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Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



Can you manage a Program, a Global Program?

Guest was Paula Wagner, Senior Project Manager
for CNN Broadcast Engineering System Technology
at Turner Broadcasting Systems.



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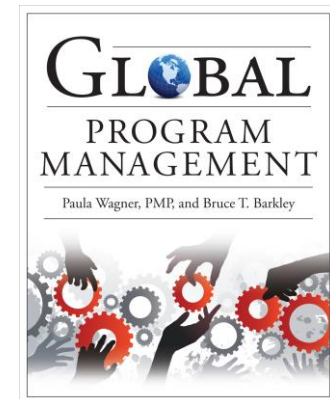
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Paula Wagner, MBA, PMP, has more than 20 years of business experience in technology, strategy, and planning. She is an expert at driving ideas to action. As a long time Turner Broadcasting employee, her experience encompasses leading multimillion-dollar cutting-edge technology projects, research and development, long-range technology planning, business planning and development, financial management and forecasting, and process engineering. Ms. Wagner is a faculty member at Keller Graduate School of Management and regularly conducts classes and presentations on project, program, portfolio, and risk management for conferences, associations, and universities.

Paula's book is an in-depth study of today's Global Program Management arena. Very few organizations make only local decisions. It seems in today's world no matter what size the company is that we all are somewhat global. Is your program or even project manager ready for this kind of challenge? How does a classic program and project management change as a result of this global influence? Paula did a great job of answering these questions as they applied to both small and large organizations.



Paula Wagner's Website: <http://pwdita.com/>

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Joe Dager: Thanks, everyone, for joining us. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 podcast. Participating in the program today is Paula Wagner. Paula has more than 20 years of business experience in technology, strategy, and planning. She is an expert in driving ideas to action and a long time Turner Broadcasting employee. She recently published a book *Global Program Management* along with Bruce Barkley. Paula, could you tell me about your book and why you wrote it?

Paula Wagner: Thank you for having me today. Basically, you know the world is global. Almost all types of businesses are global by nature. You know 20 or so years ago the only way to do business was a brick and mortar storefront, but with the Internet a customer is only fingertip away from almost all businesses have a global strategy. In a well-crafted business strategy there needs to be a well-executed project, program and portfolio process to deliver business goals and objectives. This book focuses on delivering business results through program management. So it's really exciting to collaborate with Bruce and put this book together to really help readers understand program management and the benefits it provides for organizations.

Joe: Could you help me out, and may be a few of my listeners, and kind of define what *Global Program Management* is?

Paula: Yes. *Global Program Management* helps to deliver on and provide information on a new trend in business management and that's really putting program management in front and center of a business. Some companies treat project or program management offices,

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also known as PMO's, as a third eye rather than a right arm and they are not achieving the benefits they are looking for. The organizations that best use program management are more agile and can better maneuver the global market condition. A number of businesses can outsource parts of their organization, but one thing you never want to outsource is the strategy and the execution of that strategy, which is done through program management -- where left brain activities can be outsourced, those right brain activities really should stay in house and be what that delivers those results the organization is looking for.

Joe: So you're actually saying the functionality program that can be outsourced but really I mean the management, the concept, and what you are going to get out of it, you really need to keep in-house. Is that a fair way? Or can you expand that a little bit?

Paula: That's right. You want to keep close to your organization, your strategy and how it's going to operate in a global environment. We are all working in such a tight, close global economy. We just witnessed that recently with the market conditions in the last couple of years where something, it's like the butterfly fact. Something happens in one area, it just causes catastrophic things in other areas. So everything is so tightly woven in that if you pull just one thread out of the tapestry it affects the whole look and feel of the group. So program management helps with the governance process and also the management of these global initiatives that all companies are facing.

Joe: What do you find is different in global management than, than just a regular domestic program?

