

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT BASIC SCHOOL  
(YOU AS THE PROJECT MANAGER)**

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What is a project? It may be defined as an exception, something outside the range of your normal activities, something new not routine. Also the activities are related, goals and deadlines are specific and the end result is clearly identified.

There are five steps in a project:

1. Establish the objective.
2. Plan the project.
3. Implement the project.
4. Control the project
5. Adjust as required.

Establishing the objective must include three factors:

1. Performance criteria, what's to be done.
2. What time constraints are involved.
3. What cost constraints are involved.

The plan must be clear and concise and understood and agreed upon by all parties involved.

The heart of the planning process is task analysis, specific elements are:

1. Identify the tasks (breakdown work)
2. Sequence the tasks.
3. Estimate task durations.
4. Estimate related costs.
5. Estimate resource requirements.
6. Commit task flow to paper (flow charts).

Responsibility for the task often determines the breakdown.

For sequencing tasks understanding the concepts of dependency, parallel, and lag relationships is critical. Failure to establish these will produce dramatic errors in the project schedule.

Factors to consider when estimating time:

1. Use actual times from similar tasks in other projects.
2. Involve the person(s) most knowledgeable of the task in making estimate
3. Consider track record of those making time estimates. Who is the eternal optimist (underestimates) and who is the pessimist (overestimates).
4. Research vendors and contractors with whom you have no experience.
5. Give special consideration to critical paths, tasks affected by weather and other factors beyond your control.

Factors to consider when estimating costs:

1. On high cost items confirm prices and how long they will be guaranteed.
2. Consider affects of inflation on long term projects.
3. Keep abreast of currency exchange rates on import items.
4. Build in a contingency.
5. Be sure adequate cost controls are in place.

The last three steps, implementation, adjustment, and control form a loop and work in conjunction. As long as the loop stays in motion the project is healthy.

The successful project manager must be able to anticipate problems. Keys to this skill are:

1. Reporting—with proper reporting in place the signs of a problem are soon visible. Reports should be timely, thorough and consistent.
2. Feedback—team member and contractor involvement is essential. Create an atmosphere of openness, honesty, and fairness with the team.

The project manager must be responsive to warning signals from the project team and make critical decisions on a timely basis. When will be it time to act or wait?

1. Gather the facts, be sure decision can be justified.
2. Get input from those most directly affected by the decision.
3. Don't over react to slight variations in schedule.
4. Don't procrastinate when a trend has evolved.
5. Don't cover for a friend.
6. Prioritize alternatives, be sure driving factor in the project is known.
7. Be sure to communicate decisions.

Project reviews should be prepared regularly containing a brief description of the project and its final deadline, current status of schedule and budget, explanations where needed especially variances in time and money, and expectations for the near future, completion date compared to deadline.

In review you will succeed as a project manager when:

1. You understand and practice the team approach.
2. You apply a standard that is different from the one used in managing your department.
3. You can organize a multiple effort.
4. You are flexible.
5. You communicate well with everyone.