Words of Wisdom from Sam Lahcom

Samoht Lahcom has been writing project management advice columns for the past eight years. He has a unique and unusual style and his advice is unorthodox. Some of this may be the result of translation problems since he is from the country of Putympkin. Sam calls himself "The World's Greatest PM" and this designation is seconded by people that report to him when it is time for their annual review.

Here are some interesting quotes from Sam over the past few years.

Agile project management. I like this new concept of "light" project management. This seems to fit my pattern of being light on planning and light on controlling the project. What I especially like is that because we cut down on project management, we have time left over when the actual work takes longer than estimated.

The importance of good people. Some people say that you should just pick good people for your project team and let them loose to get the job done. I tend to agree with this approach. Unfortunately, I usually find out that my project team is not exactly the cream-of-the-crop (if you know what I mean). So, when I turn them loose with little supervision and management, the typical result is a late project with lots of problems. I can then blame this on the staff by referring to them as "the dullest knives in the kitchen" (loose translation).

Project management tools. When I was younger I thought project management was some kind of tool and I remember wondering how it would cost. Alas, I wish it were a tool. Then I could use it to manage my projects automatically, which would free up my time for the important stuff like going to lunch with vendor salespeople. If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we build a tool that will manage a project for us?

Project quality. They say that good project management processes allow you to build a higher-quality product. Our clients always want more and more enhancements every time we complete a project. If we build a product perfectly, the client is still going to want changes. I have found that it does not pay to build a good quality solution since the client is just going to change it anyway.

Communication. It's hard enough to communicate well with your own team. It's even harder to communicate with vendors. Once in a while I have to work with suppliers and vendors. My philosophy is that I want them to be perfect communicators. On the other hand I don't want them to have any information on my project. That's one of the differences between being an employee and a contractor.

Scope management. I talked to Tom Mochal the other day about scope management. Tom said that scope is like a box that provides boundaries on your project. I said I like the analogy of a box, since I like to throw boxes away when I get them. Scope management sounds too confining and rigid. I like to fly with the eagles. Eagles don't worry about defining scope. Neither do I.

Issues management. Proactive issues management is a concept I don't understand. If you have a problem, you fix it. What's the big deal? We figure out some problems more quickly than others, but they all are resolved over time. When I client asks me the status of a problem, I say we are working on it. When they ask when it will be resolved, I tell

them it will be resolved as soon as we can figure it out. They don't always like it, but that is the only answer I have, and that is the only answer they need.

Project management. I saw Tom Mochal the other day at lunch. I told him his TenStep approach had too many steps in it for me. Tom says that project management just provides the framework around which the project is executed. I laughed. "Framework", I said. "If I want a framework, I'll become a carpenter and build houses. Leave the frameworks to them."

Read more of the wisdom of Samoht Lahcom at www.TheGreatestPM.com.