



Training Sample: Book Excerpt

Everything's a Project (and Everyone's a Project Manager), Book 6: Scaling

From Chapter 3, "What About Time Management?" by Christine P. Rose

What about Time Management?

Okay, I'm going to have to nip this phrase in the bud right here and right now, because there is no such thing as Time Management regardless of all the self-help books and categories you've been bombarded with. Shaming people by accusing them of not being able to manage their time has become an evil empire industry that does nothing but make you feel like a failure because you can't seem to manage time.

I have news for you: NOBODY can manage time. Time doesn't exist. Time is something that man invented to make sense of the world around him, and bring order to his existence. Time is basically what the clock and calendar say. In and of itself, it isn't a physically existing thing. We know it's 8am because our clock says so, whereas completely unrelated to time, we know it's "morning" when the sun rises. The sun rising has nothing to do with Time. It has to do with where our little piece of the planet is in relation to the Sun. If you would like to hear about the actual science behind what I'm talking about, checking out this website is an absolutely fabulous place to go: <http://www.exactlywhatistime.com>

Now, if that's too much "out there" for you to reconcile, or you're just not interested in becoming a physicist, I'll dial it back a notch and say that you cannot manage Time because each and every one of us has the same amount of hours in a day to work with. Saying you can manage Time implies that you can actually change the number of seconds in a minute, or the number of minutes in an hour, or that you can make an hour longer or shorter to suit your needs.

No. You're not God...Source...Buddha...Param Brahma...Deus...Dios...Allah...Akal Purakh...the Universe...or any other all-powerful deity or 'thing' that you might believe in. Time is our method of measuring the changes in the world around us. It used to take all



day for a pioneer woman to do her laundry. Now we can do a load of laundry in 40 minutes and dry it just as fast, if not faster. It used to take people an hour or more to walk from their homesteads to where they worked or went to school, then they'd work or learn all day and have to walk home the same distance. Nowadays if it takes an hour for us to drive somewhere, we lose our marbles. Cooking was also an all-day activity and heaven forbid if Pa brought home an animal that needed to be cleaned and cooked, too. Nowadays people can heat up a TV dinner in a few minutes and get impatient if it wants to be cooked for 7 or 8 instead of 3 or 4.

My point is this: as our society has evolved, we have crammed more and more into a day – sunrise to sunset – and have gone so far, now, as to try to cram more in by doing stuff at night that we never used to be able to do. Back in the day when it was dark, it was dark, unless you had some kind of torch or candle to light the way. You couldn't safely cut logs or plow your fields or build a barn in pitch black. Driving your horse-drawn carriage was hazardous because you couldn't see the road in front nor behind you. Nowadays electricity gives us an artificial environment so we can squeeze even more out of our waking hours, often to our detriment. We can "pull all-nighters" and stay up well past when our natural Circadian rhythms tell us we should be sleeping.

But we're not managing Time. The world spins no matter what we say. Earth revolves around the Sun no matter what we do. The Sun rises, it sets. Day is day, night is night, and we've organized that into a 24-hour clock that becomes a day which becomes a week that then becomes a month, a year, a decade, a century and so on. It's how we explain concepts like Past, Present and Future, but we don't manage any of that. It's physically impossible. (Hence all the science fiction books and movies about the concept of time travel.)

So what is this "Time Management" concept actually referring to, then, if we're not really able to manage Time? It's referring to us managing *ourselves* and *others*. As a Project Manager at work, I'm not changing Time in any way, shape or form to get the project done. I'm managing the *people on the team* to get their tasks completed by a deadline I've been given in order to achieve a larger goal or objective. Project Managers



are often touted as the ultimate time managers, but they aren't. Just like everyone else, us PMs are managing things to do in the same time that everyone else has. What we do is the same thing you do every day: manage our activities, and those of others, toward a common end.

Let's take a close look at "Time Management" in our personal lives. Tell me if any of these sound familiar:

- I didn't have time to/for...
- I wasn't given enough time to/for...
- There wasn't enough time to/for...
- It's taking too much time to/for...
- I was given way too much time to/for...

I kind of hate to do this (#sorrynotsorry) but I need to ask you to please stop making these excuses, if you indeed say any of these things. Because they are just that: excuses. It's not that you didn't have time, it's that you chose not to do whatever that thing was in the time you had. Or to put it another way, you chose to do something else and now you're saying you didn't have time for Thing B. Not true. You had the same time everyone else has, but you felt doing Thing A was what you wanted to focus on for that time period, rather than Thing B. You made a choice, so don't blame some ubiquitous Creator or Thing or Person for "not giving" you something they couldn't give you even if they wanted to.

It's not that someone didn't give you enough time to do something. Nobody can give time any more than they can take it away. It's that you were unable to complete the thing in the time allotted. There is never "not enough time" or "too much time." There is only you and how you choose to spend the time you have, which is the same amount of time everyone else has.

Someone who's really awesome at Algebra may complete the Algebra test in 10 minutes, while an hour later another person isn't finished. It's not that the first person was given too much time, or that the second person wasn't given enough. It was that the first person's ability to complete exceeded the one-hour limit imposed by the teacher, and the



second person's ability did not. We don't like to hear things like that...we'd rather say (if we're Person 2) that we weren't given enough time to complete the test. It makes us feel better to say that versus "I'm not good enough at Algebra to get this test done in an hour." But it's not honest.

