Cultural Awareness: Tailoring Your Presentation to the Audience
By Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, Jeff Hodgkinson

It is generally accepted that communication is 90% of a Project Manager's job.

As we have covered in an earlier article (Managing a Virtual Team), the basic theory of communication involves a sender, a receiver, a message and a medium. Another article that we published focused on "the challenges of virtual communication," and explained how the inability to see body language and its relationship to a person's vocal tone, facial expressions and hand gestures make it very difficult to judge the effectiveness of communication. This is especially noticeable when cultural and generational differences are factored into the equation.

There exists a great deal of high quality material about delivering effective presentations, and this is not the purpose of this article. This article focuses on face to face communication, particularly the subtleties in play when, as a Project Manager, you must to present to a number of people – be it a large group of stakeholders for your project, or perhaps a general audience. Your presentation may involve providing information about your project as a case study or discussing the project management methodologies you use.

Consider the following scenarios:

- You are an English project manager of a large construction project in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and you have been asked to make a presentation to a residents' committee comprised of people who live in the district surrounding your project.
- You are a South African project manager of your company's new IT system, currently being rolled out globally, and you need to present it to the arm of the business in Sydney, Australia.
- You are a Brazilian project manager, and have been invited to a project management seminar in Paris, France to discuss a successful project that you managed.

One of the things to think about when preparing a presentation to a large group is: what is their cultural background, and what must I do to make my presentation effective for them?

As you prepare for your presentation, here are a few examples of cultural differences to consider:
- In some cultures, you can expect many questions from the audience. In others, people may prefer to approach you on an individual basis following the presentation – prepare your presentation accordingly, e.g., whether or not to solicit questions. Is there a particular structure that will work best for your audience, and is there anyone who can advise you in this area?
- How should your presentation be formatted to be most effective for your audience ---- Power Point slides, discussion with notes provided? Certainly, you need to cover the pertinent facts about your project, but are there formats that will have a greater impact on your audience than others?

As you prepare, take a moment to find out about the local culture in which you will be presenting, either from colleagues you know from that culture or through other means. Online resources are readily available that can provide insight into everything from the economic climate of a country to the communication styles of a culture. Taking the time to adequately prepare can make a big difference to the effectiveness of your message.

In conclusion, when you must make a presentation to people that you do not know, think about your audience's cultural background, and select a suitable presentation style. It will help you both deliver an effective presentation and obtain valuable feedback.

Article Author Bios as of March 2011	
About The Article Authors, Their Roles Their Plans, And Their Goals	Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson are experienced PMO, program, and project managers who developed a mutual friendship by realizing they shared a common passion to help others and share knowledge about PMO, portfolio, program and project management (collectively termed PM below). In February 2010 they decided to collaborate on a five (5) year goal to write 100 PM subject articles (pro bono) for publication in any/all PM subject websites, newsletters, and professional magazines / journals.
	They have been translated into Arabic, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian and published on websites in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, India, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, Turkey, UK, and the USA.
	Their mission is to help expand good program and project management practices by promoting the PM profession; to be a positive influence to the PM Community; be known as eminent influencers of PM practices; and in earnest hope readers can gain benefit from the advice of their 60+ years of combined experience and expertise (and the expertise of co-authors who write with them on certain articles and subjects).
	Although all three are well credentialed, together they have the distinction in particular of being 3 of only 25 worldwide that hold the Project Management Institute's PMP®, PgMP®, and PMI-RMP® Credentials. Gary and Jeff have all five (5) of the PMI 'Family of Credentials'. As of December 31st, 2010, PMI confirmed we were the only two individuals with that achievement.
	Along with writing articles, each also champions a role in the overall writing program collaboration process: → Gareth manages all requests for additional guest author collaborations → Gary manages the article development tracking and readership metrics → Jeff manages the article distribution and new readership demographics Each can be contacted for advice, coaching, collaboration, and speaking individually as noted in their bios or as a team at: Contactus@pmoracles.com
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Gary is a 2009 & 2010 Presidents' Volunteer Award recipient for his charitable work with local fire services and professional groups. He has won several internal awards for results achieved from projects and programs he managed as well as being named one of the Business Journal's Top 40 Professionals in 2007. Gary holds numerous degrees and certifications in IT, management, and project management and they include: an advanced MBA degree in finance, and has the PgMP®, PMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP®, CAPM®, Project+, PRINCE2, ITIL-F, MCTS, MCITP, and SSGB professional certifications. Email Gary: Gary@PMOracles.com or contact him through LinkedIn.

Jeff Hodgkinson is a 31 year veteran of Intel Corporation, where he continues on a progressive career as a program/project manager. Jeff is an IT@Intel Expert and blogs on Intel's Community for IT Professionals for Program/Project Management subjects and interests. He is the most experienced Intel MAPP (Make A Project Plan) Day Facilitator at Intel with over 150 facilitation events to his credit. Jeff received the 2010 PMI (Project Management Institute) Distinguished Contribution Award for his support of the Project Management profession from the Project Management Institute.

Jeff was also the 2nd place finalist for the 2009 Kerzner International Project Manager of the Year Award ™. He lives in Mesa, Arizona, USA and volunteers as the Associate Vice President for Credentials & Certifications and the Agile CER (Chapter Engagement Representative) for the Phoenix PMI Chapter. Because of his contributions to helping people achieve their goals, he is the third (3rd) most recommended person on LinkedIn with 530+ recommendations, and is ranked in the Top 60 (currently 51st) most networked LinkedIn person.

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