

LEADING THE CHARGE

54th Annual Human Resources Conference & Expo



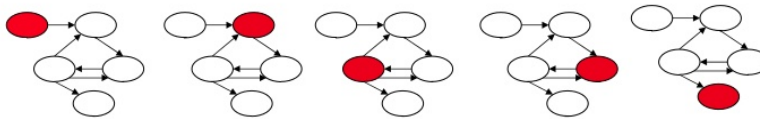
## Better Project Management: How to Combat the "Good Idea" Fairy

*presented by:*

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**Handouts**

JAR12

## What does good project management look like?



Initiating	Planning	Executing	Controlling	Closing
Scope	Project Brief	Basecamp/ Microsoft Project	PDCA	Deliverable Validation
Objectives	Schedule/ Team Development	Product Development	*Scope	Project Turnover
Constraints	Budget	Status Reporting	*Changes	File Archival
SOW	Risks	*Internal	*Quality	After-action Review
Customer Approval	Change Plan?	*External	*Schedule	
	Customer Approval		*Budget	

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## Slide 2

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**JAR12** I need to refine this graphic further.  
Jo Ann Rice, 7/29/2014

## Triple Constraint Theory



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### Exercise 1:

Have you ever been a victim of help?

Define a time when a last minute or late suggestion derailed or put at risk a project you were on?

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## How to Identify Good Idea Fairies

- **Regularity** – They drop bad ideas or derail processes or projects *all the time*. Good Idea Fairy sightings are less like hunting Bigfoot and more like trying to find a TV show involving Kardashians. You don't always need to look for them; they seem to always be around, and the quality of their content is always about the same.
- **Bad Ideas** – If a person drops in and drops ideas regularly, but they are good ideas coming from a strong understanding of an issue or a depth of experience, this is not a Good Idea Fairy per se. The idea might be gruff, or the person just might not be your favorite, but if the information is helpful, you should be open to it. Conversely, Good Idea Fairies can be fun, gregarious people and might even be your friends, but their timing and ideas can hurt more than help.
- **Rookie Mistakes** – A lot of the bad ideas that come from Good Idea Fairies occur because they don't know enough of the context or subject matter well. The problem is that if Good Idea Fairy dust is sprinkled in front of leaders that also share the same lack of nuanced understanding about the subject, you might spend a lot of time suddenly having to prove the approach you had chosen to take and the decisions you have made, or, even worse, having to decide how to change things.
- **Idea Grenades** – When a Good Idea Fairy drops an idea, it rarely includes substantial time or resources invested on their part. They swoop in, drop a grenade that gobbles time or focus, and then magically disappear as quickly as they came. If such people have no accountability and there is no cost to their budget or priorities, sometimes their ideas are less well-conceived than something they would enact on a project or process they own.

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## Exercise 2: Are you ever a good idea fairy?

Describe a time when you added something late in the process that might not have helped.

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## 8 ways to combat the Good Idea Fairy

- **Publish a timeline**
- **Get sign-off from above**
- **Charter the plan or project**
- **Define your scope**
- **Document your facts and assumptions**
- **Seek input during the planning phase**
- **Formalize the presentation of your plan**
- **Say yes to anything you can, short of changing anything of substance**

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### 1. Publish a timeline

**Publish a timeline** – Covey says that a goal isn't a goal until you write it down. A published timeline makes the dates and times appear more set, especially if they have been approved from higher levels of management.

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## 2. Get sign-off from above

**Get sign-off from above** – Not just on your timeline, but also on your approach, resources, and ultimately the project's goal. An idea that has sign-off from above also has air cover from above.

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## 3. Charter the plan or project

**Charter the plan or project** – By developing a vision for what you want to complete, a mission for how you are going to get there, and some metrics of success, you can either show how something does or doesn't fit inside what you are trying to accomplish. Also, the more complete and well-documented a plan, the less likely someone will throw in random ideas.

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# Project Charter

Vision - an idealistic view of the desired outcomes to be produced by a project upon successful project completion.

Mission- outlines the project path and clarifies how the project will be developed.

SMART Objectives- descriptions of expectations to be satisfied at successful completion of the project or its certain stage or activity, within a certain period of time and at certain cost.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-Specific

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## 4. Define your scope

**Define your scope**– The charter can help draw boundaries around a project for an idea. Defining one’s scope not only helps figure out what is to be accomplished, but more importantly, it is there to protect from “scope creep,” or the idea that, after plans are made and resources are procured, the amount to be achieved during the current mission gradually increases (usually without an increase in resources or compensation).

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## 5. Document your facts and assumptions

**Document your facts and assumptions** - Facts are known truths, whereas assumptions are assertions accepted as truth. We gather pertinent facts, but we also make assumptions early in a project planning process. It is good to define those assumptions for two reasons:

- 1) If there are questions about why decisions were made, it is good to have documented the rationale. There could be good reasons behind things that turn out to be wrong decisions, so it is important to document the “why” behind some foundational elements to a project plan.
- 2) Assumptions should be revisited throughout the project.

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## 6. Seek input during the initiation and planning phases

**Seek input during the planning phase** – If some people are constantly adopting the Good Idea Fairy approach, begin to seek them out earlier in the process. Even if you don't incorporate their ideas, you can detail why in your scope and assumptions.

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## 7. Formalize the presentation of your plan

**Formalize the presentation of your plan** — If you plan on using a white board, it might seem more “changeable” to Good Idea Fairies than if you used large paper, such as butcher paper. Paper is more permanent, it remains available for regular review, and it can prevent you covering the same ground repeatedly. Finally, on a separate note, use a professional PowerPoint slide deck to show where you are in the timeline and to define the scope.

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## 8. Say yes to anything you can, short of changing anything of substance

**Say yes to anything you can, short of changing anything of substance** — If someone has an idea that you have already integrated into a plan, go ahead and let them have credit for it. Sometimes sharing the credit on the origins of some ideas allows you to say no to some other ideas. When getting more people involved, they become vested in its ultimate success.

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## Exercise 3: Any winners?

Which of the 8 do you think would be the most useful to combat the reasons your projects regularly get delayed or expanded putting success at risk?

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## Caveat: Be open to good ideas.

Be open to the fact that it could actually be an idea worth considering. In the South, we say even the blind squirrel occasionally finds a nut. Make sure that you reject the Good Idea Fairy's suggestion on its (lack of) merit, rather than the fact that it comes from a source yet to contribute a helpful suggestion.

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## In short...



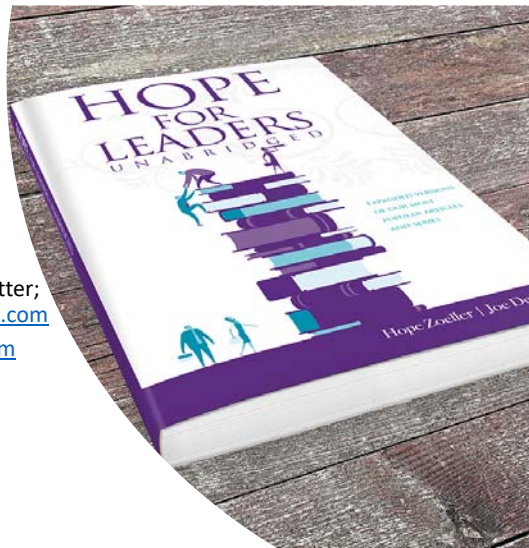
**Good planning,  
good communication and  
stakeholder commitments  
ward off the good idea fairy.**

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## In Closing

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