



PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

From Chaos to Clarity: How Our Nonprofit Won the Project Management Software Game

Keshni N. Washington

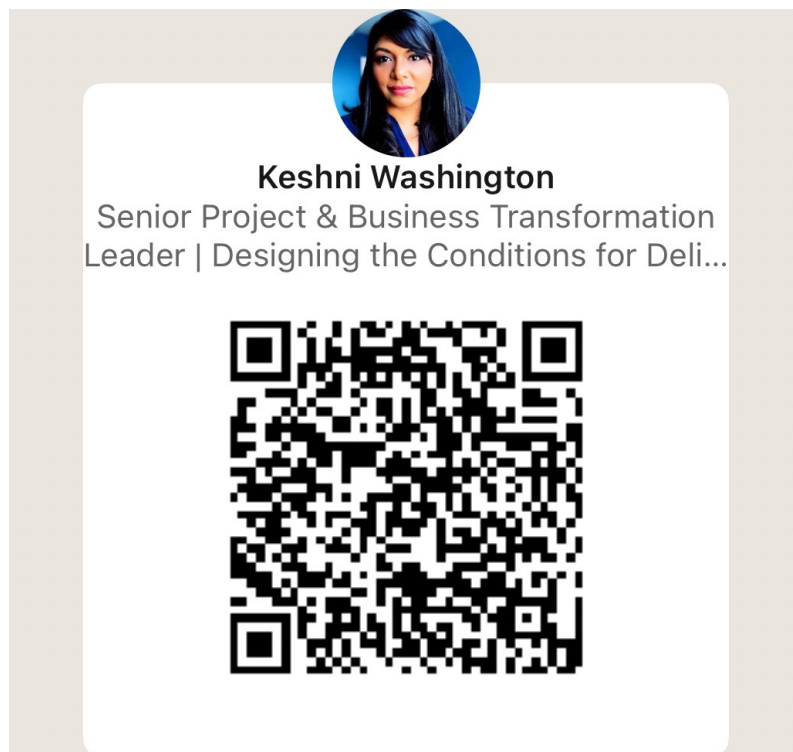
30 April | 2:30PM | Charles Carroll Room 2203

PMSYMPOSIUM.UMD.EDU



About Me

- Connect: [linkedin.com/in/keshninaicker/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/keshninaicker/)



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I'm a project manager who believes the most important PM skills have nothing to do with software. They're about people.

- **PMP | MBA | BS Computer Science**
 - **15+** years of experience
 - **GLOBAL EXPERIENCE:**
USA, UK, South Africa
- Previous companies include:*
- **International Monetary Fund**
 - **Development Bank of Southern Africa**

Session Agenda



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- **The Challenge: Where We Started (5 min)**
Setting the scene — what chaos looked like for us
- **The Decision: Choosing Our Tool (5 min)**
How we evaluated and selected a PM platform
- **The Journey: Change Management in Action (12 min)**
Navigating resistance, learning strategies, and storytelling
- **The Outcomes: Wins and Key Takeaways (8 min)**
Celebrating progress and lessons learned
- **Q&A (10 min)**

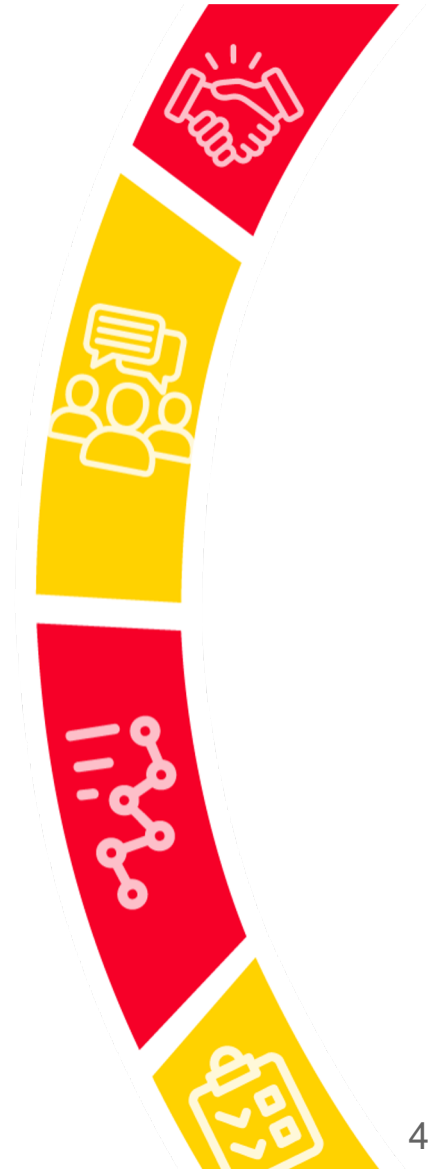


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Part 1: The Challenge

Where We Started



Our Nonprofit's PM Reality



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- Multiple teams, multiple tools, zero alignment across the organization
- Spreadsheets everywhere — every manager had their own system
- Critical project info lived in people's heads, not shared systems
- Staff turnover created knowledge gaps with no safety net
 - When someone left, their projects often left with them