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Paula: Almost every project it seems like almost every program, it seems like you are working globally. My software vendor was in Sweden. My hardware vendor was in California, and then I was in Atlanta. So globally some of the issues we faced, for one, were time zones. We are all in different time zones so it's hard to communicate, you know, all the time even when you want to reach out, it's night in Sweden where it's daytime in here and so you have those time zone issues.

We also have communication and cultural issues. So it's really difficult in a global environment to use jargon or slang that would come naturally. I was in a project program meeting and one of the stakeholders said, "We need to round the wagons." The Swedish vendor did not have an idea of what we are talking about because they did not experience the wild, wild west.

What are you referring to when you say "round the wagons"? So it's simple slang that would seem normal domestically in the United States is a little differently in, in other countries. So the global ads kind of... if you look at a Rubik's cube, just a one side of the Rubik's cube would be a program where you have issues, you know top and bottom, so even the nine squares. But globally you create a full cube and have all the squares and all the patterns that you need to adjust and arrange and keep in alignment so that you become more successful. You add that extra dimension that you don't have domestically.

Joe: How do you go about starting it? Does the book layout a certain structure of a global management system?

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Paula: The book does layout a structure of how to handle program management and that globalness brings that third dimension like I was talking about it. It adds that complexity and it talks about the complexity and also how best to address it. One way to think about it is that when you look at project, program and portfolio management, I try to use the analogy of an airport. A project manager would be a pilot, the project would be the airplane and the pilot is responsible for landing and taking off the airplane, flying it, going from, say, Chicago to Seattle, landing the plane in Seattle and that will be the conclusion of his project for that flight.

At the program level, you are looking at an air traffic controller. So they're in the tower. They are responsible for watching all the planes and giving them instructions, when they are supposed to land and take off also giving them instructions in the air. When you look at the portfolio level, the portfolio level is like the airport itself.

You can also think of it as a financial portfolio where you make decisions on how you are going to invest the money that you want in, in different like large cap or small cap investments. At the airport not only do they invest - quote - unquote in having the airplanes and which different airlines will be part of their airport, but also the vendors that are local that say, the food vendors or the beverage vendors that are supplying products for the airports.

So it's, it's a much grander, broader scale and all three of those tie together and should be used in all, especially business of any size. But it could be at a small scale or a large scale, so getting back to your question, can be larger in nature. But a program is focusing on

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those airplanes and managing those airplanes where the project manager, the pilot, focuses on all the intricacies of flying.

Joe: There needs to be a common thread with all the projects underneath the program?

Paula: Yes. There does need to be a common thread that ties all, basically the program is a kind of umbrella that oversees the projects and there is something that needs to link those projects together in order for to fill under a program. The links can be, say all the projects under our research and development. They are all marketing type projects. They are manufacturing type projects. Or, you can look at it in a different way; they can all be linked together based on escalation level. Like if it is high priority projects, all need to fall in this group, or they are all sharing the same resources.

It's much easier to coordinate all these projects together if we have shared resources. And actually I did work on a program that we did have many resource constraints and being the program manager, I had to make sure that the resources were given to a proper project under right time frame and many of them were competing, I had to make a decision on which project, which resources were given to which project at which time to achieve the overall result that the business was looking for. It might not have been according to the project time frame, but it was according to the program time frame and the needs of the business.

Joe: When you go ahead and have a program, each project has a scope similar to a waterfall project. You go down through the list of everything, but then is a program on a grander scale, does it have a scope or does it have a vision?

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Paula: It has more of a vision. A program has more of a vision, an oversight. At the program level you are working up so you have to be part of the strategy and so you are looking at the 50,000 foot level, and you are also more at the ground level too because you are focusing on the information that is coming up from the projects. So, you take this project information and you don't just report verbatim the project information to the portfolio level or the senior management level. You basically take that information and analyze it and come up with conclusions and information that can be best used by senior management.

You have to keep your eye on any strategic changes that are happening in the company. There are times when things need to change. They're responsible for communicating that to the project managers and also working with them to make changes in their projects.

