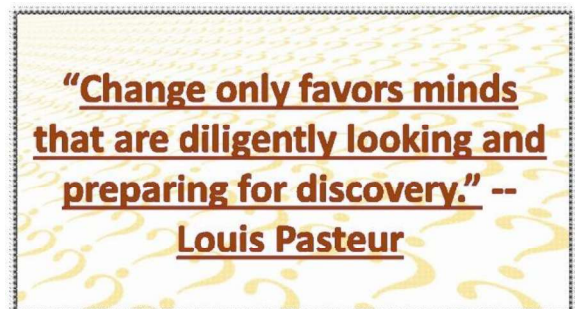


The Role of Project Management Controls in Disruptive Leadership and Agility

A New Trend in Leadership

In today's business environment, the speed of change has created continual chaos. The same applies to project management and construction industries. Out of chaos have emerged disruptive leaders, thriving on it, even instigating it, to push their organizations and teams to embrace innovation and become better than they think possible. They lead their organizations to become agile and proficient in change management, which is an advantage over competitors in today's rapidly transforming and volatile markets.

These leaders are a breed of their own, establishing a new style worthy of its own title. They proudly take ownership of that title: Disruptive. They are the few that can wield disruption as a tool and a weapon, to forge innovative paths or sever the dead and dying processes, concepts, etc. that hold back their companies.



Disruptive leadership is not about being militant or making change for the sake of change. It's about being solutions driven with a fresh approach — it's about challenging the current way things are done. ¹

Such challenges are not pure whimsy or done out of defiant belligerence. They are provoked by stagnant growth, a need for simplification or a need for innovation based on insights into trends that threaten the future of the organization to adapt or fade into obsolescence.

¹ Sandy Coryell, "Stay Hungry: Why Disruptive Leadership Works," 04.01.15 HVACRBUSINESS: The HVACR Management Magazine, <http://www.hvacrbusiness.com/why-disruptive-leadership-works.html>

Industries, organizations and individuals are naturally resistant to change, which is why many avoid it or are at least sluggish to respond to it. Logic and processes alone lack the power to motivate adaptation. Why?

In her article, “Ten Reasons People Resist Change,” Rosabeth Moss Kanter includes **uncertainty**, **concerns** about more work and **fear** of incompetency as among the ten. Just like these three, all of her ten reasons have an emotional component that reinforces resistance. [18]

Disruptive Leadership Drives the Organization’s Culture.

If emotion hinders change, then it takes emotion to light the fires of inspiration and enthusiasm which induce change. Disruptive leaders understand that the emotional factor is what drives the culture of an organization and engages stakeholders. They have a high level of emotional intelligence. These inherent strengths become a strong advantage to an organization over its competitors.

This leadership style is proactive in embracing change, driving the culture of the organization and project management team to do the same through a more horizontal exchange of experience, information and counsel.

Disruptive Leadership’s Agile Bent

Agile methodologies are preferred by disruptive leaders.^{2 3} What makes agile methodologies so appealing to the disruptive leader? In part, their own agile skillsets create agility, but agile methodologies work better than others to accommodate changes and meet challenges.

² Though all good leaders should be proactive in planning for the future, a disruptive leader must also be agile and open to change. “Ditch the Status Quo with Disruptive Leadership,” Jan 23, 2017, <https://www.snb.com/ditch-the-status-quo-with-disruptive-leadership>

³ “...if there is no agility around change, and leaders aren’t willing to put the work in to foster that change, complacency can kill a company,” John Mattone, Alyssa Drury, “Why a Strong Corporate Culture Requires Disruptive Leadership,” Jan 25, 2016 <https://seismic.com/blog/post/why-a-strong-corporate-culture-requires-disruptive-leadership/>

They are adaptable and have the potential to significantly improve any business in any industry to achieve: [8]

- Faster time to project completion
- Better project owner/user satisfaction
- Increased revenue and engagement
- Happier, more productive employees/stakeholders
- Stronger alignment throughout the organization
- Product KPIs that are easily understood
- A clearer connection between product/project investment and revenue/ROI [8]

Agile organizations complete 69% of their strategic initiatives, compared to 45% by less agile ones.

