

The Trust Model of Project Manager Time Management

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Problem Statement

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The more experienced and competent I became as a project manager, the more difficult it became to manage my time.

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“Before we begin our Time Management Seminar, did everyone get one of these 36-hour wrist watches?”

Let's Check with the Experts

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey

- **“...the essence of the best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in a single phrase: Organize and execute around priorities.”**
- **The generations of time management**
 - ✓ 1. Notes and checklists
 - ✓ 2. Calendars and appointment books
 - ✓ 3. Prioritization, or clarifying values
 - ✓ 4. “Time management” is a misnomer – the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves

Let's Check with the Experts

- **How Stephen R. Covey models time management**

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	ACTIVITIES: Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects Production problems I	ACTIVITIES: Prevention Relationship building Recognizing new opportunities Planning Recreation Production capability problems II
NOT IMPORTANT	ACTIVITIES: Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Popular activities Pressing matters III	ACTIVITIES: Trivia, busy work Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities IV

Let's Check with the Experts

- **Benefits of Covey Time Management Matrix**
 - Rightly
 - Isolates “urgent” fire-fighting demands as a drain on proactive time management
 - Isolates “planning” and like activities as beneficial
 - Isolates “busywork” and “interruptions” and real impacts to time management that do not add value
 - Recognizes the power and wisdom of “saying no” to some time management demands

Let's Check with the Experts

- **Deficiencies of Covey Time Management Matrix**
 - Provides no guidance on what to do when “busywork” and “interruptions” come from sources that have the power to demand responses
 - And is it really fair to label all interruptions as “Not Important”?
 - Doesn't separate “working according to plan” as its own domain, of a high value when managing time
 - Doesn't give scenarios on what to do when the matrix's forces are working against good proactive time management
 - Doesn't help when the culture of the organization does not respect individuals to manage their time effectively

Let's Check with the Experts

- **The 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management by Hyrum W. Smith**
 1. You control your life by controlling your time
 2. Your governing values are the foundation of personal fulfillment
 3. When your daily activities reflect your governing values, you experience inner peace
 4. To reach any significant goal, you must leave your comfort zone
 5. Daily planning leverages time through increased focus
 6. Your behavior is a reflection of what you truly believe
 7. You satisfy needs when your beliefs are in line with reality
 8. Negative behaviors are overcome by changing incorrect beliefs
 9. Your self-esteem must ultimately come from within
 10. Give more and you'll have more

These are really great laws, that make a lot of sense, that provide great insight into personal time management. But, they did not help me with my time management problems.

Trust Model of Time Management

Trust Model of Time Management

- Time spent developing plans and working according to those plans
- Work tasks are reasoned-through, developed and executed to accomplish approved goals

Working
according to
plan



Trust Model of Time Management

- Spending time in the real-time adjustment of planned work based on the latest information
- Consistent with PMBOK (and COBIT) emphasis on “monitoring and controlling” to improve pm process
- Allows for healthy feedback and plan-improvement based on learnings, suggestions and near-misses

Adjusting the
plan in flight



Trust Model of Time Management



Urgent Situations "Fighting Fires"

- Spending time in fighting fires, addressing urgent situations that arise quickly
- Often require the immediate allocation of resources, attention and smarts
- Sources can be manmade or natural
- Events that demand attention right away

Trust Model of Time Management

- Spending time in the seemingly simple area of doing what your boss asks you to do
- These “asks” are often task-oriented but they can be strategic and long-term
- Usually the asks are ad hoc, not founded in the current project plan
- Often obtained at one-on-one meetings with the boss as take-away actions. May also show up as “issues” on the issue log





