Project Success: creating excellent projects

How can I make my project successful?

Chantal Savelsbergh, Martijn Jong & Peter Storm

AMI Consultancy

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Preface

Target audience for this book

This book has been written for project managers who want to make a success of their projects. We have adopted a success model that is based on our experiences in leading projects and supporting project managers and teams. This book tells you what to expect as a project manager and what you can do to respond. We focus on what you can gain from project management in personal terms, how to steer your project towards success and what to do if your project encounters setbacks.

What can you expect?

As mentioned earlier, this book is based on our own practical experience. Each chapter therefore starts with a practical case study rather than theory. We only introduce theory where needed, to successfully solve practical issues. The same applies to methods and techniques related to project management; we only deal with those techniques that have proven their worth in practice. You can use the instructions we give you in this book to set to work right away.

What makes this book different?

There are three ways in which this book differs from other books on project management. First of all, we always start off by describing a situation you could encounter and then discuss the best way to respond, instead of first explaining the whole range of project management techniques at great length. Secondly, the book actively encourages you to focus on Project Success instead of focussing on risk management. This is based on the premise that a project is not necessarily a success if nothing goes wrong. To make a project successful, you need to invest in at least six universal success factors:

- active involvement of management and users
- a transparent and realistic strategy
- effective planning and control
- a close-knit team
- focus and inspiration
- flexibility and creativity

Finally, the book is designed in such a way as to show you how to master the field of project management based on your own experiences and those of others. In each real-life case study, we briefly reflect on the central issue (preferably from several angles) and the lesson that can be learned from it.

Acknowledgements

Several project managers have contributed to the contents of this book, many of them unknowingly, by sharing their experiences with us. We would like to thank them for their contributions.

A number of project managers have made an active contribution. We asked each of them to provide a concise description of his or her key success factor. We would also like to thank them. Their contributions can be found interspersed between the chapters in this book.

1

Leading a project: what's in it for me?

In this chapter we will first reflect on the question of what it is that makes leading projects special. From there, we will go on to discuss what's in it for you, for instance for your own career and personal development. We will end this chapter by discussing what you can do personally to realize your full potential: choose your own way and stick to it! But first:

How is managing a project 'different' from managing a routine job?

When you choose to become a project manager, your job will be different from a continuous job, like being a dentist or running a supermarket section. The first difference is the level of responsibility you hold as a project manager. That is what Petra experiences in her first project.

The project managed by Petra focuses on drawing up a strategic five-year plan, together with the management of DINKY, a small producer of toy cars. The company is staffed by people who fall within the scope of the Sheltered Employment Act: employees with a physical or social handicap not able to find a job elsewhere. The idea is to match jobs and the capabilities of individuals. In some cases, this may result in costs being higher than revenues, which is why the company is subsidized. DINKY has been doing this for 25 years. The government has now made some drastic cuts in subsidies and companies now need to offset losses in one part of their budget against revenues in other parts. This calls for a U-turn in their way of thinking for both management and employees. They need to start thinking ahead and draw up a plan to balance costs and revenues for the coming five years, without losing sight of the Act's objectives. This could mean putting an end to the production of toy cars, the current activity the whole company has dedicated itself to for the last 25 years. Petra has been asked to draw up a strategic long-range plan in such a way that management not only collaborates in the design but also widely supports the outcome.

When you opt for a job as project manager, you are expected to bear management responsibility at a very early stage in your career. Moreover, you will be challenged on your entrepreneurial competences. Compared to other positions, a project manager has to meet more demands in terms of his performance and results orientation, his team orientation and his decisiveness. A line manager, by contrast, is involved in an ongoing process to which he needs to allocate human and financial resources. His focus, therefore, lies on efficiency and control. As a project manager, it is your job to deliver a certain result on time with the resources available to you – financial, human and otherwise. A result which needs to satisfy the client. This client is by no means always your hierarchical manager and as a rule neither just one person or party. All too often there are multiple 'bosses'. In many instances there is a functional and hierarchical boss and one or more project-related bosses. After all, a project is temporary, in contrast to your employment.

An assignment is often proclaimed a project when it concerns something outside the normal routine. Specialists from different disciplines are brought together to do the job, unique in its kind. At the start, team members are not familiar with one another and role allocation and teamwork still need to be developed. Sometimes, team members may be involved in three or more projects simultaneously. They face a tough job dividing their time and attention. And as soon as the end result is in sight, team members must gradually shift their focus again to their future assignments. Furthermore, they need to hand over their project to the client properly to enable the latter to incorporate the use and management of the project result into his daily operations. That makes significant demands on a project manager's competences.

More so than other managers, project managers live in a world characterized by conflict. They have to compete with functional departments when it comes to resources, human or otherwise, and with other projects that run simultaneously. Furthermore, project managers have to deal with multiple parties that contribute to the

project's success, like the client, external stakeholders and the project team. And each of these parties has its own agenda. Projects that, due to their nature, occur more frequently in an organization, like the construction of a bridge in an engineering firm, will also require technical knowledge and skills from a project manager. Completely new projects with vague project objectives in politically complex environments, like the development of a sustainable relocation of goods, will demand more of his project-based and process management skills. Every project will most certainly call for managerial skills.

Table 1.1 contains a non-exhaustive list of the differences mentioned above between managing a project and managing a department.

Managing a project	**Managing a department**
Ample responsibility from the start	Managerial responsibility not until substantial working experience has been gained
More than one 'boss' (hierarchical, functional, clients...)	One hierarchical and functional boss
Managing a task with many new aspects (technological, methodical etc.) and little routine	Managing more routine tasks and processes
Managing a team with very diverse backgrounds and experiences	Managing a team with more uniform experiences that have gradually been acquired

Managing team members who will 'only' work together for a certain predefined period of time	Managing a team without a predefined end date
Delivering result means end of project team	Delivering result is interim reward and provides motivation to continue team effort
Managing team members working on several projects simultaneously	Managing team members exclusively belonging to this team
Never a chance to settle in, hopping from one project to another	A 'long-term' commitment to one team with a deliberate move to a new career opportunity

Table 1.1 Differences between managing a team and managing a department

The three key differentiators between managing a project versus a department are:

1. The multitude of different project management tasks. We will reflect on this in the section 'What do you encounter as a project manager?'.
2. Each 'day' in a project is different. A project develops and goes through various phases, each with its own specific characteristics. We will deal with this in the section 'Each project phase has its specific characteristics'.
3. The large variety in types of projects. We will reflect on this in the section 'Each type of project has its specific characteristics'.

Whilst we reflect on these three key characteristics of project management, we hope you will ask yourself questions like what it is that appeals to you in project management. What are the aspects that suit you well and which ones perhaps less? Why would you consider a career in project management? In other words, we hope you will find out what's in it for you.

What do you encounter as a project manager?

As a project manager you will encounter numerous situations that need solving. The authors asked several project managers to keep a logbook of issues that bothered them and the way they responded. An analysis of all the entries gives us an indication of the enormous variety of issues they encounter.

An example of a logbook entry:

Marjo:

My project 'Refurbishment of Quido office interior' is nearing completion. My client has been approached by the users with an enormous list of new requirements entitled 'remaining items'. We were just able to stay within time and budget as to the agreed refurbishment. What should we do?

After talking to my client, we have both agreed to label the users' new requirements as 'a future wish list'. We have spent a lot of time creating support. Wishes should not be ignored, but evaluation must be transparent and businesslike. Time and attention are important!

It not only appears that project managers have to deal with many different issues and people but also that the experiences reflected upon by project managers are mostly those in which behavioural aspects play a dominant role. In most cases, their experiences relate to communication, negotiations, conflicts and collaboration.

Another example of a logbook entry:

Cees:

I have been away on holiday for three weeks and Stef, our planning officer, has been acting as my replacement. He has made enormous progress and has taken on a lot of responsibility; much more than I thought he could cope with! I need to learn to pay greater attention to this and think of ways to stimulate this further!

And another one:

Nick:

I have talked to my architect three times now. Each time, we make agreements that he subsequently fails to adhere to. I get more and more agitated when I speak to him. Do I need to communicate to him differently? And should I perhaps start confirming things in writing as well?

The logbook entries clearly show the number of different parties a project manager needs to deal with; each time assuming a different role and dealing with different issues. These concern:

- the client, who needs to feel that he will be achieving his objective;
- future users, who must be made to feel that they will benefit from the project results;
- suppliers of resources from the existing organization, who need to understand the necessity of supplying resources to achieve the project goal;
- external suppliers, about whom the project manager must feel they will deliver as expected;
- external stakeholders who need to feel their interests are taken into account in the project execution and result;
- and, last but not least, the team members, who need to feel they can count on their project manager and one another in fulfilling the project objectives in a joint effort.

