

COMO OS SETE PECADOS CAPITAIS PODEM LEVAR AO FRACASSO DE PROJETOS

HOW THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS CAN LEAD TO PROJECT FAILURE

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RESUMO

Por mais de 40 anos, a paisagem de gerenciamento de projetos tem visto livros, artigos de periódicos e trabalhos apresentados discutir as causas de falhas do projeto. Infelizmente, muitas das análises de falhas parecem olhar para falha superficialmente, em vez de em profundidade. Ao tentar descobrir a causa raiz de uma falha, que geralmente procuram em primeiro lugar a empresa contratante alguém para culpar, e não em nossa própria companhia. Se isso não funcionar, então começamos a subir a hierarquia organizacional em nossa própria companhia, concentrando-se na equipe do projeto, seguido pelo gerente do projeto. Uma vez que encontrar alguém para culpar, a busca parece ter fim e nos sentimos confortáveis que nós descobrimos a causa da falha. É da natureza humana para começar a apontar o dedo na parte inferior da hierarquia organizacional em primeiro lugar, ao invés de no topo. No entanto, mais frequentemente do que não, a verdadeira causa do fracasso é o resultado de ações (ou omissões) e decisões tomadas no topo do organograma do que na parte inferior. É também a natureza humana de tomar decisões com base em como somos afetados pelos sete pecados capitais, a saber: a inveja, a raiva, o orgulho, avareza, preguiça, luxúria e gula. Decisões tomadas com base nos Sete Pecados Capitais, se eles são feitos na parte superior ou inferior da organização, pode ter consequências terríveis em projetos. Às vezes, os pecados estão escondidos e não é facilmente reconhecida por nós mesmos ou aos outros. Nós simplesmente não ver ou sentir que foram estão cometendo um pecado. Os Sete Pecados Capitais afetam a todos nós, mais cedo ou mais tarde, mesmo que se recusam a admiti-lo. Alguns de nós podem ser afetados por apenas um ou dois dos pecados, enquanto outros podem sucumbir a todos os sete. O que é lamentável é que o maior dano pode ocorrer em projetos quando os pecados influenciar a maneira que níveis mais altos de gestão deve fazer interface com projetos, seja como patrocinador do projeto ou como um membro de um grupo de governança. Más decisões no topo, principalmente se baseado em emoções, em vez de praticidade, pode colocar o projeto em um caminho destrutivo, mesmo antes do dia o projeto é expulso.

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ABSTRACT

For more than forty years, the project management landscape has seen textbooks, journal articles and presented papers discussing the causes of project failures. Unfortunately, many of the failure analyses seem to look at failure superficially rather than in depth. When trying to discover the root cause of a failure, we usually look first in the contractor's company for someone to blame rather than in our own company. If that doesn't work, then we begin climbing the organizational hierarchy in our own company by focusing on the project team, followed by the project manager. Once we find someone to blame, the search seems to end and we feel comfortable that we have discovered the cause of the failure. It is human nature to begin finger-pointing at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy first, rather than at the top. Yet, more often than not, the real cause of failure is the result of actions (or inactions) and decisions made at the top of the organizational chart than at the bottom. It is also human nature to make decisions based upon how we are affected by the Seven Deadly Sins, namely: envy, anger, pride, greed, sloth, lust and gluttony. Decisions made based upon the Seven Deadly Sins, whether they are made at the top or bottom of the organization, can have dire consequences on projects. Sometimes the sins are hidden and not easily recognized by ourselves or others. We simply do not see or feel that we are committing a sin. The Seven Deadly Sins affect all of us sooner or later, even though we refuse to admit it. Some of us may be impacted by just one or two of the sins, whereas others may succumb to all seven. What is unfortunate is that the greatest damage can occur on projects when the sins influence the way that senior levels of management must interface with projects, whether as a project sponsor or as a member of a governance group. Bad decisions at the top, especially if based upon emotions rather than practicality, can place the project on a destructive path even before the day the project is kicked off.

1 THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS¹

The term "Seven Deadly Sins," also referred to as the "Capital Vices" or "Cardinal Sins", is a classification of objectionable vices. They were originally part of Christian ethics and have been used since early Christian times to educate and instruct Christians concerning fallen humanity's tendency to sin. The currently recognized version of the sins are usually given as wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy and gluttony. Part or all of the sins have been discussed over the past four centuries from different perspectives in the religious writings of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. Over the years, the sins have been modified and discussed by the clergy, philosophers, psychologists, authors, poets and educators.

