

## Presentation Counts

By Peter Taylor

**The following is an extract from *'The Lazy Project Manager and The Project from Hell'* – Peter Taylor's new book, currently free as an eBook from Amazon**

### Presentation Counts

I was recently in a restaurant in a foreign land (well foreign to me of course but less so to the locals).

The location was good, the décor and ambience very acceptable, the company most enjoyable, and the snow fell softly outside providing a winter wonderland visual delight through the large windows.

But sadly all of that positive build-up for a great evening's dining was almost outweighed by the food and service.

After an initial ordering experience the diners elected to eat the same main course but each agreed that the chef's vegetable of choice for the evening was not to their personal liking. It was the humble Brussels sprout, a member of the brassica family that enjoys a somewhat tarnished image which, considering its status as a nutritional powerhouse, is perhaps a little unfair. Its reputation is perhaps mostly due to the great British Christmas Day cooking technique: take sprouts, cut, trim, boil until at least twice dead and then for five minutes more. Then, finally, pile into a large dish and leave – because nobody actually likes Brussels sprouts (at least not cooked this way).

Anyway the request was made to replace said evil vegetable with an alternative, and asparagus tips were requested. And so the meal continued through a mediocre appetizer and on until the main course finally arrived... without Brussels sprouts (the good news) but also without anything in their place as requested (the bad news).

The waiter was recalled and cajoled and encouraged to resolve this rapidly, at which the staff applied all of their skills and training, by ignoring us and disappearing. Eventually after a long period, during which most of the meal was consumed, the waiter did reappear and proceeded to almost, but not quite, save the entire situation.

With a silver platter and a silver fork of delicate proportions the waiter proceeded to ceremoniously, and with great flourish, place two small asparagus tips across the centre of each diner's remaining half-eaten meal.

It was theatrical and exaggerated and, had it not been for the sheer humour of the whole thing, he may just have got away with it. Presentation can win the day.

There is an old story about a crisis in a company when it was discovered that one of their products was actually killing customers. This was a major issue and one that delivered headlines that were very bad news for the company. However a savvy and spirited marketing executive quickly went to work to resolve the situation. After a few days of bad publicity and press, with the death toll mounting, the marketer launched a major fight back.

The first press release read ‘Company X extremely concerned for its customers...’

Sadly the problems continued and more customers met their maker as a result of the killer products. The bad publicity continued and the situation looked desperate.

The marketing executive did not walk away from the challenge nor did he give up the battle. He worked late into the night thinking blue sky thoughts about a solution to this issue and finally came up with a plan.

The next day a press release was delivered to the world at large that simply read ‘**Company X sees a massive reduction in dissatisfied customers...**’

It is all in the presentation and in turning negatives into positives.

Our waiter tried but just failed; he couldn’t carry it off completely and is probably from Barcelona anyway (yes that is a Fawlty Towers<sup>1</sup> reference and not an insult to wonderful Barcelona, one of my favorite cities).

As a project manager you have to be calm, confident, assured and in control at all times. There will be times when you need to recover from sticky situations and on those occasions you need to have the skill to find the positive and the will to present it convincingly.

Presentation counts.

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<sup>1</sup> Fawlty Towers is a British sitcom produced by BBC Television and first broadcast on BBC2 in 1975 and 1979. Twelve episodes were made (two series, each of six episodes). The show was written by John Cleese and his then wife Connie Booth, both of whom also starred in the show.

The series is set in Fawlty Towers, a fictional hotel in the seaside town of Torquay, on the "English Riviera". The plots centre around rude and deranged manager Basil Fawlty (Cleese), his bossy wife Sybil (Prunella Scales), a comparatively normal chambermaid Polly (Booth), and hapless Spanish waiter (from Barcelona) Manuel (Andrew Sachs) and their attempts to run the hotel amidst farcical situations and an array of demanding and eccentric guests.

In a list drawn up by the British Film Institute in 2000, voted by industry professionals, Fawlty Towers was named the best television series of all time.

# The Lazy Project Manager

Productive Laziness



## 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 and marketing across three major business areas over the last 26 years. He is also an accomplished communicator and leader and is also a professional speaker.

Peter is the author of *'The Lazy Project Manager'*, *The Lazy Winner* and *'The Lazy Project Manager and the Project from Hell'* (Infinite Ideas), as well as *'Leading Successful PMOs'* (Gower) and *'Project Branding'* (Gower – late 2012). More information can be found at [www.thelazyprojectmanager.com](http://www.thelazyprojectmanager.com) and [www.leadingsuccessfulpmos.com](http://www.leadingsuccessfulpmos.com) and [www.thelazywinner.com](http://www.thelazywinner.com) – and through his free podcasts in iTunes.

