PM Techniques in Ukraine

0:00:05.3 Announcer: 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.

0:00:15.4 Kendall Lott: Hello! Hello, PMs. The dog days of summer are back again. And this is your co-host Kendall Lott finding myself in the icky, sticky weather and that was actually on the official weather broadcast this morning. The icky sticky weather of 90-degree heat and 90% humidity in the armpit of the Chesapeake Bay also known as Northern Virginia. We have a part two of an episode today following up on our PM under duress episode. So, I'm bringing back co-host Mike Hannah for Fortessa Consulting and Sergiy Potapov a PM expert in various organizations, including being a PM architect in Ukraine. Gentlemen, welcome.

0:00:53.7 Mike Hannah: Hey, boys.

0:00:54.7 Sergiy Potapov: Hello to everyone.

0:00:56.3 KL: Hello to everyone. Yes. Where are you calling in from Sergiy?

0:01:00.0 SP: So. Right now, I'm in my apartment in Bucha. This unfortunately very famous small town close to Kyiv. Right now, I'm in safety in comfort, and I'm really glad to hear and speak to you again, guys.

0:01:15.2 KL: We're glad you're here as well. And I'm glad you're in safety and comfort. That's in the apartment you had talked to us said before. I believe that was locked up when the Russians had come through. Yeah.

0:01:23.1 SP: Yeah. And everything here is okay. But just five, six apartments from the big apartment building was untouchable and 160 was opened and robbed by Russians.

0:01:37.4 KL: Right. I'm sorry to hear that, but I'm glad you're back and safe and hopefully in comfortable weather or at least comfortable setting inside.

0:01:44.4 MH: And for our listeners. I think it's important to note that when Sergiy says safety and security, it's a relative term because before we pressed the record button, he mentioned how he heard a bomb go off. It was launched by the Russian army just yesterday morning. Was it Sergiy [laughter]

0:01:58.9 SP: No Last week Thursday or Friday. So, I woke up with the explosion sounds and that was not very pleasant waking up. So.

[laughter]

0:02:08.8 KL: Yeah, I agree. Good point there, Mike. That it's a relative concept, but also, I think it's one, that's a meaningful one, right? It has real meaning for him to be in a safe zone. Something that some of us like myself often take for granted that I get to have these podcasts from the safety of a suburb in Northern Virginia, which reminds me, Mike, where are you calling in from.

0:02:24.0 MH: Salt Lake City, just after a week of a different kind of project management challenge, where I was trying to motorbike on my electric motorbike all the way through Idaho, Wyoming and Southern Montana without losing charge in some remote mountain pass and getting back on time. So luckily all that went without a hitch because I guess you'd call it ample buffer planning.

[laughter]

0:02:46.5 KL: Does that mean you carried an extra battery?

0:02:48.6 MH: Actually, yes. And I bought a big military style backpack to fit the giant battery if I ever had to actually motorbike around with it. Luckily, I never needed that.

0:02:56.2 KL: I've heard of scope and time buffers, but now we're talking about energy buffers.

0:03:01.0 MH: Yep. Which is itself sort of can be used as a time buffer because otherwise I'm sitting there trying to recharge my bike using solar panels, which could take a few days.

0:03:08.9 KL: The trials and tribulations of project managers around the world is what I'm hearing right now. So, let's move on to our episode itself. So, we last spoke back in March when Russian invasion was only about six weeks old and there was kind of a lot of trouble there. And that has continued. So, we talked with Sergiy about how he had started some planning and execution around collecting and distributing humanitarian aid. It was beginning to pour into the country or stream into the country, into Ukraine at that time. And we covered how some common PM themes that he was dealing with, have a bit of a twist in some cases. And one of the lessons that I got out of it was even a PM under duress faces some of the similar challenges we do in terms of the topics and they weren't unusual. They just have a different weight perhaps.

0:03:45.0 KL: And we covered some stuff like stakeholder risk, the unreliable stakeholder, the need for unity of purpose and understanding intrinsic motivation of team members and those that are part of what we're doing, keeping focus across the teams. And then there was this, the two of you are very optimistic PMs having trust by default and understanding that fundamentally people are good or at least most people are good people working on our projects are good. So now we turn with an invasion six months old and we wanted to get some sense of outcomes. Sergiy has been talking to us about some tools that may or may not be working the way the rest of us might be thinking that they work on our projects wherever we find ourselves. So, with that, I want to turn to see how some of that's been working. What are some of the tools that you want to cover today? Sergiy, what are you finding interesting now that you've worked a few months in some areas there?

0:04:35.9 SP: So, first of all, I can say that unfortunately we can adopt for everything. And I can say that mostly in Ukraine and not in the zones, close to the combat zone, we are trying to create the normal life. It's a little bit difficult because our reality was changed and was changed dramatically. And I will try to explain why standard approach or standard tools do not work in this situation, like

work or like a big conflict or like big natural disaster something like this. And I will try to explain it based on the Cynefin framework from Dave Snowden. And then I will try to focus on the techniques or tools that works well, even in this situation, based on the standard approach to the project life cycle phases, we will cover the feasibility study stage and which techniques works well on this stage, then we will cover initiation. And learning phase, so I think we will speak about five or six techniques that work well even today. And if you will stop me, I also will try to give you some examples from the last three months that I spent as operational director in the small private clinic on the west of Ukraine.

