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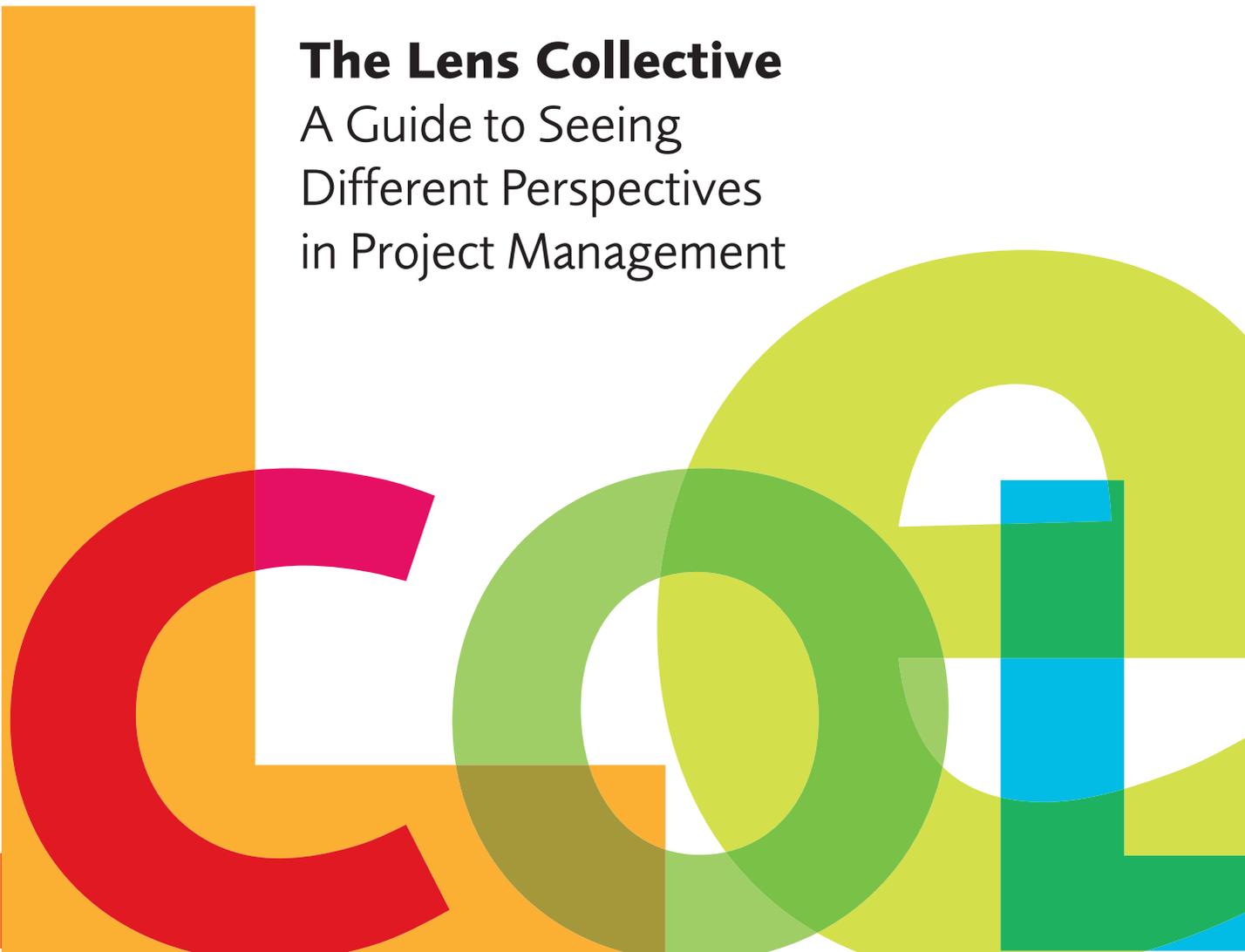
The Lens Collective
A Guide to Seeing
Different Perspectives
in Project Management

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The lens collective

PERSPECTIVE

The term 'lens' has been specifically chosen for this guide to reflect the analogy between human vision and the interaction of people. This context also facilitates the analogy between the tools and techniques used to enhance, correct, protect and improve this interaction.

The eye is the vehicle through which the brain understands distance, shape, form, colour, shade, light, dark, and dimensions. These are based upon frames of reference shaped by, for example:

- culture and beliefs;
- values and ethics;
- experience and upbringing;
- preferences and prejudices;
- education and influences;
- context and external factors;
- perceived opportunity and risk;
- mood and behaviours.

Throughout our lifetime, our vision evolves, becoming stronger or weaker. Sometimes intervention is required in the form of glasses, contact lenses or surgery. Equally, our own frames of reference evolve over time, adapting and reshaping through exposure to variety.

The human dimension gives each of us the capacity to choose to evolve according to our circumstances. We have the ability to employ tools to refine our perspectives. We can identify which corrective action may prove useful and implement effective tools. When seeking to improve or correct vision, we determine the type and intensity of lens required in conjunction with the existing range of products, such as glasses, telescope, microscope, periscope, magnifying glass, endoscope, night-sight or sunglasses.

In project, programme and portfolio management, there are infinite and complex human dimensions. This guide offers lenses to enhance, correct, protect and improve relationships, behaviours and outcomes within these environments.

GUIDELINES

The APM People SIG was formed to acknowledge that the most complex aspect of project management is people. We seek to emphasise the people dimensions of many recognised areas within project management, i.e. procurement, risk, governance, planning, etc. Specific processes, tools and techniques within these areas may be garnered from the appropriate APM SIGs.

