

## Reading and Reflecting – with ‘Meet the Managers’

### The Speech – with illustrations <sup>1</sup>

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.

The head teacher at the school had to make a speech.



He had to explain to the school governors the differences between **P**rojects, **P**rogrammes and **P**ortfolios.

The head teacher decided to ask the Manager family for some help. He asked them to keep it simple because the school governors had short attention spans. He also asked the Manager family to avoid management speak and suggested illustrations might be appropriate.

Daddy Manager, Mummy Manager and the two junior Managers sat down to discuss this challenge.

As an illustration a comparison with newspapers arose and was debated.

The daily free newspapers made available on buses and at railway stations might be just like projects.



The more extensive quality daily broadsheet newspapers might be equivalent to programmes.

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So that would mean that portfolios might be represented by expensive Sunday newspapers with their colour magazines and supplements.



The Managers were not completely happy with this explanation. For example would the tech savvy school governors be familiar with this range of newspapers or newspapers at all?

The managers moved onto retail analogies as illustrations.



A single corner grocery shop could be a project.

A supermarket or a department store or even a shopping centre could be a programme.

Consequently would a national chain of shops and stores with logistics of warehousing and distribution equate to a portfolio?



The managers were still not satisfied.

It was time to visit Granddad Manager. They would ask him. He was a wise granddad and manager.

He thought for a while and then he proposed something else.



He thought a portfolio is like a typical lady's handbag with a purse, receipts, make-up, hairbrush, mobile phone, some sweets and other bits and pieces.



(Granddad Manager does rather go on about stereotypes. Perhaps it's a generational thing?)

A programme would be just like the purse inside the handbag with bank notes, coins, credit cards and perhaps some house keys.

That would mean that a project would be like having a few coins in your pocket – with some fluff.



The Managers were not too impressed and wanted to ask Granddad Manager about their concepts of newspapers and retail options.

However Granddad Manager had fallen asleep in his favourite armchair.



Soon afterwards the Managers went back home on their bicycles.

Later that week the head teacher was told of their progress so far.

The head teacher thanked the Managers for their efforts and told them that the speech had been cancelled and was not required. That's right. Oh Yes!

Never mind said the Managers. There may be other opportunities to use their illustrations on other people with short attention spans.

Bye Bye everyone.

[Of course in some cultures these differences in projects, programmes and portfolios do not apply and so explanations and illustrations are not required.]

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**Some questions for Aspiring Managers to review:**

1. Do illustrations work?
2. How would YOU explain projects, programmes and portfolios?
3. Can we learn anything from abandoned efforts and previous initiatives?
4. How can we learn anything from older generations?

***Tip for the story teller:***

*Never open an umbrella in a lift.*

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*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.*

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## A little more About the Author



**Tom Taylor**

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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 Finneston Award for lifetime achievement. Visit [www.apm.org.uk](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.tomtaylor.info) and he may be contacted at [tomtaylor@dashdot.co.uk](mailto:tomtaylor@dashdot.co.uk)