0:06:01.5 MH: Hey, so if I might throw in for our listeners just to make sure it's clear, 'cause it's not super common in the PM world. This Cynefin framework that Sergiy mentioned that Dave Snowden came up with, if you're trying to Google it, it's written in Welsh. So the pronunciation of Cynefin is actually spelled C-Y-N-E-F as in Frank, I-N so I think to set the stage for you, Sergiy I think part of the power of that framework is it says, depending on whether you're dealing with a simple and well known and well bound problem, complicated or something with a lot of complexity, meaning not just complicated, but we don't even understand all aspects of how the system we're trying to manage in is really working, which starts to feel maybe more like Ukraine now to then the fourth quad, which is chaos, which is, there may well be a pattern in there that we can try to use. As we try to formulate some sort of structured management approach that we PMs are all well trained in, but we don't understand it yet. And in order to learn from it, we have to interact with this chaotic environment to start to learn and figure out what works. And I think that is super intriguing for today's podcast, because that's exactly the environment you found yourself in. Right. Sergiy?

0:07:09.6 SP: Yep.

0:07:10.7 KL: And that you actually, Mike, I remember you corrected me on that when I was trying to think in the context of the framework, what would that mean for a PM in taking action? And you said, no, they're in the chaos form, which is, take action, stop thinking, execute, because you can't know any better right now anyway, until you just get going. And so that was the nature of the problem. So actually, in that context, I'm wondering if the problem has matured at all, pick one of the types of tools you like to think about was one of them, shockingly, then not the thing that was helpful?

0:07:37.8 SP: No, no, no. I think there is no like some silver bullets or snake oils. I will not say I sell snake oil [chuckle], but the idea is to show you that not all the techniques you really like to use in standard and every day, you know, project management life will work in this disaster situation. First, the Cynefin framework was created by Dave Snowden to try to explain the complexity in different systems that works with people. And for me as a project manager, the word complexity is very close to word uncertainty because we project managers usually works with uncertainty that brings to us risks in our projects. So, complexity and uncertainty has a little difference, but we can try to use the Cynefin to explain how complex, how hard is to work, to operate risks to your project.

0:08:34.9 SP: And this framework have four different domains to describe the different levels of complexity or different types of uncertainty. And it is the clear or obvious when everything is clear. And you know what you know, there is complicated domain where we have known unknowns and you understand what is still you don't know. There is complex domain when you work with unknown unknowns. So, you have to try with some probes with some tests to find the right way to

achieve some result. And also, the chaos, with unknown unknowable, where all your previous experience will not help you to make right decision. And if you will spend time for analysis, the situation across you around you change dramatically. And all your previous analysis will not give you any data or information to make decisions.

0:09:33.4 SP: So that's the framework and I'm sure that everyone face with different types of complexity in your real life. And you can sort your projects, your tasks, your ideas, into different buckets for different types of complexity/uncertainty and your techniques, your methodology, your approach, your tools are prepared to work with the special type of uncertainty. And then imagine that in one day the situation changed and you obtain additional level of complexity for all your previous experience. In our situation, the typical or obvious project became complicated. The complicated project became complex. The complex project works like a chaotic and even chaotic tasks, you have, you know, chaos squares, you multiply chaos and chaos and obtain something interesting. And that's why your standard approach will not work for most of the projects. Even if you are ready to start to build some house or some shop or something like this, you will face a lot of risks that was not standard for the same project two months before, because you have problems with logistics, you have problems with people, you have problems with money.

0:11:00.6 SP: You have a lot of additional risks and you was not prepared for this kind of risk, just a few weeks before or, you start with some innovative project and, you have to test your ideas on some focus group or something like this, but you understand that your focus group did not react on your hypothesis. You are trying to test something, but people think about other tasks, other questions, other problems. And that's why standard tools will not give you the immediate result. And, you know, use some approaches, some techniques that even in this situation will give you a good result.

0:11:33.7 MH: Sergiy, can you give an example from early on in your attempts to try and get things organized when the initial chaos of the invasion was your new reality, and you were trying to get humanitarian assistance delivered.

0:11:45.6 SP: With humanitarian aid, I think that the main problem was that nobody expected that you need to have so much big trucks to deliver different goods into different places, and nobody were prepared for this situation. Also, approximately two months before in Ukraine, we have a very bad situation with diesel and enzyme. That was because before the war we've obtained up to 80% of fuel from the Russia by railroads. And right now, everything is closed. And the only source of fuel is to deliver fuel from the Poland or Slovakia through the Western border. And we have different types of rails in Ukraine and in Europe. And you can't just move the tank with the fuel by a railroad, because you have to take fuel out from one tank and put in another tank and you need special facilities and nobody think about it. So, the only way to deliver fuel into Ukraine is by trucks with tanks. There is no so many tanks in Europe to deliver the fuel into Ukraine. So that's an example.

0:13:00.0 KL: What was the impact on your schedule with that? Is that when it hit your schedule or did it cause you to completely miss some places where you needed the delivery for the rest of the project?

0:13:07.9 SP: So, you have to prioritize your trips. So many trips was just canceled. And then for example, you have to wait in a queue to put 20 liters of diesel in your car. You have to wait three to four hours and every day.

