



# *Conversations that Build Stronger Relationships*

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# *Conversations that Build Stronger Relationships*

## Presenter

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## *Before We Begin....*

- **Submit questions as we go along:**
  - Click the “?” icon at the lower right corner of your screen to bring up Q&A panel where you can type and submit questions.
  - There will be time for questions at the end of the presentation.
  - We may not be able to answer every question but will focus on the most representative.
- **PMI / PDUs**
  - 1 PDU
  - PMI reference number will be sent to attendees in a follow-up email along with a link to download this presentation.



# *Webinar Objectives*

Begin to be able to:

- Describe the why's and how's of tough conversations on critical project management problems.
- State strategies that will facilitate conversations that build stronger relationships that ultimately lead to more effective projects.



## *Key Discussion Points*

- Projects by definition are about relationships.
- Commitment to building meaningful relationships at work.
- If project relationships are about needed outcomes, what conversations are most critical to have?







Am I ready to make a  
commitment to *build  
meaningful relationships*  
at work?

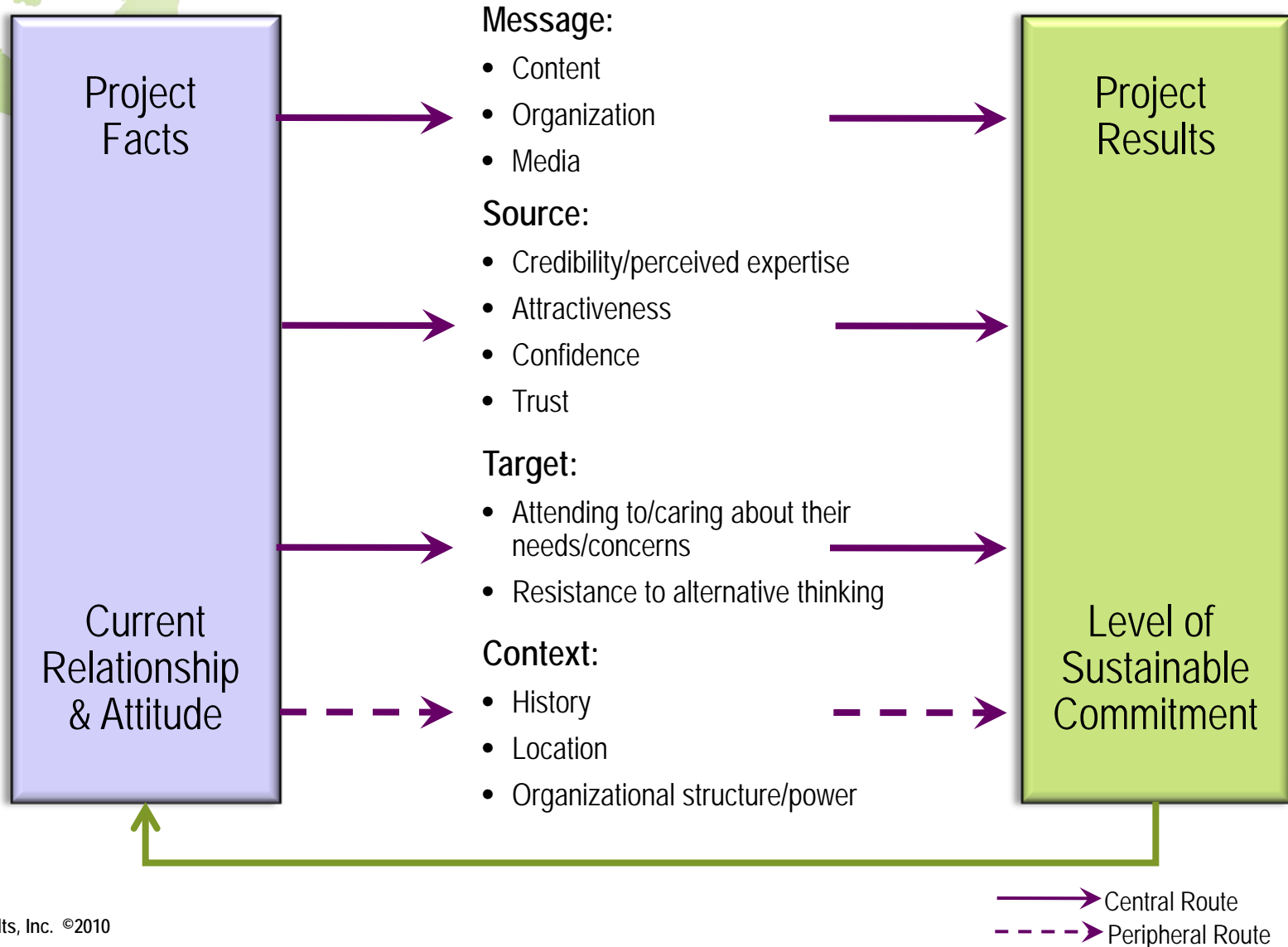
# *What Does It Mean to Commit? Critical Skills*

