

Name: Paul Crame. **Course Module:** MA Archaeological Practice - Archaeological Project Design and Delivery (HPAR7003). **Tutors:** Nigel Nayling and Martin Locock. **Date:** 15/05/2022 **Word Count:** 1995. **Critically reflect on your experience of the role play scenarios to identify the key challenges in successful project delivery when working as a team.**

Material engagement theory considers the process by which human individuals and communities engage with the material world through actions that have simultaneously material reality and cognitive or intelligent component. It is concerned with what people actually do, in the course of actions that are meaningful and purposive. Their purposes as knowledgeable agents are the results of social motivations that arise in relation to their worldview. So, they are at once both physical and mental. This cognitive component, as we have seen, is not genetically determined or transmitted, as some of the activities of such species as various social insects which construct their nests in quite elaborate ways, something that at first site could be taken as a result of intelligent planning. In human beings, they are based instead upon culturally determined patterns of learned behaviour, which are themselves the product of human experience and innovation over long trajectories of time. They may be regarded as the result of human agency. (Renfrew, 2012 p.110)

When we work within teams in heritage management projects, it is a combined and collectivised engagement in the material world, utilising a network of human skills, knowledge, and experience to the desired purpose. As individuals within a structured or unstructured team, we intersubjectively engage with ourselves, the material world, and others to achieve these aims through cognitive feedback creating a web of permutational human agency. As Renfrew posits above, this is part of the human condition; we are not, after all, pre-programmed robots but products of our longer-term interactions with ourselves, others, and the material world; we have a non-quantifiable social embodiment which impacts upon any collectivised team activity.

It is perhaps inappropriate to therefore place individuals into conceptual personality type categories based on objectivist measures narrated from qualitative questionnaires, such as the nine Belbin© Team Roles (Belbin, 2022). As an essential tool for project managers to understand the typology of a team, it perhaps has its own merits. However, to treat individuals as actors on a stage with a limited agency or a role is also a self-fulfilling prophecy which reduces the innovation or dynamism that has characterised human cultural engagement with the material world since the unknown beginnings of human pre-history.

The need to find structure and impose rules upon collective endeavour is maybe something which arrived out of the sedentary practices of the past, pooling risk and normalising outcomes to formulate collectivised benefits. However, the benefit is a debatable point amongst some modern writers of pre-history (Foster, 2021). The predisposition of utilitarianism in human projects is manifested in need to use a conduit to find the equilibrium in the fluidity of human consciousness. For this reason, a consistently defined role in all the roleplay scenarios of (HPAR7003) was that of a chairperson.

I did not participate in the role of chair in the scenarios. I could empathise with the need to find consensus, structural reasoning and create action points that make a project deliverable which is the essential core purpose of chairing a meeting. However, a decisive strategy for risk and who would critically appraise the consensus and how the risks could be carried forward beyond a first past the post-vote was perhaps absent from our discourse. Groupthink is consistently the enemy of any project delivery. Incorporating risk logs/registers, reflective practice, MoRPHE review points and agile project management techniques go a long way to mitigating perfect failures such as Irving, L Janis's famous example of the Bay of Pigs fiasco during the Cuban missile crisis (Janis, 1972). Critical appraisal, once a decision has been made, still needs to be revisited and fleshed out. Because project management should never be an automaton process, people fitting into a jigsaw of Belbin© roles

and finding the shortest route to a consensus. Reality is complex and recursive, producing known knowable's and the unforeseen un-knowable's and potential black swan events that can make a project undeliverable, as evidenced in CIFA data indicating that almost 30% of projects fail due to unforeseen external constraints and 10% due to poor planning (Appendix A).

I was reminded during the scenarios of a negative opinion once expressed by a senior manager at my place of work when discussing project meetings and people that do not contribute as not being able to 'justify their pay packets'. There can be an emphasis on quantity instead of quality, believing you must script out a certain amount of verbiage during a project meeting to justify your attendance. How often are our best decisions and ideas made in the moment? Often, they come like bolts out of the blue at 4 am. Project meetings can be unproductive, misleading, and to a certain extent, artificial constructs that do not pay any credence to our thought processes and organisational skills. However, they can also sometimes be the most interesting, dynamic, and essential hinges that permit project stages, tasks, and products to be deliverable. There is a real need for a project team to understand that communication is a continuous iterative process that grows with the project.