The Lens Collective

Defining the lens collective

- It is a suite of tools providing thought provoking questions centred upon people.
- It represents knowledge capture of project management from practitioners, subject matter experts and academics.
- It encourages project managers to reflect and consider alternative courses of behaviour.
- It enables project managers to utilise those aspects that are pertinent to their current circumstances.
- It provides a context, summary question and series of challenges to assess the current status.
- It prompts individuals to expand their understanding and analysis of project challenges or contexts.
- It creates opportunity to widen knowledge to diagnose and respond to particular conditions.
- Each 'lens' employed can also be utilised to close out issues, phases and the project itself.
- It presents insights to pertinent issues that may be alleviated through employing it.

The lens collective is intended for:

- inexperienced, upcoming, learning or junior project managers;
- project managers who are experiencing people related difficulties;
- project managers who are primarily process orientated;
- experienced project, programme and portfolio managers who want to increase their perspectives;
- mentors, trainers, coaches and programme managers to use as a facilitation tool.

The purpose of providing the lens collective is to facilitate:

- a focus upon people;
- the evolution of perspectives;
- access to alternative frames of reference for greater understanding;
- the need to balance people with process;
- promotion of communication to incorporate different approaches;
- success through people using flexible enablers;
- expansion of personal competence.

Benefits of applying the lens collective:

- It helps to probe the latent power of people.
- It enables higher levels of self-awareness.
- It encourages project managers to increase their individual effectiveness.
- It empowers project managers to greater flexibility in people management.
- It leverages collective experience and knowledge.
- It provokes dialogue.
- It facilitates the identification of root causes of problems.

- It promotes creative problem solving.
- It provides insights that may assist in addressing issues.
- It enables collaborative teamwork.

The lens collective is proffered in the context of challenging established paradigms or terms of reference:

- The content is intended to be thought provoking or reflective.
- The language is intentionally accessible and everyday.
- The rhetorical style of questions aims to promote independent thought and action.
- The lenses can be used wholly, sequentially, partially or uniquely.
- In a specific lens, it may be that a single question proves relevant or appropriate.
- Each question can be utilised at any point throughout the project or programme lifecycle.

Health warnings

- The lens collective is not a panacea.
- The lens collective is not a checklist or definitive process.
- The lens collective is not exhaustive.
- The lens collective is not academic, nor does it claim to have new or emerging theories.

Pre-requisites for applying the lens collective

- Open minded approach – flexibility and awareness that options exist.
- Preparation – requires time and effort.
- Personal cognisance – attitude, preferences and motivation.
- Framing – recognise uniqueness of each situation or context.
- Judicial thought – the ability to discern current state, motivation, potential to apply lens.
- Outcome orientation – what you hope to achieve.

Using the lens collective

- The lens collective is universally applicable, regardless of the complexity of the project, programme or portfolio.
- The lens collective can be deployed from the outset of the project.
- The lens collective can be used iteratively through the project or programme lifecycle.
- Individual 'lenses' can be applied during the project or programme lifecycle.
- Each 'lens' can be utilised wholly or partially.
- Each 'lens' can be applied individually or collaboratively.
- Each 'lens' can be used for self or group reflection.
- Each 'lens' can be applied to inspire, motivate and enhance people performance.

Lens 11:	Summary question:
Leveraging creativity in projects	*"What questions do I need to ask in order to understand and achieve success through leveraging creativity and innovation in my projects?"*

This lens is about encouraging and harnessing creativity and innovation in projects.

This lens can help you to:

- create new ideas of how to improve project performance and delivery;
- manage and deliver projects more creatively;
- inspire and stimulate stakeholders;
- motivate individuals for professional and personal development;
- help facilitate competitive advantage.

Areas this can help you address:

- Applying innovation where traditional methods are no longer achieving the required outcomes.
- Issues affecting project delivery.
- Enhancing established practices and behaviours.
- Stifled creativity and innovation in the organisation.
- Absence of confidence to implement new ways of working.

Questions to ask:

1. Do I understand the critical elements of creativity and innovation?

- Am I able to define 'out-of-the-box' thinking?
- Can I define creative problem solving and innovative approaches to others?
- Do I understand how to look at things from a different perspective?
- Have I considered my organisation's capacity for creativity and innovation?
- Have I considered the range of creativity and innovation within the team?
- How can I support corporate strategy by being innovative in project delivery?

2. How can I encourage and harness creativity in my project?

- Do I feel comfortable with creativity and innovation?
- Do I understand what can be done differently in my project?
- Am I employing creativity and innovation appropriately?
- Do I understand how to stimulate creativity and innovation?
- Do I feel confident in facilitating constructive conflict to achieve creativity?

- Do I have the necessary tools and techniques to apply innovation?
- Do I understand how to manage the creativity of others?
- Can I create and sustain confidence with stakeholders?

3. **How do I identify scope for creativity and innovation in my project?**

- Can I define the opportunities for innovation?
- Can I articulate the boundaries for applying innovation?
- Have I identified strategies to sustain and manage creativity?
- How will I effectively manage risks and issues arising from creative approaches?
- Do I have access to additional resources to support creativity and innovation?
- How can I modify key performance indicators to accommodate innovation?
- How do I convert creativity and innovation into project delivery and closeout?

4. **What can be done to respond to extremes in creativity and innovation?**

- Am I able to articulate and apply lessons learned to increase responsiveness?
- Can I channel or redirect creativity to sustain project direction?
- Am I able to curtail excessive creativity?
- Do I know which parties to escalate to?
- Am I confident in pausing progress to reinforce innovation boundaries?