- Self reflection & self management
- Listening
- Sharing without fear:
  - Feedback
  - Points of view & perceptions
  - Tough questions
  - Testing assumptions & inferences
- Courage to have the right conversations

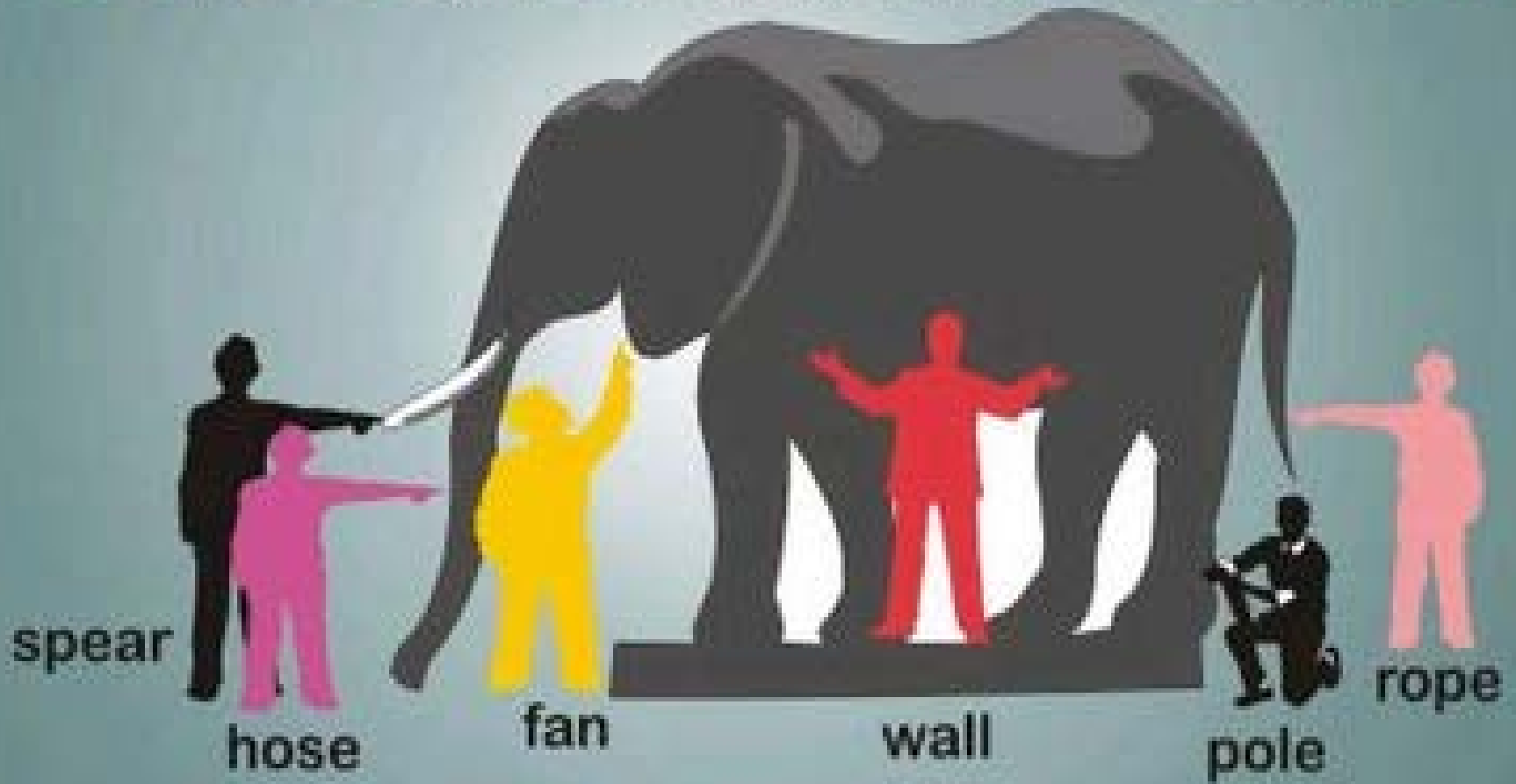




# Communications Leverage in Project Relationships: Influencing Collaboration



# THE ELEPHANT METAPHOR OF REALITY



# *A View Of Conversation™*

*Internal Dialogue*

*External Dialogue*

*Willing to  
communicate  
in normal  
conversation*

*Uncommunicated  
thoughts, feelings, &  
images, including what  
is difficult to discuss or  
undiscussable  
(inner thoughts)*