For this reason, I felt that it should always be the position of a chair to remind participants that a project meeting is a short moment in time. It is an opportunity to contribute, receive instantaneous feedback and make initial actional decisions, but this is just a drop in the ocean. Other team members may want to think about the discourse and contribute at a later meeting or via written communication on the project website. This lack of pretext was a significant problem for me with all the scenarios. How was the information flow being managed in the project team dynamically?

From the several role-play scenarios in (HPAR7003), three scenarios in particular had the most value for me in my professional reflective practice and how to deliver a successful heritage project.

The Goldcliffe Project start-up task. This was the first task, and it was asked of the group to put forward a volunteer chair, this was not forthcoming. Volunteering to take a leadership position in a team during a project start-up is difficult; assigning a chair by the Project Manager (PM) and rotating the position equally is the most expedite method if it is not to be the PM as chair throughout project lifecycle. The task itself highlighted the complexity involved in researching and finding information once an initial brief for a proposal has been received from a client. To some extent the task was simplified as it was an area with a complicated archaeological landscape, in most cases project proposal areas can in practice be a bit more banal.

None the less, the scenario really emphasised for me the importance of using all available recourses to look beyond the official statutory record, the HER, and to understand the logistics of what a client wants to do in a designated area and how this can have ramifications for locality outside the designated area of development. In terms of challenges for the start of a project, it has to be the limitations on my time as a PM to access the available information and make informed decisions to progress the project onto the next stage or to put mitigating strategies in place or to make a final decision and recommend that developer reviews another area, as the potential impact would be significant on the historic landscape.

In the example of Goldcliffe this was complicated as we could see that there was potential for Benedictine Priory with field systems in the in the land area, as well as Roman, Bronze Age and Mesolithic in the intertidal, although the statutory record was not forthcoming in identify these features. However, a search of published academic literature by Martin Bell and unpublished grey literature on the ADS revealed that this was a complicated historic landscape. Potential unforeseen risk that was not initially picked up by the team was that the Gwent Levels is part of the protected

historic landscape in Wales (CADW) which could potentially stop the project in its tracks. The other key obstacle to project start-up concerns client confidentiality, sometimes the best sources to consult are people and local groups, however this can be complicated at the early stages, as the project team can be restricted in sharing confidential information to third parties by the client.

The WSI Scenario task. This task was typical of some of the challenges that are encountered in the decision-making process of how to propose an effective methodology in a proposed heritage project. The task highlighted the need to find balance between a client's objectives, the heritage asset, and conditions of a consent to meet the planning requirements. The scenario made me think about choice, as a person that works in the heritage sector I automatically want to do the most to fully preserve heritage assets, but in the real world we have to think about the conflict of cost, time and quality to reach a balanced outcome and this can be a significant barrier to the delivery of a successful project.

What was abundantly clear to me in this scenario was the need to maintain good communication between all the stakeholders involved in a project. For example, in the geological anomaly task had the potential to be a high-risk product of the project. On the one hand it could be nothing more than an anomaly which has resulted in the decision to strip back a large parcel of land at both a financial and environmental cost. Conversely it could be the foundations of a substantial Roman villa that will cause a significant difficulty latter on in the project if it is not addressed at the beginning.

There is a need to be honest in project management, to have the uncomfortable conversations concerning potential costs and continually gaining understanding, justification, and agreement with stakeholders to reach the most equitable outcomes when investigating heritage assets as part of a project. We therefore need to think and reflect about the best possible outcomes in a project, if we feel there is a significant research potential then yes we may need to fully excavate and try and find answers to those questions, if however, the potential is lower then perhaps we need to think about how we record and mitigate with less invasive methodologies and yet still deliver on time, costs, and quality for the stakeholders.

