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Phil Baguley
Brighton, England

introduction

This book is a readable and practical introduction to the craft of Project Management.

Written for all readers, it explains and illustrates the what, why, where, when and how of project management in an accessible and easily understood form. Jargon-free, based on sound theory, with diagrams, useful ideas and pointers to appropriate methods and tools it's the book for all of you who wish to begin to develop the skills of effective project management.

Managing a project is not an easy task. Nor, as we will see in the following chapters, is it one for the faint hearted. But managing a project well is not only satisfying and rewarding – it also enables you to develop and use skills that are transferable – skills that you can use to good effect elsewhere in your lives and careers.

Not all of your projects will be large and particular attention is paid in this book to the management of small projects. This sort of project abounds both in our workplaces – such as those involved in the process of performance improvement – and in our homes – as when we plan our holidays or remodel our houses. These are the small projects that you, as business professionals, managers or homeowners, are frequently involved in – often on a part-time basis.

By the time you get to the end of this book you will understand not only what a project is but also what you need to do to successfully plan, manage and control that project. By then, if not before, you should be ready to begin, with confidence, the process of managing your own projects. To reach that point you'll have threaded your way through the eleven chapters of this book. These chapters will tell you what is, and isn't, a project (Chapter 1); how to choose (Chapter 2), organize

(Chapter 3), plan (Chapter 4), manage (Chapter 5) and monitor your project (Chapter 8) as well as how to assemble your project team (Chapter 6), manage your project money (Chapter 7), solve the problems that crop up along the way (Chapter 9) and, finally, how to close your project (Chapter 10).

Each of these chapters:

- starts with a brief summary of its objectives and content;
- contains accessible and understandable material that is easily related to your own experience and is full of useful ideas, pointers to appropriate methods, tools, diagrams and examples;
- finishes with a checklist of its key points – all of which are reviewed in the book's final chapter (Chapter 11).

At the end of the book there's a glossary of useful project terms and a list of books and Internet web sites, all aimed at pointing you towards further, more advanced, material on project management.

But this isn't one of those books to be read and then put away – to gather dust on the shelf. It's a book aimed at enabling you to develop and enhance your ability to manage projects; a book to revisit – to dip into, refer to or browse over – as your project management experience and skill grow. Given half a chance, this book will give you one of the most powerful and flexible skills that you can possess – the ability to manage a project.

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01

projects, projects, and projects

in this chapter you will learn

- about the what, why, where, when and how of projects
- what the Five Fundamentals of a project are
- how the Three Dimensions define its boundaries
- how the patterns of its life cycle vary

Projects old and new

When the Egyptian Pharaoh Cheops died, in 2612 BC, he was buried in what we now call the Great Pyramid of Giza. Ranked as the tallest structure on Earth for over 43 centuries, this huge edifice took over twenty years and almost seven million person-weeks of effort to build. The finished structure contained over two million blocks of stone, each with an average weight of 2.5 tons. In its original form it rose some 146 metres above a square base whose sides are exactly aligned to the four points of the compass and measured almost 230 metres. A massive project – even by modern day standards – but not the only one in our history.

The ‘top one hundred’ list of humankind’s projects includes other such ancient structures as the Colossus of Rhodes, the Coliseum of Rome, the Great Wall of China, the Mayan temples of Central America, the Pharos of Alexandria and the megalithic stone circle at Stonehenge, England. But the projects that led to these huge structures were rare, once in a generation, events.

Now, things are different. The project has become an every-day event. It’s a regular feature of all our lives and for many of us it’s a common-place experience to be involved in a project, either at work or at home. So why has this happened?

Projects now

Projects are about change. Without exception, they alter, modify, even transform the world in which we live. To do that they act in ways that are creative, energetic and active. The attraction of the project as a change-creating tool is both considerable and obvious. But this only goes part way to telling us why our use of the project has changed – why it has become a part of our every-day lives.

Part of the answer lies in the fact that we have all become more aware of the power of the project. For not only does the project create things, it also enables us to use our resources more efficiently and effectively. Today’s business professional uses it to plan, direct and execute the ways in which organizational resources are used. In our homes we can use the project to enhance the quality of our lives. As a result the project has become a major contributor to survival and growth in all organizations, whatever their aims, products or services might be, and a tool for us all to use to shape our lives.

But this isn't the only reason. For the world has also changed. It is, for better or for worse, different from the one that our grandfathers and fathers lived and worked in. Our projects are bigger and more complex: NASA's Lunar Landing project, the Sydney Opera House, the 553 metre high CN tower in Toronto, the 3910 metre long Akashi-Kaikyo bridge in Japan, Hong Kong's new Chek Lap Kok international airport and China's huge Xiaolangdi dam on the Yellow River are all examples. They also have shorter life spans. In our market-places the tides of change are now global, rather than local or national. What happens in Tokyo on Monday is with us on Tuesday – if not before! This means that customer-led organizations, who need to respond to the desires of their customers, need a mechanism, a process, to enable them to do just that – and quickly.

The project is, without doubt, the answer to that need. It acts as a lens through which an organization or an individual can focus resources and abilities towards a desired outcome. In short, the project enables the organization to delight its customers and us, as individuals, to achieve our goals.