Interaction with the project team will be considered extensively in chapters 7 and 10. We will talk about the creation of a close-knit team and leadership. Apart from being a team builder and leader, the project manager is also an important ambassador to the outside world. It is primarily his job to maintain relationships with all the above parties; and these parties all have different expectations. The client expects someone who is on the same level, who keeps him informed and draws his attention to problems. Future users want to know what they will be facing. External suppliers want transparent agreements. And external stakeholders primarily need information that enables them to safeguard their own interests.

The project manager must therefore be able to deal with a large variety of different issues and roles, be able to switch quickly and also fathom the essentials of issues. Furthermore, he also needs to be able to communicate productively in various roles with many different kinds of people.

Each project phase has its specific characteristics

In this section we will look at the gradual transformation of a project and the ways in which the challenges for and experiences of a project manager will change in terms of character during a project's life cycle. Like the life of a human being, a project has a beginning and an end. The life of a project also starts at its conception and develops into a 'foetus'. This is followed by the project's birth and subsequent development, until it is ready for its adult phase. Once grown-up, the project is in full swing, and this is followed by its elderly life phase in which transfer and completion take place. As with the life of a human being, the project faces different challenges at each stage. In particular, it requires flexibility from the project manager and his team. There must be a gradual shift in focus, for instance from bringing parties together to keeping parties committed, and from building a close-knit team to a result-oriented approach. We will explain these switches clearly with a number of cases. We will

set out the characteristic challenges and experiences for you so that you can ask yourself whether these appeal to you and whether they are useful for your personal development.

Conception and foetus stage of a project

Nicole has been asked to become the project manager for the introduction of a new personnel information system. This stems from the choice made two years ago to adopt a single extensive system to support all operational business processes. The 'client' in this case is the Personnel Director who considers compatibility with other operational business processes essential, since this improves his support. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that the current information systems need to be expanded with regard to management and executive development and that there are currently no opportunities for a cafeteria system. The view of the ICT department and the way people working in the personnel department view the project is so far unknown to Nicole. All employees will be affected by the new system since the online multiple-option system will enable them to swap part of their pay and employee benefits. Up until now, Nicole has been fairly involved in a number of smaller ICT-related activities in the Personnel department and has established good contacts with the ICT department. Besides, working in Personnel and not in ICT makes it easier for her to stay in touch with Personnel. It was therefore not a huge step for the director to appoint her as project manager.

In this example, there are a number of objectives and issues involving different actors. This is usually the case. These come together to form the outline of a project concept. The person most affected by the project's significance will approach a potential project manager, in this case Nicole. Nicole will think about what she personally sees in the project and try to obtain an idea of the people who are or could be involved, which forces will be at work and the importance of the results for those concerned. In other words, many things are still unclear and there is still a lot to be decided on. This will remain the case for the time being. Ask yourself how well you could cope

with this kind of uncertainty and vagueness! On the other hand, also ask yourself how much you would like to be one of the driving forces. If there is still a lot of ground to cover, it also offers plenty of opportunity to help 'set the course' and be one of the 'entrepreneurs'.

The uncertainties and blind spots will prompt the project manager to start conducting some research. He will need to talk to stakeholders like the person commissioning the project, its users and resource suppliers. Parties involved might not always be willing to respond to every question or might give conflicting answers. Even if the picture that emerges from these discussions is unclear, the impressions you pick up as a project manager will help you gain a better understanding.

The interview round can also have an adverse effect, such as alerting potential opponents to the initiatives who then start building up a defence and creating allies that harbour unrealistic expectations.

The particular challenge at this stage is to lobby carefully and with tact, preparing the field, probing and networking. It is also important to be involved in the thought process and think ahead, so that you can help deliver the result you want to commit yourself to!

From birth to adulthood

Monique has started putting her team together. At the Faculty of Business Studies, the project concept for the development of an online study programme for novice managers has turned into an accepted project. The project's sponsor is the dean. It is up to Monique to drum up enthusiasm among the faculty's teaching staff to help her develop this programme. One complicating factor is that many people already have a full schedule and the programme is not a core activity. Nonetheless, Monique manages to recruit enthusiastic team members from the various disciplines. An educationalist, two website builders and an e-learning expert have also conceded to join the project. This makes nine people in

total. She decides to begin with a Project Start Up. The objective is to get to know one another better, to obtain a concrete picture of the project deliverables and to draw up a rough plan. She's a bit worried, however, as to how to get the manager of Educational Support enthusiastic and committed! After all, he and his team will eventually be responsible for making the programme available. Next week, she has an appointment with him. She could try to find out what his experiences with online programmes have been so far. Monique anticipates an important choice in her project that might influence its success. It concerns the e-learning environment. At present, two environments are being used in the organization and no decision has yet been made as to which one will become the standard. Making the wrong choice for her project could result in tremendous delays, since everything would need to be adapted to the other environment. There might be other choices like this that she is not yet fully aware of. Time for some exploring. She has also scheduled an appointment with one of her friends who works at another university. This friend has gained experience in her faculty with the development of an e-learning programme there.

The project has left the idea stage and has been born. The main challenges at this stage are getting the right people involved in the project and getting them to work together. Furthermore, a good relationship with the stakeholders must be established and maintained.

There are plenty of people to talk to, but that is not all! How will you make sure the right choices are made with regard to detailing the project deliverables and the path to take to get there? How do you come up with a plan that incorporates the appropriate decision moments and that both the team and the client want to commit to? Asking lots of questions, analyzing and combining information, deciding, updating, negotiating, selling and organizing are characteristic for this stage of the project.

It is a switch from 'flying with the eagles' in the conception stage to 'scratching with the chickens' in this stage. You can compare it to children growing up, gathering, analyzing and combining informa-

tion to reach a decision on what they want to become and how to go about it. At the same time, they will continue to keep their parents informed and involved, so that they can negotiate productively about the circumstances and the road to their goal.

Adulthood

Johan is all set to start work on the three underground stations of the North-South subway, together with his three project teams. They have recently gone through the entire detailed plan once again. Purchasing is well under way and the first results have been achieved. This called for a proper celebration. However, some major hitches are on the horizon. Previous occurrences of subsidence have forced him to adapt his plans. The new plan requires twice as much manpower in week 40 and an additional special crane. The supplier of the crane has informed him that delivery cannot take place until week 41. Johan foresees trouble with the contractor since the latter has reserved extra manpower for week 40. And that is not all on Johan's list. Piet's team has nine people on sick leave due to Swine flu. As a result, the first station is now in danger of being severely delayed at a time when the stations need to be coordinated very closely. Furthermore, safety systems appear to have been insufficiently tested and need another two weeks of further tests. A disaster like the safety situation with the tunnels in Limburg is something Johan cannot afford. And the list goes on. He decides to take time out with the three members of his management team to discuss his concerns about the project. Furthermore, Johan has a meeting with the steering committee in two weeks' time. He wants to keep them updated and present them with possible options in time, especially when it comes to preventing delays.

The 'dream & design' phase is over and the project is now in full swing. The challenge is now (a) to specify the details of the global plan step by step and (b) to actually execute it. It goes without saying that unforeseen circumstances will arise that affect the chosen strategy and planning. How do you manage to keep on top of things and monitor any threats to the progress of your project? How do you

keep motivating and stimulating your people to look for different solutions, even when it gets tough? How do you manage to keep track of the end result of your project, even when countless problems seem to make your 'to do' list endless? And last but not least, how do you stay sufficiently in touch with your client and other important stakeholders, who will in the end be the ones deciding whether the project result meets their expectations? Which decisions do you take with them and which ones without them?

At this stage, there is often an increase in pressure as well as in the number of people involved. A switch is made from pure planning and concept detailing to actual production. Compare it again to a young adult who, through his education and his first jobs, eventually becomes who he wants to be. He will need to keep track of his chosen path's progress and maintain his network. Once in a while, he will also check whether his stakeholders, such as his parents and later on his own family and himself, are still satisfied with progress so far. Once he starts to combine a career and a family, he will never stop planning, organizing and delegating. It will, at times, be hard not to lose sight of his objectives. But there are also successes that call for a celebration. That is also the switch at this stage; in addition to increased pressure, the first (interim) project results start to emerge.

