# 11. Marcus Parker: Two Houses

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**00:02 Speaker 1:** We need to find a way to bring the quality profession, and the tools, into the project management world, and vice versa. Quality managers need to know how to become good project managers.

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**00:16 Speaker 2:** From the Washington DC Chapter of the Project Management Institute, this is PM Point of View. The podcast that looks at project management from all the angles. Here's your host, Kendall Lott.

**00:26 Speaker 3:** Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair business practices where we lay our scene. The Project Management Institute, PMI and The American Society for Quality, ASQ, competitors for your dollars, collaborators for business success. How do they speak to each other? How do they co-exist to improve business outcomes? Marcus Parker, President of the Silver Spring Chapter of PMI, and a board member of the Baltimore Chapter of ASQ, is an advocate for strengthening the relationship between the two professions. And today, he tells us what each organization has to say to business professionals, and why it's important.

**01:02 S1:** Yes. So American Society of Quality is the global leader in the community of quality management and quality assurance. They share ideas about how to make the world work better. They focus on quality as a global priority, and they're also an organization that has a professional standard for not only certification, but also ethics, when it comes to quality management in the organization. So, it's a moral standard for how you conduct yourself, and how you conduct yourself in a quality way in an organization. But then they also have global standards, such as ISO 9000 and then they have a myriad of certifications around supporting that. You can be an auditor, or you can be a lead evaluator, you can get ISO certified to help companies become certified in these quality standards.

**01:52 S3:** ISO, the international standards organization?

**01:54 S1:** That's correct.

**01:55 S3:** Now, what is ASQ's role with ISO?

**01:57 S1:** So ASQ's role is they provide training for delivering the ISO standard, and helping organizations achieve and maintain that standard.

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**02:10 S3:** So let's talk about the Chapter then. So Baltimore's where you belong?

**02:13 S1:** Yep.

**02:13 S3:** What made you interested to join that board?

**02:16 S1:** Yeah. So in my professional career, I started out in manufacturing engineering. And quite frankly, that's my degree. Bachelor of Science in Manufacturing Engineering, and my Master's is in Product Development. So my first job was at Xerox Corporation in manufacturing and quality management. So, yeah. I've been around quality management my entire career.

**02:36 S3:** What is it about quality management that you like?

**02:38 S1:** Yeah. I think it speaks to the core of business. When you're in manufacturing, you have to deliver a quality product to ensure that you meet customers' expectations. So it's all about reducing defects, doing things right the first time. And that's a philosophy. So you wanna make sure that as a professional, you're trained, and you have the tools and techniques to do that.

**03:04 S3:** Project Management has 10 areas of knowledge that they call knowledge areas, one of which is quality. Can you talk a little bit about that intersection between how they talk about quality in the two roles, is it the same? Can you map 'em? Does it matter?

**03:17 S1:** As a practitioner, there's a direct intersection of the PMBOK and the aims and goals of American Society of Quality. So let's just talk through the process groups. So you initiate, plan, execute, monitor/ control and close. IPECC. That's the PMBOK framework. And then you have the knowledge areas. When you come down to the knowledge area of quality management, the first thing you have to do is plan for quality. So you have to have a understanding of, from a project management standpoint, what is your quality management system? What is your philosophy that you wanna implement, not only on your specific project, but what is your organizational's quality philosophy?

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**04:09 S1:** So there's certain fathers of quality. You have Walter Deming, "Management is 80% of the quality." So managers have to get involved so that people on the floor can actually achieve what they want to do. So if there's a part that needs to be changed, the poor guy on the floor, he has no hope of changing the machine. But the manager has the power and the know-how, how to get that piece of equipment changed.

**04:38 S3:** That's coming out of the post war rebuilding-Japan type of work. Those were often the analogies and the images we're given. So take me into the IT world, the services world... Let's get off the manufacturing floor, 'cause most of us don't actually understand that. Bring that forward from a software perspective 'cause we know that software has a whole issue...

**04:54 S1:** I think the key is this. We're in an austere environment. So companies are having to do more with less, or do more with the same. And they're asking their employees, their line managers, their functional managers, to lead projects and deliver on time, on budget, from a quality perspective. So, the manager doesn't have the ability to say, oftentimes, "I have a quality manager to do just quality stuff." Or, "I have a project manager just to do project management." So it requires the manager to have the skillsets of quality management, and the skillsets of project management.

