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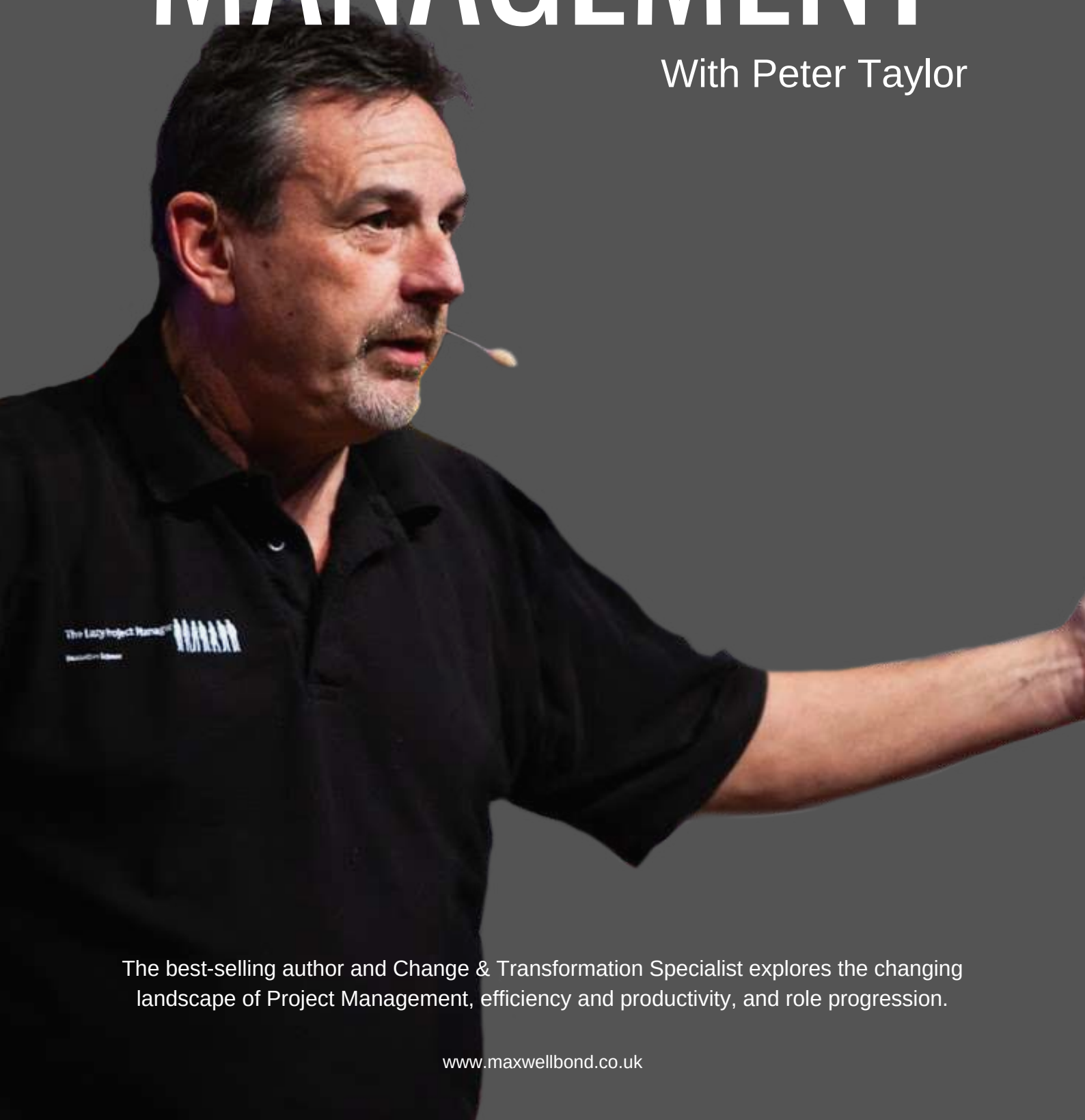
# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

## With Peter Taylor

The best-selling author and Change & Transformation Specialist explores the changing landscape of Project Management, efficiency and productivity, and role progression.

www.maxwellbond.co.uk

# ABOUT US

Maxwell Bond is a recruitment consultancy, specialising in technology and digital recruitment across the UK, helping companies from FTSE 100's to SME's. Since their inception in 2016, Maxwell Bond and its team of experienced and people-oriented consultants have built a strong reputation for providing exceptional recruitment delivery, as well as giving back to the community by hosting training and learning opportunities through events and webinars. You can get in touch with any of the team for help with recruitment, finding your next role, or for future speaking and event opportunities.