One thing about project management is that you never want to -- I should never say "you never" -- but you want to focus on once the plan is created, you'd like to prevent change because if there is change that adds more risk to a project so you have a very structured change control process. At the program level, you welcome change and you also try to use that to best achieve the result you are looking for. So it's a little difference there, and project managers work differently in a program as opposed to working in a project.

Joe: I assume that there are projects starting and ending all the time and that this program management thing is bigger umbrella over a longer time period. Is that true?

Paula: Yes, the program is longer in time. A project has a beginning, middle and end and those airplanes might take off and land at different times but the program is still running.

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So a program does eventually reach a conclusion, but in duration it is from the beginning of the first project all the way through the last project, and then you have a closeout phase. So it is longer you have a program life-cycle where you have a pre-program setup. You go through a program initiation phase, a program formulation phase then you ensure that the delivery of the program benefit is created and then you'll have a closeout. So it is larger. You are working with the project management as well as your senior management.

When you are working in a program and it adds another level of oversight guidance and governance that you would not get in a project. Projects once they get their scope they continue on their project beginning to end.

Where in a program you are always making adjustments based on any changes. So you are more agile, you are more flexible. As things change, as parties change, you work with those parties and work with the project managers to ensure that those changes are incorporated in all the projects.

Joe: How would someone know that they need to go to the level of a program. Now let's forget about the global for a second, but how would you know you need to go to the level of program management for instance.

Paula: You need to go to the level of a program in situations where you have a limited resources or resource constraint. I worked on a program where five projects all had to come together and launch on the same day. So you had to have someone oversee and manage all of them so they receive the right resources at the right time and that everyone was coordinated so they were all going to achieve the same deliverables on the same date.

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You can also need a program say for risk mitigation if there is a lot of risk surrounding a set of program or projects that are grouped together that they need to manage that risk and coordinated way. If there is task dependency across projects, often projects are linked together and there is a task that has to be coordinated between the two.

As far as any organizational change they help oversee any direction changes, organizational change. So if you want to be flexible and mobile where a project once they are delivered, once they have their scope they deliver upon that. The program manager ensures that everything is coordinated; everything is following the framework as they are supposed to. It gives that extra guidance and oversight that is needed and helps keep everything within the framework that was developed.

Joe: When you said that they are looking at a program, is it actually a team of people typically managing a program?

Paula: In a program, generally there is a program director or a program manager. It depends upon the complexity of the program, but you have a program manager overseeing a number of project managers. So program management is not managing the intricacies of individual projects, but it is overall managing the big picture and focusing on benefits.

Joe: When you wrote your book, who did you direct your book at? Who would be the person in that description you gave there that they should read it?

Paula: Well this book is really focusing on people that are project managers that will have to work in a program so that they can better understand a program. And anyone in

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business that is looking to incorporate program management into their operation to give better business results to the projects that they are working on.

Joe: Now you think someone would benefit from it that necessarily wouldn't be looking at a global situation?

Paula: Oh definitely! This book, though, it's called "Global Program Management." There are key elements that are true for any program, and the global part focuses on like I said that third dimension. But, what is true for program management, its true if it's domestic or international or global.

Joe: On the global side of things, it's got to be a pretty difficult undertaking because like you said just the translation and slang. If you ever listen to someone tell a joke in one language then translate it for you everybody knows the difficulties because they don't come out the same...

Paula: Exactly, and the book also outlines a number of different global factors to keep in mind. Different cultures have different ways and behaving in a work environment. When you are faced with different cultures you have to spend a little more time explaining what the process is and what the expectations are. When you have a 24-hour world where everyone is awake at different time and you have to deal with how you are going to communicate. Often, you find people on the phone at 11:00 at night and other people are six in the morning just to make those conference calls so everyone can be available at the same time.