A brief description of each of the Seven Deadly Sins appears in Exhibit 1. Each of the sins can be related to an animal, a specific color and even a punishment in hell for committing the sin.²

Exhibit 1 - The Seven Deadly Sins.

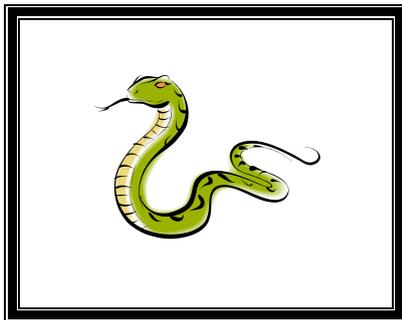
| SIN | TRAITS | ANIMAL | COLOR | PUNISHMENT IN HELL |
|-------------|--|---------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Envy | The desire to possess what others have | Snake | Green | Placed in freezing water |
| Anger/Wrath | A strong feeling of displeasure | Lion | Red | Dismembered alive |
| Pride | The need for inward emotional satisfaction | Peacock | Violet | Broken on the wheel |
| Greed | The desire for material wealth or gain | Toad | Yellow | Put in cauldrons of boiling oil |
| Sloth | The avoidance of work | Snail | Light blue | Thrown into a snake pit |
| Lust | A craving, but not necessarily sexual | Goat | Blue | Smothered in fire and brimstone |
| Gluttony | The desire to consume more than we need | Pig | Orange | Forced to eat rats, toads and snakes |

¹ Adapted from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

² There are several versions of colors, animal, and punishments in the literature. Exhibit 1 is just one version.

In a project environment, any or all of these sins can cause rational people to make irrational decisions, and this can occur at any level within the organizational hierarchy. At some levels, the existence of the sins may have a greater impact on project performance than at other levels. If a sin is apparent in the beginning of a project, then poor decisions in the initiation phase can have detrimental consequences in all of the downstream phases.

2 ENVY



- *"Envy is the art of counting the other fellow's blessing instead of your own."* (Harold Coffin)
- *"Envy is ignorance. Imitation is suicide."* (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- *"When men are full of envy, they disparage everything, whether it be good or bad."* (Publius Cornelius Tacitus)

Envy is the desire to have what others have. Resentful emotions occur when one lacks another's superior qualities such as status, wealth, good fortune, physical possessions, traits, abilities or position. Envy may encourage someone to inflict misfortune on another person and try to undo someone else's advantage or deprive them of obtaining the advantage. Envy can also affect the relationship between people, as when one ignores a person of whom they are envious. Envy is often synonymous with jealousy, bitterness, greed, spite and resentment.

Envy can be malicious or benign. Malicious envy has all of the characteristics mentioned above. Benign envy can be a positive motivational force if it encourages people to act in a more favorable manner such that the desires are attainable. Benign envy usually exists at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, whereas malicious envy appears most frequently at the top.

The following four situations illustrate how envy can lead to project disasters:

- **Situation 1: Reorganizational Failure.** A company had four divisions, each headed up by a senior vice president. In the past, most of the projects had stayed entirely within one division. Each division had their own project management methodology, and the number of project successes significantly outnumbered the failures. As the marketplace began to change, the company began working on projects that required that more than one division work together on the same project. Using multiple methodologies on the same project proved to be an impossible task.

The president decreed that there must be one and only one methodology, and that all of the divisions must use the same methodology for managing projects. The company created a Project Management Office (PMO), and the president assigned one of the vice presidents with control over the PMO. Employees from each of the other three divisions were then assigned on a "dotted line" relationship to the PMO for the development of the singular methodology.

The people in the PMO seemed to work well together. But the four vice presidents demanded that they have final signature authority over the adoption of the singular methodology. Each vice president believed that the project management approach used in their division should be the driving force for the creation of a singular methodology. Regardless of what design the PMO came up with, each vice president demonstrated envy and resentment, finding fault with the others' ideas, playing out the "not invented here" syndrome. And while this was happening, the number of project failures began to increase, because of the lack of structure for project execution.

It also became obvious to each of the four vice presidents that whichever vice president had control of the PMO would become more powerful than the other three vice presidents because of the control over all of the project management intellectual property. Information is power, and envy for control of the information had taken its toll on the ability to manage and control projects effectively. Eventually, the president stepped in and allowed each vice president to have a PMO. However, the PMOs had to be networked together. This helped a little, but even after they agreed on a common methodology, each PMO tried to seduce the other PMOs into their way of thinking and, as expected, continuous changes were being introduced to the methodology, with the projects still suffering from a lack of direction. Envy prevented decisions from being made that would have been in the best interest of the entire company.