Project planning and budgeting scenario. Archaeology is often called a magpie discipline as it involves the input across an array of specialities in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. This scenario reminded me of how varied and dispersed a project team's skills, knowledge, and experience can be when working together on a heritage project. The role of a project manager can therefore be highly complicated in balancing expectations against budgets, and timetables, between the different occupational groups whilst maintaining overall momentum against key strategic aims and milestones to reach all the requirements of stakeholders involved in a project. Upon reflection of this scenario, it really emphasised for me the purpose of building up an accessible knowledge base from every project, because planning and budgeting in heritage projects can literally be a shot a dark if there is no previous practise for comparative analysis.

We should be trying our best to arrive at predictable, planned outcomes to deliver successful projects. MoRPHE builds this opportunity into the project design process with the use of review points, but specifically the use of reflection to review a project at the point of closure, to find definitive answers to what has worked and what has not worked during the project lifecycle. To be an effective project manager over the longer-term is to utilise knowledge and experience from previous projects and carry it over to the new projects. Without the iterative communication process between project team members and the memory to make all these varied technical skills operative, it would be impossible to deliver a heritage project to any measure of time, cost, and quality.

Bibliography:

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Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink; a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin.

Q1 How many projects did you organisation complete last year?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	10	2/17/2020 9:31 PM
2	130	2/10/2020 12:23 PM
3	350	2/10/2020 9:43 AM
4	200+	2/10/2020 9:42 AM
5	36	2/10/2020 9:29 AM
6	50 - 100	2/10/2020 8:18 AM
7	11	2/8/2020 10:02 AM
8	30	2/7/2020 10:16 PM
9	4	2/7/2020 8:55 PM
10	250	2/7/2020 6:32 PM
11	30 ish	2/7/2020 6:22 PM
12	95	2/7/2020 5:53 PM
13	30+	2/7/2020 5:43 PM
14	85	1/14/2020 8:52 PM
15	c. 20	1/14/2020 3:37 PM
16	50	1/14/2020 3:20 PM
17	1	1/14/2020 3:03 PM
18	40	1/14/2020 8:50 AM
19	40	1/13/2020 7:19 PM
20	107	1/13/2020 2:17 PM
21	4	1/13/2020 11:41 AM
22	2	1/13/2020 11:03 AM
23	24	1/13/2020 10:54 AM
24	100	1/13/2020 10:45 AM
25	500	1/13/2020 10:17 AM
26	5	1/13/2020 10:14 AM
27	15	1/13/2020 10:01 AM
28	1	1/13/2020 10:00 AM

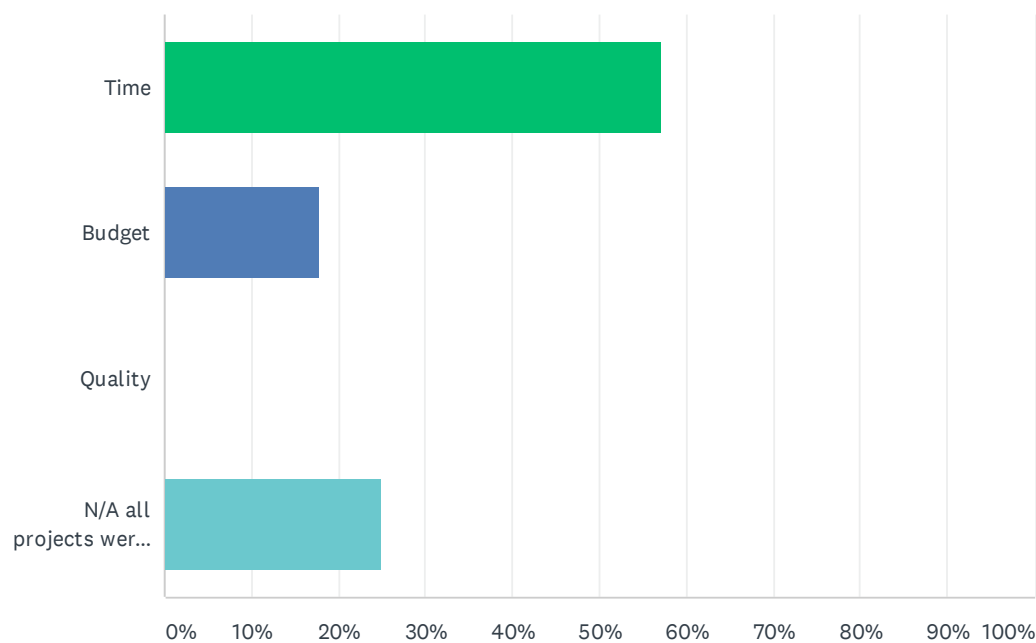
Q2 What proportion of your organisation's projects were successful (completed on time, on budget, and at the required quality)? Please answer in percentage terms.

