

Reading and Reflecting – with ‘Meet the Managers’

The lifecycle or the cycle of life 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 the PMWJ.

Someone asked: who are the Aspiring Managers to whom these stories and reflections are addressed – are they students? Well yes – and of all generations. Everyone is a manager – just to get by in the 21st century. It is possible to aspire to be a better manager. For example, the author started this project management lark in the 1970s, yet probably approaching the midpoint of his PM career he still aspires to be a better manager.

Very best wishes with your reading and reflecting.

No.5 – The lifecycle or the cycle of life

This is a sad story – at the beginning.

Daddy Manager, Mummy Manager and the two junior Managers all like animals.

The Managers had a hamster. It died. We said it would be a sad story.

The Managers then had a stick insect. It died. It is getting sadder.

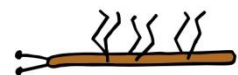
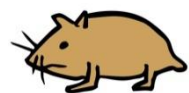
The Managers decided to review the lifecycles of their pets and of other possessions.

Lifecycles are not the same as lifestyles – although lifestyles can affect lifecycles.



The Managers decided to talk about inanimate* objects as this was less emotional – or sad – compared with living and dying things.

Houses take a long time to design, approve and build. But this early time for a house up to its initial occupation was really short compared to the later



¹ How to cite this work: Taylor, T. (2026). The lifecycle or the cycle of life, Meet the Managers, series story 5, *PM World Journal*, Vol XV, Issue V, May.

and much longer time of occupation when it will be lived in until its final vacation and removal.

Daddy Manager was managing a project for New Year Celebrations in the town centre which was very different. It would take nearly a whole year of planning, and then all be over in just a few minutes – except for clearing up the mess the next day, learning lessons for the following years and the life time of memories for the people who attended and enjoyed themselves beyond all expectations.



The managers decided they should think about lifecycles in all their activities on their domestic projects and in family operational business-as-usual.

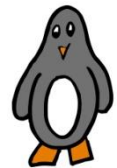


The Managers quickly recognised that they did not have influence over all stages of a product's or project's lifecycle.

For example mobile phones were made by other people. The Managers only used the phone. And the Managers might even frustrate the planned later stages when they are no longer using that phone model. For example, they would put the redundant handset and charger in a drawer or cupboard with other obsolete technology rather than recycle the units to the suppliers to complete the cradle-to-cradle

story.

The Managers decided for their next pet they would get a stuffed penguin toy – from the charity shop. Sustainable.



They would also consider and assist lifecycles whenever they could. Sustainably.



Later they asked Grandma Manager to explain the lifecycle of top sportsmen and women. Grandma said it is frequently a sad story.

And that is another story for another day. Bye Bye everyone.

Some aspects for Aspiring Managers to ponder:

1. What is the normal project duration of your projects?
2. What is the normal lifecycle duration of your projects?
3. Is having a pet a project or an operational activity?
4. Who do you know who really understands lifecycles?

Tip for the story teller: Ask Grandma or Granddad to explain this story.

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



Tom Taylor

London, UK



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

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