

**Hal Macomber**

## The Project Reformer's e-Tip of the Week

### 032: **Don't Mistake Obligation for Commitment**

In this time of hyper-connectivity and simultaneous physical seperateness we see some extremely bad habits that create breakdowns, frustrations, and waste on our projects. One significant culprit is the emailed meeting request. We all know how it works, someone sends out a meeting request often at the last minute expecting that everyone that receives the request will show up at the meeting. With online calendars the meeting organizer can see that times are "free" and presumes that there will be no reason for saying no. Depending on the stature or rank of the meeting organizer people might understand that the only response is to accept the request or to just show up.

There are two mistakes in this scenario. First, one person can not make a promise for another person. The most you can do is to promise to get a promise-yes or a promise-no. The other mistake is in assuming that an "opening" on a calendar grants you authority to commit that time. This is not a matter of the technology. Technology only allows us to do what we will do anyway.

Projects are too often commitment-free zones. Take responsibility for activating a network of commitment rather than taking the seeming short-cut to obligate people. Nothing beats a group of people who are committed to complete tasks to the satisfaction of others on their team.

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