0:13:22.7 MH: What about regions of the country that had to be prioritized away? So, we just can't get you the fuel.

0:13:29.8 SP: I think that situation is better for the Western part because you have the short logistic leverage road and close to the Eastern part problems with fuels bigger and bigger and bigger. But that's an example nobody could imagine six months is before that you can see just zeros since price. It means there is no fuel [laughter] and you cannot buy it. So, the problem is not in the price. The problem is there is no fuel. And right now, the situation is better, not as six months as before, but quite good, much better than two months before.

0:14:04.6 MH: Do you have other stories where, whether it was because of a shortage of fuel or something that was sort of taken for granted before that suddenly was not available as a way to achieve the humanitarian assistance mission, where you had to get very creative and come up with different ways?

0:14:20.9 SP: Interesting story was we see of humanitarian aid on the Ukrainian territory, because again, most you are trying to use camels or buses or small trucks, something like this, but it's not efficient. And also, we've spoken about efficiency and effectiveness, and that was one nonstandard solution because on this big humanitarian hub, that was an ability to use railroads, but that was a problem with carriages. And I've seen that was two or three trains with standard passenger carriages without people, but all this places for passengers was filled with humanitarian aid and passenger carriages used like have to say it in English.

0:15:10.6 MH: Like cargo compartments.

0:15:12.2 SP: Most work cargo car, or something like this. So that's also an example. So, I have to use what you have to deliver goods to new place.

0:15:22.7 KL: I'd like you to connect this concept of feasibility studies. You'd mentioned before, when we were talking, we went on air here that those have a different role when you're in the complexity that you're dealing with. And perhaps even the chaos you're dealing with. And it sounds like it's a complex situation because the ideas, I don't know where my inputs are. I don't know what's available when I don't know who will be available when, what was your take on that? Is it just that it's too hard to know information to do a feasibility? Or is it the variance is too high? Like what's your take on the validity use? What was your experience and what can we learn from that about when we should, or shouldn't try to use one?

0:15:56.9 SP: Okay. So, for the standard life cycle of every project, you have the stage zero or pre rep project stage when you have to make some investigation researches. So, you have to understand what's your client base, what is potential number of sales, something like this. And every project needs to be calculated, maybe not very precise, but before you start, you have to understand what you want to achieve, what should be an outcome. And usually we use visibility study, some researches, some findings before we start the project, before we sign the project charter. And today in our situation, it is almost impossible to gather media data because in Ukraine, and let's say before the war, we have 40 millions people in Ukraine. And right now, I really don't know what is the exact statistics. But I think that up to 10 millions persons is right now, displaced persons, internal displaced, or external displaced persons.

0:17:01.8 SP: So, millions of Ukrainians are mostly are women and children are not in Ukraine. A lot of people was moved and mixed between different regions of the country. And right now, when you are trying to understand how many clients will be in your store or how many clients will buy your food, you really don't know because it is almost impossible to collect data. There are some attempts to calculate, to understand this streams of internal displaced persons by government. And they are trying to collect the information from mobile operators, but this information is not public. And you really don't know how many persons are in your region, especially if you are not in the capital city or in big city. If you are trying create or deliver some projects in the small cities in regions, you really don't understand what will be the number of potential buyers for your service or good or something like this.

0:18:04.9 SP: And it means it is very difficult for you to calculate again cost benefit analysis. Because you really don't know how much you want to invest to achieve something, to achieve what, and in this situation, what really works. If you cannot obtain the real market data, you start to use different assumptions, rough assumptions, very roughly assumptions with very big gap of error. And then it is very important to put some constraints or some thresholds for different situations. For example, you can say, okay understand that this project for me will be complex and I will try to achieve some results. I will test differently hypothesis, but I understand that for me, project should give the number of clients no less than, or I understand that I will try to test some hypothesis for the period, no less than for example, two or three months, or I will test invest in this test no more than $50,000.

0:19:09.0 SP: And you cannot calculate exact numbers for what you want to achieve, but you put some thresholds and this helps you to move forward. For example, this small private clinic wants to open the branch office in the neighbor region, 50 kilometers from the main headquarter, and nobody knows what will be the number of patients. We cannot calculate the economics of the project, but we understand that for us, this project is okay if we will generate the flow for example 30 patients per week, what should be done to generate 30 patients? And our capacity is for example to make 60 or 70 examination per week, but we understand that even 30 is okay for us. So, that's assumptions and that's thresholds and that's example of different inputs.

0:20:04.0 MH: And then you get feedback that tells you if the demand is being met or not. Right?

0:20:09.3 SP: Yeah. Yeah.

0:20:09.3 MH: And then...

0:20:09.7 KL: Did it work? Were you able... I mean, so the question is, did it work? So, what's the outcome of planning that and when it transpired, what happened?

0:20:18.9 SP: So, you have the number, you understand your threshold, you understand that economics will be plus if you have 31 or more patients, and then you try different scenarios, have to promote your services across this region, use different market promo, different channels, different ideas. And then, it is very interesting because in this situation, usually you are trying to test different scenarios, different approaches, and sometimes you can find good ideas that will cost you maybe 10 times less than you usually spend for this hypothesis, for this test and you also can achieve the same result. For example, the initial idea was, have to promote the service to the region.

