

Reading and Reflecting – with ‘Meet the Managers’¹

by Tom Taylor

A project manager from UK

In a busy world is there sufficient time to develop and apply our reflection capabilities? This ‘Meet the Managers’ series of short stories may appear to be frivolous and irreverent. But their true purpose is to stimulate our reflective skills – in ourselves as readers and with our colleagues as teams or communities or families – for each story.

These reflections can be shallow or deep, quick or longer, reactionary or considered. Having read and reflected on these pieces it may be possible to read and reflect on other articles in PMWJ. Very best wishes with your reading and reflecting.

Welcome to another piece in “Meet the Managers”, a series focussed on reading and reflecting to stimulate Aspiring Managers. This includes people studying project management and practising project management – so it could be YOU! Is it worth reflecting on the threats and opportunities which make up risks? What actually happened against what might have been expected?

No.2 – Games time – dealing with chance.

It was a wet and windy day of extreme weather. (All together now) Oh No!

There was rioting in the streets of their neighbourhood. Oh No!

So the Managers decided to stay at home and play some games.



There was Mummy Manager, Daddy Manager, and two junior Managers.

They choose Snakes and Ladders.

They found the board, but they could not find any of the pieces. Oh No!

That did not put the Managers off. They found some dice in another game, they fetched an egg cup as a shaker and some buttons to use as counters. This is what teams do. They solve problems.



¹ How to cite this work: Taylor, T. (2026). Games time – dealing with chance, Story 2, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XV, Issue II, February.

They used intelligence, innovation and ingenuity. They all start with the letter “I”. But there is no “I” in TEAM. Certainly not.

After three rounds Daddy Manager joined them. He had been making sure that the wet and windy weather and the rioters couldn’t get into the house.

They let him have three goes to catch up. Not all team members can be present all the time. So common sense with flexibility and fairness can always be applied.



Fundamentally, Snakes and Ladders is all about RISK with negative THREATS of snakes going down and positive OPPORTUNITIES of ladders going up.



Mummy Manager nearly won on four occasions, but she kept going down snakes on the top line. Oh No!

In the end one of the junior Managers managed to get to the finish. Game over.

Sometimes they would play Monopoly. This is another risk game with threats of landing on the properties of other players and opportunities of the other players landing on your properties – with side issues on other squares and potential complications from cards.



Usually all games with dice involve a large degree of chance and a small degree of decision making. In life and on projects it is better to be the other way round.



If they had no equipment available at all the Managers might play Paper-Rock-Scissors. This appears to be mainly about decision making – contextual decision making.

Of course one should never run with scissors – and certainly not into the road.

The Managers talked about the games they had played.

They thought about the fun they had had. The bright colours of the boards, the sound of the dice in the eggcup, the pretty pictures on the cards. And of course all the theoretical and practical, strategic and tactical requirements inherent in games of risk and chance. Oh yes! And they learned lessons with tricks and techniques – about winning and losing – for the next time.

The riots and the bad weather were still going on outside – oh dear! The Managers decided they had had quite enough risk for today.

They had their routine of tea time, bath time, story time and then went to bed.
Bye Bye everyone. Sleep tight.

Some questions for Aspiring Managers to debate:

1. Are there different sorts of risks?
2. Is there anything to learn from games and sports?
3. Do you believe in chance?
4. What is the difference between good luck and bad luck?

Tip for the storyteller:

Reassurance may be required: including people sometimes win and sometimes lose; on the effects of climate change; and how rioting is simply an expression of social unrest – usually.

Tom Taylor is the author of the “Meet the Managers” collection and is known as:

- *A popular, confident and energetic speaker and broadcaster,*
- *A prolific author and publisher on innovative business and original management issues,*
- *An experienced and enthusiastic lecturer and course leader,*
- *And an award-winning, highly experienced manager of projects, advisor and consultant.*

The illustrations are by Rob Dee, a talented designer and illustrator from UK.

A little more about the author



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Tom Taylor is Principal with Dashdot and joint founding director of Buro Four in the United Kingdom. For many years, he has been a central figure in the Association for Project Management (APM) in the UK as former APM president, vice-president, Chair and London

Branch. Via APM he has achieved Chartered Project Professional (ChPP), Registered Project Professional (RPP), an Honorary Fellowship, the inaugural President's Medal from Professor Martin Barnes and APM's prestigious Sir Monty Finniston Award for lifetime achievement. Visit www.apm.org.uk

Tom's professional career so far has been in property and construction in UK in front line roles – from theatres to manufacturing, from residential to harbour works – significant to less so – with contractors, designers and as a consultant – as employer, employee and entrepreneur - within major organisations and “all-on-my-own” – prize winning and mundane. It's been rewarding and enjoyable – so far.

He is an advisor on projects, programmes, enterprises and business, as principal at Dashdot – a consultancy and publishing vehicle – please go to www.dashdot.co.uk

He is a joint founder from 1985 and occasional advisor with Buro Four – an eminent project management outfit based in UK - please go to www.burofour.com

Tom has been a guest lecturer at several universities, a previous Visiting Professor at Salford University and an external examiner at UCL.

Tom is a supporter of Membership Associations (MAs) of International Project Management Association (IPMA), Young Crews - and their events. Visit www.ipma.org

Tom attends, speaks and hosts PM events in UK and round the world. He holds honorary positions with project management associations in Finland, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Portugal, Spain and UK plus with IPMA.

“Continuing to be involved in front line projects and the journey of the project management community, over the last fifty years or so, has certainly been fascinating, rewarding and enjoyable – as a bystander, passenger, navigator and driver. Changing technologies and surprising opportunities have had significant impact for me, and on me. However, it is people, the colleagues, who are most important – with our collective commitment, common purpose and good humour. I have been very fortunate indeed in that aspect. Approaching my likely career midpoint, I am looking forward to more good projects, with good people, with good humour.”

A current personal profile of Tom is available at www.tomtaylor.info and he may be contacted at tomtaylor@dashdot.co.uk