According to Research by PMI. [9]

What are the features that distinguish Agile methods?

Based on research and our experience with more than 20 years of project management consulting, we narrowed our focus to five distinguishing features of agile methods as they apply to project management for construction. Examine the following keys: [5]



- **Learning agility:** ability to apply previous learning and embrace learning in new, novel or ill-defined environments.
- **Communicating intent:** what does success look like at the end of the operation?
- **Leader-development readiness:** combination of one's motivation and ability to personally grow and develop. (Emotional Components)
- **Organized chaos:** following core best practices and procedures to ensure optimal execution in spite of uncertainties.
- **Ethics:** strength, honor and grace under pressure; handling conflicts in hostile situations; sense of comradery; and purpose and integrity. (Emotional components)

These agile keys are characteristic of the disruptive leader. However, these characteristics alone do not define disruptive leadership.

Disruptive Leadership Competencies

From our research, we have selected seven competencies of disruptive leaders that, when practiced, lead to disruptive leadership.

Anyone with the motivation to adopt new practices, who acknowledges a need for change, can incorporate the competencies of these leaders into their own leadership style.

The canons of disruptive leadership that set its style apart are: [1] [2]

1. Leapfrogging- Creativity and Innovation
2. Pushing Boundaries—Be curious and ask why.
Break the Rules, Write New Ones—but always explain why.
3. Be Decisive-Stand Up and be Counted

4. Diversity in circle of influence
5. Data/ Intuition Integration or building your bank of intelligence
6. Adaptive Planning
7. Embracing Change - Guiding others through chaos

This canon of practices results in a transition to more agile methodologies in project management through influencing change, better involvement of the team in the planning, project controls (scheduling, reporting, analytics, documentation) and problem solving.

The Importance of Project Controls in Project Management

Few if any project managers or executives would deny the need for project controls. Yet, many organizations, according to various survey's, willingly admit that inadequate project controls, which include planning and scheduling, result in major challenges.

- Businesses identified “capturing time/costs against projects” as their biggest project management challenge. [14]
- Over 30% of companies consider poor visibility of available resources to be a major challenge. [14]
- About 9% of organizations rate themselves as excellent on successfully executing initiatives to deliver strategic results. Consequently, only 56% of strategic initiatives meet their original goals and business intent. [15]
- A majority of companies either lack the skills or fail to deploy the personnel needed for strategy implementation. [15]

When are project controls such a challenge? When they are not considered a rudimentary part of every project, or given priority of thought, time, and budget over the execution processes of projects.

This can be due to a lack of resources to give them the priority they deserve, or a lack of understanding of their importance to tracking a project's progress and managing change/risk.

Therefore, we should go back to a few fundamentals and engrave them in the foundation stone of our management processes.

- Methods, tools and people employed in planning, cost control, schedule management and change management are the essentials of project controls.
- Measuring progress involves metrics. The metrics of project success are factors of time, cost, quality and performance.
- Once measurement processes are in place, key performance indicators (KPIs) are a method of reporting these to project stakeholders and key decision makers. [10]
KPIs focus on future outcomes, and this is the information stakeholders need for decision making.⁴

Project Controls are Essential for Proactive Risk Management

The effectiveness of existing controls at a company determine the degree the company is at risk of failure. [16]

Every company has a bunch of business practices, and if those business practices are properly in place, the company will maximize its ability to make a profit. All those business practices (or things you need in place) are called risk factors. [16]

All causes of loss are fixable by putting a business practice or control in place. The lack of such controls or practices could cause a business to fail. Having all the necessary controls and practices in place would provide a business with the greatest ability to generate profits. [16]

Quality project controls depend upon quality planning.

A comprehensive project plan must be defined before starting a project, otherwise there is little basis for control. Project tracking cannot be accomplished without a well-defined work plan, budget, and schedule. [12] These serve as a baseline from which to compare real-time performance.