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The best part of working in a global business now or even a global project is that there is so much technology out there to help support a global operation where you have shared servers that you can post documents and keep version control available. There is obviously email as well as any kind of like Skype or any of those types of tools that you can communicate much more easily than you would have been able to even 20 years ago.

Joe: But the cost of communication is just about reached zero. It is amazing how that has gone down and so that does make it very easy to be able to go anywhere.

Paula: Exactly.

Joe: You tell me some of the instances that you shift to different countries, is it cost, is it talent, is it... Why are certain things done in, in program management that you have seen that it caused it to be more effectively they do globally rather than having a team in an office?

Paula: That's a good question. The reason why people are focusing more on global ways of doing business is a lot of the reasons why you listed. Basically, you go to where the best-skilled labor is. I mentioned that we did business with someone in Sweden. Basically, they developed a software system that didn't exist anywhere else in the world. So, we work with the best and the brightest. It could also be your raw materials, where it's less expensive to get raw materials from certain areas. Even when I worked on this book my copy editor was in India. So, there are very talented people in India that can copyedit the book and the publisher was in New York. So they obviously outsourced the copy editing to the people they thought would be best-qualified to handle that type of work. So it's

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resources. It's anything to do with resources, whether it's setting up a plant or manufacturing, you want to be closest to those raw materials that you need. It could be the talent, the labor. I know, working at a global business, we always look to see where the best talent's coming from when we open a new operation. Obviously you don't want to open a plant and then have to import people from all over the world. You want to have that talent local, and also those resource.

Joe: I noticed in the book that you addressed the actual position of Global Program Manager. What qualities do you look for in someone that wants to fill that position?

Paula: You know, with someone who's a Global Program Manager, I would say for anyone working in a global business, the number one skill is flexibility. Because you have to be flexible and understand different cultures, different customs, different styles of doing business. I once talked to somebody and they said when they hire someone for a global position they always want to know is this person going to eat at the hotel restaurant or are they going to go and experience the culture and eat at the restaurant down the street and really experience their customs and their food.

There are a number of skill sets to being a program manager. Obviously, leadership, these people have to lead project managers who are very strong leaders in themselves, but also you're leading this whole enterprise to achieve the business results you're looking for. Understand the politics and the market conditions and the locations that you're operating in that can affect any of the projects that you're overseeing.

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There's also a need to be somewhat technical, technology savvy, or technical savvy, in the area that your projects are under so you can understand their language and their needs and their experiences. You also want to have a strategic vision. Be able to look and think broadly, and then act locally; understanding the organizational structure of the company as well as the structure of the program and the project managers. You also need some environmental awareness - what's going on in the world and how it would affect the work that you're doing. And it's always great to have experience as a project manager before stepping into the shoes as a program manager.

Program managers have to be real great time managers because they have to be flexible and obviously people are working around the world so you have to be cognizant of time zones, time changes. In the U.S., we have Daylight Savings Time. In around the world those that do practice Daylight Savings Times have different weekends that it changes, so they have to be aware of that.

I actually worked on a program where Daylight Savings had to be written into the software, so that can easily shift or add an hour or lose an hour during those two days of the year. And most importantly a program manager has to have strong communications skills as well as people skills. And sometimes those soft skills are often the hardest skills that there are, is the way to work with people and really be able to communicate both verbally and in writing so that people from many different backgrounds can understand you.

Joe: I find it interesting the thought on leadership. A Global Program Manager, you may not ever meet some of these project managers?

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Paula: That is true. Being a Global Program Manager, you might work virtually for the entire program.

Joe: Then how do you develop a sense of leadership when it's all virtual?

Paula: That's probably a great big challenge for program managers, especially when working virtually. You don't get that chance to build relationships with people as you would if everyone was just sitting in the cube next door or having those water cooler conversations. So you have to take the extra time and effort to reach out to them, to your project team or your program team, outside of normal meeting times. I found that in both programs and projects that I've worked on if I just kind of reached out to people and I said, "Hey, how's it going? What's going on?" And then through that conversation I learn things about them but also more information about the status of my projects and programs. Just through a simple conversation. So it's important to be flexible and understanding but also to get to understand people.