And the idea was to brand the car with the signs of the clinic and put this special car across different villages, with a doctor and doctor will came to small city or small village and do something as a doctor can do to check the blood pressure, to test something like this, and it cost you a lot.

0:21:37.0 SP: And then question was, what kind of data you want to collect? What type of information you want to achieve, and what should be the final decision? And the idea is wants to be knowable for the elder people and then they will come to our clinic and spend some money for medical examination or services or something like this. Okay, do we have another options? Do we have another ideas, how to reach this client segment? And that was an idea from the girl from City Council, that's from small City Council. And she said, "You know, next week we will have the special day for the elder people and our City Council think what we can create to make small event to show to the elder people that we care." And that was an idea, let's do something like gym or special exercises for elder people on the main square, by our doctors. And it cost you 20 times less than create this car trips across different regions, and you reach the same auditorium, you reach the same number of potential clients. And that's an example how different scenarios sometimes, non usual scenarios will give you same result you want to achieve.

0:23:02.8 KL: Sergiy, I want to ask about that. You said one of the people that was on a council gave you that idea. Is there a lesson in there about the nature of your team? Does that have to do with where you are hearing information? 'Cause I think we think of alternatives or maybe we should be challenged to think of alternatives more often, but it sounded like, oh, a voice came in. Is this about... How do you see the role of the teams you've had? Were they project team members or was it a larger stakeholder group?

0:23:30.6 SP: That's a very good point and I think the source of different scenarios or different ideas is from your... Maybe not the team, but your friends or some minor stakeholders in your project, but it is important to hear everyone. Maybe you can hear a good idea from your friend who has car repair shop, or you can hear the good idea from the person that has a restaurant in the city where you have dinner. Or you can hear the good idea from maybe not from your, but from... If you have general medical practice and also you have your friend dentist, so you are not friends, but he or she can give you good idea. I think in this situation, you have to have your ears open and hear for every good idea.

0:24:26.3 MH: So, I'm hearing an additional lesson in there Sergiy, which is in that particular case, it might have been somewhat serendipitous or almost accidental, but what might we do to be deliberate? So, like you said, have people invited into the room to share their ideas that you might not normally consider key stakeholders. I think you called this person a minor stakeholder on the City Council, right? And so, I think of the old story where Johan Gutenberg invented the printing press, the idea came to him when he saw the big large scale for the time, right? Grape presses that were used in his part of Germany to make wine. And that gave an idea, well, if you can press grapes, we could probably press an enormous amount of information printed over and over and over and over and then distribute it. So, you could say, well, that was totally unplanned and serendipitous, but how might we be more deliberate about those serendipitous collisions?

0:25:22.7 SP: I'm really not sure that we can systemize this approach. But for me, it is very important to share your idea across, not across the standard stakeholders, but also when you are trying to engage different persons. And I think that's one of the impact of the current situation to our Ukrainian society, because I can feel that we spread this horizontal links between different people.

And even if maybe six or nine months ago, you will not speak to this person in our situation today you will share your ideas much easier with different persons and it means you can have different nonstandard inputs from the places or from the people you really did not expect that you will obtain this information.

0:26:22.1 MH: And if you think about that particular example, I know they're not all going to be so easy, right? But if you think about that particular example, there's a pattern rather than us go to the patients, what if we could have an easy way where the patients willingly come to some central place and we just meet them there? That could become a pattern everywhere.

0:26:40.6 SP: Yep.

0:26:41.0 MH: Right. That maybe was not so obvious when you first started. So how about that aspect? Did you find situations whether in your humanitarian assistance role or in your role as COO of the clinic where you could have the aha moment that says, "Aha, this could change our whole model, let's replicate it."

0:27:00.7 SP: Maybe I will give you another example, not with communication with people, with customers about aha moments. I will give you another example. This example is with scenario analysis again, on this visibility study usually, you understand that you have some standard way of doing things that, and for example, you understand, if you want to cover neighbor regions, you have to open branch office or something like this, either you have to open the cabinet and do something because that is the standard way of doing things. And then you start to calculate the costs because to open the examination cabinet, you have to invest some money and you can calculate investments very good. And for example, you understand that you have invest, for example, $50,000 to open the new cabinet.

0:28:04.9 SP: And it will tell this reparation and preparation will take for example, three months. So, the project is three months, investments is 50 grand. And you really don't know how many patients you will cover because we are in chaos. And then you start to analyze, do we have another ideas? Do we have another ways to reach our potential patients? And you start to think, what is your potential patient? Where he's living, where he's eating, where he's doing something, and the main idea you cannot provide the full spectrum of medical services in this small branch office. The main idea is to find the patient and put him to the headquarter to the big clinic with equipment with all the stuff. So, the idea is not to organize the examination or some services in neighbor region, but the idea is to gather some patients and bring them to the main building, and we can invest $100 and create some information boards and put these boards in pharmacy stores in the dentist cabinets in massage cabinets and even in small city, we have 10 or 20 points when we can show information about our services in main building.

