What's In a Name?
© 2011, by Peter Taylor

"That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"
William Shakespeare, from Romeo and Juliet

Or to put it another way:
"Hi! My name is... (what?) My name is... (who?). My name is... Slim Shady. Hi! My name is... (huh?) My name is... (what?). My name is... Slim Shady" Eminem (Marshall Mathers)."

I do like to have a good contrast in life and that was certainly one of the extreme ones.

But the point is that we all use tags, nicknames, brands, titles, whatever you would like to call them. Some, such as Slim Shady aka Eminem aka Marshall Mathers aka ... more than most perhaps, but we use them all the time.

The other day I was cheerfully teasing my teenage son - us fathers have to have some pleasures in life after all - about his musical tastes (a lot that I actually share with him) and particularly about some of their names.

"Tiny Tempah" being a good example. A huge star these days but, excuse me if you will, a rather silly name I think and one that would have normally been a real problem at school once upon a time. And then there is "50 cent" and "P Diddy" and "Vanilla Ice" and "Snoop Dog" and "LL Cool J" and "Soulja Boy" and "Ice Cube" and my favourite "Del tha Funkee Homosapien". Eventually the teenager had had enough and responded on the attack.

"Well you call yourself 'The Lazy Project Manager'! How dumb is that?"

Point well made I had to agree (although his allowance has been severely cut). And I am not alone out there.

Ladies and Gentlemen I kindly offer you "Papercut PM" and "Project Shrink" and "Deep Fried Brain" and "Earth PM" and "Gantthead" and "Raven's Brain" and "Drunken PM" and "Journeyman" and, since we are on such a roll, "The gorilla is named Hogarth". Quite a list and these are only a few that came to mind right now – there are many, many more great PMs out there blogging away (just check out my website for a more complete list www.thelazyprojectmanager.com) and a whole bunch of them are known by their alter-egos.

So what is in a name? Why do we do it? I mean I do have a name that my parents bestowed upon me – Peter Taylor – so why was "The Lazy Project Manager" born to replace my perfectly suitable name?

Well in my case it was to articulate a way of being a project manager, the 'lazy way, the productively lazy way'. To be honest, describing the way I work as the "Peter Taylor" way or the concept as the "Peter Taylor Project Manager" probably would have gone nowhere fast and I doubt if my publishers would have picked up on the book proposal.

But "The Lazy Project Manager" said it all, provides a great hook in for people, and it reflects me as a person and a project manager. And over the last two years through my original website, speaking engagements, the book, the eLearning courses, the articles and associated activity "The Lazy Project Manager" has become a brand. Indeed my publishers have just commissioned the second book in the 'lazy' series so the brand will grow in the coming months.

A brand is the identity of a specific product, service, or business. A brand can take many forms, including a name, a sign, a symbol, a colour combination or a slogan or indeed a mixture of all these. The word brand began simply as a way to tell one person's cattle from another by means of a hot iron stamp and a legally protected brand name is called a trademark. The word brand has continued to evolve to encompass identity - it affects the personality of a product, company or service. I would hope with "The Lazy Project Manager" that brand means good service, value for money, and great entertainment through a learning experience.

So what is your 'brand'? How do you present yourself and your projects?

There are three major categories of communication within a project Communication Plan: mandatory, informational, and marketing.

Mandatory and informational communication is, typically, well addressed by project managers; it is simple to understand and to carry out. The third element of marketing communication however is often neglected, to the detriment of the project and its likely achievement of success. Branding a project is achieved through creating a project personality with which stakeholders can have a relationship and therefore an emotional attachment; that is in essence that they actually care about the project outcomes. This personality or identity is known as the project brand and it is key to maximising buy-in and support from the widest range of stakeholders. If marketing communication wins the minds of these stakeholders then project branding should win their hearts as well.

Of course, branding takes time and money and effort, so you also need to have a project with a long time horizon. A steady stream of positive communication, combined with the positive feeling of the project branding, will help the project be successful and should help overcome any negative perceptions that the project may have.

Perhaps the simplest branding technique is to have a project name that reflects the people, the project, the company and the purpose. I have asked, through LinkedIn discussions, for people to share with me their project names and the reasons they were chosen and whether they were successful or not, and why. But I would love to hear more so please contact me through www.thelazyprojectmanager.com

Is there a "Tiny Tempah" project out there somewhere? Maybe a "P Diddy" school of project management might be attractive?

Anyway I am off now to watch some TV, maybe an old western with Clint Eastwood in. I love those. Maybe one of the ones with the "Man with no Name" – what a brand!

About Peter Taylor

Peter is a dynamic and commercially astute professional who has achieved notable success in Project Management.

His background is in project management across three major business areas over the last 26 years, MRP/ERP systems with various software houses and culminating in his current role with Infor, Business Intelligence (BI) with Cognos, and product lifecycle management (PLM) with Siemens. He has spent the last 7 years leading PMOs and developing project managers and is now focusing on project based services development with Infor.

He is also an accomplished communicator and leader and is a professional speaker as well as the author of *"The Lazy Project Manager"* (Infinite Ideas) and *"Leading Successful PMOs"* (Gower).

You can contact Peter at: mail@thelazyprojectmanager.com. More information can be found at www.thelazyprojectmanager.com – and through his free podcasts in iTunes.