When I was working on this book, the copy editor emailed me and said, "Hey, I probably will not be available for the next few days because we have our big holiday coming up." I was unfamiliar with their religion or their holiday, but I had to be flexible and understanding. They have their certain holidays as well as, you know, in the States there's holidays that people observe. So you have to understand different cultures and customs and religions, too.

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Joe: I think that everybody can learn from someone that's been a Global Program Manager. I think that's such a strong skill to develop in your resume anymore because we are doing so much virtually and globally anymore.

Paula: That's true, and you know program management is really a synergistic kind of activity. It's basically the sum of the parts is greater than if each of them were individual. So you kind of pull everything together and you get this synergy and you build something greater than each deliverable you would have had from individual projects.

Joe: The other difficulty I see is in the communication. You have a tendency to rely a lot on data and numbers and project schedules because of the virtual aspect of it.

Paula: You do rely on probably text or written information probably a little more than you would on verbal communication. A lot of what a program manager does is take the data and create information from it, and eventually give it up to the senior leaders so they can make decisions based on the information they're receiving. So you take the data. You analyze the data, whether it's the time lines, the budgets... As a program manager, one project might be budgeted a little heavier than another one, and you might pull resources from one or financial resources from one and move it to another if the need is heavier there. So you make those decisions across the project where financially how much money each project should be. If one is running heavier you can make decisions and maybe cutting something in another project, so you're kind of overseeing a lot, a huge array of different issues. So you have the financials, the time-based, and also the quality and scope. You want to make sure they all are heading at the same quality. There's something

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in project management called "gold plating" which is something you don't want to do. You want to provide what is needed at the right time.

Joe: What's been your biggest surprise being a program manager? What just floored you one time or shocked you one time in the middle of a project or at the end: "How could I have let that happen?" Have you had those moments?

Paula: Well, we did have a moment where it was quite surprising how much, we had a software project, gosh, it must be ten years ago, and we had to have a DB2 expert and the DB2 expert was needed across many projects. And what happened was, we weren't structured in a program at that point so everyone was pulling this single DB2 resource and this person was kind of saying, "Hey wait, this is crazy."

That's when we actually started doing the program management where then we had this extra oversight, someone really managing the big picture, determining where this DB2 expert should go. So for me it was a surprise in what the need of program management was that we didn't even realize how important it was for our organization, how beneficial it was. Because once we added that program level governance, they made sure everything aligned correctly, they made sure everything integrated correctly. They also took care of rolling up all the finances and making sure that was all communicated correctly, and built more of an infrastructure for us to work in so all the project managers worked better.

The surprise for me was actually needing that program process because at first everyone was like, "This is crazy, why do we need this extra oversight," but then, when it was

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added, it just added so much relief to the project groups that we all worked better together.

Joe: When you end a program, is there always another program waiting for a Global Program Manager or what do you do in the middle?

Paula: Every company's going to be different. When a program ends, it depends on what type of organization you have. There's kind of three bucketed types of organizations and most of them fall somewhere between all those, they're not perfect but there's a functional organization where you usually would not have a project or program manager, usually a functional manager, say an accountant, will be doing their accounting job and then run a project at the same time.

Then at the other extreme is the projectizing organization and I always think of NASA, so in NASA they have this big project or program and they hire people specifically for that big project or program and when that's complete, they release those resources. And then in between those two extremes is a matrix organization which in this day and age most organizations are matrix where you have a project manager or program manager and they often have dual reports where they might report through a function group, say a project team as well as report to the organization that they are doing the work for.

They'll have a dual report. If you're in a dual report area, you probably go back to your other functional areas or program manager might take on a larger project or they might be released, depending on the type of company they might be released and then they go to another company that needs that type of resource.

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Joe: I think someone could really excel in the field and it would be a lot of fun and a great experience to go through it. However is there a high degree of burnout in program managers?