0:29:41.0 SP: You can teach the receptionist in every place have to answer and have to collect the data about the potential patient. And then you can invest $50,000 and buy, for example, four Nissan LEAFs, electric cars with zero OpEx and just take the patients from the other cities and bring them to your main building. And you will obtain the same result, but in different way. So that's for me, is an example, how important is not to start to doing something standard, not to stop starting, can start finishing, do not try to start the project tomorrow because you think it is important to achieve some result, think, three, five days about different scenarios, about different ways how you can achieve the same result and I promise you, you will find very good solution, maybe nonstandard, but it will

cost you less and it will give you the same result.

0:31:04.2 KL: I want to jump in on something here then. Another tool that you had mentioned before that I wasn't familiar with, and I want to make sure I got it right. You called it the PODSC.

0:31:13.0 SP: Yeah.

0:31:13.9 KL: Is this the project objectives deliverable success criteria?

0:31:17.8 SP: Problem objective.

0:31:18.5 KL: Problem objective. I haven't actually used it that way, although that's kind of the clearest statement of it. I think we do that a lot. You mentioned that you found that effective. Tell me where you're getting that and how that played into you. I mean, it's identify the problem, get an objective, get the specific outcome, the deliverable, and then success criteria. It seems kind of like a pretty standard flow, but you found that effective or not effective. And tell me how that worked for you.

0:31:44.9 SP: So, when you understand what is your scenario you want to implement in your project, you from the standard life cycle have to initiate the project. And for me, maybe the main purpose of this initiation phase is to share the common understanding of the final result between different stakeholders between all the stakeholders. And it is very important to have an approach or a tool to guarantee the common understanding of your project between different persons. And I really like this PODSC approach. I use it always for absolutely different types of projects and it works well in different situations. So, the main idea of this technique is you have to answer on different questions. And the question number one is why we want to start this project, what is the problem? Because problem is about why, what is the motive?

0:32:43.0 SP: And I think this question is very powerful because it is much easier to make next steps with, even with maybe no neutral stakeholder, when you share the common understanding of why, and when everyone understands, why it is important, it's much more easier to engage with this stakeholder and make something great together. So, the question number one is problem. And if you can make a statement about the problem, usually you can say, what is the numbers? What are the indicators that shows you have a problem? For example, we have just 50 patients per week from this city, and we think it is a problem for us, okay, why we want to do something. I want to increase the number of patients. And then we have the second question. And second part of this technique is objective and objective for me is the answer on the question for what so, why that's as ease situation and objective for what is to be situation.

0:33:50.9 SP: And it is also important to mention that usually one problem has different alternative scenarios to solve. And that's why it is important on this prayer project stage on the feasibility study, try to find different solutions for the same problem, because you can open the branch office or you can take patients by car and that's different solutions for the same problem. So, your objective should mention the solution. So, for example, we have a problem. Objective is to organize patients delivery by electric cars, for example, three times per day or four times per day.

0:34:30.6 KL: So that's really important because I misunderstood that. So, I wanted to get in that a little bit. You do the alternatives, the brainstorming of different ways to do it before you answer the

objective, you don't think here's an objective. And now let's think of ways to get to the objective. You're saying, do the thinking because the way you choose the path you take will define the objective.

0:34:53.0 SP: Yes, I use this approach because for me, problem is much important then one of the possible solutions. So, if you share the common understanding of the problem and you will give me different alternative scenarios to solve this problem, I will try to analyze on this feasibility study stage, all different scenarios, all different alternatives. And then when I will choose the best one in this situation, I will formulate the objective as a solution. And then it's very interesting because you have as is point, you have to be point and if you have two points on the same line, you can calculate the distance between these points.

0:35:38.8 SP: And so, you can say, what is success criteria for me? Because between problem and between objective, you have put success criteria. So, for example, if your solution is to deliver patients from other city, how many is a sign of success? And you can say at least 50 per week or 30 per week. Okay, great. That's success criteria. And then when you understand this distance between as is, and to be, you can formulate what should be done, what are the deliverables to obtain this objective, to make your steps from the point A to the point B. So, I use this tool as what is the problem, why we want to start this project? What is the best solution from different alternatives? What is success criteria and what should be done? And then you can make final check. You can imagine the deliverables that are done and you again, ask yourself, okay, I've done. I've did it. So, will I solve initial problem? And if you have this feedback loop and you can say, "yes, I understand that I will solve the problem." Great. These two work well.

0:37:01.0 MH: Let me ask a couple questions to clarify my own brain and maybe for our audience as well. So, in my mind, when I think of this PODSC in this context of like getting healthcare to people in a complicated or chaotic war zone, right? You might say, well, the success criteria are at least 50 patients per week.

0:37:20.9 SP: Sorry, Mike, not about the war zone about safe zone. No, it's not it...

0:37:26.6 MH: So, we'll take the safe zone, but you say like if we only serve 49 per week, we haven't achieved success. We really need to do at least 50 because we know there's a need probably much bigger than that. So then once we have the clear understanding of the success criteria, how we're going to actually measure our ability to achieve success, the objective and solve the problem, then we still have lots of opportunity to talk about which solutions might achieve those success criteria in the fastest and most cost-effective manner. Is that your thinking or are you coming at it from the opposite?

0:38:00.0 SP: So, in our standard normal life, I will try to calculate the number of patients more precise, but in this case I usually use this threshold. So, no less than, and then again, you make an assumption and you ask yourself, okay, is it possible to take less than 50 is not interesting from the economical point of the project. Okay.

