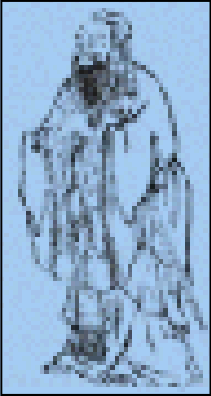


The Sayings of Confucius and The Art of Project Management Processes

By Bernie Keh, President and CEO, BOT International

Processes On Demand is a project management process solution that reduces costs and improves project management results. It provides access to process descriptions, scalable workflows, step by step guidance, tools, PM templates, and resources suggestions to help project managers and all those involved in the Project Management Process.



According to tradition, the Chinese philosopher and sage Confucius was born in 551 BC in the village of Zou in the state of Lu as a descendant of the noble K'ung clan. Distressed by constant warfare between the Chinese states and by the tyranny of the rulers, he urged a system of governance and fairness that would preserve peace and provide people with stable and just government. It is said that he accepted aid from his disciples according to their means and that he had little respect for those among them who did not truly want to learn. In his time, his fame and legend as a man of great knowledge and character spread throughout China and it is still with us today. While it is unclear whether or not Confucius obtained certification as a Project Management Professional, his sayings clearly were rooted in the practice and continuous improvement of Project Management Processes...!

Confucius Saying #1. “One who goes unrecognized yet isn’t annoyed - isn’t that a noble person?”
This first saying serves as a guiding principle for the professional project manager. Rather than hero worship, true recognition comes from within. Quiet pursuit of continuous improvement and helping others perform better will save more than the day, it will secure the future.

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Confucius Saying #2, “One who has committed a mistake and doesn’t correct it, is committing another.”

How many times are repeat mistakes made? Too many. And who is in the best position to understand and correct workplace defects? Management? The front line? Almost always, those closest to the problem are best able to fix it. Project managers are in the unique position of seeing first hand opportunities for defect elimination and reduction of waste. Management must ensure that lessons learned feedback is communicated and acted upon as part of the PM Process, not just documented and filed away.

Confucius Saying #3. “Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without.”

Many people confuse pursuit of continuous improvement

with pursuit of perfection. The well balanced project manager seeks continuous improvement but does not obsess on unattainable states of perfection. Be open to new ideas and improvement opportunities even if they are not the current view of the perfect solution. Make full use of what you already know, have, and can easily obtain.

Confucius Saying #4. “He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger.”

The professional project manager constantly learns new techniques and thinks about ways to apply them. He also thinks about what he needs to learn next and seeks education and training opportunities.

Confucius Saying #5. “By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is the noblest; Second, by imitation, which is the easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.”

In setting up project management processes, there is ample opportunity for all three methods of learning wisdom. Adopting de facto standard processes “as-is” is a useful way to rapidly benefit from the wisdom of others. Examining defined processes, benchmark measurements, and qualitative data provides further insight and wisdom as well as opportunities for process improvement. Experience is always an excellent teacher and it doesn’t always have to be bitter. Learn from successes and learn even more from the challenges, difficulties, and failures.

Confucius Saying #6, “To have friends come from far away - isn’t that a joy.”

Not necessarily geographic, but distances as measured in priorities, perspectives, styles, skills, reporting structures and loyalties can keep team members distant from the project and one another. Good project management processes enable the project team to come together from these great distances, speak a common language, follow a common process, use a useful and usable set of tools and information, and perform brilliantly and consistently.

Confucius Saying #7, “To see what is right and do it, is courageous.

Continuous process improvement is the right thing to do.

The Art of Project Management Processes, whether discussed in the context and era of Confucius or discussed in today's time and venue, provides an abundance of styles, approaches, and theories. While it is fun and entertaining to present the sayings of Confucius in the context of project management processes, advances in technology make it increasingly easier to setup, use, and continuously improve defined processes.

The Mistakes of the 80's are well remembered by today's executives now in charge of workplace processes. Though well intended, countless companies invested man-years of effort in defining "best practices" and workplace processes. Though rooted in excellent TQM, Six Sigma, and Malcolm Baldrige programs, many business unit heads relied upon pencil and paper to define processes and document process measurements. In many cases, the very processes that were defined on paper could not be effectively communicated and shared throughout the organization. To further frustrate things, the transactional systems in place at the time couldn't be easily changed. Bear in mind, this was before CRM and well before corporate intranets. The net result for many business units was that the entire process management effort, though it may have resulted in a departmental quality award, was in effect a waste of time.

Project Management Offices (PMOs) began to appear in the 90's, often focusing on organizational structure and enterprise application selection. Though project management process definition was a priority, the lack of end user tools and process applications for this resulted in most processes being written once and seldom updated.

A new excellence in Process Management is now emerging. This excellence is "On Demand" and it is made possible through web applications and communications and collaboration technologies. Unlike the "static" paper based project management manuals and methodologies, today's solutions are web-based and managed by end user process owners, not IT department application developers.

Tools and collaboration platforms such as easy to use end user web application products (Microsoft FrontPage, Macromedia Dreamweaver, IBM Websphere, etc.) and collaboration platforms for corporate portals and workgroup team workplaces (Microsoft SharePoint, IBM Team Workplace, etc.) enable organizations to truly define, communicate, manage, and continuously improve upon their workplace processes.

The Art of Project Management Processes is our core focus at BOT International. We seek to help organizations define, manage, and continuously improve their project management processes. Toward this aim, we develop, market, and sell (as well as use internally) our product offering. To us, the Art of Project Management Processes is the creative integration of "all things useful" into an easy to use and improve workplace process. An integration that provides point and click access to process descriptions, scalable workflows, step by step guidance, tools, project management templates, information and resources suggestions to help knowledge workers do their jobs. It is a web application that can run on your intranet, LAN, or even a PC. Skilled as well as occasional practitioners are able to follow best practices with a useful and usable set of tools. This "Art" is maintained by workplace process owners who are able to "care-take" the project management process and incorporate lessons learned opportunities to ensure quality, reduce mistakes, defects, and waste.

The pursuit of this "Art" improves results in a number of ways. Take it from a few of our customers...

"We had a PM Methodology Manual, but it wasn't usable and quickly became out of date. Processes On Demand provides us with a live process that saves time, promotes skills, and enables us to use and improve upon what we already have and know." Director PM

"Processes On Demand enabled our only PMP to setup our virtual PMO providing valuable project management processes and training at a fraction of the cost of a staffed PMO." IT Director

"Our new people need to learn what "Bob" knows. Processes On Demand enables us to provide Workplace Blueprints aligned to project management best practices so that everyone knows what "Bob" knows and can perform as well as "Bob" can." VP Client Services

In Summary, from before the era of Confucius to well past our present day there has been and will be an abundance of wisdom and good ideas. From a project management processes point of view, the manner in which we apply, communicate, and share knowledge and "best practices" will be the difference between ad hoc best efforts and exceptional performance. The latter of which is truly an art.

About the author: Bernie Keh is the President and CEO of BOT International. She is Singaporean Chinese and graduated from the National University of Singapore with Honors in 1988. Prior to founding BOT International, Ms. Keh had executive and management positions with IBM, Computer Associates, and Systems Union.