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	8	2/17/2020 9:31 PM
2	98	2/10/2020 12:23 PM
3	38	2/10/2020 9:43 AM
4	95%	2/10/2020 9:42 AM
5	35	2/10/2020 9:29 AM
6	75 - 80%	2/10/2020 8:18 AM
7	80	2/8/2020 10:02 AM
8	100	2/7/2020 10:16 PM
9	100%	2/7/2020 8:55 PM
10	85	2/7/2020 6:32 PM
11	50% ish	2/7/2020 6:22 PM
12	95%	2/7/2020 5:53 PM
13	60%	2/7/2020 5:43 PM
14	85%	1/14/2020 8:52 PM
15	100	1/14/2020 3:37 PM
16	60	1/14/2020 3:20 PM
17	100%	1/14/2020 3:03 PM
18	75	1/14/2020 8:50 AM
19	100	1/13/2020 7:19 PM
20	72%	1/13/2020 2:17 PM
21	2	1/13/2020 11:41 AM
22	50	1/13/2020 11:03 AM
23	23	1/13/2020 10:54 AM
24	90	1/13/2020 10:45 AM
25	90%	1/13/2020 10:17 AM
26	100	1/13/2020 10:14 AM
27	100%	1/13/2020 10:01 AM
28	100	1/13/2020 10:00 AM

Q3 For those projects which were not successful, what was the main area of failure? (select one)

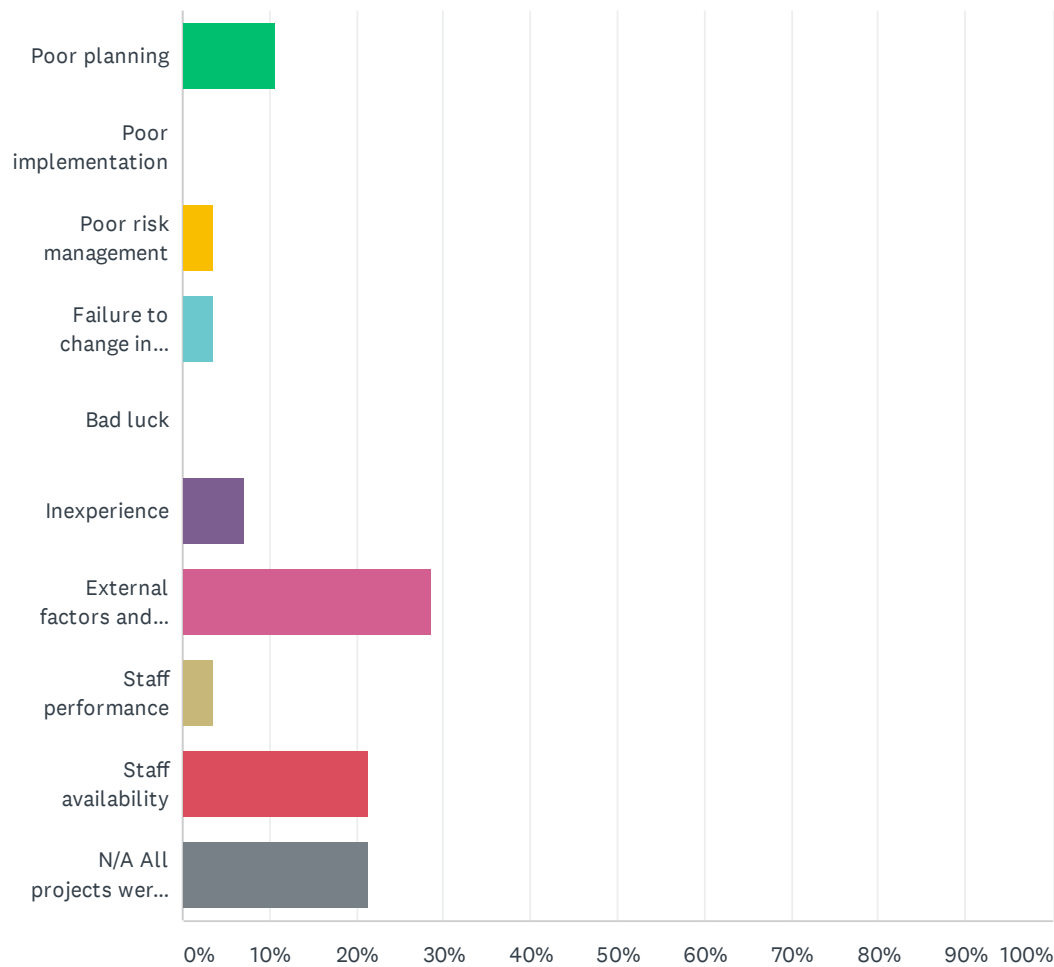
Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Time	57.14%	16
Budget	17.86%	5
Quality	0.00%	0
N/A all projects were successful	25.00%	7
TOTAL		28

