

Flying under the Radar

Bob Metzler, Managing Director

So often consultants enter a new client's office with our project bag of tools and associated project language. We usually begin by telling our client "how to do" project management, work plans, status reports, issue tracking, issue escalation, governance, change request process, escalation process, timelines, milestones, project deliverables, the lifecycle, communication plans, process improvement, Six Sigma, toll gates, etc". By the time you have finished your clients' eyes are crossed, their heads are spinning and the room is filled with the sound of silence. If I was the client I would run out of the room screaming, "**STOP**".

How about an alternative approach that is "just do it"? I know Nike is famous for bringing this simple approach to light. Let's say it is time that I get into shape and I want to start a jogging/running program. The simple approach is to get a pair of running shoes that are comfortable and put one foot in front of the other. Start slowly, short distances and gradually OVER TIME speed up and run longer distances. Don't over do it and if you hurt, then rest and recover – a very simple, easy process with easy to follow instructions.

The other approach to start a running program is to research all the running shoes available to ensure you get the "correct" pair. Then you need to find the answers to all the technical questions. Do I pronate? Do I need orthotics? Am I a heel striker or toe runner? How should I hold my arms and hands? What should be my stride length? By the time you would get through all of that you may want to take up Ping-Pong.

So what approach can we take with our new business client? Here are some thoughts:

- Define what you initially want to get done, say in the next 30 days (For example: the project goals/scope and interim work plan)
- Keep a list of questions (potential issues) that need to be answered
- Identify who, when and how we keep the right folks (Sponsors, stakeholders, project leads) informed about how/what we are doing

I think this is enough to start. *Then do it.* Bring in templates and "project speak" *only as needed.* Keep the documentation simple and fact-based. I am not suggesting that you not follow the client's standards if they already exist.

A next step would be to look at what you want to do in the next 30 – 60 days. And repeat the steps above. As you hit the next 60 – 90 days you should have a viable plan that you can manage to and a process to review the progress, the financials, etc. *and* you will have introduced "project management" without your client knowing it!

In conclusion, I think if we remember that the tools are *not* the focus, it is the work, we will have more success and a very satisfied client.