- **Situation 2: Reward Failure.** Believing that an effective reward /bonus system would motivate project teams, senior management announced that bonuses would be given to each project team based upon the profitability of their projects. The company survived on competitive bidding to win contracts and most of the projects were in the millions of dollars. Project managers quickly learned that large bonuses could be awarded if the project's cost estimates were grossly inflated during the bidding process and the contracts could be won. This way, the actual profits on some contracts could exceed the targeted profits.

Although the company lost a few contracts they expected to win because of the inflated costs, some of the bonuses given to the project managers at the end of the contracts were similar in size to the bonuses given to some of the executives. Many of the executives were now envious of the people below them who were receiving such large bonuses. Due to envy, the executives then changed the bonus policy whereby part of the bonus fund would be distributed among the executives, even though the executives were not functioning as project sponsors. The bonuses given to the workers and the project managers were then reduced significantly. Some of the workers then sabotaged some of the projects, rather than see the executives receive bonuses that were awarded at the expense of the workers.

- **Situation 3: Failure Due to Inflicting Misfortune.** Paul was the Director of Operations for a medium-sized company. Paul's company was in the process of establishing a PMO that would report directly to the CEO. Paul desperately wanted the new position of Director of the PMO, believing it would be a stepping stone to becoming a vice president. Paul's major competitor for the position of Director of the PMO was Brenda, a 20-year veteran with the company and considered the company's best project manager. Because of Brenda's decision-making skills, Brenda was almost always empowered with complete decision-making authority on her projects.

When Brenda was assigned to her latest project, Paul requested and was granted the position of project sponsor for Brenda's project. Paul was envious of Brenda's abilities and good fortune and believed that, if he could somehow inflict misfortune on Brenda's project without hurting himself in the process, he could easily be assigned Director of the PMO. Paul placed limits on Brenda's empowerment and demanded that, as the sponsor, he approve any and all critical decisions. Paul

continuously forced Brenda to select non-optimal alternatives when some decisions had to be made. Brenda's project was nearly a disaster, and Paul was later assigned as Director of the PMO.

Envy can force us to inflict pain on others to get what we desire. Paul received his promotion, but the workers and Brenda knew what he had done. Paul's working relationship with the functional subject matter experts deteriorated.

- **Situation 4: The Relationship Failure.** Jerry and two of his friends lived near each other and joined the company at exactly the same time; Jerry worked in project management, and the other two worked in engineering. They formed a carpool and travelled to and from work together every day. They also socialized together when not at work.

Two years after joining the company, Jerry had received his second promotion, whereas the other two workers had not received any promotions. The other two workers were envious of Jerry's success to the point where they stopped socializing and carpooling together. The jealousy became so strong that the two workers even refused to work on Jerry's projects. The workers never visibly displayed their jealousy for Jerry, but their actions spoke louder than words and made it clear how they really felt.

3 ANGER (OR WRATH)



- *"For every minute you are angry, you lose sixty seconds of happiness."* (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- *"Speak when you are angry - and you'll make the best speech you'll ever regret."* (Dr. Lawrence J. Peters)
- *"Anger is never without reason, but seldom a good one."* (Benjamin Franklin)

- *"Anger is one letter short of danger." (Anonymous)*
- *"Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it." (Seneca)*

Anger or wrath is a strong feeling of displeasure. Sometimes we become angry because the actions of others on the project have offended us. Other times, we demonstrate unnecessary anger to make someone extremely annoyed in order to stop a threatening behavior, such as continuous schedule slippages or cost overruns. Anger is often synonymous with ire, annoyance, irritation, rage, and resentment.

When we get angry, we often lose our objectivity. The anger we feel and demonstrate can appear suddenly, or it can be deliberate. There are ranges of anger. On the soft end of the spectrum, anger can be just a mild irritation, whereas on the hard end, anger can result in fury and rage. Not all anger is readily visible. For example, passive anger can be seen as a phony smile, giving someone the cold shoulder, overreacting to something, or constantly checking things. Aggressive anger can appear as bullying, expressing mistrust, talking too fast or destructiveness.

Here are some examples of how anger can affect projects:

- **Situation 5: Failure Due to Unjust Anger.** While selecting the portfolio of 20 projects for the upcoming year, senior management established the budgets and schedules without any supporting data on what might or might not be realistic. To make matters worse, the executive sponsors on each project emphatically stated that they would not tolerate schedule slippages or cost overruns. The project teams developed the detailed project plan and, on eight of the 20 projects, the teams determined that the budgets and schedules provided by senior management were unrealistic. Rather than inform senior management immediately that their budget and schedule perceptions may be wrong, the teams began executing the projects and hoping for a miracle. The teams felt that this was a better approach than to incur the wrath of senior management in action when they were apprised of the situation.