Doing what
your boss asks
you to do

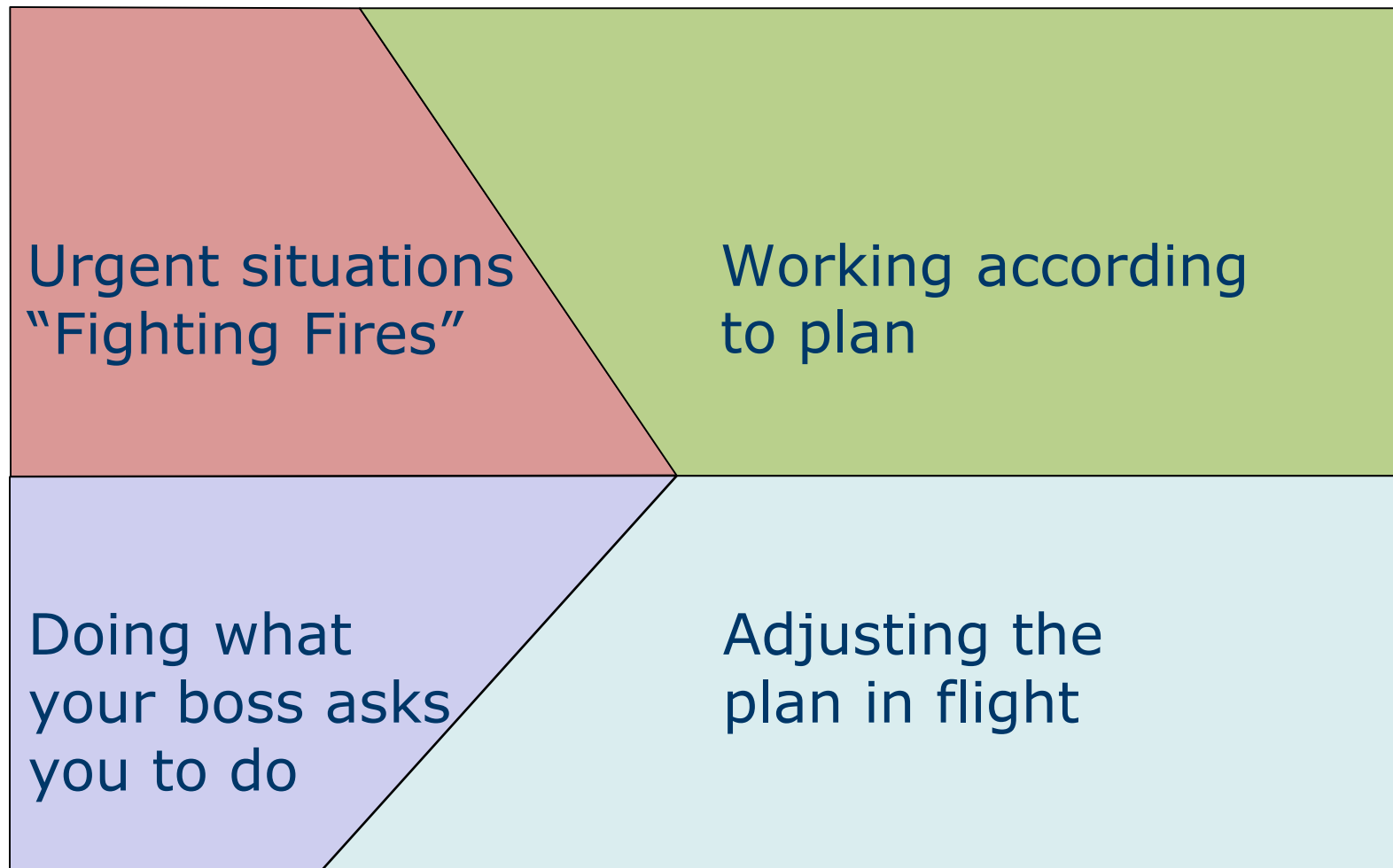
Trust Model of Time Management



All four quadrants are always present at some level. It would not be normal if any of the **Low Level of PM Control** *not allocated e* **High Level of PM Control**