The last stage

Bernhard and his team have given it their all to develop a new concept for tackling projects in their organization. They have come up with the so-called three-role-concept in which the project manager, the contract manager and the environment manager are joint leaders. They have developed a website to support the projects and feedback has been gathered from projects that have been based on the role model. They have supervised these projects closely and learning points that have emerged have led to one or two adaptations of the three-role-concept. Bernhard notices that attention in his team is waning. People think the project is finished, but the training module has not yet been finalised. To ensure

the concept is firmly embedded in the organization, this module is a vital deliverable of the project. Bernhard wonders whether Kees and Marriëlle should be allowed to leave the project team already. The four of them should be able to finish the training module without them. He decides to carry out an evaluation with the entire team: what has been achieved so far, which deliverables still require attention and who wants to participate? Surprisingly enough, Marriëlle excuses herself from the meeting in advance... is there more to it than meets the eye?

The project is coming to an end. Most of the objectives have been met – at least that is the overall feeling. Interest is fading. Another switch for the project manager. How will you ensure, together with your team, that your project result will not end up gathering dust? That the end user will embrace the result? And that the organization will take over the management of the project result? Or that the project result will be cleared up, if that was the idea? With regard to your team, if it has become extremely close-knit, how will you manage to call it a day for everyone? To find new projects that suit everyone's personal development plan? How will you manage to retain the main lessons learnt, to ensure that experiences and discoveries will not be lost?

At this stage, a switch is made from 'full swing' back to 'what is left to do and when do we let go'. Compare it to the last stage of someone's life. What is it you still want to achieve and what is it you want to retain of all your achievements? That is what keeps you occupied during this final stage. Would you like to motivate your team to make one last effort? But also to say goodbye properly and to learn lessons for the future? Would you like to deliver the project result to the end user? Do you really want to find out what he thinks of it and where you can still help him? If so, then this stage is no punishment!

When you look back at the description of the different life stages of a project, a project manager is mainly occupied with:

- Determining what it is about (co-steering);
- Mobilizing, designing and selling;
- Planning, organizing and delegating;
- Exploring key issues and finding solutions;
- Keeping stakeholders committed;
  Handing over (implementing) and closing out.

A different management focus is required at each stage of the project's lifecycle. Does that appeal to you? What does appeal and what doesn't? Which parts would you still find difficult?

Each type of project has its specific characteristics

We have already discussed the wide variety of project management tasks and the different characteristics of the subsequent project stages. But there is even greater diversity when it comes to project management due to the different types of projects themselves. No two projects are alike. And one project calls for different project management competences than another. Several researchers (e.g. Turner and Müller, 2006) have looked into this. What their research demonstrates is that:

- a project is more likely to succeed if the project manager has a certain set of leadership competences;
- different types of projects require different success generating leadership competences.

What types of projects can we distinguish in general? To do this, we will look at two typologies of projects, both based on the premise that no two projects are alike. Both typologies can be used to understand which kind of projects best suits your current competences and which kind would in fact contribute most to your development.

The first typology is the Complementing Values Framework for project management by Storm and Vuijk (2008), based on the Competing Values Framework by Quinn (1994) for general management. Just like Quinn's framework, this model is based on the idea that a project manager will be dealing with different values. The key values in each project can differ tremendously, which in turn will impact the demands on project management. The two traditional values for successful project management are:

1. result orientation: the result does what it should;
2. control: the result has been achieved in a controlled way.

In addition, there are two values that focus on the project's future and thereafter:

1. goal orientation: satisfied stakeholders who are committed to the outlined result and for whom the project has helped achieve their goals. This is about the value created by the project, not about the exact details and definitions of the results;
2. flexibility: the project has been managed in such a way that it could be adapted in time to developments in the relevant environment, that new solutions could be found where necessary and, moreover, that knowledge has been gained that can be deployed in subsequent projects. This innovative aspect of the project requires flexibility.

By viewing these values as complementary, combinations of value sets arise that typify a project. For example: a project is an innovation project when result orientation and flexibility are determining factors of the project's success. Figure 1.1 clearly shows the four different types of projects and their value sets, as determined by Storm and Vuijk.

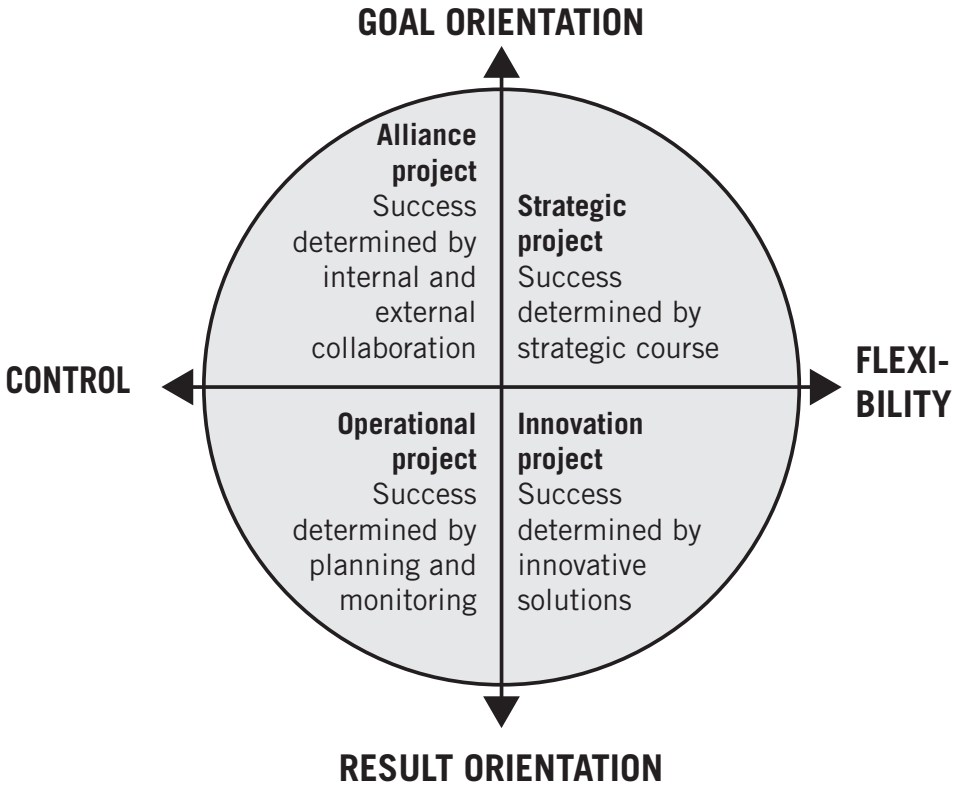

Figure 1.1 Complementing Values Framework for project management (Storm and Vuijk, 2008)

This does not mean that when executing an operational project, like installing a dormer, you need not concern yourself with the strategic course of the project. However, flexibility and goal orientation for setting out a strategic course will not be as dominant in this project as it would be in launching a new strategic building concept enabling you to install many dormers on the same day. Each of these four types of projects appeals to a particular set of values.

The second project typology is that of Van Harten and Vuijk (2005). They have developed the Project role Diagrammatic Approach framework (PrDA framework), that like the CV framework defines projects according to four different categories, each with a relevant set of competences for the successful project manager. However, they use slightly different definitions, which might help you visualize the different types of projects:

1. 'Earth projects' are quite stable. The environment they are situated in does not change rapidly and the project's objectives and methods are predetermined. Project managers working in this kind of project need to excel in organizing and working according to a detailed plan and strict procedures. As project manager you radiate confidence to your environment. You are pragmatic, realistic, perseverant and an organizer. Examples of projects of this kind are simple building projects or construction projects.
2. 'Water projects' are projects with a fairly fixed objective, but in need of different parties to reach those objectives in a joint effort. Project managers particularly need to excel in cooperative behaviour, stimulating collaboration, loyalty and dedication. You are the one that brings together the 'currents'. Examples of projects of this kind are collaboration projects and innovative projects.
3. 'Fire projects' are projects with many different stakeholders and results that often need to be delivered in dynamic circumstances. This requires the project manager to be self-confident, tactful, self-reliant and independent during the project. Examples of projects of this kind are prestigious building projects under pressure from the minister.
4. 'Air projects' are projects with a lot of uncertainties that occur in very energetic environments. This kind of project needs project managers who can handle many different ideas, who are good at motivating their team members and who are flexible. You need to be able to make quick switches. You are engaging and interested, creative and stimulating. Examples of projects of this kind are research projects and change projects.

The figure shows the correlation between the projects' focus and the competences of a successful project manager in each of the different project categories (Figure 1.2).