The project plan should be developed with input from all people who will be performing the work, and must be communicated to all participants. The tasks, costs, and schedules of the project plan

⁴ Harold Kerzner, Ph.D.; *Project Management Metrics, KPIs, and Dashboards – A Guide to Measuring and Monitoring Project Performance*, pg.119, Copyright © 2013 by International Institute for Learning, Inc., New York, New York. All rights reserved. Published by Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey

establish the benchmarks and check-points that are necessary for comparing actual accomplishments to planned accomplishments, so the progress of a project can be measured, evaluated, and controlled. [12]

A Dedicated Project Controls person/team offers the objective, timely project controls support to Project Management Leadership, Executives and Project Team.

There are a few analogies that can be drawn upon to support our claim. Whether from anatomy, fitness, sports or aviation; they are readily available.

- **Anatomy**—The spinal column is an excellent example of specialized information being coordinated to the brain (key decision makers) and the members of the body (the project team).
- **Fitness**—In fitness we have the personal trainer who helps clients with fitness goals from planning, monitoring and counseling for modifications necessary to achieve goals and prevent injury.
- **Sports**—Cowboys’ fans should appreciate this one. The coach is the project manager, the quarterback is the controls. The quarterback knows the plays and monitors the teams progress. The quarterback passes the information down from the coach to the players to achieve the plays. The quarterback is involved in the plays.
- **Aviation**— Air traffic controllers are personnel responsible for the safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of air traffic in the global air traffic control system.⁵

The skills, experience and focus of the project controls team are specialized for assisting with the creation of the plan and logic, developing the baseline schedule, pulling together the reports and documenting progress, analyzing data, offering objective and constructive advice on how to correct issues that cause or threaten to cause milestone delays, and update and maintain the schedule accordingly. And, when the team is also familiar and/or experienced with construction and engineering, the partnership or teamwork between the project management, sub-contractors, owners and controls team more easily becomes synchronized.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_traffic_controller

This individual/group frees up the rest of the project team, management and executives to do what they do best, and shorten the time of decision making.

Disruptive leadership Competencies & Dedicated Project Controls Mesh to facilitate Agility in Project Management for Construction

Under each of the seven competencies we will show the advantages of its application to project management; how each is interdependent upon dedicated project controls, and a how they promote one or more of the five keys of agility.

Leapfrogging

Disruptive leadership is about disruptive innovation. In today's ever-changing world, a few examples of organizations whose disruptive leaders have taken them by leaps and bounds above their competition are Amazon, Tesla, Starbucks, Marriott and Netflix.⁶ Some companies left reeling from their dust are Walmart, General Motors, the local diner, Hilton and Blockbuster.

In the construction and engineering industries, 3D-printed houses, automatically designed hospitals, prefabricated skyscrapers—these once-futuristic dreams are now a reality, as described in a new report, *Shaping the Future of Construction: Inspiring Innovators Redefine the Industry*, developed by BCG and the World Economic Forum.⁷ And, four trends altering the industry, most likely for the long term, are: a low-bid commodification mentality, technological innovation, plentiful and affordable domestic energy resources, and the integration of design with construction.⁸

⁶ <https://www.forbes.com/innovative-companies/#81273231d654>

⁷ <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2017/engineered-products-project-business-innovation-shaping-future-of-construction-inspiring-innovators-define-industry.aspx>

⁸ <http://www.cfma.org/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2533>

Disruptive leaders will push organizations toward leading trends in best practices and innovation in project management, and will encourage their companies to be proactive in design, technology and process improvements that will give them a competitive edge and lead the industry in change.

This quality enhances the agility keys:

- **leader-development readiness**
Leapfrogging forces growth and development via example and adaptation
- **learning agility**
Leapfrogging creates an environment of application of existing skills to the novel and ill-defined unknown.

A **project controls source** frees up the disruptive leader and his team to be creative, and provides the timely reports and analysis to feed his intuition.

Pushing Boundaries

The disruptive leader is always looking to improve processes and performance in project management and project execution. The accepted status quo of time, cost and quality to the disruptive leader are like records to the athlete: they exist to be broken.

This competency encourages agility keys:

- **Learning agility:** Knowledge of previous outcomes and expected results becomes a tool for improvement
- **Leader-development readiness:** Prior standards empower motivation
- **Communicating intent:** Knowing the intent of the project gives fluidity to execution so that boundaries can be surpassed.