*Inviting individuals to more openly discuss*

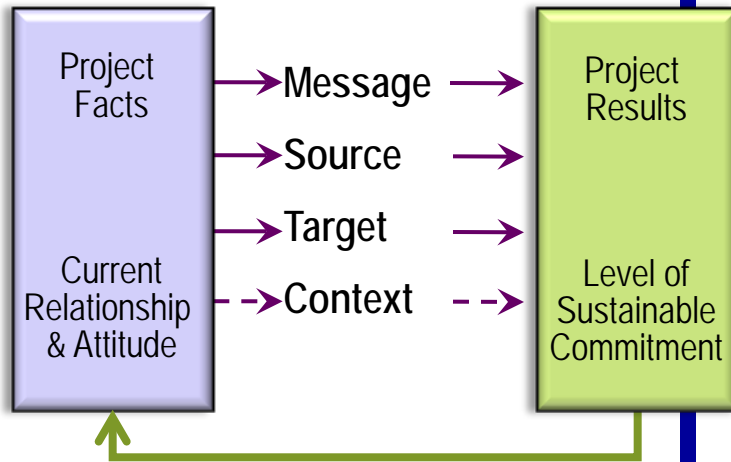
*difficult issues over time*

# *Chat Box Exercise*

- In the chat box, record what issues are difficult to discuss about your projects with:
  - Senior management and sponsors
  - Colleagues and other team members
  - Other stakeholders.



# Difficult to Discuss Project Management Issues



- Contradictory messages
- Sense of urgency, stakes
- Competition for resources
- "Suck it up"
- Information / certainty
- Project relationship to strategy, priority
- Level of commitment
- Unclear measures
- Different assessment of project risks
- Assumptions, e.g., I'm right, you're not
- Adequacy of backup plans
- Skill levels of team members & leader
- Difficult sponsors
- Quality of decisions: real v. false consensus
- Group issues: member style, domination
- Protecting scope boundaries
- Protecting roles and responsibilities
- Jumping to solutions & conclusions
- Getting your voice heard by senior management
- Follow through and accountability

# *What Makes Some Conversations So Difficult?*

## Concerns / fears about:

1. Being judged negatively
2. Hurting others, including challenging their theories or beliefs
3. Reprisal
4. Isolation
5. Loss of status or power
6. Change
7. Conflict issues
8. Others?



# *Making Difficult Conversations Less Difficult – General Behaviors*

- Be aware and understand them.
- Be clear about your intent in the conversation.
- Start with the “easier” of the difficult conversations – build trust from there.
- Check your inferences and assumptions – and don’t assume that the result will be negative!
- Invite conversations and jointly design safety – how can we have these conversations?



# Managing Accountabilities

- Setting expectations in a way that's REALLY understood.

## Example: Project schedule

- Not just individual commitment to date
- Interdependencies
- What's at stake
- What does completeness mean
  - who needs what when I'm done
- How good does it have to be

## 4 Components of Clarity

<b>Boss' understanding</b> (role description)	<b>Own understanding</b> (incumbent's sense of the role)
<b>Others' understanding</b> (expectations of the role)	<b>Reality</b> (how the role is enacted)

# *Managing Accountabilities*



- Analyze and critique own and each other's task performance & deliverables in respectful fashion.
- Feedback is an accountability tool.
- When off target:
  - Observe, THEN...
  - Figure out corrective actions to minimize / eliminate negative impact.



*We diminish the other person when we tolerate behavior that betrays our trust, when we don't expect enough from the other person, or don't put them to the test of what's possible.*



## *AfR Contact Information*

- If you enjoyed this webinar, ask us about these onsite courses:
  - Communicating for Project Success
  - Essential Facilitation Skills for Projects
  - Virtual Facilitation Skills
- Erkki Goodwin, CAPM  
Customer Relationship Manager  
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