How and why

At the core of the project lies the act of doing. Projects are about work, actions, building, re-building, achievements, deliverables and outcomes. But to be successful they must be managed with care and forethought – in ways that ensure that all of this 'doing' is carried out efficiently and effectively and focused towards a common endpoint. If we fail to do this then our projects will finish late, generate outcomes that are incomplete or inadequate and do so at costs that exceed our planned expenditure. These sorts of project – the failures of the project world – have ill-defined tasks and deliverables, and inappropriate organizations. They are poorly led, with ineffective communication systems and isolated project teams. Their plans are inflexible and inadequate. Successful projects plan and track measurable tasks and goals. They build on success in short-term deliverables to generate further successes in complex long-term outcomes. They look for results now, rather than later. Their problems are detected early; the creativity, commitment and energy of their teams drive their projects to success.

To make those things happen in our projects we need a map to help us steer our way, a framework from within which we can view the detail of the following chapters of this book, an image that tells us about the project process. The diagram in Figure 1.1 answers all these needs.

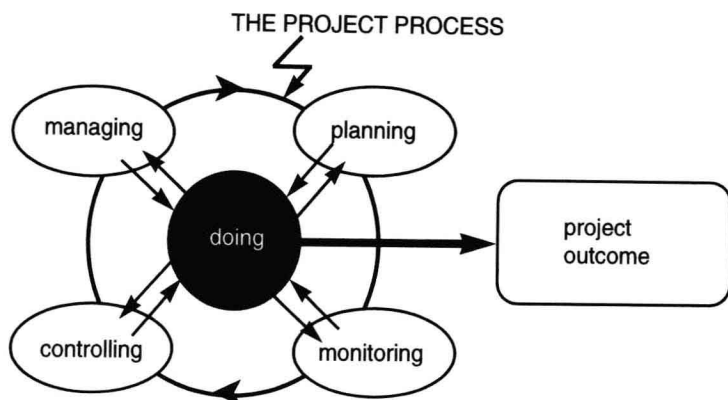


Figure 1.1 The project process

Figure 1.1 not only confirms that the act of **doing** is core to the project process – it also tells us that it doesn't stand alone. For **doing** needs to be supported and reinforced by the acts of **managing**, **planning**, **monitoring** and **controlling**. But all of these need, if they are to be effective, to be carried out within an arena that is built on the foundations of good project management – which is where you come in.

But your involvement has its entry conditions.

For there are three criteria that you have to meet if you are going to become an effective, creative, change-generating project manager:

First: *You* have to *need* and *want* to be a project manager.

Second: *You* must have the opportunity – either at work or at home – to be able to explore being a project manager.

Third: *You* must have enough knowledge of the how and why of being a project manager.

The first two of these are down to you. The third one – the knowledge of the what, how, why and when of project

management – is what this book is about. But first, before we reach out for that knowledge, what we need to do is to take a good hard look at the project itself.

Big or small

Most people will have heard about at least one big project. The ones that catch the public eye are usually about creating or doing things that are significant, large, expensive and well publicized, like NASA's Mars project or football's World Cup.

But not all of our projects are as ambitious or as massive or as costly as these. For every day, all over the world, millions of projects take place. They are launched, planned, monitored and completed with smaller outcomes, more modest costs and shorter time scales. New products are being launched, new books published, shops and restaurants 're-imaged' or 'restyled' and old or new businesses moved into new offices. The majority of these have deliverables that are modest, by any standards. For example, beverage vending machines are installed, customer record forms used by Sales Departments are modified, holidays are planned and taken.

If you cast your mind back you can probably remember a similar range of projects – from large to small or modest. It's also worth thinking about the numbers of people involved in those projects and you'll find that these too ranged from those involving many people – as when a company relocated – to those involving as few as two or three in a workplace or a family.

Concrete or ideas

If you ask most people about the projects that they remember, they'll probably tell you about the ones that had outcomes that were tangible. You could see, touch or get hold of them. But these concrete, tangible outcomes – like a new office block or a new computer – aren't the only sorts of outcome that our projects create.

For our projects can also be aimed towards far less tangible outcomes. These can be, for example, information about customers or changes in the ways in which we think or feel about a particular subject or issue. However, like their cousins with

more concrete outcomes, they can still consume huge amounts of money and people time. Some of these are called ‘influencing’ projects. Examples include car manufacturers’ advertising campaigns, aimed at persuading us to buy their newly launched cars; government or federal authority health campaigns, aimed at making us more aware of the risks of smoking or eating too much; and the campaigns of political parties, aimed at persuading us to vote for a particular candidate or party. In our workplaces this sort of ‘influencing’ project is often about such things as increasing quality, reducing waste or improving customer service. All of these are just as important as a new computer or a new office block. They all contain the potential to contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of our organizations. In our homes these influencing projects can help us to support each other or try to persuade our children to behave better.

Work and play

The projects that you’ve heard of or worked on so far might lead you to believe that most of our projects are to do with our workplaces. But that isn’t so. For the power of the project has spread out beyond the workplace into the rest of our lives. We all have individual projects. They can be about any part of our lives. Some of these are about our home – its size, features or decorations – while others are about our desire to be better swimmers, dancers, runners or golfers. Their outcomes can influence or change things like our own or our children’s education, the sort of car we drive, how much we weigh or how we dress. You name it – it is, or has been, somebody’s project.

These projects are just as important as our workplace projects. For not only are they statements of our individuality, their outcomes are also often very influential in our lives. They can, for example, result in us changing jobs, moving house, having an extension or sun-deck built, gaining a master’s degree, having a holiday in Hawaii, changing or making-over the way we dress or do our hair, or even getting a new partner!

The Five Fundamentals

From what we’ve seen so far it’s beginning to be pretty clear that the project is a versatile and powerful box of tricks.