Project Controls supports disruptive leadership through documentation and collaboration.

Project Controls -specifically in planning and schedule development- keep the intent in the forefront.

Like a stop watch in the hands of a horse trainer measures the speed of a thoroughbred on the race track and video of each run can give him insight on when, where and how to boost the horse's

performance, so do project controls, especially KPIs, offer leaders the information from which to glean insights into where team performance can be improved.

KPIs are to Project Management and Project Teams what watching video playbacks of a game performance are to coaches, managers and football teams

Be Decisive-Stand Up and be Counted

Disruptive leaders are bold to act, confident in their insights and instincts. Their confidence will involve their fellows in initiating changes. This makes change management easier for the whole team/organization.

The agility keys enhanced are:

- Organized Chaos—Each member of the team, as exemplified by their leader, becomes more confident. Decisiveness is imperative to organized chaos.
- Ethics—Leading by example to make informed decisions, follow instinct and be bold in presentation and action. Doing what is right, even if it is not what everyone is used to doing. Ethics encourages better engagement in project controls and using them for improvement or problem solving.

Decisiveness and Boldness are strengthened by Dedicated Project Controls

- Project Controls are critical for triage and execution of solutions. They are the metrics and monitoring of success.
- Project Controls validate instincts and embolden action.

Diversity in circle of influence

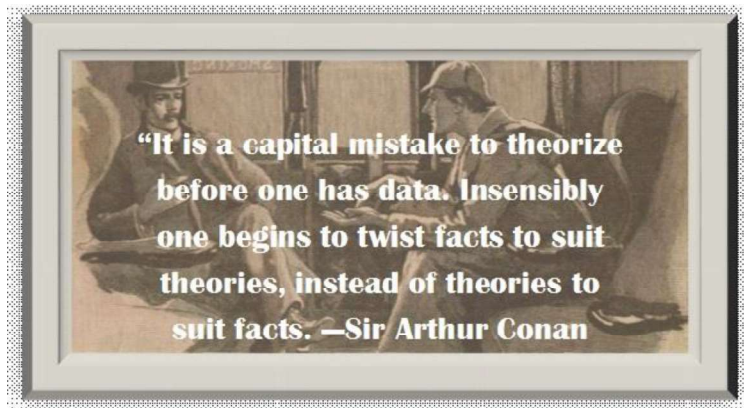
Disruptive leadership collaborates with and/or designates responsibility to those with specialized skills and experience. As a leader, this prevents you from being stretched too thin in your own responsibilities or capabilities.

Diversity reinforces agility keys:

- Learning Agility
- Leader-development Readiness

The talents and experience of a designated project controls person/team is leveraged by disruptive leaders to insure adequate time and attention are given to planning, schedule development, reporting, analysis and documentation for each and every project.

Data/ Intuition Integration



Disruptive Leaders are instinctive leaders, but they value data for intuitive decisions. Intuitive intelligence, or instinct, is listening to your gut about an idea or decision.

Disruptive leadership requires that we develop our intuition and follow its advice. Here is how it works:

As Barry Gordon states in his book (Intelligent Memory: Improve the Memory That Makes You Smarter) - “Since birth our brains compartmentalize experiences and information akin to an elaborate closet organization system. The brain warehouses existing knowledge into separate files and, when new data is received, it searches the stored files looking for similar information. Upon finding a match, the new information is combined with the existing knowledge to create a fresh thought. This process, called intelligent memory, is the basis for producing creative, breakthrough ideas.” [13]

We can draw from Barry's writing that instinctive decisions and actions do not happen without adequate information from which to draw discernment. Instinct reveals more quickly than pure reason alone what to do with that information. [3]

There must be enough pertinent information to trigger intuitive thought and action, but not so much that the rational brain overthinks and becomes indecisive. [3] This is one of the areas where the emotional approach to managing situations must exert itself to balance the rational.

Disruptive leaders understand the importance of ongoing and real-time data for well-timed insights to aid agile decisions. They understand that knowledge has value. [4]

Instinct or intuition falls under the agility key of **learning agility**. It is confirmed by data and leads to agile decisions.

