

# Making Emotional Conversations Unemotional

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# Agenda

**1. What Causes Emotional Conversations?**

**2. The Process of Making them Unemotional**

**3. Dealing with Mandated Dates**

**4. Other Emotional Conversations**

**5. Questions and Answers**



# What causes emotional conversations?

- ▶ Mandated Dates
- ▶ Stressed/Overworked Team Members
- ▶ Estimates That Are Not Reliable
- ▶ The Project Blame Game
- ▶ Post-Project Negotiations
- ▶ What else?



# Examples

- ▶ That date is impossible!
- ▶ We don't have enough resources!
- ▶ I thought you said 40 hours!
- ▶ It's not my fault, the developers missed their target!
- ▶ That's a scope change!



# My Defining Moment

“Projects fail because of  
context, not content.”

*(Thomsett, Radical Project Management,  
2002, p37)*



# Step One

- ▶ Establish your mindset....
  - ▶ Don't say the negative statement
  - ▶ Learn not to say no, instead say yes with the condition.
  - ▶ Understand the long term effect of the conversation



# Step Two

## ▶▶ Get to the data!

- ▶ Data rules all. Data takes an emotional based conversation and turns it into an unemotional fact based discussion.



# Step Three

- ▶ Once the data is presented, accept the answer given.
  - ▶ This may be difficult, but again our focus is on the end game. Not the immediate win.



# Dealing with Mandated Dates

- ▶ First, if possible, don't share the mandated date with the team. Not until true estimates are given.
- ▶ Don't speak in dates, speak in time, commitment, deliverables, and predecessors.
- ▶ Let the date "fall" out in a project plan.
- ▶ Adjust thinking based on the results of the project plan.



# Dealing with Mandated Dates

- ▶ Now baseline the plan. (Very Important)
- ▶ Present the DATA to the project sponsor.
  - Be truthful and honest
  - Present options, not problems
  - Don't be afraid to ask for what you need
- ▶ If you don't get what you need, baseline the "new" plan for future reference.
- ▶ Track the plan and report results. Use this as a basis for the next mandated date.



# Unreliable Estimates

- ▶ Ask all of the questions, not just how long
- ▶ Name That Tune!
  - I can write that code in 4 hours
- ▶ Define the word “done”
- ▶ Utilize PERT
  - $(BC + (4 * ML) + WC) / 6$



# Stressed / Overworked Team Members

- ▶ Protect your team at all costs
- ▶ Do we have to work weekends and overtime?
- ▶ Know their utilization, be factual
- ▶ Don't forget, "Drop everything" doesn't mean drop everything!



# The Project Blame Game

- ▶ Avoid blame, take it on yourself
- ▶ 100%/10% rule
  - “I own 100% of project failure”
  - “I share only 10% of project success”



# Post-Project Negotiations

- ▶ Make it simple
- ▶ Avoid the blame game at all costs
- ▶ Make the business decision....do we want to do more business? If yes, eat the cost, if no, settle.



# Key Drivers

- ▶ You must get to the data.
- ▶ Having facts and data turns the emotional conversations into unemotional conversations
- ▶ Invest in a system. It can range from local one user based tools to a large EPM solution such as Clarity.



Completely Updated!

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# Questions?

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