The eight teams were unsuccessful in their quest for a miracle. After a few months, senior management performed a health check on one of the eight projects and discovered the truth: the project was in bad shape. A health check was then performed on all 20 projects, and it became apparent that eight of the projects were in trouble both financially and technically. Senior

management became enraged that they were not informed of this previously, cancelled the eight troubled projects and fired all eight project managers in one day.

Part of the blame certainly falls upon the shoulders of the project teams for not informing senior management early on. But a lot of the blame must rest with senior management, especially when they have a history of demonstrating irate behavior that may have been unjustified. When project teams believe that they will encounter anger rather than support for problems from the top of the organizational hierarchy, project management may not succeed, and projects will fail. Bad news is often filtered to prevent the occurrence of anger.

- **Situation 6: Failure Due to a Hidden Agenda.** The Chief Information Officer (CIO) became the project sponsor for a \$25 million IT project scheduled to last about one year. The CIO established October 1st as the "go live" date for the project. During a July review of the status of the project, the CIO was informed by the project manager that the "go live" date was unrealistic. The CIO became furious and asked, "How much of the software would be operational by October 1st?" The project manager responded, "Perhaps ten percent."

The CIO stormed out of the meeting after demonstrating anger, calling the project team "incompetent fools." The CIO then authorized significant overtime and awarded the prime contractor almost \$5 million in additional costs if they could get at least 50% of the software operational by October 1st and 70% or more by November 1st. The CIO knew that his year-end corporate bonus was partially aligned with implementation of this project, and with 70% of the software operational, his bonus would be significant. When the project was finally completed in February, the executive committee viewed the project as a partial failure because of the \$5 million cost overrun, and the project manager was reprimanded. But the CIO received his bonus.

- **Situation 7: Failure Due to Information Filtering.** Senior management in a Government agency established a culture that bad news would be filtered as the news proceeded up the organizational hierarchy. Allowing bad news to reach the top would be an invitation for fury and rage coming from the top back down to the projects. Therefore, by the time that the information reached the top, much of the bad news disappeared, and the risks associated with the project were buried. The result on one project was just as the technical risk experts predicted: seven astronauts were killed when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded during

liftoff.³ There were other factors, as well, that led to this disaster. During a Congressional Committee Meeting reviewing the cause of the fatality, one subject matter expert was asked by the committee, "Why didn't you explain to senior management what the risks were?" The subject matter expert asserted, "I didn't report administratively to senior management. My responsibility was to report this to my boss and he, in turn, should have reported it higher up."

- **Situation 8: Failure Due to a Collective Belief.** A collective belief is a fervent, and often blind, desire to achieve - regardless of the cost and consequences. When a collective belief exists, especially at the senior levels of management, rational organizations begin making irrational decisions, and any deviation from the collective belief is met with anger. People who question the collective belief or challenge progress are removed from the project or severely reprimanded. In order to work on these projects, one must suppress one's anger and go with the flow, regardless of the outcome. These projects can be technical successes but financial failures, never totally fulfilling the corporate business strategy.

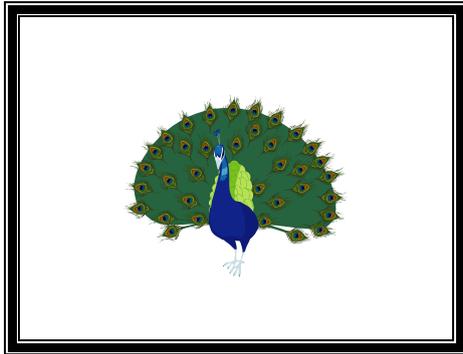
A good example of this was the Iridium Project.⁴ The Iridium Project was an 11-year project that missed the service launch date by one month. The service was a network of 66 satellites circling the earth, whereby we could talk to anyone anywhere. The project management activities performed by Motorola and Iridium LLP were outstanding, especially when we consider that the project resulted in more than 1000 patents and 25 million lines of software code. Technically, it was a success. But financially, it was a disaster, invoking anger when it became apparent that they could not get the number of subscribers they needed to break even. Throughout the project, the threat of severe anger from above, as well as the existence of the collective belief, made it almost impossible for people to challenge the projections on the number of subscribers.

Anger need not be demonstrated to inflict pain upon a project. Just the implied threat or fear of anger can limit a team's performance significantly.