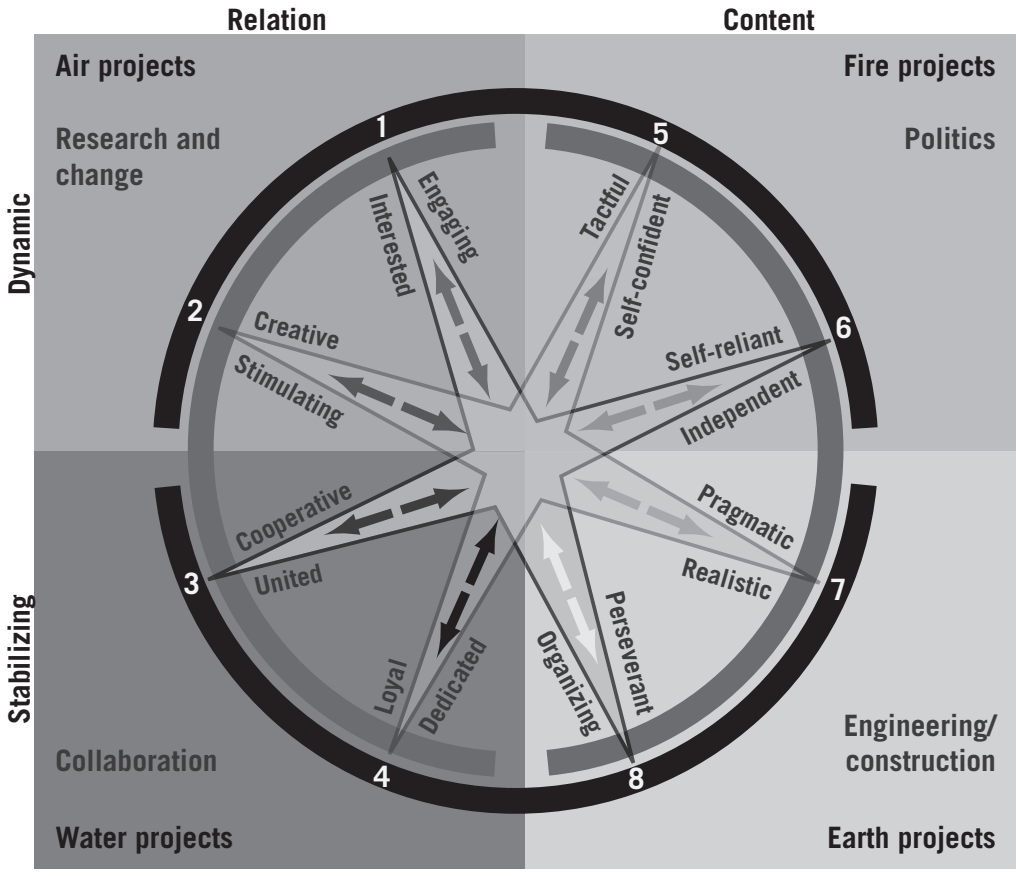

Figure 1.2 The framework of the 'Project role Diagrammatic Approach' (Storm and Vuijk, 2008)

As mentioned earlier, both project typologies are based on the same premise that no two projects are alike. The nature of projects differs and therefore calls for a different set of competences from you as project manager. Both models distinguish four corresponding types of projects (see Table 1.2).

CV model	PrDA model
Innovation projects	Air projects
Alliance projects	Water projects
Strategic projects	Fire projects
Operational projects	Earth projects

Table 1.2 Correlation of the two typologies

In this section we have hopefully dispelled the notion that a project is a project and that managing a project is more or less the same at all times. It is up to you to choose the projects that appeal to you most.

The choice of projects you take on is one of the factors determining the way you will develop. Project managers usually master the trade in practice, by leading projects. Most project managers do not take a theoretical course until after several years and find that most courses are based on the idea that all projects are 'alike'. This is changing as a result of certification. However, even courses leading to certification are often limited in scope and depth. In particular, limited attention is given to developing a critical view on matters and the match between personality and project, as well as the ability to learn independently from your own and other people's project management experiences. And this is exactly what you need when learning a trade in practice! Therefore, the authors have developed PMLab®, where project managers can learn from each other's experiences. As part of this programme, project managers meet once a month over the course of approximately one year to learn how to share experiences in a structural and critical way and to learn from them. This programme gives them the skills to learn from their own and one another's experiences and to expand on their expertise (instead of simply applying text book recipes). Furthermore, they are capable of taking a critical view of themselves and of setting out their own development course by deliberately choosing certain types of projects.

We hope you will ask yourself, after having read the previous sections, whether project management is suitable for you. What appeals to you and what doesn't? Where do you see development opportunities for yourself?

In the short-term you could:

- Help decide on the project deliverables, the project result.
- Take on a high level of responsibility early on.
- Adopt a wide variety of roles:
  - selling (to your team, your client),
  - updating other teams,
  - creating commitment from stakeholders / acting as ambassador,
  - managing: enthusing, delegating, facilitating decisionmaking, settling disputes, stimulating teamwork...
- Take on a non-routine assignment with defined end result.

And in the long run (career wise) you could:

- Gain a wide range of different experiences.
- Build an expansive network.
- Learn to work in different environments.
- Develop entrepreneurship as part of a bigger process.
- Learn to disassociate yourself from your specialism (from specialist to generalist). You are there to lead and to manage!

Perhaps you could add to the list. With each point, ask yourself whether you consider it important, and whether it appeals to you and why. Knowing the factors that determine your choice is very helpful when the going gets tough, in order to maintain focus and make the right decisions.

When your answers indicate an aptitude for politics, for teamwork rather than working on your own, for building a team, like you already do with your football buddies, for working with an outlined plan rather than improvising and for seeing conflicts as a challenge, then the job of project manager definitely holds many attractions for you. The next section will enable you to reflect on your own career path as a project manager.

Do project managers have their own career path?

To conclude this chapter we would like to reflect briefly on the development and career planning of project managers. If you go back to Table 1.1 and read the last line, you might ask yourself what this means for project managers. The wording suggests that project managers do not always follow a standard, transparent and unambiguous development programme, nor is their career path equally transparent in every organization! Naturally, you and nobody else are in the driver's seat when it comes to your own development and career path, but some organizations may require you to be more alert to this matter than others. Some organizations still regard managing a project as a job 'on the side'. In these kinds of organization, you often seem to become a project manager by accident, because you happen to be an expert on the project's deliverables. The management part of it, or rather 'getting things done through others', does not come to much since your involvement often primarily concerns the content. When the project is finished, the role of project manager ceases to be, and you go from being a temporary project leader to being part of a team of professional experts once again.

Since adolescence, Mieke has been building websites for travel agencies. She adores travelling and was often able to travel at reduced rates. She now has a job with an advertising company as a designer for local papers. Last Monday, out of the blue, she was appointed project leader for an assignment from a travel agency. The company received its first order to build a website for a travel agency and the decision to make Mieke project manager was prompted by the fact that she has gained so much technical expertise in this field. Mieke is overwhelmed but curious at the same time... it could mean new opportunities and challenges.

In this kind of organization, career prospects for people managing projects are not always transparent. If you work as a controller, you normally climb the career ladder following a more or less fixed route, from assistant controller to controller and maybe financial

director. Managerial experience gained in a project is often not recognized as such in these organizations, whereas a department manager with a small team of desk clerks receives this recognition as a matter of course.

There are, however, organizations that take a different view on project management.

With twenty years' experience, the last five as project manager for three large and complex projects, Michiel is now ready for the next step. He would prefer greater focus on the future in the organization, rather than focusing on just one project. He has gained particular expertise in thinking ahead and outlining future developments in the infrastructural building industry. Furthermore, he is good at building relationships. In his organization, the job of project manager is a core activity. As an engineering firm, the company acts as consultant in large building projects. Their services are therefore always delivered as a project. Employees who join the firm usually start out as a project assistant, after which there are several options for further development. Michiel advanced through the projects route and is now a senior project manager. A logical next step after this would be a position as project director, to be able to lead even larger projects. But Michiel is hesitant. He has had a number of interviews with the Head of Business Development and the Head of Project Portfolio management. Next week, he will have more talks with people working in those departments...

The number of organizations that 'make money in projects' is gradually increasing. Nowadays, the future of these kinds of organization highly depends on the success of their projects. Project management is seen as a profession. Career paths are usually set out from project leader to project manager to project director. In these organizations it is not unusual to switch to line management in order to capitalize on the managerial experience gained as project leader in a line manager's position. Even though these organizations have given the job of project manager, its relevant competences and experience, a lot more thought, you yourself are still the best guardian of your own career development path.

When you are at the start of your career, it is not easy to determine your career path and the direction you want to take in project management. In order to obtain a clear idea of your own preferences for the future, it could help to talk to people in jobs that appeal to you. What does an average day for them look like, what career path have they taken, what would they do again and what not, and what experiences helped them most and why? Doing some research will help you decide what you want to do and why. It also provides a better understanding of issues like: where am I now, which opportunities are there, what are my talents and what do I like most? This picture will help you and your career development officer to set out a realistic career path and monitor it adequately.

