

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT-TURNING YOUR DREAMS INTO REALITY

Presenter: Craig Tooke

Session Chair: Michael Stukeley

Session Secretary: Jeff Stocco

## Introduction

As the President of the Melbourne Tramcar Preservation Association I am often asked the question how is your Association able to achieve so much in such a short time with relatively few resources on hand.

The answer invariably lies in good project management and planning for which the results of our efforts often reflect.

The purpose of my presentation is not to discuss in great depth the academic side of project management, but more some of my practical thoughts and experiences in the hope that they may be of assistance to you in your endeavours at your respective museums.

## What Is Project Management?

Project management as it's name implies is the successful management of related tasks directed towards a single goal.

## Planning - A Vital And Effective Tool

Before the actual management of a project can begin, the key to success is planning. By it's very nature planning can be either very simple or very complex, however in all projects regardless of their nature the following key elements must be identified if planning is to be successful. These elements are as follows:

\*Who

\*What

\*When

\*Where

\*How

\*Why

Very often the failure to either complete a project on time or successfully can be put down to a lack of poor planning and preparation in one of the above areas. How often have you attempted a project at your museum only to find that you have wasted considerable time and effort for lack of proper planning? I am sure everyone can relate to this experience in one way or another.

The key to attempting any project is to break it down into a series of smaller tasks or objectives each of which are clearly defined and have a beginning and an end which can also be identified.

Once each of the tasks related to the project have been identified then questioning can begin to identify the six critical elements to any project, who, what, where, when, how and why.

It is a very good idea to actually list the tasks down onto a piece of paper as headings and provide answers to each of the six elements as they are determined. For example, let our project be to place a pole in the ground and the specific task to dig the hole. Your list on paper could perhaps look like this:

PROJECT: To place a pole in the ground  
TASK: Dig hole in ground

- \* Who? Craig Tooke
- \* What? To dig hole 1 metre deep in the ground for the erection of a pole
- \* Where? 2 metres north of the north corner of the workshop building
- \* When? Work to commence on 5/12/94 at 13:00 hours
- \* How? Using the largest spade available
- \* Why? Hole necessary to allow the pole to be placed in the ground

Once you have clearly identified the above six key elements for each task in the project then you must critically examine each of the details that are provided for the six elements.

For example, questions such as are there any underground services in the way? Do any of the tasks have to be completed before one of the others can be started? Have we clearly identified all of the information that is required for the task elements?

Once you are certain that all of the elements for each task are clearly identified then it is possible to identify the materials and man power that are required to complete the project.

As with identifying the elements of the task it is a good idea to commit your thoughts to paper for reference.

Using our above example of digging a hole, a list of man power and materials required to complete the task would perhaps look like:

MANPOWER	MATERIALS
1 person x 4 hours	Large shovel
	Tape measure
	Depth gauge

Once the man power and materials list has been completed it should be carefully reviewed to ensure everything has been included.

The next stage in the process is to identify the order in which the tasks have to be undertaken. To use an old adage, "there is no use having the cart before the horse". For example, in the case of our sample project, the erection of a pole, there would be no point in attempting to erect the pole without having first dug the hole in the right location and of sufficient depth, therefore time spent carefully analysing the order in which tasks have to be undertaken in order to successfully complete a project is well spent before commencing work.

With all the necessary financial resources in place the final step in the planning process is to actually work out when work can and should commence on the project. Most museums, of which the Melbourne Tramcar Preservation Association is no exception, do not have finite human resources and as such we have to be very careful that we do not attempt projects requiring high involvement of many members at the one time. This is not to say that we do not have a number of projects on the go at the one time but rather we do not attempt

projects requiring large membership involvement simultaneously unless we have sufficient members available to successfully complete the project.

To assist us in this project we actually prepare a quarterly works schedule for work that will be undertaken at the museum. This works schedule encompasses all facets of our activities at the museum and is prepared for presentation at our Committee Meetings by our General Manager. At our meetings we review, modify and approve the works schedule and this then becomes the plan to which our activities at Haddon are directed towards for the next quarter.

At the Committee Meeting prior to the expiry of the current quarterly works schedule we ensure that a new schedule for the next quarter is ready and that it contains any new items and outstanding or continuing items from the current quarterly schedule.

Mention at this stage should perhaps be also made of the possible use of a personal computer in the planning and preparation stage of a project. Although not absolutely essential or indeed at times necessary, depending upon the complexity of a project, the use of a personal computer and project management software such as Microsoft "Project", Symantic "Time Line" or other project management software can at times assist in the planning and preparation phase of a project depending upon the complexity of the project.

Project management software can also be used to advantage in the management of a project particularly if the project is extremely complicated or involves a large number of tasks.

Another management tool in project management can also be the use of CPM which stands for Critical Path Management or other similar mathematical tools, however further discussion on the use of a computer or these mathematical tools is outside the scope of this presentation and people interested in these fields are directed towards the wealth of published literature that is available on the subject of project management and planning where the use of computers or mathematical models is covered in depth.

#### Project Management - Reviewing A Project As It Is Happening

We are now at the stage where after careful planning and preparation we commence our project so why bother continuing to keep abreast of our progress?

This stage is as important if not more important than the planning process for without reviewing our project as it progresses we cannot see if our project is on track and our planning for other tasks involved in the project still accurate and more importantly realistic.

Every project regardless of it's complexity will always suffer from variation or delay in our plans due to unforeseen difficulties which for example could be the lack of material or the need to divert resources to other more urgent pressing tasks which in the case of our museums is very often the case.

It is therefore important to review our plans as we progress to ensure that our planning for future tasks remains accurate, thus ensuring the successful completion of a project.

Using our example of the erection of a pole, should we have been unable to complete digging the hole in time, and we had allowed for no delay in our plans there would be no point in the cement to hold the pole in place arriving at the determined time, particularly if the pole could not be put in the ground on time because the hole had not been dug.

The reviewing of our progress on a regular basis to ensure time lines can be met is the key to ensuring success.

#### Project Completion

Well we have reached the stage where our project is now complete and we can give ourselves a pat on the back for a job well done, however this is by no means the end of our project management cycle.

Critical review of our planning, execution and results for the project that we have just completed is important because we would not want to fall into the same traps with our next project or would we?

Careful analysis will help build on our achievements and, like any skill, project management is one that has to be developed and this only comes with practice and learning from our mistakes.

I will pause my presentation for a moment as we view part of a video titled "The Plank", which I believe highlights many of the points I have mentioned so far. I ask you to bear in mind as you watch the video.  
(Video "The Plank" 15 minute duration)

### Conclusion

Perhaps much of what I have spoken about is common sense, however the point I am trying to get across is that if we undertake careful preparation, execution and review of all our efforts at our respective museums then we will be surprised in the quality and quantity of the outcomes for our efforts.

We are all striving to achieve excellence in the preservation of our tramway heritage and quality project management can and does go a long way to the fulfillment of our goals and avoids unnecessary wasted effort or resources which although when reviewed in hindsight can appear comical, just as we have seen watching "The Plank", I am sure it is not the way in which we currently do or want to run our museums in the future.

Editors Note:- At the end of the Speaker's address, the time available for the session had expired. Therefore it was not possible for any discussion or questions/answers on the subject.