³ For additional information on this case study see Harold Kerzner, *Project Management Case Studies*, 3rd Edition, John Wiley and Sons Publishers, Hoboken, 2009; P.425.

⁴ For additional information see Harold Kerzner, *Project Management Case Studies*, 3rd Edition, John Wiley and Sons Publishers, Hoboken, 2009; Case Study: The Rise, Fall and Resurrection of Iridium; A Project Management Perspective; P.351.

4 PRIDE



- *"A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you can't see anything above you."* (C.S. Lewis)
- *"The blind cannot see - the proud will not."* (Russian proverb)
- *"Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves; vanity, to what we would have others think of us."* (Jane Austen)
- *"We are rarely proud when we are alone."* (Voltaire)

Pride is an inward emotion that leads to personal satisfaction or meeting personal goals. Pride can be a virtue or simply love of oneself or an inflated sense of one's accomplishments, which leads to exhilarating emotions. Pride can have both negative and positive connotations. In a negative sense, pride can cause us to grossly inflate what we have accomplished. In a positive sense, it can be an attachment to the actions of others or a fulfilled feeling of belonging, such as national or ethnic pride, or being a member of the team on an important project.

Pride is often seen as a virtue. Overinflated pride can result in a disagreement with the truth, which sometimes comes with self-gratification. The antonyms to pride are humility and guilt. Here are some examples of how pride can affect a project:

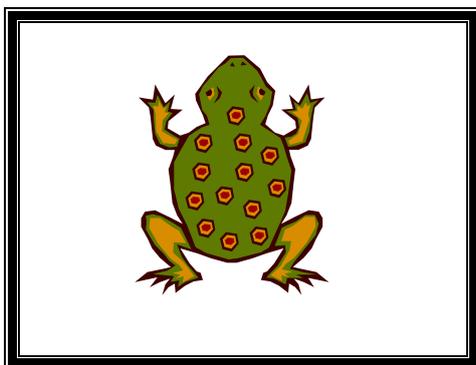
- **Situation 9: Failure Due to Too Much Expertise.** Peter was one of the most experienced engineers in the company. His technical expertise was second to none. Peter was asked to solve a problem on a project. Even though there were several possible options, Peter chose the option that was the most costly and resulted in the addition of unnecessary features which we refer to as "bells and whistles." Peter asserted that his solution was the only

practical one, and the project manager reluctantly agreed. Peter saw this project as a way of increasing his reputation in the company regardless of the impact on the project. The bells and whistles increased the final cost of the deliverable significantly. It also inflated Peter's self-esteem.

- **Situation 10: Failure Due to the Wrong Sponsor.** Nancy was the Director of Marketing. Her superior, the Vice President for Marketing, had requested the development of a rather sophisticated IT project for the Marketing Division. It was customary for the IT Department to act as the project sponsor on all IT projects once the business case for the project was approved. Nancy knew that this project would get the attention of the senior-most levels of management. Nancy had never served in the capacity of a project sponsor but believed that, if she could be the sponsor for this project, her identification with this project could result in a promotion.

Nancy's campaign to become the sponsor was a success. Unfortunately, there were numerous IT issues that had to be resolved at the sponsor level and, because of Nancy's lack of expertise in IT, she made several wrong decisions. The project ended up being late and over budget because many of Nancy's decisions had to be changed later on in the project. Nancy's quest for pride ended up having detrimental results.

5 GREED (AVARICE)



- *"Ambition is but avarice on stilts, and masked."* (Walter Savage Landor)
- *"Avarice has ruined more souls than extravagance."* (Charles Caleb Colton)

- *"Avarice is the vice of declining years."* (George Bancroft)
- *"Avarice is generally the last passion of those lives of which the first part has been squandered in pleasure, and the second devoted to ambition."* (Samuel Johnson)
- *"Poverty wants much, but avarice, everything."* (Publilius Syrus)
- *"Poverty wants some things, luxury many things, avarice all things."* (Benjamin Franklin)
- *"Love is always a stranger in the house of avarice."* (Andreas Capellanus)
- *"To hazard much to get much has more avarice than wisdom."* (William Penn)

Greed is a strong desire for wealth, goods and objects of value for oneself. Greed goes beyond the basic levels of comfort and survival. Greed asks for more than we actually need or deserve. Greed can also appear as the desire for power, information or control of resources. Synonyms for greed are avarice and covetousness.