Project Management Controls is all about the creation, tracking, reporting, analyzing and managing the various forms of intelligence that document the life of the project. When a dedicated project controls team is in place, the disruptive leader has his timely information in front of him; unlike Sherlock Holmes who had to inspect and hunt for clues to gain his insights.

Adaptive Planning

Disruptive leadership is all about action, guided by instincts, tempered with available information.

Disruptive Leadership applies agile thinking to Adaptive planning, which includes planning project controls processes.

Breaking projects and processes down into smaller tasks is part of keeping things agile. However, instead of breaking down project controls into smaller tasks to be doled out to the project manager, scheduler and/or other members of the project team, in addition to their primary responsibilities, (which has the multi-tasking effect of lessening focus and quality of work); the process of project

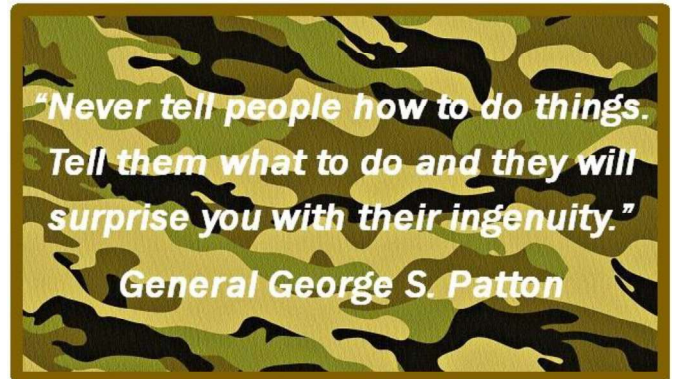
controls is assigned to an individual or team. This is their singular focus, which improves quality of work and reliability of pertinent information.

Greatly improved are Agility Keys:

- **Communicating Intent:**

As modeled by the armed forces and the engineering field, applying intent-based planning aids in project management agility. The advantages are:

- Achieving more time for each team member to do what they do best
- Flexibility to make changes within the parameters of the intent without bureaucratic involvement
- Efficiency



- **Learning Agility**

Breaking projects and processes down into smaller tasks is part of keeping things agile, increasing learning agility.

Disruptive leaders keep their insights and instincts aligned with the projects intent (master plan and purpose) by keeping up to date with the project controls reports and of the counsel of the project controls person/team.

Because the project controls team is involved from the planning phase throughout the life a project, the intent of the project is woven into the fabric of the baseline scope and schedule. It is the project controls team that keeps the project true to the intent as the project execution phase progresses. Their eyes are always on the intent. A dedicated project controls source is to the PM and project as is a navigator to the Captain and his ship.

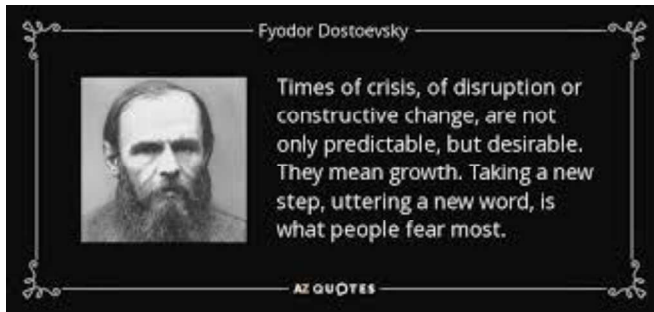
Embracing Change

It has been said that in life there are two certainties: death and taxes.

There is, however, a third: Change.

No matter who you are, where you are, what you are or what you do; you change, things change.

Industries, communities, technologies, information, weather, laws, feelings, bodies—the list is endless. And as time advances, these changes are happening at an ever-maddening pace.



Change causes disruption in our normal way of doing things, interrupting or preventing business as usual. In one article⁹, this was said about change:

“When forced to embrace change, 10 percent will respond like James Bond, 10 percent will respond like Moe Howard from the Three Stooges, and 80 percent will do nothing at all.”

This is initially, without the proper motivation. Basically, 80 percent are hyper resistant to change.