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'What should project managers know about their projects?
More precisely: which indicators do project managers use?
What KPIs are on their dashboard? Whenever I ask these questions to my fellow project managers, they come up with things like progress, cost control and risk management.
But when asked what advice they would give to novice project leaders, their answers are totally different. Like, taking a personal interest in the team, an open atmosphere and taking time for reflection.
In practice I need both just as much.'

Bert Kappe, project manager,
Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management

2

Leading a project: what are my organization's objectives?

It's great that I get to manage a project, but why does my management board want this project and what do they expect from me? In this chapter, we will look into the reasons why organizations embark on projects and sometimes disembark again, the pros and cons of a project-based approach and ways to promote the significance of your project.

Sorry... your project is put on hold

Ruud van Harten was asked by his manager three months ago to start and lead a project. Its purpose was to increase customer loyalty. The Marketing & Sales department had noticed that churn figures were gradually rising. The department head of Marketing & Sales had suggested to the management board that they find out why churn was increasing and to take appropriate action to fight this trend. The management board had agreed to the proposal and decided to offer this project to a management trainee as an opportunity to get to know the company and its customers and to put himself 'in the spotlight'. Ruud was offered that chance and jumped at the offer. He eagerly started with an analysis of customer data. He was more or less finished and was about to write a proposal to the management board about possible next steps when he was suddenly informed that his project was temporarily put on hold. When he asked why, he was told it was 'due to the economic crisis'. Ruud did not understand. According to his analysis, the economic crisis was one of the reasons why customers were switching to the competition. Because they were given better payment conditions there. Shouldn't they do something about this? Or did the management board think customers would simply come back of their own accord? Ruud tried to put forward this argument in a short memo to his manager but the latter did not want to go into it and simply told him: 'It just won't work, management has other concerns right now.'

Is this sheer bad luck for Ruud or could he have helped it himself? What could he have done to make his project more attractive for the organization, thus diminishing the risk of it suddenly being put on hold? To answer that, we must first look at the motives for starting and cancelling a project and the grounds for choosing a project-based approach.

Why organizations embark on projects

There are several reasons why an organization might want to start a project:

1. *Because new legislation makes it necessary*. Almost everything is subject to laws and regulations. Products, services, processes, policies, systems, raw materials, resources, positions and last but not least people themselves. For example, employees working in potentially dangerous circumstances – like a drilling platform – need to meet certain requirements before they are legally allowed to perform their job. Changes in laws and regulations can have a tremendous impact. Sometimes the changes are so extensive or complex that a specific project is set up.
2. *Because there is a pressing problem that needs a swift solution*. An explosion, a faulty computer system or a major supplier going bankrupt: all examples of pressing problems that need quick solutions. But it could also be a somewhat less visible problem that needs a project-based approach, like growing unrest among the workforce, customers switching to the competition, knowledge leaving the company or irregularities in the financial administration that might indicate fraud.
3. *Because a customer makes it necessary*. If your organization delivers products or services, a customer might want to have a product or service adapted. If such an adaptation impacts the production process, guarantee clauses or service provisioning, it seems logical to set up a project for it. After all, not only the details of the required adaptation and its manufacturing process

must be figured out, but also the impact of such an adaptation on the internal organization. It is more than a one-off job. Another example is that of a customer placing such an extremely large order that production, transport and delivery (and sometimes even putting it into operational service) exceed the standard processes and need special requirements. And another step still is the customer wanting a completely new product or service. If this is the case, then a project-based approach is most definitely called for.

4. *Because management sees an opportunity it wants to grasp*. In the case of a company: a country lowers the import duties for a product and management expects demand for that product to rise in that particular country. A perfect time to start an export project. Or in the case of a ministry: a majority seems to be emerging in parliament for a change in policy and the officials in charge of the ministry want to anticipate this with new policies and new legislation. New technology, new market behaviour and a new balance of power in politics: all three important sources for project ideas.
5. *Because people or resources otherwise remain idle*. Sometimes organizations set up a project to keep people and resources busy. This may seem like a waste, but it can be financially sound. Overhead costs can be covered, at least partly. Additional reasons can be that employees gain further experience, reducing the risk of them leaving the company.
6. *Because people want to develop expertise, new products or services*. Each project will bring new knowledge and experience, but innovation can also be the main driver for starting a project. Where innovation is not an additional result but the main reason for a project, the project's output is somewhat more difficult to ascertain than with any of the previously mentioned motives.
7. *Because the strategy or the strategic goals of an organization 'ask' for it*. For example, when the strategic course of the organization is aimed at maintaining a prominent market position, several projects can be set up to realize this.

Problem-driven, opportunity-driven and ambition-driven projects

To conclude, we could argue that there are three types of motives:

- *Problem-driven*: this applies to the projects mentioned under (1), (2) and (5). These projects are mainly set up because management has no other choice.
- *Opportunity-driven*: applies to the projects mentioned under (3) and (4).
- *Ambition-driven*: applies to the projects mentioned under (6) and (7).

A project can also be based on a mixture of motives.

One of the authors once participated in the evaluation of a 'wet lease' project of an airline company. 'Wet lease' means that not only the aircraft but also the necessary services connected with it are leased. For example, the pilots, stewards and stewardesses, ground personnel and logistic support. The airline had leased three aircraft for a period of three years to a new airline company that did not yet have these resources at its disposal. When the contract had nearly expired, the letter wanted to evaluate the project to see if any lessons learned could be used in other potential 'wet lease' projects. To find out, an evaluation project was set up. The main part of the evaluation consisted of a series of interviews with people directly involved in the project. A question directed at all participants was: 'Why did you start this project?' Nearly every participant mentioned a different reason.

The more reasons to start a project the better? It does sound convincing if you can give a number of reasons why your project should start right now. On the other hand, this can also lead to confusion or disagreement. Each stakeholder will put his favourite motive first. Should that particular motive become less important halfway through the project, the motivation might also dissolve quickly and the person in question might become less inclined to take an active interest in the project. He may even be the one to suggest aborting

the project altogether.

In any case, a project does not necessarily need to be completed once started. From time to time, management boards of both profit and non-profit organizations experience that they have way too many projects, that these projects all cost time and money, which is not always available, and that it is quite unclear what the output of some projects will actually be. To cancel a project every now and then can therefore be quite beneficial for the organization.

Why organizations cancel projects

A project can be cancelled for several reasons. We have already mentioned two:

1. *There are insufficient means to continue the project*. This is perhaps the most common reason for cancelling a project: it sounds objective and does not harm anyone.
2. *The reason why it was once set up no longer exists*. This argument is likely to be used in long-running projects. This is especially the case in opportunity and ambition-driven projects. There is a feeling that the opportunity has been lost because visible results have stayed out for so long. Or the original project champion, who was such a strong promoter of the project, has moved to another position or has left the organization.

Other reasons could be:

3. *The desired project result turns out to be unrealistic*. This is difficult, especially in cases where the feasibility of a project has not been checked regularly. People can feel that something is no longer realistic, but how do you prove that?
4. *The project meets with too much opposition in the community*. This is something the project manager should take to heart. If a project encounters more and more opposition, he has not managed it very well.
5. *The project's priority has been lowered in favour of other projects*. Priorities of the various projects in a large organization are

often subject to change. Project managers do not like this, even though it is sometimes their own fault when it comes to their own project. It is a game of give and take in which the project manager has the responsibility to demonstrate that his is not a solitary activity but a project linked to other projects.

Stopping or cancelling a project should be a matter of common sense, but that is often not the case. Taking a go/no go decision is sometimes a drawn-out process, the outcome of which seems to be influenced by emotions and instincts rather than rational considerations.

Take, for example, the issue of costs already incurred. The question arises: 'Do we take the costs incurred into account when we decide whether or not to continue the project?' Economists will as a rule say: 'No, you should not take them into account. You only need to look at the expected costs and revenues. If the balance is positive when you continue and negative when you cancel, then it is better to continue the project from a financial point of view.' Others will say: 'Yes, you need to take the costs incurred into account. If there is no chance of recovering these costs in the project, it is better to stop.' Since both parties choose fundamentally different starting points, the gap between them is difficult to bridge with reason.

A good project manager tries to do justice to both angles – heart and head - in this process of appraisal (continue or discontinue the project). A project manager like this will not blindly choose to continue, but will gather all the pros and cons and try to discern underlying emotions and instincts.

Must we do it project-based?

So far, we have been assuming that whatever the reason for starting a new assignment, this should always be approached in a project-based manner. That, however, is not a matter of course. One of the reasons some organizations seem to be doing far too many projects at the same time is that everything is proclaimed to be a project. There are,

however, alternatives for a project-based approach, like (a) routine working and (b) improvised working.