Below are several examples of how greed can affect projects:

- **Situation 11: The Failure of Too Many Resources.** Karl was placed in charge of a two-year project that required 118 people, many of whom were needed on just a part-time basis. Karl convinced senior management that this project required a co-located team, with everyone assigned full-time and that the team should be housed in a building away from the employees' functional managers. Senior management knew this was a bad idea but reluctantly agreed to it, knowing full well that the project was now over-staffed and over-managed.

At the end of the first year, it became obvious that none of the employees on Karl's project received promotions or merit increases in their salary. The functional managers were rewarding only those employees who sat near them and made them look good on a daily basis. The employees on Karl's project now felt that assignment to this project was a non-promotable assignment. Several employees tried to sabotage the project just to get off of the project. Later, Karl discovered that several of the other project managers now had a strong dislike for him because his greed for resources had affected their projects.

- **Situation 12: The Failure of Power.** Carol was a department manager. She was proud of the fact that she finally became a department manager. Word had spread throughout the company that senior management was considering a downsizing of the company. Carol was afraid that her department might be eliminated and that she would lose her position as a department manager.

To protect her power position, Carol began giving conflicting instructions to the people in her department. The workers kept coming back to Carol for clarification of the conflicting instructions. Carol then told her superiors that the people in her department needed daily supervision or else the department's performance would suffer. While this technique seemed to prevent the downsizing of Carol's department, it did have a detrimental effect on the work the employees were doing on the projects. Carol's greed for power and resources proved detrimental to the company, but beneficial to Carol's personal needs.

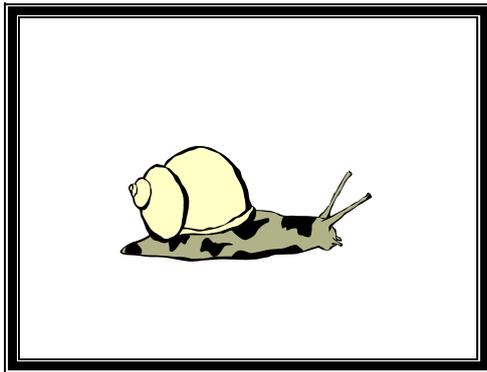
- **Situation 13: The Failure of Greed for the Bonus.** The Vice President for Engineering was assigned as the project sponsor for a multimillion dollar Department of Defense (DOD) contract, and Ben was the project manager. A large portion of the vice president's bonus was based upon the profitability of the projects directly under his control and of which he was the sponsor. This large project, headed up by Ben, was scheduled to be completed in November; the follow-on contract, which was also quite large, was scheduled to begin in February.

The vice president and Ben agreed that a large management reserve should be established to support the project team between contracts. If the team were to be disbanded in November, there would be no guarantee that the same people would be available for the follow-on contract that would begin in February. When the project came to fruition in October, the remaining management reserve was large enough to support the resources with critical skills between October and February. These people would be working on some activities that would be needed for the follow-on contract, such as preliminary planning activities and procurement planning.

When the contract finally ended in October, the vice president told the financial people to book the management reserve as additional profit on the project. This increased the vice president's bonus significantly. However, without the management reserve, the critically-skilled resources were

reassigned back to their functional departments, and many were not available to work on the follow-on contract. The follow-on contract suffered from cost overruns and schedule slippages, due to different resources and a new learning curve. The damage due to the vice president's greed was now apparent.

6 SLOTH



- *"Nothing irritates me more than chronic laziness in others. Mind you, it's only mental sloth I object to. Physical sloth can be heavenly."* (Elizabeth Huxley)
- *"We excuse our sloth under the pretext of difficulty."* (Marcus Fabius Quintilian)
- *"Diligence overcomes difficulties, sloth makes them."* (Benjamin Franklin)
- *"Sloth and silence are a fool's virtues."* (Benjamin Franklin)
- *"All things are easy to industry; all things are difficult to sloth."* (Benjamin Franklin)

Sloth is the act of being physically, mentally and/or emotionally inactive and often is characterized as laziness. Sloth can result in extreme waste in the effective use of people, things, skills, information and even time. Sloth often forces us to overestimate the difficulty of the job.

Below are examples of how sloth can affect projects:

- **Situation 14: The Failure of Laziness.** Becky was placed in charge of a one-year project that was relatively easy to accomplish and low risk. When negotiating with the functional managers for project staff, Becky overestimated the complexity and risk of the project so that she could request the more experienced people. That would certainly make Becky's job easier. The functional managers were not sure if Becky's estimates on risk and complexity

were valid, but they decided that it would be better to grant her request than to provide mediocre resources and find out later that she was correct.