0:38:20.6 MH: Or just the impact.

0:38:21.2 SP: Yeah.

0:38:23.0 MH: Less than 50 is not enough medical care to that target population.

0:38:27.5 SP: Yeah, absolutely. If you are speaking, not about the commercial clinic, yes. But then you ask yourself, "Okay, 50 is the lowest threshold, is it possible to take 80." Assumption is quite probable. "Okay. Is it possible to take 100," or, "I think that 100 is the upper limit. Okay. Is it possible to make... "

0:38:50.9 KL: Or maybe for fun here, what would have to be true to achieve 200?

0:38:55.2 SP: I think you have to be realistic even in this kind of staff.

0:39:00.4 KL: Well, no, that's an interesting question though. Because now you're getting to the constraint. Is that external constraint? Internal constraint? Is it because there's not 200 patients out there? Is it... What are we looking at?

0:39:07.9 MH: You might say doctors have to lower their cost by 50% and maybe that's not realistic, but still in my mind a cool question to ask what would have to be true in order to achieve some really great goal.

0:39:20.8 SP: And we can remember the main dispute the main this with an X question and [laughter] ask yourself, "Okay. 50 is okay, but what should be done to have 500" [laughter]

0:39:33.6 KL: Well, I'll tell you one thing that I do myself with teams here, but I do the objectives a little different than you do. Mike, you are always optimistic about it. I come from the cynical side, but it's the same type of question, which is this. I tell my teams, "Don't tell me no, tell me how," but yours is a better way of stating it. And then if somebody were to push that with me, I would say it is quite legitimate that there is no way to do this, but you would still need to be able to say under God's green earth, the only way this could happen is if the sun blows up and that's not going to happen. I'll say, "Okay, good. We now know the condition is beyond any parameter, but I'm not asking you for what doesn't work. I'm asking you for essentially what are the constraints." What would have to be true. Like what is needed to happen to make it true. And the answer could be, "Well, yes, if you had a billion dollars, we could do this for you boss." And I'm like, "Okay, I don't have a billion dollars now. I understand why I can't have it." [laughter] But I think like there's a way of changing with changing the opening thinking, right?

0:40:30.1 MH: Exactly. You're keeping the aperture open and I know I'm having a little bit of fun with Sergiy because I know that he and I have faced many similar obstacles with running into just psychological resistance. People automatically say, "Oh that's impossible." Or "The best we've ever done is X. We could never do 2X."

0:40:48.4 SP: Yes guys. But I think this approach should be discussed before the project initiation phase on this feasibility study. And I really like the question, please tell me what are the ideal environment to achieve some result. And also, we use this kind of question with the call center because we have some statistics about the number of calls, number of missed calls and all this stuff. And the question was to the head of call center. Please tell us what is the environment? What are the ideal factors for you, for your subordinates to have zero missed calls and this guy, "Okay. I need one, two, three, four, five. Okay. We will try to give you maybe not all these five items, but four of them. And we expect that we will lower the number of missed calls or something like this." Yes, but

again, I think that when you use PODSC, there is no place to have 10x difference for the success criteria because in this situation, usually you will have different deliverables.

0:42:00.7 SP: For example, might be of the example from the Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, as we have usually like as any big city, we have some traffic problems. And for example, from one area in the Kyiv to the center, today the people spend one half hour to just commute. And is it possible to improve the infrastructure to lower the time in commute time? Yes, it is possible. Okay. What is the success criteria? If today we have 90 minutes, what is success? And somebody tells 60, somebody tells 45, somebody tells 30 and depending on this number, you will choose different deliverables. So, first idea you have to build another bridge across the Dnieper River, the 45, for example, you have to put additional subway lane. And if you want to achieve 20 minutes, you have to call to Elon Musk and build a Hyperloop in Kyiv, so different deliverables. [laughter] Sure. The same problem, the same objective, different success criteria and absolutely different deliverables. So, I think that you have to try to achieve 10X result before PODSC.

0:43:16.9 MH: I think the SC should come before the D. Right?

0:43:20.0 SP: Yeah, absolutely...

0:43:22.5 KL: Actually, that's how he described his process. He actually described a POSCD upon...

[laughter]

0:43:30.2 SP: PODSC you know.

0:43:32.1 KL: No, that's all good. So, but, so Sergey, tell me, did it work? Give us an example where you did this pattern and that was the answer you were able, and do you use it for communicating with the team? Are you using that to get a better estimation? Are you using that to drive your estimations, schedule, cost?

0:43:47.2 SP: Every time, because I think one of the biggest problems in the project management is that usually your outcome and your output are not coherent. And in this situation, objective is and success criteria is outcome. And the set of deliverables that mostly are physical and tangible is an output. And if you do not use the techniques like PODSC, POSCD, you will have risk of mismatching between objective and deliverables.

0:44:19.4 MH: Or worse. You'll jump to a solution that actually doesn't deliver the outcome at all.

0:44:24.5 SP: Yeah, absolutely. And that's the problem because usually, you know, technical people are sitting in this deliverable zone and business people are sitting in this objective zone and they do not have for the technique to communicate between each other. And then we have the situation when project manager delivers the product on time, on budget, on scope, but nobody use it. And that's the question, is it good project or not? [laughter] And for me the project, with good output, but without outcome that's nightmare. So that's why I think, PODSC is very important and that's why I use it, even in our uncertain times, always.