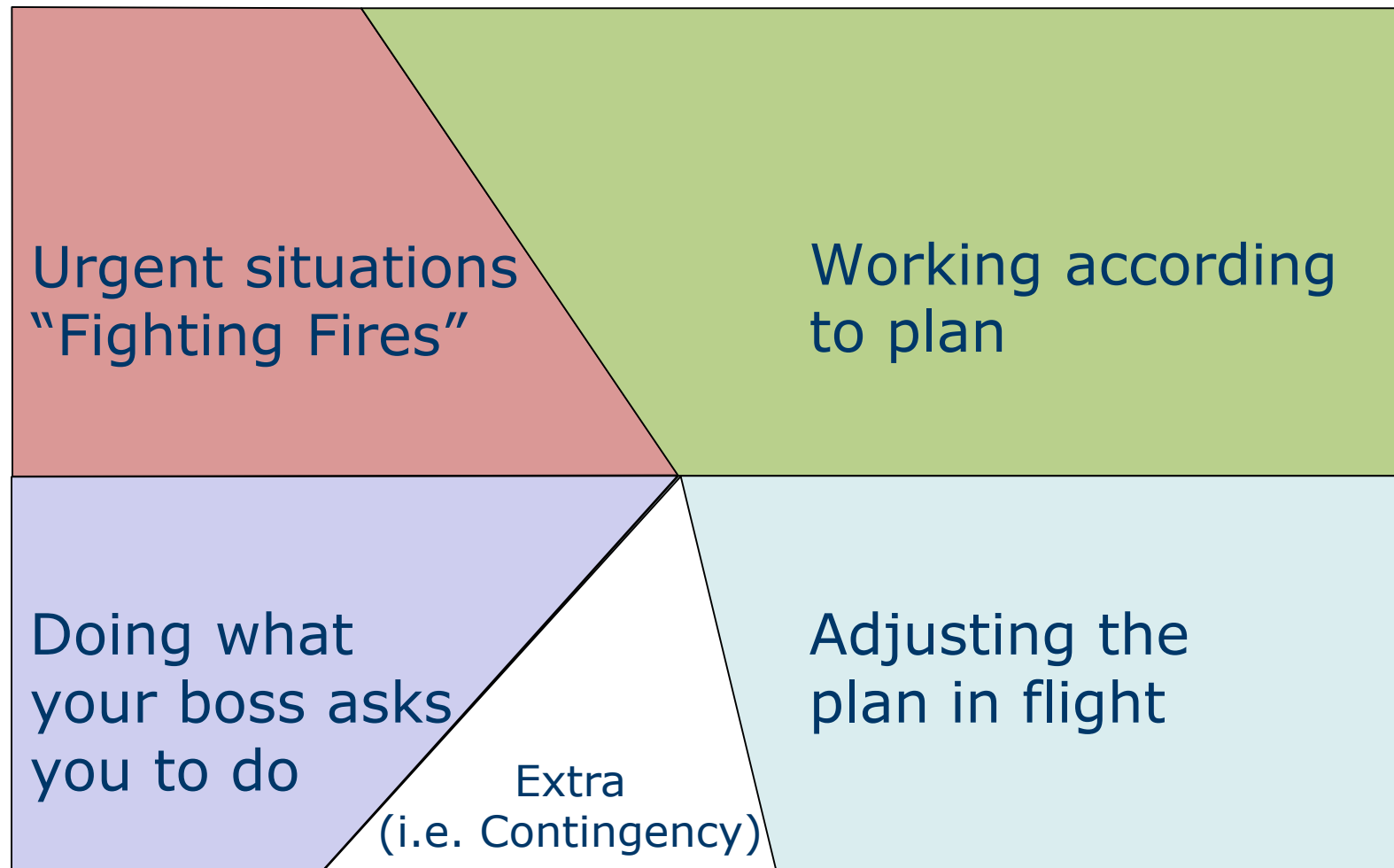
Factor		
Project	Well Planned	Not Well Planned
Project Manager	Competent	Not Competent
Boss & Governance	Trusting	Not Trusting
Good Project Risk Management	In Place	Absent
Effective Issue Management	In Place	Commandeered for Other Purposes

Boss Trusts & Project Manager is Competent



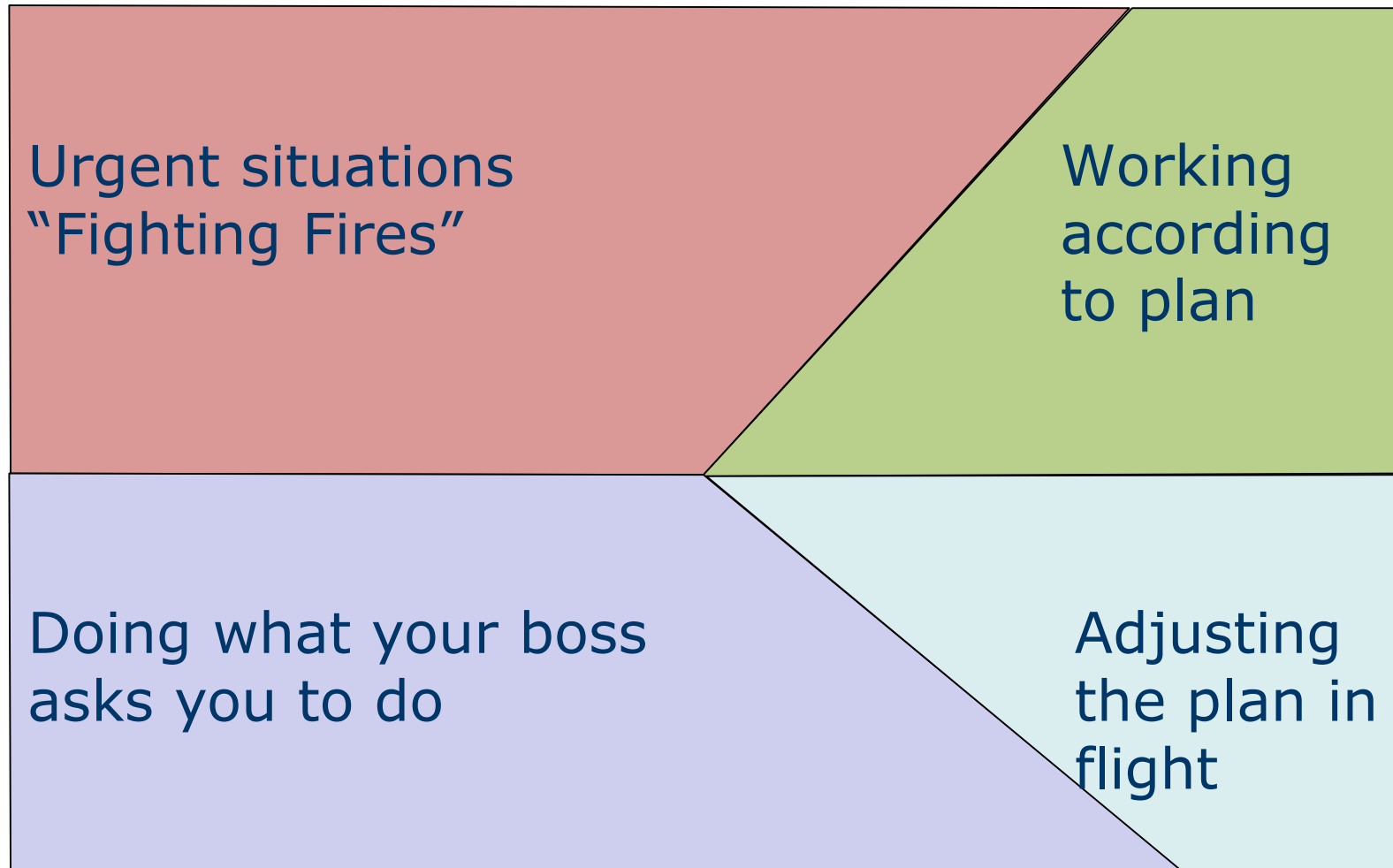
Ideally: Boss Trusts, Project Manager is Competent, Level of urgent situations is low, plan is good and adjustments to plan happen naturally and in a healthy manner.

