



PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT GROUP  
[www.pipmg.org](http://www.pipmg.org)

## Project Sessions



# Project Sessions by PIPMG

Today	"Project Management experiences in the pandemic"
3rd September @11am GMT	"PM practice in the new normal" with keynote speaker, John Swales, AstraZeneca
1st October @11am GMT	"The Clinical PM of the future" with keynote speaker, Shola Ayeni, Applied Molecular Transport



# Today's Agenda

11:00	Intro
11:10	Breakout sessions
11:35	Reconvene & feedback
11:50	Summary and look ahead



# Breakout sessions

## **BREAKOUT ROOM 1:**

Pros and cons of virtual meeting apps

## **BREAKOUT ROOM 2 and 3:**

What's been the effect of pandemic on business / timelines?

## **BREAKOUT ROOM 4:**

Impact on those learning their trade as PMs / what skills needs has it highlighted?



## BREAKOUT ROOM 1: Pros and cons of virtual meeting apps

Great Breakout room discussion, shows how well virtual meetings can work!

Key points:

- Need to get to grips with and get more used to using it, even though big companies have been doing for many years - we are not actually reinventing the wheel!
- Things that are taking time to get used to: use of camera/ not seeing individual faces in their company/ meeting etiquette i.e. chair noticing who wants to speak/ put your hand up
- There has been a mixed experience between companies/ understanding people's circumstances – interruptions at home; pets/ childcare etc.
- Technology problems occur when lots of people e.g. 60 people + - need to ensure enough people working behind the scenes so presenter can be present/ requires two facilitators; need one to lead and one to manage rooms etc.
- After COVID – companies short of space (e.g. small start up) will likely continue this way of working because it has demonstrated that people are just as productive
- Difficulties when half in office and half dialling in. When all virtual it works so much better. If go back to more “blended” way of working, we hope that people remember how much better it was when we were all virtual and not half and half.
- MS teams (companies developing virtual backgrounds – if everyone has the same background then you feel like you’re in the same room), zoom is also used and is reportedly better for seeing people when sharing screen. WebEx is on the way out!



## **BREAKOUT ROOM 2 and 3:**

What's been the effect of pandemic on business / timelines?

**Some companies had to modify working times to match CROs extended hours as they went to shift work.**

- Working at home days are longer.
- One company noted: Impact on timelines varies according to function.
- While Contract Manufacturers (CMO) assure companies that timelines won't be impacted, the sponsor are not convinced so still factoring potential delays into risk tables.
- Another challenge is competing with Covid-19 projects etc for capacity.
- Impact on CMC includes customs because there is no-one to receive goods on import.
- Some companies note that despite trials on hold, all manufacturing is still happening but it is having a huge impact on revenues.

## BREAKOUT ROOM 2 and 3:

### What's been the effect of pandemic on business / timelines?

**Communication has been tricky, and it is easy to assume everyone is equally impacted – which is not the case! So there are challenges to keep empathy and understanding of issues between groups.**

- One company has put a lot of focus on manufacturing and made a **large shift of resources**, they are now doing 24hour shifts. This is a huge effort and long hours by staff. Managing morale is not easy but people have remained engaged. It is easy to keep it up for the first weeks, but after that it is hard to stay motivated. So good management and showing the direct impact on delivering projects really does help.
- Teams do see the impact and recognise it is important to make products to help patients
- The main risk is that when Covid-19 quietens down people will then start to feel the effects of such intense working patterns and this needs to be considered by management

#### **Clinical impact**

- Depends on region, different impact e.g. some trial sites are not working on any recruitment unless it is related to Covid-19. There is also a big shift towards supporting Covid-19 related trials.
- Big impact on Human Volunteer trials, even more so than high risk cancer trials because of the different risk/benefit profiles for patients.
- Lots of innovation to combat the impact on timelines. Monitoring of sites, use of tech – we do not know the impact of this yet. It may impact Quality etc. one to keep an eye on.
- One company had managed to complete Clinical trials that had already started but all new clinical trials were put on hold from March for 1 month. We worked to get all systems in place to restart; testing of staff, back to full capacity and working with screens by September.