Q4 For those projects that were not successful, what do you think was the most common reason? (select one)

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

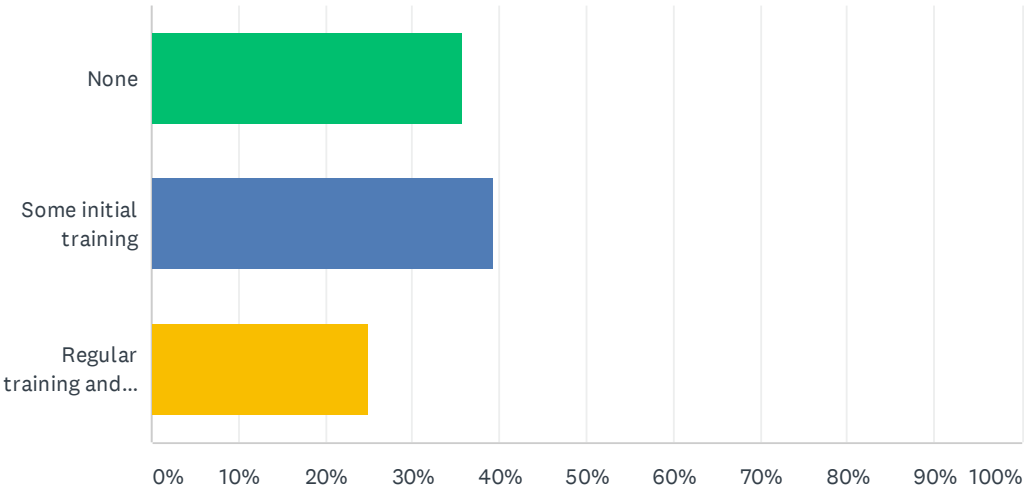


Snap survey: Project success factors

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Poor planning	10.71%	3
Poor implementation	0.00%	0
Poor risk management	3.57%	1
Failure to change in response to new information	3.57%	1
Bad luck	0.00%	0
Inexperience	7.14%	2
External factors and constraints	28.57%	8
Staff performance	3.57%	1
Staff availability	21.43%	6
N/A All projects were successful	21.43%	6
TOTAL		28

Q5 How much effort does your organisation invest in ensuring its project managers are adequately trained and qualified?(Select one)

