



PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

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



AGILE PROCUREMENT AND COST OF MULTITASKING

Yuliya Kondratenko, MA, PMP
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Today's presentation

- What are some of the useful strategies when contracting out professional services in an agile environment?
- What are the “real” costs of multitasking?
- How do we cultivate effective and positive relationships with suppliers of expertise?

Procurement Environment

- **Project activities:** true innovation and knowledge co-creation
 - **Team:** heterogeneous ecosystem
 - Researchers
 - Gig workers: artists, software developers, curators, poets, writers, sound engineers
- **Culture:** high level of trust

Project as a Cathedral Metaphor



Team Augmentation as a Procurement Strategy

- **Benefits**

- Access to knowledge heterogeneity
- More accurate effort-based estimations
- Increased autonomy
- Sense of purpose

Extending the Metaphor

- From *The Stones of Venice Vol. II* by John Ruskin
“So that, in the best times of Gothic, a useless window would rather have been opened in an unexpected place for the sake of the surprise, than a useful one forbidden for the sake of symmetry.”

Energize, Activate, Inspire, Give Purpose



Team Augmentation as a Procurement Strategy

- Risks
 - Issues finding the “right” contactors
 - Burden of managing dependencies
 - Lack of effective prioritization model
 - “Unhealthy” codependency on a contractor's expertise
 - Multitasking

Is multitasking good or bad for projects?

- Multitasking: the act of taking on multiple projects at the same time (Appelbaum et al. 2008)
- Impact on:
 - Productivity
 - Timeline
 - Ability to prioritize effectively
 - Inter-project learning

Risk Mitigation Strategies

- Reduplication of expertise
- Modularity
- Heterogeneous multitasking between projects but homogeneous tasks
- WIP controls

Key Findings

- Team Augmentation is the preferred strategy
- Multitasking is more complicated than originally thought. It costs team productivity but could also be mitigated by inter-project learning.

References

- PMBOK® Guide, sixth edition, p. 554
- Slide 4, image source: <https://www.trover.com/d/t4Cr-cathedral-of-junk-austin-texas>
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