And by now, you hopefully know me well enough to know that I am nothing if not honest. I don't lie. I don't deceive, inveigle or obfuscate, to quote a favorite line from *The X-Files* television show. And it's because I believe that we can't better ourselves or our lives if we lie to ourselves about what's really going on with ourselves and our lives. I can bemoan the fact that I'm overweight, but if I'm doing nothing at all to address that, then I have to own the fact that I'd rather sit in my recliner than go for a walk, or that I want to have the cheesecake for dessert on top of the huge meal I just consumed, or that I don't want to go to the doctor to see if I have a medical issue like thyroid disease. It's up to me to fix my issues. Blaming others is to absolve myself of responsibility for my woes, which allows me to play the victim rather than take ownership of my life and what I do with the time I am given.

I'm not preaching...or at least, I'm not trying to. And I'm definitely not out to make you feel bad or upset you. What I want to convey to you is that these tools, tips, tricks and techniques I teach you are things you can use to help alleviate anything you are making excuses about. If you consistently hear yourself saying one or more of those bullet-point phrases, look at what you're spending your days on to see where you are choosing to spend your time, leaving you "not enough time" to do whatever the other thing is.

"I don't have enough time to read books." No, you're choosing to watch TV or play video games or perhaps you have family obligations that keep you busy from sunup to sundown, but it's all stuff you chose, not something someone else did to you. You are in charge of you, and when you're acting as a Project Manager in any capacity, you are also often in charge of other peoples' goings-on, asking them to complete certain tasks or deliverables within a specified parameter (such as a date).

Take a look at how you manage yourself today (notice I didn't say how you manage your time). How do you choose what gets done, day in and day out? Does it all revolve



around your child and his needs and well-being? Does it revolve around wanting to please your Significant Other (SO)? Have you centered your life around your career or your job, and so you're working 13-hour days with "no time" for anything outside of work? Are you focused on a charitable cause to the exclusion of all else, or have you become so involved in an online gaming experience that your house never gets cleaned and your kids think you no longer exist?

The painful truth that I will admit to you here and now is that I have done all of those things I just listed. So I'm not someone who's perfect, and is pointing the finger at "all you imperfect people." I don't purport to be perfect or the best Project Manager or the best communicator or the best anything. I simply have learned, over a long history of Epic Fails, challenges and self-centeredness, what works and doesn't work and what the truth of most situations actually is.

You are a Project Manager. You always have been. Now you have the tools and tips to be confident managing a project at work. But like me, you're still human and you still get overwhelmed. It feels like others are piling too much on your head, doesn't it? It feels like other people seem to have it all together while you're over here drowning in quicksand in a pit that gets deeper with every move you try to make.

I understand. I have been there. And as I write this, I find myself edging that way again. Due to an injury, I stopped doing all the healthy things that had me one week away from participating in a 5k run. I'm not blaming anyone else, including the bus driver who broke my toe to begin with (don't ask, you don't even want to know). I have the tools at my disposal to get myself back on track, but I have chosen to spend my time on other things. It's nobody's fault but mine that I haven't gone back to the gym or that I don't go on daily walks or that I haven't put myself back on a healthier eating track.

But here's the thing: in spite of what I have taught you in this book series, there is no right way or wrong way to any project's completion, whether it's a work project or a personal one. There isn't even a right or wrong outcome. I may have made a mistake, for example, that caused a big kerfuffle at work, but even though I didn't get the outcome I'd hoped for, that doesn't mean the outcome I got was bad. It gave me a learning experience



so I know what to do (or not to do) next time I'm in a similar situation. It's the way babies learn to crawl and then walk. If you didn't fall down, then you wouldn't learn what not to do while trying to walk. If you didn't wobble and scrape your knee falling off your bike when you made too sharp a turn, you wouldn't have learned to not turn so sharply. Every failure teaches us lessons. I'll go back to what I shared with you about my definition of the word fail as being just another word for Lessons Learned. "Failure is not an option" is an utterly ridiculous statement, because failure is the contrast you need in order to define what you consider success. One cannot exist without the other. Failures give you the ability to assess and improve as you work toward your definition of success.

You can do this with any project they throw your way at work, and you can do this with anything you've got to handle in your personal life. You can do it for technical/IT projects or process improvement. You can do it for financial projects and marketing projects. You can do it to create businesses and build houses. You can use it for organizing parties, your household and your life. It works for creative endeavors, too. If you want to be a tuba player in a symphony orchestra, like my son does, what's your plan for getting from where you are now to where you want to be? If you want to become a figure skater, what do you need to buy, what tasks do you need to perform, where do you need to go in order to learn how to do that? If you want to write a book, how do you structure it and how do you decide if it should just be one book or a whole series?

All of *everything* can be managed like a project because all of *everything is* a project. I can help you understand the basic tenets of Project Management, but it's your style and flair, and your environment and circumstances, that dictate how *you* are going to be a Project Manager. If you have a heckuva time staying on target because you get so busy doing something that you "lose track of time" and therefore don't make it to Item #2 on your list, then get yourself a calendar reminder app on your phone, or set alarms or tell a friend to phone you at a certain time so that when it's time to stop doing Item #1, you stop doing Item #1.