## **BREAKOUT ROOM 2 and 3:**

What's been the effect of pandemic on business / timelines?

### **Regulatory impact**

- Some Competent Authorities have a backlog, and 30-day timelines are not necessarily true anymore.
- Mitigations are kicking in, how long to pause trials, how can we piggyback using different territories where the pandemic is in a different stage e.g. Eastern Europe hasn't had so much impact but the USA has – but everchanging state by state
- Pandemic guidelines for Clinical Trials by the FDA, possibly the EU are available.
- Good Regulatory contact is possible for urgent authorisations importations etc and accelerated procedure. Regulators are very reactive and supportive.
- Competent authorities have Fast tracked approvals where there are good reasons.
- Some companies have found lots of flexibility, rapid responses, changes and amendments, standalone documentation, faster approval. And that high priority projects prioritised. All the while still learning to adapt.



## **BREAKOUT ROOM 2 and 3:**

What's been the effect of pandemic on business / timelines?

### **New ways of working**

- Importance of good communication, especially when on zoom, or MS teams - including the use of camera where possible (body language is important)
- Some PMs are experiencing detrimental impact of not seeing colleagues
- Some companies have implemented staggered shifts in labs to aid social distancing
- Some believe that the working from home option may be continued, especially in small companies, perhaps not but large companies
- New modus operandi – more flexibility working in a virtual world



## **BREAKOUT ROOM 2 and 3:**

What's been the effect of pandemic on business / timelines?

### **Possible solutions?**

- Communication is key
- More visibility is essential
- Must be prepared when projects/tasks are paused and there is a massive thirst for mitigation plans and pull for information.
- We need to master balancing work/life as well being exposed to constant information flow
- Tools and Dashboards would help enormously
- People want as much information as possible on plans, critical paths, the impacts



## BREAKOUT ROOM 4:

### Impact on those learning their trade as PMs / what skills needs has it highlighted?

- For some people, the transition to 100% remote working seemed relatively painless as they were already used to working with remote teams using many of the communication tools that are now in more widespread use. The challenge was more around being in that position 100% of the time with no opportunity to meet face-to-face due to travel restrictions etc. Feelings of isolation as time passes.
- For some who were relatively new to the PM role, the switch to remote working has been a huge challenge particularly with respect to communication. Not being able to shout across the desk to someone or to physically see them has highlighted the increased importance of communication and communication skills at this time.
- Someone who works across organisations in a consultancy role commented that many organisations had seen the COVID-19 situation as an opportunity to improve their PM skills. The areas of need highlighted were how to improve virtual skills – technology, social and PM tools and improving collaboration.
- Technology challenges was highlighted as a steep learning curve that they had had to go through by some people in the breakout group. Some people had invested quite a lot of time to better understand the available tools and their capabilities and that this had been a worthwhile investment. Challenge of poor or unstable home internet connections (particularly when shared with many other occupants in the house), lack of second monitors, lack of printers etc had caused some difficulties and frustrations.



## BREAKOUT ROOM 4:

### Impact on those learning their trade as PMs / what skills needs has it highlighted?

- Another observation was that the tools used in the virtual environment have generally proven themselves to be robust. As more people have had to get more used to using these tools people are becoming more comfortable with them and seeing the benefits. People have had to find different ways of maintaining informal virtual social contact during the lockdown such as using the technology for informal coffee catch-ups or social events such as Quiz's etc.
- Communicating with teams in the virtual world has also highlighted the importance of improving visual outputs from meetings or what is shared during meetings. Use of tools such as One pager pro was highlighted as being useful to distil important points.
- PM's generally seem to be juggling more work.
- Timeline pressures seem to be increased for many. Some clients have forgotten that we are in a COVID-19 situation and are still expecting timelines to be unaffected!
- Cultural differences – There has been a blurring of work and home life which is handled differently within different cultures but generally the virtual world seems to have become more informal and tolerant than before (classic no no's such as dog's barking, children coming into rooms etc seems to be accepted as the norm in many environments). The challenge for many is finding the right balance between the stresses of work and home life and developing the discipline required to make it work effectively and efficiently.



# Thank you

If you have any questions, please contact

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