

**Lessons Learned in Project Management:
140 Tips from 140 Leaders in 140 Words or Less**

Dr. John A. Estrella, CMC, PMP, CBAP, CTFL, CSTE
08 April 2009

I woke up at 4:30 a.m. today; could not get back to sleep because of a Twitter-inspired book concept that was swirling in my head. If 140 experienced project managers can come up with 140 tips, each in 140 words or less, we'll have a very concise body of knowledge that will be useful for all project managers.

Would you like to be part of it?

Tip: Ten words or less (start with an action verb)

Explanation: 110 words or less (describe the tip and the reason behind it; provide examples; use bullets for brevity)

Conclusion: 20 words or less (summarize your tip)

By participating, you are granting me full rights to publish and use your tip. You will not receive any compensation other than an attribution and an electronic copy of the book.

Get the guidelines and examples: <http://johnestrella.com/LLPM.pdf>

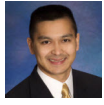
Four easy steps to become a published project management author

①	Visit my blog about this book and click on the Comments link. http://blog.johnestrella.com/2009/04/become-a-project-management-author/
②	Complete the following fields in the "Leave a Reply" section. John Doe, PMP ← Your name; highest degree and/or PM-specific designation (mandatory) johndoe@gmail.com ← Your e-mail; will not be published or shared or rented (mandatory) http://johndoe.com ← Your Web site URL; include the http:// portion (optional)
③	Type your tip in Microsoft Office Word. Check your spelling and grammar. Make sure that your tip contains 140 words or less by clicking on Review and then Word Count in Microsoft Office Word. If you are happy with it, cut and paste it in the comment field. I will only accept one tip per project manager. I reserve the right not to publish your tip. However, I will give a higher priority to the first 140 tips!
④	Add the following two lines at the end of your tip (not included in the 140 words). Project Manager, Your Corporation ← Title, company (optional) President, PMI Chapter ← Other PM roles, achievements or authorship (optional)

Your tip will appear in the book similar to the three example tips below with an attribution under it.

John Doe, PMP
Project Manager, Your Corporation
President, PMI Chapter
<http://johndoe.com>

**Please distribute this document to other project managers who may be interested.
Questions? Send me an e-mail at [jestrella@agilitek DOT com](mailto:jestrella@agilitek.com).**



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Example 1: Not Technical

Remember that you are managing people in your projects

Regardless of the size of your project, remember that you are managing people—not processes, not procedures, not the *PMBOK® Guide*! People will develop the project charter and the project management plan—and collect requirements, define the scope, create the WBS and so on. Given this, you need to take the time to know your project team members. Find out their likes and dislikes.

What type of work do they like to do? What motivates them? Do they need detailed instructions or will a high-level description of the objective be sufficient? How did they perform on their last project? Most importantly, you need to treat them with respect.

If you take good care of the people in your project, they will take good care of your project.

Example 2: Somewhat Technical

Use three-point estimates to make contingency reserves more accurate

Duration and cost estimates can be greatly improved by incorporating uncertainty and risks. Unfortunately, some project managers simply pick an arbitrary percentage when allocating contingency reserves (e.g., 10% or 25% of the total duration or cost).

For each project activity, ask your team members to provide three estimates: most likely (t_M), optimistic (t_O) and pessimistic (T_M). You can do this for duration only, cost only or both. Use PERT analysis to calculate the expected value (t_E) using the formula $t_E = (t_O + 4t_M + t_P) / 6$. Calculate the standard deviation (t_S) = $(t_P - t_O) / 6$.

Manage your project based on t_E . Your contingency reserve should be $\pm 3t_S$. In doing so, statistically, there is a 99.73% probability that the duration or cost will fall within $t_E \pm 3t_S$.

Example 3: Tool or Technique

Whisk through work breakdown structures by using WBS Chart Pro™

In the past, I used to create work breakdown structures (WBS) by brainstorming with my project team using a white board, sticky notes or by projecting my notes (old organizational hierarchy feature of Microsoft Office PowerPoint, a bullet list in Microsoft Office Word or the Gantt Chart view in Microsoft Office Project).

With WBS Chart Pro, you can visually create a WBS, as it should be, and then export the results into Microsoft Office Project. The bidirectional feature is really neat (changes in WBS Chart Pro get reflected in Microsoft Office Project in real-time and vice-versa). During your weekly progress meeting, you can use WBS Chart Pro to show a graphical summary of your project.

Go to <http://criticaltools.com> to get more information and to download a trial version.