0:45:08.6 MH: So, in our preparation for today's cost Sergiy mentioned that he also uses this

technique called a goal tree. And in short, it basically is a way to say, let's start with the end in mind and then ask those questions. What needs to be true in order to achieve that? What are the necessary and sufficient conditions, or you might even call the milestones that have to be achieved in order for that desired outcome to actually become real. And then you work backwards from there and say, well, really, it's almost like a set of intermediate objectives, right? That if I achieve these intermediate ones in some sort of natural progression, then the goal will be achieved. So, I'm curious if you can tie that back to your PODSC approach, Sergiy.

0:45:52.4 KL: Hold it before you do that. I just have a quick interjection. I have struggled on strategy and Goal Trees forever. And is what you just said, the answer, because if that's what it is, my God I've been using it with clients, but I never connected that to the literature.

0:46:08.0 MH: That's it.

[laughter]

0:46:09.0 KL: Mike, we've got to do a new book. We've got to do like goal rat revisited or something.

0:46:14.9 MH: Goal rat in plain English.

0:46:16.2 KL: TOC without the theory or any constraints.

[laughter]

0:46:19.3 KL: That's the name of the book. You were in here first.

[background conversation]

0:46:22.7 KL: Sorry guys, I'll be taking this out of it.

0:46:24.4 MH: TOC. Un-constrained.

0:46:25.5 KL: I am literally using this model with a forest service client right now and I would never have connected it to those strategy and goal trees. I never would've connected. And I've read about those repeatedly. I've asked you to mentor me on that. I'm sorry. I'm going on a rant. Rant over Kendall out, Sergiy, answer the question, Mike, you may have to repeat it. Do you remember Sergiy is laughing all over the place now I've lost him. Okay. Sorry about that. I just had my brain open. I'm going to go back to coughing now. Bye.

0:46:52.2 SP: After understanding the set of deliverables or when you understand the output or even you can say, when you understand the product of your project, you usually you have five, seven up to 10 deliverables and it is impossible to manage such a big volumes of work. And you have to decompose deliverables into smallest parts, and we know that the smallest part of the project, what is the atomic object of the project is the project task because on the task level, all the important parts, all the important stuff, in our project management is working. So that's why we have to have, and that tool that will help us to decompose deliverables to the task. And usually, I use not classical work background structure because I think this WBS is usually it's not natural. You

have to sync a lot to use WBS. And that's why I really like, and I'm keen on goal tree because it helps you to decompose deliverables into the project task with much more natural way of thinking.

0:48:04.7 KL: Can you give an example?

0:48:06.6 SP: Okay. Usually, every project think 99% of project will have one of the deliverables as equipment or some machines or something technical that will give you the new capability and deliverable is like machine or equipment and that's deliverable. And, you start to ask the question, number one, what are the needed conditions to deliver this equipment? And for me, it's very easy to imagine this working equipment. When all the wheels are turning everything, have a green lights and everything is perfect. So, the question is what are the needed conditions to obtain this image, this picture in real life. And you understand that you have to choose an equipment. You have to buy, deliver, put into the place, make some connections, make some preparations and set up and then maybe test production, so needed condition.

0:49:11.5 SP: And when you meet all these needed conditions, you will achieve the deliverable with needed quality that you want. And then when you understand needed conditions, you again, start to ask yourself what are needed actions to achieve every needed condition and you decompose deliverable. For example, deliverable one equipment needed condition 11 choose an equipment, new detection. 111 create the short list of technologies. 112, create the table to compare different variants, 113, find some weight coefficients for this table, something like this. And you will generate the set of tasks. And if you will, repeat the same approach for all the deliverables from the five, seven deliverables on the high level, you will obtain, I think 20 certain needed conditions on the second level and you will generate 100 plus project tasks. And that for me is much more than enough for 95% of the project.

0:50:20.3 MH: I love that. And I've used it as well. Of course. I might have even learned some of this from you with some of our interactions in the past and while I still love work breakdown structures. I agree with you. This is a bit more of a natural logical test. So rather than say, what are all the piece parts of this deliverable we're trying to build, right? And all the sub-assemblies and all these component, all the componentry to say what has to be true in order for our objectives to be met and using this with a recent client, actually, they were really excellent at building these super cool, like virtual reality solutions. And they had phenomenal ideas to incorporate more AI and some other stuff to achieve some really cool capabilities. But then when I started asking questions like, well, is that sufficient?

0:51:01.9 MH: If we have this great solution that is clearly better than anything anyone has ever built before, are we done? Will the objective be met? And they said, well, I guess not. We need some way to make sure we have the initial customers that don't mind dealing with some of the bugs and the issues. Because there will be many. And we have to have an expert that understands like when people wear the virtual reality glasses, sometimes they actually get motion sick in certain conditions. So, we need somebody that understands how to prevent motion sickness and the testing phase. Oh. And we needed some governance structure so that if we don't achieve our initial market objectives, we can scale back our ambitions and take some other marketing approaches and govern. That we don't just build this giant expensive solution and nobody comes, we can sort of do it in a more piecemeal way. So, it was just quite fascinating that they got away from all the componentry and the technical solution and the product and into more of sort of the... What are the human things we need to do as a group to drive success.