The Spark: We Need a Tool



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- The breaking point: a failed project due to miscommunication and lost information
- Leadership directive: find and implement an org-wide PM platform
- A small matrix team formed to lead the evaluation and rollout
- We evaluated 4 platforms: ease of use, collaboration, onboarding, and budget
 - Selected a cloud-based tool for its simplicity and shared visibility

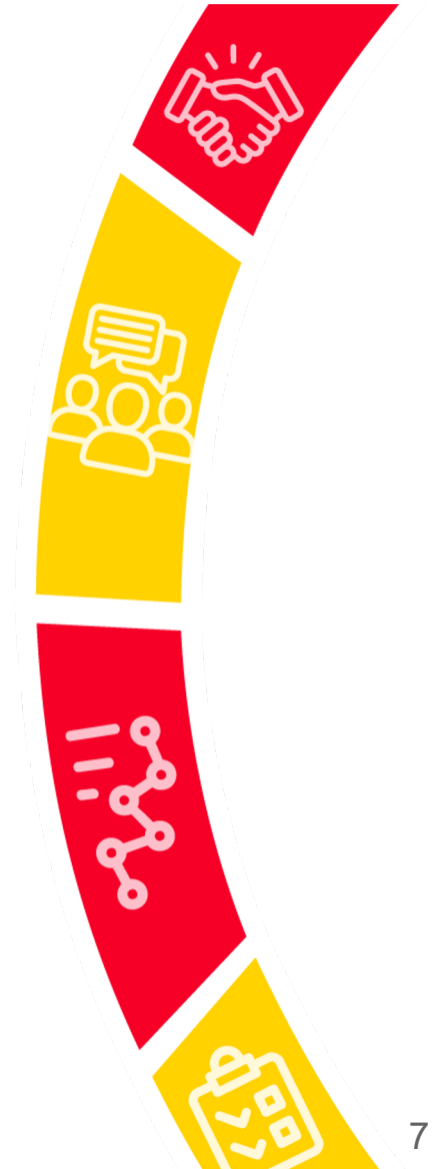


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Part 2: The Journey

Change Management in Action





Before vs. After



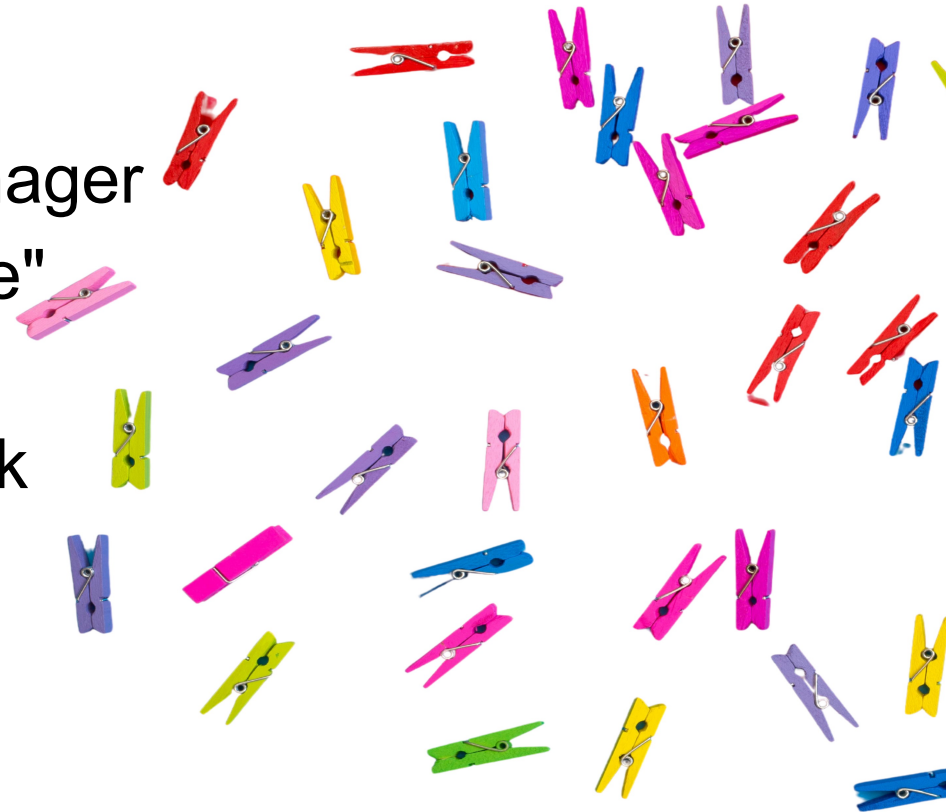
Before vs. After: The Messy Middle



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BEFORE

- Siloed project tracking per manager
- No shared vocabulary for "done"
- Status update = "Go ask Jane"
- Decision making driven in Slack