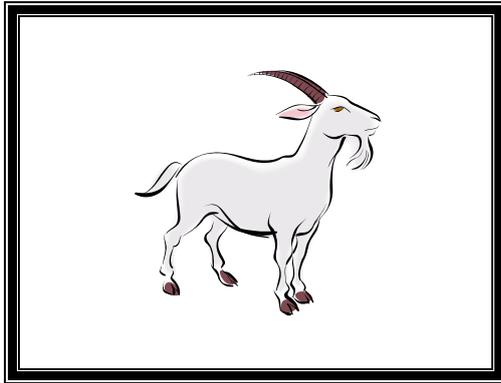
There wasn't much for Becky to do on the project. The subject matter experts did it all. Eventually, the experienced people on Becky's project reported back to their respective functional managers that lower pay grade resources should have been assigned. While Becky's project was considered as a success and there wasn't much for Becky to do, the other projects that really could have used the more experienced resources suffered. Sloth usually benefits a single individual and at the expense of the greater good.

- **Situation 15: Failure Due to the Union Standard.** A company had a powerful union that discouraged new employees who were eager to show what they could do by producing more units than the standard agreed to by the union. The new workers were told to slow down and enjoy life.

The company soon became noncompetitive in the marketplace, and their business base began to deteriorate. Senior management then told the union that either the standards must be updated, or people might lose their jobs. The union wanted to maintain their complacency and refused to budge on the standards. When management threatened to outsource much of the work and lay people off, the union workers went on strike.

Management personnel and non-union workers began doing the work that was previously done by the union workers. They turned out 70% of the work using 10% of the non-unionized labor force. Human Resources personnel were running drill presses and lathes, and sales people were on the assembly line. Management now had a clear picture of what the sin of sloth had been doing to the company for years. Management had no intention of negotiating an end to the strike. Eventually the union conceded and returned to work. However, more than 160 of the union workers were laid off after the new standards were adopted. The company was now competitive again.

7 LUST



- *"Lust is to other passions what the nervous fluid is to life; it supports them all, ambition, cruelty, avarice, revenge are all found on lust." (Marquis Se Sade)*
- *"Of all the worldly possessions, lust is the most intense. All other worldly passions seem to follow its train." (Buddha)*
- *"Society drives people crazy with lust and calls it advertising." (John Lahr)*
- *"Their insatiable lust for power is only equaled by their incurable impotence in exercising it." (Winston Churchill)*
- *"Hell has three gates: lust, anger and greed." (Bhagavad Gita)*
- *"It is not power itself, but the legitimation of the lust for power, which corrupts absolutely." (Anonymous)*
- *"The lust of avarice is so totally seized upon mankind that their wealth seems to rather possess them than they possess their wealth." (Anonymous)*

Lust is the emotion or feeling of intense desire in the body. Although lust is usually described in a sexual content, it can also appear as a strong desire for power, knowledge or control. It can lead to great eagerness or enthusiasm, which may be good, especially if it fulfills the need to gratify the senses.

Two examples of how lust can affect projects are shown below:

- **Situation 16: Failure Due to the Lust for Power.** Ralph was elated to be assigned as the project manager for a new project that was won through competitive bidding. The chance for significant follow-on work from this client was highly likely. This would be Ralph's

chance to become more powerful than the other project managers and possibly get promoted and be given a corner office. Corner offices with large windows were signs of power and prestige. For this to happen, Ralph had to slowly build his project into an empire of resources, regardless of the consequences.

By the end of the initial contract, Ralph had more resources assigned full-time than planned for during project initiation. The project was significantly overstaffed, and this had an adverse effect on profits. But Ralph explained to his superiors that this would lead to increased profits in the future.

When the follow-on contract appeared, Ralph argued that he needed even more resources, and that a projectized organizational structure was needed with Ralph as its head. The company agreed. The projectized structure allowed Ralph to have all remaining part-time workers assigned to his project full-time. Part way through the project, the company was notified that there would be additional follow-on contracts, but these would all be awarded through competitive bidding. Ralph's power was now at an all-time high.

