

Use of the People Perspective Lenses

In today's environment project managers are under increasing pressures to deliver projects with less. Success in this challenging environment may require some additional tools. Projects are delivered to and by people, and project success requires more than just following processes and methods and meeting clients' contractual requirements.

With this in mind, the APM People SIG have developed a number of "lenses" to assist people in viewing things from alternative perspectives, appreciating that different people have differing frames of reference. This will help to improve the effectiveness of the Project Manager by improving communication, providing insight into what is happening, improving relationships and ultimately improving the delivery of projects.

What is a lens?

- It is a diagnostic tool to assist Project Managers, or those responsible for delivery of aspects of projects, in considering the people drivers that will lead to success.
- It does so by asking questions rather than providing answers. The Project Manager is asked to reflect and, with their contextual knowledge of the situation, to consider alternative courses of action and behaviour.
- The lenses capture practical experience and knowledge from a wide range of practitioners, academics and subject matter experts.
- They should be considered in detail at the start of a project but revisited regularly throughout the project lifecycle or as the situation requires.
- It may be that only 1 question in a lens is relevant / pertinent / catches your attention, and from that allows you to re-assess and gain value

Lenses are not:

- Checklists that have to be applied in a mechanistic or prescriptive manner - they are only intended to provoke thought and to challenge you to think differently
- An answer to a complex problem - they provide diagnostic tools and fresh perspectives that might help Project Managers to find the answers themselves

What are they for?

- Providing insights that may help in sorting out complex day to day issues which are typically caused by people
- Helping to get to the root cause of issues, and learning the associated lessons, taking account of people issues and opportunities
- Provoking discussion and action by identifying alternative solutions.
- Encouraging Project Managers to explore the effects that people have on their projects

How are lenses structured?

Each lens is based around an overall “Summary Question”, which asks *“What questions do I need to ask in order to understand and achieve success.....”*, with the end of the question being specific to the lens in question. For example, the Summary Question for the Stakeholder Perspectives lens is *“What questions do I need to ask in order to understand and achieve success as seen from the perspectives of key project stakeholders?”*

The main body of the lens identifies a series of questions that the Project Manager could ask in order to provoke people-related thinking on a particular topic.

Each lens also includes sections on how the lens might be used and the kinds of issues it might help the Project Manager address, plus references to associated documents, for example the APM Body of Knowledge

How might the lenses be used?

- In project planning and in resourcing project teams, and in assigning tasks to team members
- In helping to diagnose relationship problems within project teams, and with clients
- In helping to understand the personal expectations, ambitions and concerns of key individual stakeholders - clients, sponsors, key influencers etc.
- As a discussion point at team meetings and workshops, for example focusing on a particular lens, or part of a lens, at each meeting
- In the personal development of Project Managers and team members, including mentoring and coaching
- In developing and changing the culture of a project team, and its parent organisation
- The questions in a lens could be prioritised for a particular situation, and only certain questions examined.

What does it need from those using the lenses?

- Judgement - when, where and how
- Open mind - to have the awareness that there are multiple options
- Putting in context - unique to each project and situation
- Preparation and effort - requires time to be made available.
- Constant reviewing - to check that the benefits have been achieved.