Routine working is characterized by:

- A predetermined method, usually laid down in procedures and guidelines.
- A high level of specialist work by the employees involved.
- A set allocation of tasks between the employees involved.
- Predetermined requirements for assessing the necessary quality and for the available time and money.
- A limited involvement of the customer or user in defining the end result.
- A hierarchical management of the activities.

Routine work could be characterized as follows: 'We work according to the rules and just as we have always done.'

Advantages of routine working compared to the other two are:

- Every employee knows what to do.
- No one is assigned to do something he is not capable of.
- A precise estimate of the costs and the time needed can be made in advance.

The relative disadvantages of routine working are:

- A user has little to say about the process and the result 'along the way'. Routine work leaves little room for tailor-made solutions. Or, should the customer reconsider at a later date, there is little room for adaptation.
- Problems falling outside the scope of the specialisms involved are discovered late and are difficult to solve in an organization where 'everyone is doing his thing'.

As a conclusion, you could say that routine work offers more opportunities for efficiency and fewer opportunities for goal-oriented and flexible working.

Improvised working is characterized by:

- Putting aside existing procedures and guidelines.
- Solving problems when they come up along the way.
- Trying to make a result effective as soon as possible.
- Working with a small group of people as a close-knit team without strictly allocated tasks.

The relative advantages of improvised working are:

- Flexibility: employees involved are better prepared to adjust their approach to the circumstances.
- Drive: visible results are achieved sooner than in a routine approach.

Relative disadvantages are:

- Limited control. Since the route that is being followed is fairly unpredictable, it is harder to foresee how long it will take and how much it will cost.
- Little influence from the user on the way forward, unless users are doing the work themselves.

Conclusion: an improvised approach gives you more flexibility but is less efficient and less goal-oriented.

Project-based working is characterized by:

- An approach that can be tailored to any special requests from the user wherever possible and to the actual working conditions.
- Phased process where, at certain moments, the user is actively involved in the decision-making process with regard to how to proceed.
- An allocation of tasks using specialist knowledge but also enabling the highest possible level of integrated working.

The relative advantages of project-based working are:

- Goal-orientation: greater focus on the goal the client wants to achieve with the project results.
- User-friendliness: a project-based approach actively involves the user in a structural way.
- Efficiency: extensive research is done in advance as to the best route to success and during the project this choice is checked against insights and experiences gained so far.

The relative disadvantages of project-based working are:

- Requires greater management effort.
- Only works well if the employees involved and managers are willing and capable to apply the rules of project management.

Conclusion: a project-based approach scores higher on goal-orientation and less on efficiency. As to flexibility, project-based working finds itself halfway between improvised and routine working.

Congratulations... your project now has the highest priority

Let's go back to Ruud, his project and the question concerning what you can do to make and keep your project as attractive as possible for your organization. For that, you need to be able to answer three questions clearly and convincingly:

1. Why is this project important for the organization?
2. Why is a project-based approach necessary?
3. Why are you the right project manager for this project?

To demonstrate the significance of his project to its full extent, a project manager should be able to present a convincing business case. The business case is what the organization's management will look at when they take a go/no go decision about a project.

Which items are addressed in a business case, generally speaking? Table 2.1 provides an overview in a nutshell:

Items	Subjects to be discussed
Strategic goal	• *What strategic goals or objectives does this project contribute to? Which strategic aspects should be taken into account when determining the project's priority in relation to other projects?*
Expected '*benefits*'	• *Which measurable output – revenues, cost reductions, performance improvements, image improvements – can be achieved with the results of this project?*

Stakeholders	• *Which people are positively affected by the project's execution? How can they influence the project's success? Are there any possible adverse effects of the project for a stakeholder? If so, in which ways and for which stakeholder?*
Expected results	• *What are the most important, complementary sub results? What is the feasibility level of these results? What risks should be taken into account in any case?*
Necessary investment	• *What minimum budget is needed for the project itself? Can these costs be recovered? What is the risk margin for this project?*
Basic scenario	• *What period of time is most opportune for the preparation and execution of this project? Why is that? What are the risks if this period is exceeded? What are the key external factors affecting the chances of success or failure of this project?*
Approach	• *Which approach is suggested to reach the goals defined and the results described, taking into account the risks mentioned? To what extent is this a usual approach? To what extent is this an unusual approach?*

Table 2.1 Items of a business case

To arrive at a successful business case, you need to be a good interviewer. After all, it should not be you who provides all the answers to the questions in the business case. The stakeholders or interested parties should do that. Stakeholders are the people investing in the project, expecting some kind of return on their investment. This could be financial investments or revenues, or also time, resources, knowledge or relationships.

Why is a project-based approach necessary?

We have already provided you with some ammunition to help you answer this question. If the task you are facing would benefit most from a goal-oriented, user-friendly and methodical approach, and a routine or improvised approach would be counterproductive, you have a strong case for a project-based approach. It still remains important to pay sufficient attention to the preconditions for a project-based approach.

Wijnen and Storm (2007) mention three conditions as a prerequisite for a project-based approach (see Table 2.2).

Condition that must be met	If not, this may be the result
Clear beginning and end, pressure of time and limited resources	Amateurism, no commitment, no progress, waste
An eagerly anticipated result, seen as urgent by motivated stakeholders	Vague deliverables, project as status enhancing activity or make-work
Enforceable resources and willingness to collaborate, manage and control from one point	Internal fights, slow and frustrating negotiation processes

Table 2.2 Prerequisites for a project-based approach (source: Wijnen and Storm, 2007)

We sometimes meet project managers who think the above conditions should have been met before they start leading the project. That is wishful thinking which does not fit project-based working. In reality, hardly any of these conditions have been fulfilled at the start. It is up to the project manager to meet these conditions step by step, together with the main stakeholders. In your argument in favour of your project, you should address this issue and ask the question – and answer it – of how a gradual fulfilment of these conditions can be ensured. For this, you will need top level commitment and you should ask for that.

Why am I the right leader for this project?

When you want to be considered for a position you have not held before, you sometimes fall victim to the 'Catch22' syndrome. This syndrome says that you want the position to gain experience and the person deciding says you need experience before you can handle the position. What can you do to break out of this?

Be specific and realistic. A much-used tactic is to name as many generally positive qualities of yourself as possible. This is also called the 'shot gun' approach, in which you cover as wide an area as possible, hoping to hit the target. This is something we discourage as we prefer a goal-oriented approach.

What are the goals?

1. Management becomes convinced that you are the right person for the job. Leading a project does not call for a huge amount of expertise as such, but rather for the ability to make the most of your personal qualities, such as tenacity, resourcefulness, curiosity and reliability. People often think they do not possess distinct qualities. This could be because they are preoccupied with the things they are not or cannot do. Look at it from another angle and focus on the positive. Choose those qualities that best fit this particular project.
2. Management becomes convinced that your ambitions fit this position. In the previous chapter we looked at what's in it for

you when you lead a project. Choose two or three (not more) ambitions that clearly relate to the project and that suit your career ambitions. Point out that pursuing these ambitions will not only benefit you but also the organization in future projects.

3. Management becomes convinced that you will contribute useful knowledge and experience to the organization through this project. Point out that you will pay special attention to acquiring, sharing and applying new knowledge and experience.

Literature

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'Dare to cancel a project.
That can be a very rational thing to do.'

Arthur Bouland, project director, Sogeti

3

How can I make my project successful?

Image

Projects are not finished on time, cost too much and do not bring the results that were expected beforehand. That is how projects are thought and spoken of. Nevertheless, projects are a booming business and an increasing number of targets rely on projects as a means to achieve them. So where does this negative image come from?

Since the early days, industries like construction and infrastructure have achieved results through projects. Project management has a long history from this perspective and a lot of experience and expertise has been gathered. The do's and don'ts have become common knowledge in practice. Other industries also apply project management to book results. It is quite natural to suggest turning something into a project nowadays, and has even become a bit of a habit. All sorts of things are made into a project and the people charged with making it a success are relatively ignorant and inexperienced. This could partly explain the negative image of projects. At the same time, history shows that professional project managers, such as those in the building or infrastructure industry, can also run into heavy weather.

Examples of projects making the news headlines in a negative way are the Betuwe railway and more recently the North-South subway in Amsterdam. The general consensus about the Betuwe railway is that this track of railway has been exceptionally expensive (much more than originally budgeted) and, now that it is in operation, is being insufficiently exploited. Even now, discussions on the return on investment of the Betuwe railway extend even to parliament. Since very large amounts of money are involved, it is logical that discussions focus on budgets. But is this project only about cost control and maximizing returns? It seems that discussions about the North-South subway partly follow the same course. When you read about the North-South subway in the papers, it is mainly about the huge rise in construction costs, although discussions also focus on the severe delays in completion and the risks that were insuf-

ficiently mapped out beforehand. It looks as if this project is only about (a) costs versus original budget, (b) the moment the North-South subway is expected to become operational and (c) controlling and minimizing the risks.