# WHITEPAPER OVERVIEW

On Thursday 18th June, Change & Transformation Specialist, best-selling author and lifestyle coach, Peter Taylor joined Maxwell Bond to discuss Project Management, and how to double productivity without doubling our workload. Utilising his 30 years of experience, Peter was able to offer unique, tips, tricks and insights on how to successfully navigate work, life, and projects to ensure we get maximum output from minimal input, whilst also exploring the changing world of project management.

The full webinar replay is available now to watch for free. Simply click the YouTube icon below to head over to the recording. Alternatively, you can read the highlights here.

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# CURRENT HIRING MENTALITY

Throughout the pandemic, a lot of workers, including project managers have been furloughed or made redundant. This has caused a growth in the candidate talent pool, meaning that businesses can afford to be more selective about who they hire.

Some companies require Project Management candidates to have very specific tech skills rather than more general project management experience. Whilst it is reasonable for a company to look for candidates with industry experience and knowledge, in a lot of cases more general Project Managers are more than adequate, as project management is a skill all in itself which can generally be transferred.

For example, if a business was looking to build up a Project Management team for generic delivery, it shouldn't matter too much what technology they have used before, unless a very niche and specific technology is to be used.

The concern is that, with an enlarged candidate pool, companies can start to be more demanding of experience and less competitive with their offers. Additionally, companies may then miss out on the best project managers, because they have instead opted for someone with the right words on their CV. This means recruitment becomes more of a box ticking exercise, which results in the loss of great candidates and reduced diversity.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN HIRING PROJECT MANAGERS

It's easy to look at someone's CV and focus on the certifications and qualifications, but from experience, Peter suggests that recommendations are really something to take into consideration. Crash courses and certifications are rife online, and relatively easy to achieve, whereas good recommendations are from a place of real experience and past activity and shows the impact that one person has had on another person, company or community.

Reading about past projects from previous employers, co-workers or team members can help shine a light on a candidate's passion for their work, their personality, and their character. Recommendations from credible sources can really champion a candidates case and articulate well what that candidate can bring to the table.

# WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER

Efficiency and effectiveness are pivotal to maximising productivity and output, without overwhelming and overworking yourself. Peter quoted that "progress is made by lazy people finding an easier way to do something" which led into a small discussion on his book, The Lazy Project Manager. He acknowledges that it was this book which we wrote ten years ago, that has had a real lasting impact on him, and which has enabled him to write 18 more books and talk at international events. His biggest lesson learned is that there is a lesson to be learned every step of the way, and every mistake made should be seen as a learning opportunity. Nobody gets to the top without making mistakes, and being open, honest and accountable for them is how we all grow.

# PROJECT SPONSORSHIP

Underpinning successful Project Sponsorship is the need for open discussions with Project Sponsors about the value of sponsorship. It's also important to offer them coaching sessions and training to allow them to evolve and gain knowledge in the required areas. Businesses should also work closely with Project Managers, and teach them how to work effectively with the current Project Sponsors, to maximise potential. A survey of international businesses from a variety of different sectors an industry on Project Sponsorship, revealed the following:

**100%** agree that Project Sponsorship is important.

**85%** say that they have Project Sponsorship.

**83%** admit that they offer no support or mentoring for Project Sponsors.

# NURTURING DEVELOPMENT

Enabling the development and growth of new Project Managers can be easily achieved by businesses of all sizes, by ensuring there is a 'community of Project Managers' who can support each other. Key to this, is creating a safe environment which will nurture growth and encourage development, which is something a PMO is able to do.

In addition to this, businesses can create buddy systems, so that everyone of varying seniority and experience has somebody to go to, to ask questions and learn from. There is also the option to utilise remote and external project management coaches, who can offer objective tips and advice when it is needed. Imperatively, all Project Managers should have a support network around them and should have access to help when they need it.



# PMO'S: GETTING IT RIGHT



Depending on the business, a PMO can be supportive, controlling, or directing, but to be effective they must be partnered with the right leader and the right team, and must be unique and willing to adapt and evolve alongside that specific business.

They must be able to collaborate well with teams and coworkers, and should therefore avoid becoming the 'project police', and instead act as a support function who helps to primarily prevent issues rather than having to fix them later down the line. A PMO who is solely about discipline and checklists will disenchant entire teams of workers, which is where issues will arise.