Paula Wagner: Program management is a great field to go in. It really depends on the company and how it's structured, how much support they give a program manager. If you have a very strong and thriving PMO, which different companies refer to it differently, PMO could be a project management office, program management office, portfolio management office. It kind of refers to a different, differently at different companies. But this office structure that helps support the program manager, if they have a strong support mechanism where you have people focusing on the administrative needs of the program and the project, program manager doesn't have to work on that, then the burnout rate is going to be less.

But if the program manager is tasked with everything and they're kind of a sole person operating by themselves overseeing this huge structure, there could be more burnout. So it really depends on the industry and the environment in which they're working in. But it is a wonderful and actually growing group and profession and so much so that the program, excuse me, Project Management Institute, also known as PMI has created a certification program certifying people as program managers so they saw that this was actually a growing and developing profession.

A lot of people kind of move up the hierarchy where they start as project managers and some even start as business, excuse me, business analysts or project consultants and then they move into project management and then the next step would be a project manager to

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work on wide-scale projects and programs. So there is a career path there and eventually you could get up to the portfolio level, so which would be more of an executive oversight of the, all the resources that are being tasked with projects and programs.

Joe: Now what's been the greatest change with program management that you've seen since you've been involved in it?

Paula Wagner: Well, you know, program management is relatively new and there was a lot of confusion of what a program is and what it is not so PMI set up the standards in about 2006, so before that there was a lot of confusion, there's, and now it's getting a little more refined and there's actually positions of program management out there. I would say ten years ago, you would rarely see that, now it is something that is quite common and something that people can strive to become.

Joe: Well, you actually teach at Keller, is that correct?

Paula: That's true. I do teach at Keller and I teach all different aspects of project, program and portfolio management.

Joe: Have they developed a certain program or even a Global Program Management curriculum?

Paula: They actually do have a program management class. They have a project management class, a program management class. They also teach risk management as it deals with projects, contracts and procurements, there's, I'm trying to think of all the other ones, there's a cost and, and time course, so there's about six or eight different courses

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but there is one focused completely on program management. And in that course the students work in teams and they create quote, unquote projects that they oversee and they allocate different resources to those programs, projects based on the needs of those projects. So it's a great learning experience for the students to get involved and kind of roll up their sleeves and get involved in learning the tools and techniques of program management.

Joe: Now, is there anything I left out that you would like to mention about Global Program Management or your book?

Paula: You know, the book is a great resource for people. It's a great resource for universities that do teach a program or project management class. It kind of starts at the big picture and then gets more specific as opposed to a lot of books where they start kind of narrow and get broader. Where it starts with business strategy and it looks at why would you want a global business and why would you want to have a program help you receive the results of that business. Then it goes into talking about program management in detail according to PMI. We also discuss portfolio management. In the appendix, if someone's not familiar with project management, there's a high-level discussion of project management so you understand how it ties back to program management.

Joe: I would like to thank you very much for being on my podcast today. The pod's available on the Business901 site and the Business901 iTunes Store.

Paula: Thank you. It was a pleasure being on today.

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Joseph T. Dager

Lean Six Sigma Black Belt

Ph: 260-438-0411 Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: jtdager@business901.com

Web/Blog: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)



What others say: *In the past 20 years, Joe and I have collaborated on many difficult issues. Joe's ability to combine his expertise with "out of the box" thinking is unsurpassed. He has always delivered quickly, cost effectively and with ingenuity. A brilliant mind that is always a pleasure to work with." James R.*

Joe Dager is President of Business901, a progressive company providing direction in areas **such as Lean Marketing, Product Marketing, Product Launches and Re-Launches. As a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt**, Business901 provides and implements marketing, project and performance planning methodologies in small businesses. The simplicity of a single flexible model will create clarity for your staff and, as a result, better execution. My goal is to allow you spend your time on the **need versus the plan.**

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