A project from some time ago with similar dynamics is the Opera House in Sydney. The first initiatives to build a new opera house go back to 1954. In 1957, the winning design by Jorn Utzon was chosen. Demolition work started in 1958 and construction work in 1959, with the first performances expected to take place a few years' later. It was not until Friday 28 September 1973, however, that the first performance of Prokofiev's War and Peace was staged. Not only did the building process take much longer, but original budgets were also hugely exceeded. But who speaks about that anymore? Who even thinks about it? The heated discussions about content, money and deadlines have faded into the background. What is left is a monument: *There is no doubt that the Sydney Opera House is a masterpiece. It is one of the great iconic buildings of the 20th century, an image of great beauty that has become known throughout the world – a symbol for not only a city, but a whole country and continent* (Pritzker Prize 2003 report). Can Sydney Opera House be seen as an example of a successful project? And if so, where can we trace that success back to?

In these three examples, the following things strike us:

- When a project's success or failure is discussed in general during a project, it is the project's output in terms of time and money and quality of end result that are discussed in particular. The overall 'reason for being' seems to have faded into the background.
- After a project has been delivered and completed, the project result remains. Better still, the project starts its purpose. At the stage prior to delivery of the project result, it is very hard to translate future output into 'real benefits'.
- It is easy to list examples of projects that failed or encountered severe criticism. Listing successful projects proves more diffi-

cult. Apart from the question of how we measure that success, the question of whether enough effort is put into making these successes visible is also a valid one.

Do projects have an image problem? Yes, they do. It seems a rather unappealing prospect for a novice project manager to enter a world that to an outsider seems doomed to produce failures. But there is hope, because as confrères we should be able to show off the success of projects to its best advantage, should we not?!

Project Success

The success of projects primarily seems to be measured in terms of time, money and quality. In literature about project management, these terms are also known and described as control aspects. They are the answer to the question: which indicators are leading when steering your project in a controlled way towards the finish? This is in no way a guarantee that success will indeed be generated. A project's success is not only determined by the level of control; that is not a success indicator in itself. Just imagine if one of your friends returned from holiday and, on being asked how it was, answered: 'I'm back on time, didn't spend more money than I budgeted and did exactly what I set out to do.'

So what are the things we do look for when determining the success of a project? There are three angles to each project's success:

1. The project approach: the project is a success if the way it was structured, planned and controlled was of the highest quality.
2. The project result: the project is a success if the deliverables of the project can be put to the effect we originally demanded.
3. The project goal: the project is a success if the project result significantly and sufficiently fulfils the original ambitions of the project.

These three perspectives are not alternatives for each other, but are complementary. A solid project approach in itself does not guarantee that the project objectives will be met. But project objectives cannot be realized successfully without a successful project approach. That would after all raise questions like: what were the costs involved and how satisfied are we with the way the result has been achieved?

Theoretically speaking, a project is a success if:

(A) The project objectives have been met, even long after completion.
(B) The project result has proven to be the 'best' tool to meet these objectives.
(C) The approach has brought the parties needed for the result closer together instead of forcing them to take opposite sides.

A satisfaction survey conducted among the citizens of a smaller municipality in the southern parts of the Netherlands has shown that there is room for improvement, especially when it comes to transparency of and communication by the Council and the Mayor and Aldermen. Inhabitants complain that the electoral sweet talks have been just that, that the council hardly gives any feedback about plans if at all and that they have no idea where to take their questions.

Cees de Jager has just started as head of the Administrative and Concern unit. He has been asked by the Mayor and Aldermen to take up the 'Transparent municipality' project for the coming year. He is eager to make a start on this project and is asked to present an action plan within four weeks. Cees then decides to refer to the survey results once more and to use them for an interview round among the Mayor and Aldermen and the Council. He is curious about what his colleagues have in mind when they think of the 'Transparent municipality' project.

Question for:	What do you want to achieve with the project?	When is this project a success for you?
Alderman Youth/ Education	I thought the survey was rather shaky in its set-up. Let's find out what people really think!	If the project is completed without having caused too much upheaval.
Alderman Welfare	More transparency for and feedback to the citizens, for instance by using the website.	If we manage to structurally improve communication with our citizens together.
Head of Civil Affairs department	To take a step forward with our website: easier, more and better!	If we stay within the budgetary and time restraints.
Mayor	That our citizen satisfaction survey does better next year.	If we book results that are visible for our citizens.
Chairman CDA councillors	This fits the strategy we have embarked on. We can now gain momentum.	To take a step forward in the coming year. Do better in the satisfaction ranking.
Chairman Groen Links councillors	We put this on the agenda years ago. It's great that it has finally come to something!	If the council understands it's high time for a different approach towards its citizens.

Table 3.1 Project Success of 'Transparent municipality'

Based on these interview results, Cees writes a first draft of the project plan:

- Goal: to score better in the next citizen satisfaction survey.
- Result: to develop a much improved website, where you can easily find all the plans of and information about the municipality, and where you can leave your questions.
- Approach: to hire a communication agency specialized in interactive websites to renew and promote the website.

Cees submits this proposal to the Mayor and Aldermen and, with a budget allocation and a deadline, his proposal is accepted. He can spend nine months and € 12,500 out-of-pocket *costs to execute the project. After the project is finished, a new citizen satisfaction survey will be conducted.*

This is a good start to the project, or so it seems. The goal, result and approach are clear, and preconditions in terms of time and money have been defined and seem to be aligned.

The project is finished. The municipality is the proud owner of a completely renewed website that meets all the specifications. Everything a citizen could possibly want to know, can be found. Its design is very appealing and the information is presented in a superbly easy and accessible way. There is a contact page, where citizens can ask all their questions and other remarks or complaints can also be communicated through this page. During the project, various arrangements were made related to the website, like providing answers to questions, remarks and complaints within 24 hours and drawing attention to the renewed website in various ways throughout the municipality. This took more effort than previously expected and eventually cost € 16,000, but the Mayor and Aldermen are satisfied on all fronts. Several municipalities have already visited with the intent of copying the lay-out and several parts of the website.

Cees seems to have conducted his first assignment with flying colours. But three months later the results of the next citizen satisfaction survey are published. The scores for communication and transparency have hardly improved. Worse still, the scores in some parts are even lower than before. This results in an animated discussion.

Who	Viewpoint
Alderman Youth/ Education	No hassle along the way, he can appreciate that and informs Cees accordingly. He is even more opposed to the satisfaction survey now – see, it doesn't make sense whatsoever!
Alderman Welfare	The website was and still is a good idea. Communication with our citizens still needs attention. We must invest more in highlighting the website in the coming period.
Head of Civil Affairs department	Investments in the project have been (too) substantial already with little result. We had better put this effort into our people and our work processes.
Mayor	We have not been able to reach our citizens better with this tool. That means the project is in fact a complete failure. We should first look into the causes.
Chairman CDA councillors	Higher satisfaction rates have not been achieved but we have made some progress. But why did Cees opt for a website?
Chairman Groen Links councillors	Another failure of this coalition. They invest in a website and processes without really listening to the citizens. This is proof of incompetence!

Table 3.2 Result of 'Transparent municipality'

Cees is upset by the survey results and the discussions they raise. He had agreed on the project plan and its progress with all interested parties. They had always been satisfied with progress and the proposals he suggested. Nonetheless, the approach, including the option for a website, now seems to be subject to discussion.

Cees cannot really be blamed though. After all, he executed the assignment from the Mayor and Aldermen exactly as discussed and recorded. What could he have done differently?

Instigated by the Mayor and both chairmen of the political parties, the municipal auditor's office starts an investigation into the project's effectiveness (has the project's goal been met) and efficiency (has the result been achieved in the best possible way). A few months later, the results are published. The following was observed:

- The original goal of the project, to resolve citizens' dissatisfaction with the council's communication, gradually faded into the background during the project.
- The result, the website, was delivered according to plan and meets every requirement. The project manager executed the project assignment as set out.
- Furthermore, the additional resources were used efficiently and effectively.

The main recommendation of the auditor's office concerns the role of the Mayor and Aldermen as commissioning authority. In future projects, they should take greater consideration of the realization of the project's objectives as a key performance indicator.

Cees heaves a sigh of relief when he reads the results. After some discussion, the Mayor and Aldermen promise improvement. At home, Cees discusses the report with his wife. 'The operation was successful, but the patient died', is her conclusion.

