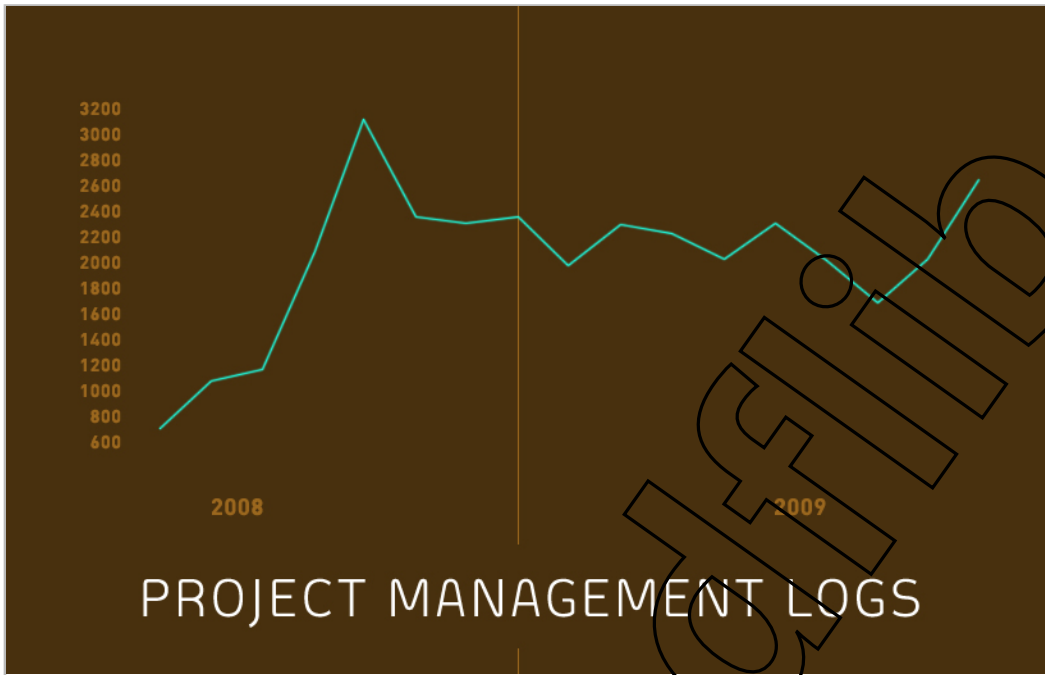


## Measuring "Busyness"

by Chris, November 2009



In my [last post](#) in what is becoming series on [measurement](#), I started off with my hypothesis that our company is like an ecosystem, "comprised of many areas of **unseen** activity" in addition to the sort of **seen** activity you'd expect (sales, individual projects, relationships, etc.). So, in trying to verify my hypothesis, I've been gathering data representing all kinds of unseen and unmeasured activity to see how it relates to the big picture as I've understood it so far. I started with looking at our [blogging activity](#) over the past three years and noticed that the months where we posted less loosely corresponded to what we tend to think of anecdotally as "busy" times for our company. That made me wonder- how else could I measure "busyness"? Looking at sales data wouldn't quite do it, because those numbers would correspond to the beginning of a project, so the trendline of sales may not match up exactly with that of volume of work over time. However, looking at the volume of communication using our internal project management system might help me discern at trendline for "busyness."



The first factor is the number of employees using the system. Between May and October of 2008, we hired 4 new employees- three [Project Manager Assistants](#) and one [Resourcer](#). These roles were essential to a new system we'd been establishing to make sure our service remained excellent while the complexity of our work increased. The Project Management teams use this system constantly to communicate and log project progress, and the Resourcer is constantly checking in on every task to watch progress and utilization. No wonder the number jumped so drastically! The other factor helps to explain the pattern, in that we are again seeing a jump this October despite not having a corresponding growth in personnel- that factor is the pre-holidays rush. This happens every year, where existing clients and new prospects are eager to get work completed or scheduled before the holidays and especially the new year. There's something about these calendar landmarks that put the pressure on, not to mention the common need to allocate funds before the end of the financial year.

This was an interesting exercise. Little by little, measuring these "peripheral" data sets is giving me a much better sense of the big picture.

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