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# AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

From experience, Peter admits that he has rarely used one sole method of project delivery, instead utilising a mix of Agile, Lean and Gated, simply using the best features and benefits from each. Regardless of the chosen delivery method, there always need for a Project Manager who will oversee the full project lifecycle from start to finish, act as a key decision maker, and ensure progress is being made to meet deadlines. Agile can be very beneficial in terms of its adaptability, flexibility and fast pace and decision making, but organisations don't have to commit to one method **or** another.

# SENIORITY & MERGING ROLES

Many Project Managers can define themselves on their CV as a 'Senior Project Manager', but what factors contribute to this seniority? Is it time spent in the role, number of companies worked for, size of the companies worked for, or delivery of results? Could it be a mix of all of the above? As with most things, this definition is arbitrary and dependent on the hiring company or business.

For some, seniority is solely dependent on length of service, and promotions and pay-rises are automatically awarded on this basis. However, in reality, it's important to really quantify and differentiate Project Managers and Senior Project Managers to clearly define the step between the two.

Peter believes that a Senior Project Manager should exhibit strong experience with scaling and risk, internal and external qualifications, as well community responsibility or the ability to mentor and guide Junior Project Managers. Due to the fast moving nature of many industries it's important to assess Project Managers based on their current or latest project - "you're only as good as your last project."

Another interesting evolution in the Project Management space is the blurring of general role definitions including BA's, Project and Programme Managers. There is no standardised view of these job titles, and there is therefore no coherence to what these roles mean to different businesses.

In small scale projects it can be possible to combine two roles (such as BA and Project Manager), however as risk or scale increases, it is important to have both for objectivity and the collaborative partnership, as well as a more focussed and balanced workload.

# CHANGE MANAGEMENT



A lot of companies believe that they are well equipped to handle Change Management, but this is often not the case.

The current pandemic have encouraged, and in some cases forced businesses to embrace and accelerate change and transformation. Within organisations, Change Management is overlooked. This increases the importance of ensuring that Project Managers, and especially Senior Project Managers are educated on the basic principles of Organisational Change Management, so that they can understand and identify when things are not being actioned correctly.

By nature humans are often reluctant to change, and the same can be said of businesses. However, we live in a world that is naturally fast paced and driven by change and growth, and it is imperative that businesses start prioritizing Change Management and place it at the heart of their business. Being quick to adapt and stay flexible in changing circumstances can become fundamental to maintaining competitive advantage.

For businesses to stay competitive and profitable, it is imperative that they are agile in order to keep up and respond to sudden changes within their market. To be effective organisations must have great leadership connected to great sponsorship to drive change through to both Project Managers and wider teams. It's also important to unhold these structures, as change is constant and businesses need to be able to constantly adapt to emerging needs and requirements.

Businesses can build up and reinforce Change Management within their organisation by simply encouraging employees to read up and learn about change and transformation. This often starts by un-learning outdated and current Change processes, and relearning correct and effective methodologies and structures internally. Employees should learn how to then break down new processes in order to fully understand them and the importance of them. Courses and coaching are also alternative options.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TIP

At the end of a project, reflect on the lessons you have learned, and **share those lessons**. However, make sure to keep this information short and succinct so that you can really focus on driving those lessons throughout the business and the wider community. Learning one or two lessons well is better than going away from a project with 28 learning points that you won't have time to action properly.

# INITIATING PROJECTS DURING COVID-19

In the current crisis, it can be hard to determine whether or not it is a good idea for certain projects to go ahead. Additional financial and workforce pressures naturally increases the level of risk for any project. Responding to these concerns, Peter suggested some tips to manage and decide which projects are truly business-necessary and which ones can be put on the back burner.

**01** CHALLENGE PROJECTS THAT DON'T PROVIDE A MEASURABLE ROI

**02** REFUSE PROJECTS THAT DON'T FIT THE BUSINESS NEEDS RIGHT NOW

**03** FOCUS ON PROJECTS WITH FAST DELIVERY/ REDUCED TIME SPAN



# NEW MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES



Project Managers often communicate efficiently with remote and office based teams, and remote working under the current COVID-19 restrictions shouldn't cause any issue to a project lifecycle and delivery.

Issues can arise around team spirit and bonding, and Project Managers need to be more creative around engagement and put more effort into communications to ensure that everybody is well informed and always feels part of the team.

Furthermore, as businesses begin to increase project workload to make up for lost revenue (COVID-19 related), PMO's should be looking at Project and Management efficiency in order to optimise project delivery.

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## GET IN TOUCH

FOR HELP WITH PROJECT, PROGRAMME, BA AND CHANGE & TRANSFORMATION
RECRUITMENT, OR FOR FUTURE EVENT AND SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES, REACH
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