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Project

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Character forming?

Focus on initials
and acronyms in
project management



W E ONCE heard a story about a management consultant who realised that staff at the firm he was visiting seemed obsessed with abbreviations. To test his theory, he told the staff to concentrate on 'the TLAs'. Everyone started chattering away and using the new phrase until, like the small boy in the tale of the Emperor's new clothes, one person asked what the phrase stood for? "Why," said the consultant, "TLA means three letter acronyms."

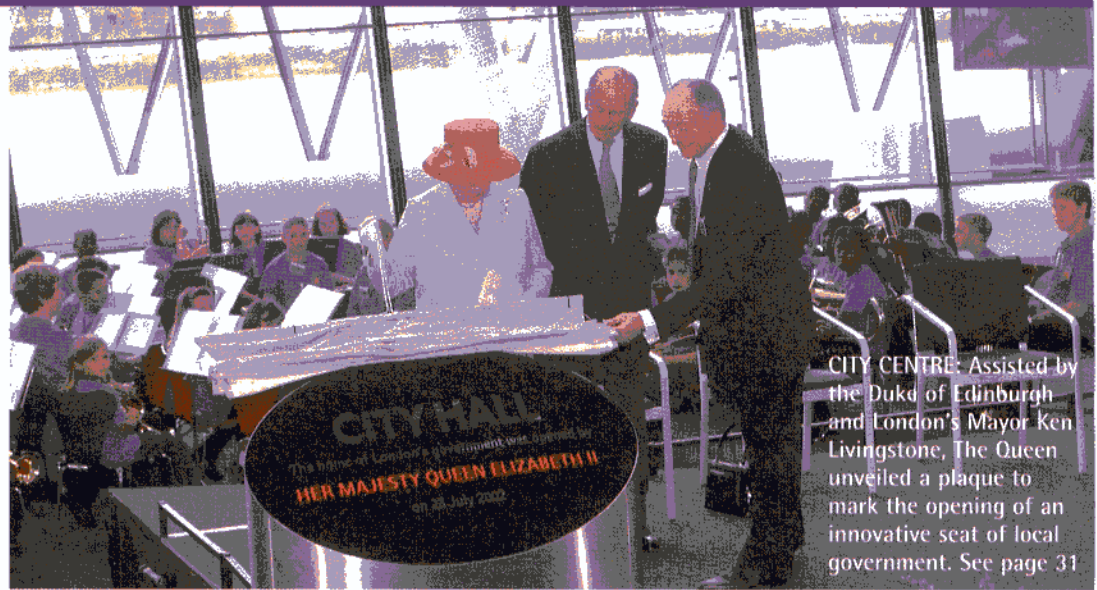
Abbreviations have their place. When a patient is rushed into the emergency room, the air is filled with cries of 'ETA', 'RTA', 'MRI' and the like. The patient would probably later be grateful that the doctor saved a couple of seconds by requesting an 'ECG' rather than an 'electro-cardiogram'. But when the doctor explains what is happening to the patient, who is not familiar with the jargon, a stream of abbreviations will only leave them feeling helpless.

It's particularly important to avoid abbreviations when writing for readers with English as a second language.

And if you still aren't convinced, just imagine the confusion that comes up in internet chat rooms, where 'LOL' can mean either 'lots of love' or 'laughing out loud'!

Project management has its own raft of acronyms and it could be risky to assume that everybody else knows what they mean. If in doubt, spell it out!

John Lister
Plain English Campaign



CITY CENTRE: Assisted by the Duke of Edinburgh and London's Mayor Ken Livingstone, The Queen unveiled a plaque to mark the opening of an innovative seat of local government. See page 31

COVER STORY: Initials and acronyms abound in project management. This month, we look at the initial truth behind some of those in common usage, starting on page 12

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apm

Network, the members' newsletter of the Association for Project Management, is included with every issue.

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Three-fold improvement for EVA's seventh event

THE seventh annual Earned Value Management conference this year was three times the success of previous events, *writes John Faiers.*

It expanded to three days and three venues: a training day and workshops at Southwark Cathedral, a conference at Church House, Westminster and a networking dinner at Simpsons-in-the-Strand and a workshop day.

Guideline

EVA7 saw the arrival of the new APM UK Earned Value Guideline. It has been well received internationally, with requests for translation already in from Japan and Canada, as well as words of praise from the USA. Now on sale direct from APM, it provides a common definition and practical guidance for the entire UK community.

It was generally agreed that the speakers this year were the best so far. The National Audit Office offered its considerable support to the use of EV to control and manage taxpayers money.

The Type 45 Destroyer project

demonstrated that collaboration is better than confrontation when you're building a battleship. Earned Value makes you share information and put the project first. It is also apparent that whilst we don't have an MOD mandate for Earned Value, we do really.

Paul Kidston revealed Taylor Woodrow's prowess and inexorable progress to Earned Value conversion. There is increasing recognition that EV is the way forward in the construction industry.

Courageous

This was echoed on a gigantic scale by John Loftly and Jonathan Crone from Terminal 5. This industry-changing project is using Earned Value to manage most of its programme which enables it to remove the risk from its suppliers, a courageous and deeply reasoned move, which has implications for the entire industry.

A cautionary tale from Wayne Abba about the A12 fiasco warned that EV techniques alone don't guarantee success; it is

human beings managing responsibly that does.

Surprise

Perhaps the biggest surprise was from continental Europe. Earned Value was used successfully to manage the infrastructure for EXPO98 in Portugal and is now being used to concurrently build 11 national stadia plus transport infrastructure in time for EURO2004. Wembley eat your heart out!

Alexandre Rodrigues gave a stunningly solid exposition of hard facts, not just good intentions.

A second surprise was the London Chorus, one of the world's oldest and best choirs, conducted by Ronald Corp, raising the roof and giving an unforgettable illustrated lecture on team-working.

Project will be taking a closer look at some of the presentations in the coming months.

Next year's EVA8 is on 18 June 2003, with the first EV conference in Brazil in November 2002.

Roll up for the Members' Fayre

SHAKESPEARE, ships and SIGs will be under the spotlight at the second APM Members' Fayre at Church House, Westminster, on 9 October.

Also taking the limelight will be the winners of this year's APM Project Management Awards, which will be announced at a gala dinner in the evening.

Following the success of the first Fayre last year, the 2002 event has attracted a range of speakers on a wide variety of project management topics.

APM's Sue Beavil is looking at continuing professional development. Stephen Carver challenges delegates to take responsibility for their actions, while Alistair Watters discusses what makes a PM professional.

The Festival of the Sea is the salty subject from Peter Workman, and Tom Taylor reveals the truth of project management in practice.

Geoff Heppel lifts the curtain on theatreland and Piers Ibbotson from the Royal Shakespeare Company examines the Bard's PM contribution.

After the conference, the 2002 winners will be announced at the dinner held at Simpson's-in-the-Strand.

To book your place, contact APM on 0845 458 1944.

CEO ups anchor

CHIEF Executive of the Association for Project Management, Dick Strange, is moving on.

Dick, a former submariner and Captain in the Royal Navy, became APM's first full-time chief executive two years ago. He leaves the High Wycombe headquarters this month (September) to take advantage of fresh opportunities.

Paying tribute to the work that Dick has done during his time with the Association, Chairman Miles Shepherd said:

"He joined at a time of rapid change – not always planned – and has stood up to it extremely well. He has been a steadfast and terrific representative for APM and we are very grateful for all that he has done."