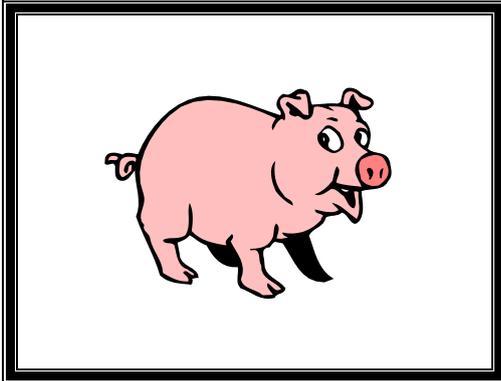
Unfortunately, because of the need to support his empire, the profitability of the follow-on contract that Ralph was finishing up had all of the profits going to worker salaries. Once again, Ralph argued that significant profits would be forthcoming. During competitive bidding for new follow-on work, Ralph's superiors significantly increased the price of the bid. Unfortunately, the company was now noncompetitive. Ralph and part of the empire he had built up were laid off. The lust for power, which took two years to develop, vanished in one day.

- **Situation 17: Revisiting the Failure Due to the Lust for Power.** This project would be Kathy's first chance to function as a project sponsor. Kathy believed that her lust for power would thrive if she micromanaged the project team and demanded to make any and all decisions. Senior management would certainly notice this. At least that's what she thought...

Kathy was correct in that senior management saw that she was making all of the decisions. Unfortunately, the subject matter experts assigned to the project, as well as the project manager, knew that Kathy had very limited knowledge with regard to some of the technical decisions that needed to be made on the project. They were also quite unhappy with being micromanaged. Many

of Kathy's decisions were wrong, and the team knew it. But they went along anyway with the bad decisions without questioning them. Management also saw the bad decisions that Kathy had made and eventually Kathy was removed as the project sponsor.

8 GLUTTONY



- *"Glutton: one who digs his grave with his teeth."* (French proverb)
- *"Gluttony is the source of all our infirmities, and the fountain of all our diseases. As a lamp is choked by a superabundance of oil, a fire extinguished by excess of fuel, so is the natural health of the body destroyed by intemperate diet."* (Robert Burton)
- *"The miser and the glutton are two facetious buzzards; one hides his store and the other stores his hide."* (Josh Billings)
- *"Gluttony is an emotional escape, a sign something is eating us."* (Peter De Vries)
- *"Gluttony kills more than the sword."* (Anonymous)

Gluttony is usually defined in terms of food with terms such as "gulp down" or "swallow." We see it as an overconsumption of food. In a business environment, gluttony is the desire to consume more than what is required. It is extravagance or waste.

The example below shows how gluttony can lead to both success and failure.

- **Situation 18: The Success of Gluttony of Resources.** Jerry was one of the Directors of Manufacturing reporting to the Vice President for Manufacturing. As technology began to change, manufacturing personnel recognized the need to create several new departments to take advantage of new technologies. Jerry had a thirst for resources. He convinced the Vice

President for Manufacturing that these new departments belonged under his control. Within the next two years, all new departments were under Jerry's supervision. Jerry now controlled more than 75% of the resources in the Manufacturing Division.

When the Vice President for Manufacturing retired, Jerry was promoted to vice president. Jerry's first action was to break up the empire he created so that nobody could ever become as powerful as he had been. But in Jerry's eyes now, he had control over all resources, regardless where they resided in the Manufacturing Division.

We painted a bleak picture here of how the Seven Deadly Sins can have a negative impact on projects. From a project perspective, some of the sins are closely related and cannot be as easily separated and discussed as psychologists and philosophers would have us believe. This can be seen from some of the situations presented previously, for example, where the desire for control of vast resources could be considered as some form of lust, gluttony or avarice.

It is true that, in some situations, the sins can produce positive results. They can force us to become more aggressive, take risks, accept new challenges and add value to the company. Our fascination with pride and lust can help us turn around a distressed project and make it into a success so that we can get corporate-wide recognition. The greed for wanting a large bonus can likewise encourage us to make our project successful. The downside risk of the vices is that they most certainly can have a negative effect on our ability to establish on our interpersonal skills and our relationships with the project teams and functional departments.

So, should we train project managers and team members on how to identify and control the sins? Perhaps not as long as beneficial results are forthcoming. Once again, we all succumb to some or all of these sins, but in varying degrees.

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven virtues, which correspond inversely to each of the Seven Deadly Sins. This is shown below in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2 - Vices and Virtues.

| VICE | VIRTUE |
|----------|------------|
| Envy | Kindness |
| Wrath | Patience |
| Pride | Humility |
| Greed | Charity |
| Sloth | Diligence |
| Lust | Chastity |
| Gluttony | Temperance |

From a project management perspective, perhaps the best solution would be to teach the virtues in project management training courses. It is even possible that in future editions of the *PMBOK® Guide*, the Human Resources Management Chapter may even discuss vices and virtues. Time will tell.

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Data do recebimento do artigo: 18/08/2012

Data do aceite de publicação: 04/10/2012