0:51:56.9 SP: Mike, absolutely agree. It is very important on the top of our goal tree; the initial node is an objective. So, the first is objective. Then you have deliverables, but in PODSC, you create this co link between an objective and needed deliverables. So, you can say that deliverables are critical success factor to achieve an objective. And in this case, you will not only say that we have to create some AI platform or solution. We also have to find our initial consumers. Also, we have to organize all the requirements from regulators and so on and so on, but for me, it should be done on PODSC.

0:52:41.0 KL: Love it. And I'll tell you how I'm using it a little bit. I'm using this and didn't realize the critical success factors and necessary conditions, but I've had to convert it all into identity statements, how we will be goals, objectives, and then that will set up projects. And then at that point, I release them to the wild go and as managers and structure projects with your teams, that's the strategic planning enterprise level. 'cause I'm taking an organizational level [laughter] and so I like what you said there, Mike. So, I want to support this to our audience and use an example I have with a client, mine's a government client. So, my need for it's a little bit different. They will always and correctly say there's a level where we don't actually control anything. We don't control our budget. What the new policy will be, what the new constraints out in our citizen facing services are going to be, we're doing the best we can with what we have and we have tons of good ideas, right?

0:53:31.9 KL: There's so many ways to help. So, I'm using this approach less to get them out of their I'm overly technical and highly expert, what to do, but more about how to prioritize when you don't get something. So, the problem becomes, and I think generally if I went and looked at a lot of government organizations down at the kind of grassroots level, is there are many goals and objectives, but so many gaps across that whole series of things that they end up not really completing anything. The big problem I see with people who can't predict their budget is nothing ever finishes. You run out of time, you run out of money, but you don't finish.

0:54:14.9 KL: And that's a problem you end up stopping, but you're not finished. Right? And so, what I'm trying to get across is if we can structure what must become true for this objective, what is the critical success factor, a condition that must become true for this to be effective. And what would you need to do to create that the many things you must do to create that? It will help us prioritize. I believe when we're running into trouble, when it's a time or budget constraint has actually happened in the reality of execution. So, when that happens, it's like, I need to move this way so that I can close an objective. So, I can start getting these things to actually happen. It allows them to have a structure, to choose sequencing prioritization, sequencing of the conversation. And that is that decomposition of the outcomes, none of the tasking so the problem is you got to structure the outcomes, not the tasking, not the work breakdown, decompose the outcomes. Don't worry about decomposing the work it follows.

0:55:11.1 MH: Bring us home, Sergiy.

0:55:13.1 KL: What's the biggest thing you've learned the last six months, Sergiy hit us with it, man.

0:55:17.5 SP: Project management works even in absolutely non-standard situations. So, I really haven't my own example that some techniques, some approaches, some tools works well. Even if the world around you is destroyed, definitely. So, that's not like special world that's absolutely our

reality. And even in this situations, some tools will help you to achieve your objectives. So, I think that's the most important takeaway from this situation from the last six months for me.

0:55:54.2 MH: Beautiful Sergiy.

0:55:55.7 KL: Yeah. That's really important for us to hear Mike, what are you getting out of this reinforcement?

0:56:00.7 MH: Yeah. And I think back to yeah, I think you guys both know the story. When I interviewed coast guard captain Michael Day, who led the 911 sea lift rescue, which if you're not familiar was the largest sea lift rescue in the history of humankind. And he applied so many cool techniques to achieve this massive undertaking and a ridiculously short amount of time to the point where very few of us even heard of it, we would definitely have heard of it, had it been a failure, right? 'cause we would've had people jumping into the water, losing hope and then the chaos and dust and debris and not knowing that this is sort of a multi-phase terror attack or what was happening. He said something very poignant. He just said, well, all of my training was not in any of these special techniques. It was just when you're in a crisis, you got to get organized. And I just thought that was sort of a, such a simple way to break it down. And he didn't say you have to stay calm, right? He didn't say, even you need to maintain your same sort of calm professionalism, which by the way, Sergiy, you do a great job of, but he did say we've got get organized. And so that's what we did.

0:57:05.3 SP: I agree.

0:57:06.8 Announcer: Love it. Well, listen, Sergiy as before, thank you for your time taking with us amidst your troubles and stressful times that you're in and where you're sitting. So, with that, we know that project management absolutely works both standard and non-standard situations. That's one of my great takeaways from that. So, thanks guys. I really, really appreciate it.

0:57:25.3 KL: Sergiy as before. Thank you for your time amidst your troubles and such stressful times, Mike, as always thank you for your persistent analytical optimism. PMs who have listened to this whole episode can go to ccrs.pmi.org/claim and scroll to the fourth banner on the left column, online or digital media and manually enter provider code number 4, 6, 3, 4, and select M Powered Strategies, and then manually enter the name of the episode PM POV0101 PM Techniques in Ukraine and select technical project management in the talent triangle co-host me, Kendall Lott, calling you PM architect, get your PMs to plan his deliverables, not the tasks, but whether you use a goal tree or a WBS, keep it in scope and get it done.

[music]

0:58:18.6 Announcer: This has been a final milestone production sponsored by M Powered Strategies.