EXAMPLES OF NONTRADITIONAL

PROJECTS

An extended list of nontraditional projects from *Chapter 6: Principles of Efficient Work Management.*

USE-CASES OF NONTRADITIONAL PROJECTS

In chapter 6 of *Come Up For Air*, I talk at length about the primary levels that make up the hierarchy within a work management tool, and how that helps break down work into manageable tasks. I also show you examples of what you can do with projects in a work management tool, and how you can use nontraditional projects to organize your tasks.

Here are some examples of how we've set up nontraditional projects in Asana. These concepts can be applied to any work management tool of your choosing.

Parking Lot Projects

Bastien Siebman, a fellow Asana Solutions Partner that I've worked closely with, introduced me to this one. If you have lots of future tasks that you don't want to get lost, you can add them to a parking lot project. If you don't assign them to yourself or add due dates, they won't interfere with your overall list of tasks. Instead, assign yourself to one recurring weekly task to check the parking lot project. As you review the list of tasks, you can then assign yourself and add a due date to anything that needs to get done in the near future.

Departmental Projects

It only makes sense to create a project for each department or team within an organization. This can serve as a catch-all for work within the department that needs to get done but is not confined to any one project. It's also a great place to store ideas for future tasks that will be clarified at a later date.

One-on-one Projects

This type of nontraditional project can help you mitigate what I call the Task Dance. The Task Dance is essentially another form of the boomerang effect that we discussed with email. Any time you assign a task to someone else, chances are you're going to receive some sort of response in return, whether that's a question or a simple confirmation. If you delegate a lot of tasks, this boomerang effect can eventually flood your inbox with comments, negating some of the efficiency gains that these tools provide.

I've lived through this myself. Sometimes I'll think of a future task for someone on my team and create it for them in Asana, but I don't want or need a response at that moment. But they feel the need to respond to me immediately, and as a result my

inbox becomes flooded with responses on tasks that I don't really care about or that aren't terribly important. We're stuck in the Task Dance for no reason.

One way to negate the Task Dance is to create one-on-one agenda projects with the people you work most closely with. Usually, this is between a manager and a direct report, and the idea is that you can simply add tasks to the project without an assignee instead of assigning them directly to the person. Then, the next time you meet, you can look through all of the tasks and clarify them in real-time.

This helps to eliminate back-and-forth comments on tasks as the assignee and assignor can work through each one together in just a few minutes. It creates a system to capture and prioritize people's work properly, instead of managers bombarding their employees with tasks when they're top of mind. From an efficiency standpoint, it's another example of batching—it's easier and more efficient to clarify ten tasks together on a video call than to have back-and-forth messages on ten separate tasks.

Studies have also shown that people are more motivated to complete work they assign to themselves.[1] From a culture perspective, there's a huge benefit to talking through a task together and having someone assign themselves, rather than simply assigning a task with little context.

These examples, along with the two mentioned in the book, really scratch the surface of what you can do with projects in a work management tool. Most organizations will have a variety of these types of projects, and in some cases, they may even have more non-traditional projects than traditional ones. The lesson is that if you confine yourself to thinking only in terms of a "traditional project" you're missing out on a significant amount of the value these tools can provide.

Book a call to learn how we can help you better set up and track projects on your work management tool.

[1] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10664-020-09876-x#Sec7