Disruptive leaders are ahead of the game, because they are not afraid of change, avoiding change or waiting for change to hit them upside the head.

Because disruptive leaders have a high emotional IQ, they are able tap into the emotions of those they lead by understanding what motivates them and leading by example. This is especially important when navigating through the seeming chaos that change causes.

With disruptive leadership, chaos is organized, because it is anticipated in the plan. Hannibal Smith of “The A-Team” is a great example of a disruptive leader. He relies on a team, plans for risk and elements of surprise and his team sees the mission through because they know the intent of the mission. His team is loyal to him because he is loyal to them and has gained their trust.

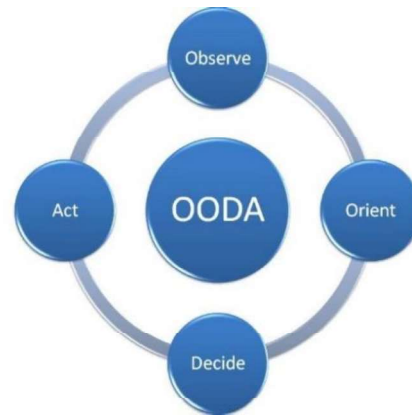
⁹ Richard Becker, “If 80 Percent of People Won’t Change, Why for Them?” <http://www.richardrbecker.com/2014/03/if-80-percent-of-people-wont-change-why.html>

What made the TV show and the movie so much fun was that to us, the observer, we see chaos and what seems impossible odds. Then in the end, when the mission is accomplished, we are given a glimpse of the level of planning that went into the front end of the mission.

Organized Chaos is an agility key:

Disruptive leaders do this in iterative cycles guided by the project's intent and baseline schedule. The disruptive leader would find the OODA loop helpful in agile project management with **project controls** as a guide.

Challenges would be further triaged for priority in action.



A **project controls team/person** becomes the project's health practitioner/s by thorough monitoring of metrics and KPIs to measure healthy progress, costs within budget, project safety and quality standards.

They enable thorough examination and tracking, without placing extensive demands of time and responsibility upon the project manager, executives and team.

Project controls give the team a unifying course of action through the storms of challenges to the project.

Using a pre-planned guide for project triage, it is the project controls team that triages challenges or problems according to priority of risk to project for evaluation by leaders and executives to implement solutions.

Conclusion:

Disruptive leadership is a bold approach to leadership and requires confidence in personal instincts and insights. At the same time, disruptive leadership creatively instigates positive change within organizations through motivating and involving the organization/team. This creates a culture of agility and creativity that prevents the organization from stagnating in old methods and strategies that no longer keep up with current industry trends.

None-the-less, changes are not made ad-hoc. Foundational principals that are still necessary are not tossed out for everything that is new. Disruptive leaders blend the old with the new, the solid with the flexible according to what is necessary for innovation and performance.

Because of the proactive attitude toward change, disruptive leadership encourages agility in project management that is measured and guided by well planned, maintained and administered project controls. This together with innovation is needed in the construction industry, which has been slow to embrace disruptive methodologies, technologies and diligence in controls.

Disruptive leadership favors allowcating responsibilities to those best suited in talent and expertise, both in the leaders and the supporting team. Thus they build a strong sphere of influence and strengthen the capabilities of the whole.

Along with this strategy, a designated project controls team adds needed support to the whole by providing expert, focused planning, scheduling, reporting, analysis, KPI's, documentation and quarterbacking this information to the pertinent stakeholders.

Complementary to a disruptive style of leadership is the utilization of the structure of planning and information of project controls conveniently provided by a designated project controls person or team to enhance agile project management.

As a result of implementing this style of leadership with the support of a designated project controls team, a synchronized, diversified culture of leadership, creative thinking, and organized chaos will thrive in the uncertainties of project management within the construction and engineering industries.

Old boundaries will be replaced by new benchmarks. Progress will be well documented and lessons learned will be ongoing from the beginning of a project to the finish and on to the next. Value is added to both the culture and knowledge base of the team, organization and industry.

Essentially, that which is excellent continues and that which is not, innovation will replace with excellence.



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