**05:39 S3:** So let me stop you there, because in theory, all areas of the PMBOK would be areas that they need those skillsets in. There's something about quality that has you smiling right now. So what is it about quality that makes that so much higher or important in it?...

**05:51 S1:** So when you look at the iron triangle, if you will; scope, schedule, cost, and 'Q', quality.

**06:00 S3:** Correct.

**06:00 S1:** But when you're talking about software quality, let's bring it back to that. How do you do that? How do you ensure that you're gonna deliver the right product. So when you push that quality button, the manager needs to understand what are the basic tools that are at your disposal. So, ASQ focuses on that queue and teaches their professionals and practitioners those tools. So, they go deep into Pareto charts, Scatter plots, Histograms, run charts. A project manager, he needs to know enough about quality management to ask for someone to go do...

**06:39 S3:** Sounds like he or she is gonna be the consumer of that information that they might be producing there.

**06:44 S1:** And now, in an austere environment, also the producer.

**06:47 S3:** So, are we lacking in training in that do you feel? Or do people get this?

**06:53 S1:** So, right now in my professional opinion, there's still silos of professional excellence. And what I'm here to talk to you about and why I'm so interested in this discussion is 'cause I submit to you and the listeners to this podcast that we need to find a way to bring the quality profession and the tools into the project management world and vice versa. Quality managers need to know how to become good project managers.

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**07:26 S3:** When you talked about deeper in the Pareto charts for example, the tools of the trade which are highlighted in many of the project, and program, management guides as well. It strikes me that size or complexity must matter. There must be some threshold for pushing that deep into it.

**07:40 S1:** It's just like the PMBOK, right? The PMBOK guide gives you a myriad of tools, and you have to use your professional judgement, or professional expertise, to know when to use those tools. Companies are going away from the model of, "I have a quality manager and a project manager."

**07:57 S3:** So even more cross-training is better?

**07:58 S1:** More cross-training is better. And that's the future of the modern day professional in these austere environments.

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**08:12 S1:** So let's talk about Six Sigma.

**08:14 S3:** Okay.

**08:15 S1:** Right. So Six Sigma is a statistical term which means zero defects or 3.4 defects out of a million opportunities, regardless of the process. It strives to produce zero defects. So in order to be a Six Sigma practitioner in the service industry delivering software, it's very important that you understand how to manage a project. Because the Six Sigma practitioner doesn't do the work by themselves. You're trying to be a change agent in your organization and you need to know how to manage a group, how to facilitate a meeting, how to have an agenda. These are all the things project managers do second nature, that quality managers and quality practitioners have to practice. They understand demand; define the problem, measure the problem, analyze the data and make the improvement. But then to put the control in place, it's very important that you work with people to understand the human element.

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**09:23 S3:** Project management, quality, which one has the better, bigger, more important value proposition to a commercial enterprise?

**09:32 S1:** So that's why I'm here. They're equal. Professionals need both of those skill sets. I think professionals that have put themselves in the silo of excellence, whether it be quality management or just project management, in this environment at this present time, are in danger of being downsized. So as a professional, as a father of a young child, and a husband, it is all about time and the almighty dollar out of my wallet. So create one forum where I can get the best of both worlds. ASQ has their training; green belt, black belt, auditor, et cetera. Those courses should be offered as part of the PMI curriculum through ASQ. Likewise, the ASQ managers, they wanna be project managers, they wanna excel in their organizations. Offer the PMP in their organizations.

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**10:29 S3:** We've got big transformative words here. Change is sustainability. For adapting to a future world. Time is to sustainability.

**10:38 S1:** Quality runs deep, and deep in years. So you'll go through the flavors of the day, quality circles. You'll notice that many companies allow the employees wear the quality statement on their badge or have it on their desk. Because quality is everybody's job.

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**11:03 S1:** We can do good with the positions that we have if we lead people in the right way. It's natural. You cannot be a good project manager without being a good quality manager because they're triple constrained. Scope, schedule, cost and quality. You can't be a good quality practitioner without understanding how to interact with your organization on a professional level through projects. As a leader in both organizations, I feel I'm on the forefront of bringing us together.

**11:38 S3:** Special thanks to our guest Marcus Parker. Our theme music was composed by Molly Flannery used with permission. Post production performed at M Powered Strategies and technical and web support provided by Potomac Management Resources. I'm your host Kendall Lott and until next time, keep it in scope and get it done.