Boss Trusts & Project Manager is Competent



Ideally: Boss Trusts, Project Manager is Competent, Level of urgent situations is low, plan is good and adjustments to plan happen naturally and in a healthy manner – and unallocated time is available.

Boss Has No Trust / PM is Incompetent



The Worst: Boss has no Trust, Project Manager is Incompetent, Level of urgent situations is high, plan is weak and adjustments to plan are needed but there is no skill to identify them and no time to put them in effect. There is no extra time.

The Mistrust Spiral

The boss does not trust the PM, therefore...

- The boss directs actions to the PM in the form of “asks” or “to do’s”
- The PM performs those actions

Competent PM

- Performs boss asks
- Overcomes time required to do asks, makes project successful



Boss Conclusion

- I’m a genius
- “Asks” lead to success, so more “Asks”

Incompetent PM

- Performs boss asks
- Project falters due to lack of PM skill and loss of time to asks



Boss Conclusion

- I’m a genius
- “Asks” have not yet led to success, so more “Asks”

Trust Model of Time Management



Urgent situations
"Fighting Fires"

Working according to plan



Doing what your boss asks you to do



Adjusting the plan in flight



All four quadrants are always present at some level. It would not be normal if any of them were absent. But time is not allocated evenly in real-world projects.

The Downside of Issue Tracking

What is an “issue”?

- **An issue is one of two things:**
 - A problem that must be solved for which there is not yet a feasible solution
 - A decision that must be made for which the project decision makers are not in agreement
- **An issue is not:**
 - A very *difficult* thing that must be done. (That is a “to do” or PM plan task.)
 - A very *important* thing that must be done. (That is also a “to do” or PM plan task.)
 - A way to make a political statement about an aspect of the project a stakeholder disagrees with. In other words, a way to keep closed decisions alive
 - A sneaky way to get “asks” into the project

The Downside of Issue Tracking

- **Considerations:**

- Be careful that issue logs do not become substitutes for good up-to-date project plans and good up-to-date risk mitigation plans
- Be careful that issue logs do not become more important than the project plans to drive project progress
- Be careful that issue logs do not become ways for bosses and stakeholders to drop “asks” into the project that are ad hoc and must be dealt with in a one-off fashion, outside of the project plan
 - Bosses can use issue logs to commandeer project plans and project priority setting

Keys to Success

- **Competent project planning and execution**
- **Active project monitoring, effective project monitoring processes**
- **Active and good risk management**
- **Healthy environment that supports continual improvement of the project plan**
- **A boss (and overall governance) that trusts**
 - Does not micromanage
 - Understands every “ask” takes away valuable project resource time
 - Doesn’t overreact when urgent situations arise
- **Issue management that hews close to a strict definition of issue**

Conclusion

- **Use the Trust Model of Time Management**

