

## Is Project Management an Everyday Job?

*Written by Andrew Miller*

Why is there such a focus on project managers being on site all day, everyday? Am I the only one that has noticed that? Whenever I talk with clients or colleagues about PM positions whether full-time or on contract, the focus seems to always be on being on site all of the time. In today's world of global projects and excellent technology, I would submit that being on site could sometimes be a hindrance. I understand, of course, that on projects where the team is there everyday working on tasks and deliverables, etc., someone needs to be there to answer questions, provide leadership and ensure things are moving as planned. I have been on many projects where this is the case and I have found that sometimes it is detrimental to the team to have the PM around all the time. Teams can use the PM as a crutch where, instead of researching the answer to a question or sharing the information with each other, everything needs to funnel through the PM. This leads to a dangerous level of dependence on the PM and does not evoke a very trusting environment. If I cannot trust my team to work on their tasks and deliverables just because I am not there watching over their shoulders, then maybe I have the wrong team.

If a PM's job is to provide leadership, manage team members, communicate to leadership, work with suppliers and ensure goals and objectives are being met, then why does being there every day mean all of this will be done? Are Presidents and CEOs present everyday at their workplace? Absolutely not, yet amazingly work seems to get done. My fear is that the world of project management has become one of controlling, not of providing skills and expertise to successfully implement strategic initiatives. It has become a question of how often can you be here, not what value is the organization going to get as a result of this project.

With today's technology, I am reachable wherever I may be, whether on the beach, at a conference or in my office. Through phone or email, I can almost always be reached (except on planes, but that is outside of my control) If there are issues on a project, I can be reached, even if I am not on site. My MO is to check in with my project teams on a regular basis through face to face meetings, phone and email, but not to be on site all day everyday for the life of a project. I have found that this works effectively because it builds independence within the team, but also provides a safety net of communication when issues do arise. I encourage my teams to call me whenever they need to and I like to create open dialogue. If we see the results, then there is no relevance whether I am on site or not. You can call me the Virtual Project Manager!