Before vs. After: The Messy Middle



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AFTER

- Centralized project hub for all teams – Wrike
- Shared milestones and shared language – Org-wide collaboration
- Status = Open the shared dashboard



Navigating Resistance



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NO!



Too
Busy

- Resistance is not rebellion — it is fear, uncertainty, and loss of control
- Common objection: "This is just more work. I liked my spreadsheet."
- Strategy: Listen first, then address the "What's in it for me?"
- Cultivated internal champions — most trusted, not most tech-savvy
 - One-on-one conversations with the most resistant team members

Hands-On Learning Experiences



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Hands-On Learning Experiences



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- Dropped the traditional "sit and click through a demo" training model
- Role-based workshops where staff migrated their REAL active projects
- Quick-reference job aids tailored to each role and comfort level
- Office hours drop-in sessions for ongoing support after go-live + one on one with each team to mentor
 - Peer-to-peer learning — staff taught each other new features

Storytelling as a Change Tool



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Storytelling as a Change Tool



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- "We're upgrading" vs. "We're building something better together"
- Working group with a rep from each team (before, during, after) – shared decision making & ownership
- Framed the rollout as a shared adventure and collective achievement, led with benefits
- Real staff quotes and early wins featured in all-staff communications
- Monthly highlight reels made progress visible and public — not just reported up.

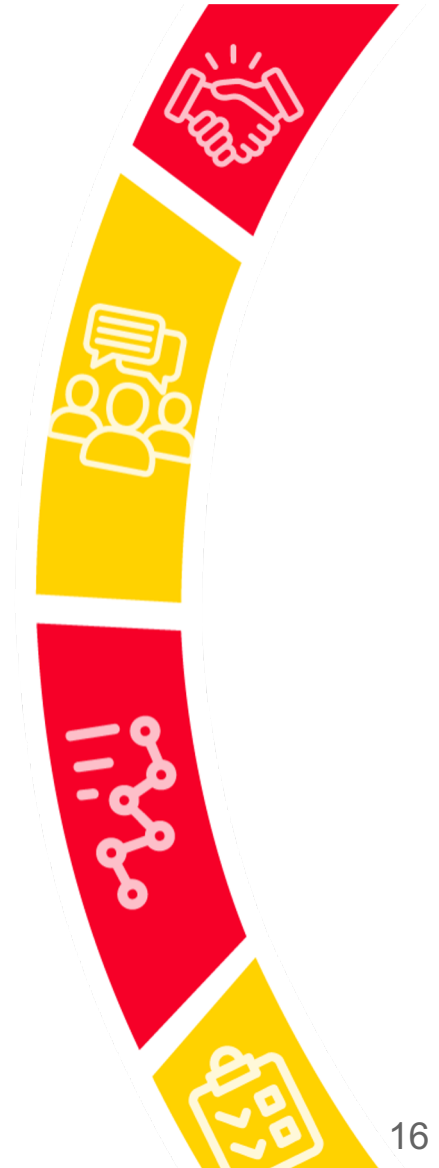


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Part 3: The Outcomes

Wins, Lessons & Takeaways





Celebrate Small Wins: Early and Often

- First team to go fully live was celebrated at our all-staff meeting
- "PM Tool MVP" shoutouts in newsletters, team channels, and all-hands
- Live adoption dashboard made org-wide progress visible to everyone
- 100% staff adoption achieved within 6 months of go-live
 - Celebration is not fluff — it is strategy that accelerates adoption

Key Takeaways



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Adoption is Emotional

Turn skeptics into champions. Create shared ownership. Always answer: What's in it for me?

Communication is Your Superpower

Frame change with stories. Minimize friction through transparency. Celebrate progress loudly.

Small Wins Drive Big Change

Recognize progress at every stage. Make milestones visible. Build momentum through consistency.



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Questions & Evaluation

Evaluate Session:



Contact Information:

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References



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- Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2010). Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard. Crown Business.
- PMI Talent Triangle - Ways of Working Domain (pmi.org)