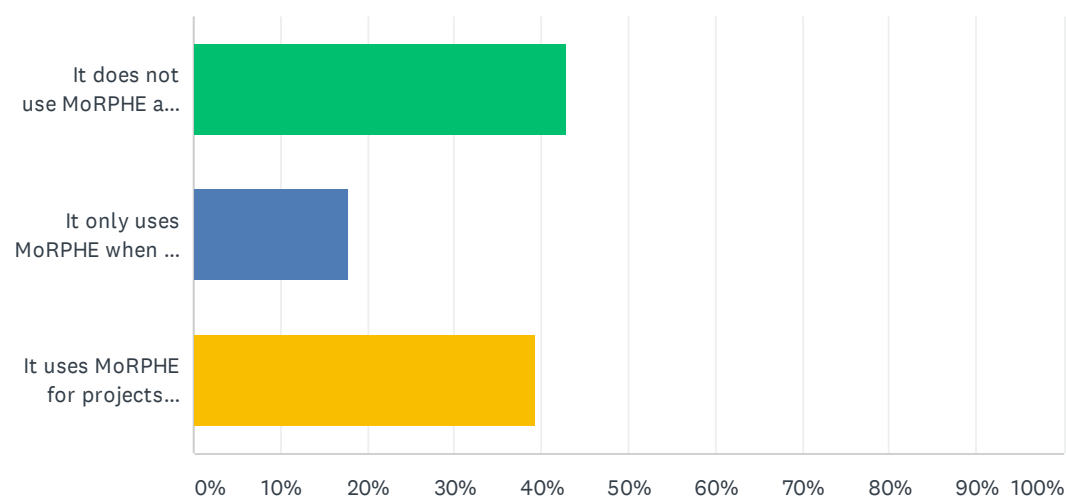
Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
None		35.71%	10
Some initial training		39.29%	11
Regular training and development (externally provided)		25.00%	7
TOTAL			28

Q6 Does your organisation use MoRPHE for projects where it is not a funding requirement? (MoRPHE is Historic England’s Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, a project management methodology based on PRINCE2)(Select one)

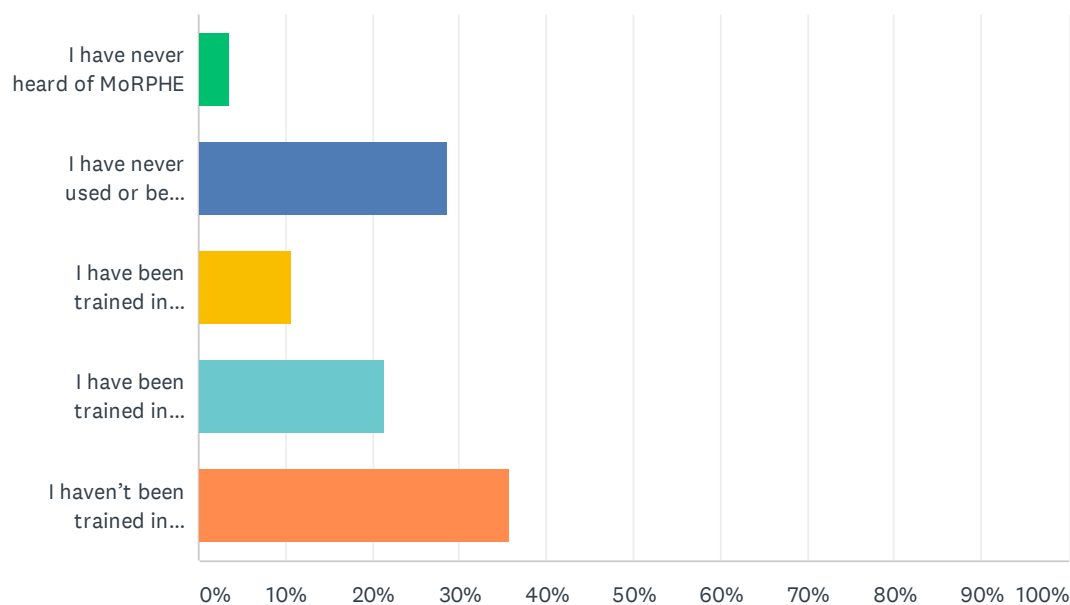
Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
It does not use MoRPHE at all	42.86%	12
It only uses MoRPHE when it is a funding requirement	17.86%	5
It uses MoRPHE for projects regardless of funding	39.29%	11
TOTAL		28

Q7 What is your level of MoRPHE training and use? (training includes the online course)(Select one)

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have never heard of MoRPHE	3.57%	1
I have never used or be trained in MoRPHE	28.57%	8
I have been trained in MoRPHE but haven't used it	10.71%	3
I have been trained in MoRPHE and I have used it	21.43%	6
I haven't been trained in MoRPHE and have used it	35.71%	10
TOTAL		28