Success Model for projects

When we start talking about achieving results in the (near) future, we are entering the sphere of probability. After all, nothing we predict to take place in the future, is certain. Whether we like it or not, we are simply not able to look into the future with a 100% certainty. We will have to wait and see whether profit will be made next year, whether a reorganization will have the expected effect, whether the new service launched will be a success. We do our utmost to make projections as accurately as possible, but in the end reality depends on the course of events. This does not mean that all the effort we put into our forecasts, targets, business cases, strategies, tactics and action plans is useless. On the contrary, they maximize our chance of achieving the desired result. The same is true for projects. A project's success is not just the result of a series of chance events. Although we cannot structure, plan and, in particular, control the course of events completely, we can in fact exert some influence.

The main recommendation of the auditor's office focused on the role of the Mayor and Aldermen as commissioning authority. Even though the recommendation makes sense, we take the project manager's perspective. What could Cees have done, in addition to all the actions already taken, to further increase the chances of success for his project?

To maximize the chances of success, a project manager needs a management model, a cockpit he can monitor as (project) manager in order to:

(A) determine whether the project is on a course leading towards success;
(B) determine the cause of any deviation, should any occur;
(C) determine which aspects he can/must control differently, should a deviation occur;
(D) determine what any such adjustment will cost him.

The first three questions form the foundation of the Success Model for projects. The Success Model, which the project manager needs to create from scratch for each project, provides answers to three questions:

1. How will the project's success be measured? In other words, what are the success criteria for the project?
2. Which indicators need to be managed to make your project successful? In other words, what are the success factors of the project?
3. How do these factors and criteria interrelate?

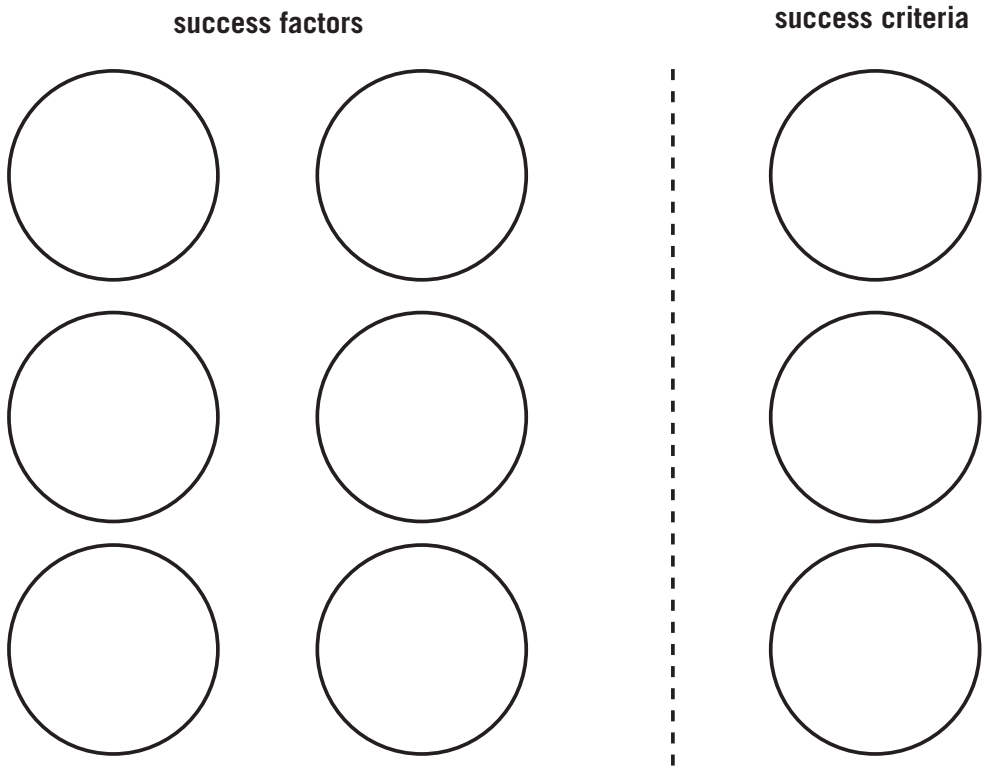


Figure 3.1 Success Model

Success criteria

The success or failure of a project is closely linked to the project goals, the project result and the project approach. A project is a success if the original ambitions of the project have been met, the

project result has proven to be the best means to achieve them and the project approach has proven to be the most efficient way to get there. If this is not the case, then the project has failed. This provides the definition of a project's success, but still leaves us with the question of what criteria can be used to measure a project's success. For that, we need more concrete success criteria. For projects, these success criteria are:

(A) The ambitions that initiated the project have been met
(B) The business case (what are the deliverables and what do we need to invest) has been realized meeting the key preconditions.
(C) Internal and external stakeholders are satisfied with the project and the end result.

These criteria are universal and apply to all projects worldwide. If you gradually steer your project towards these three success criteria, and actually manage to meet them, your project will be a success. But each project is unique and has its own specific requirements and challenges. In order to improve your management of the project's success and maximise the chances of success, it is important to adapt these universal success criteria to your specific project.

Back to Cees. Cees' first step in defining his project task was to interview the key stakeholders with the following questions:

- What do you want to achieve with this project?
- When would you say this project is a success?

This provided Cees with (a) a first impression of the success criteria and (b) an initial insight into the rationale behind the project. Let's take another look at the interview results and translate the outcome to the question of what aspects are taken into account when stakeholders measure the project's success. The key success criteria for 'Transparent municipality' could then be as follows:

- Communication with the citizens has been structurally improved.
- Citizens are more satisfied with this communication.
- Increased awareness of the importance of good communication

within the municipality.

When we compare Cees' approach with these three success criteria, we notice that.

- The project is primarily focused on producing a good website. This mainly fulfils the first success criterion. The attention paid to the two remaining criteria has faded during the project, whereas these turn out to be important enough after the disappointing results of the citizen satisfaction survey.
- The three success criteria are related to the goal as described by Cees. They do not mention the required project result, but focus on the goal that needs to be achieved. All options were in fact still open.
- The three success criteria do not fully cover the significance of the interview results. It is not a matter of 'simply adding up' the wishes and demands mentioned by the stakeholders, but should be a concise description of the key objectives the project needs to meet.
- Cees has interviewed the key stakeholders of the municipality itself. The demands and wishes of the citizens and what they deem to be really important have only been taken into account by means of the results of the first citizen satisfaction survey. The citizens as stakeholders have not been heard as such, even though they constitute an important, even crucial, factor in the project's success.

When you want to ascertain the success criteria for your project, it is not always an easy process. You need to adhere to certain rules. These rules will lead you to project-specific success criteria that go right to the very core of your project.

(A) Success criteria are linked to the project's goal. The success of your project is not related to the project's result or its realization within budget and time limits. Your project's success is directly related to the question of whether the objectives of the project have been met. Not the website as such but the citizen satisfaction as focus point!

(B) Success criteria are not determined by you as project manager. They are determined by the stakeholders. The role of the project manager and his team is to come up with a limited and manageable set of success criteria. As project manager, you are responsible for the quality of the process of defining these success criteria, rather than for the intrinsic value of the criteria. On the other hand, a project manager cannot or will not distance himself from the content entirely.

(C) In defining the success criteria, all stakeholders should be involved, including those more distant. Often, the project manager focuses his attention on the commissioning party, even though other kinds of stakeholders, like users, budget owners or sponsors, customers and other indirectly interested parties, can and are a decisive factor in the eventual success of the project.

(D) Determining success criteria requires more than a simple round of interviews asking for someone's view on when the project will be considered to be a success. The first time stakeholders answer this question, they will often come up with the common, often mentioned, criteria of time, money and quality. It takes time and tenacity to know how and to be allowed to discuss what really matters with stakeholders. This requires a project manager who is capable of asking 'the success question' in different ways.

(E) Steering towards fulfilment of the success criteria requires a solid process for defining these criteria during the start-up stage of the project, but that in itself is not sufficient. During the project, there needs to be an ongoing discussion about whether the project is still heading towards success. The aim is (a) to ascertain whether the success criteria are being met in the eyes of the stakeholders, (b) to obtain commitment from stakeholders who were difficult to get involved in the initial phases of the project, and (c) to ascertain whether the success criteria as such have not changed.

Success factors

Once the question of how the project's success will be measured has been answered, the next question is what you should do as project manager to achieve this success. Once the success factors, including the relationship between these factors and the success criteria, have been identified, the cockpit for success is ready. We described the universal criteria for success earlier and, similarly, there are also universal success factors for projects.

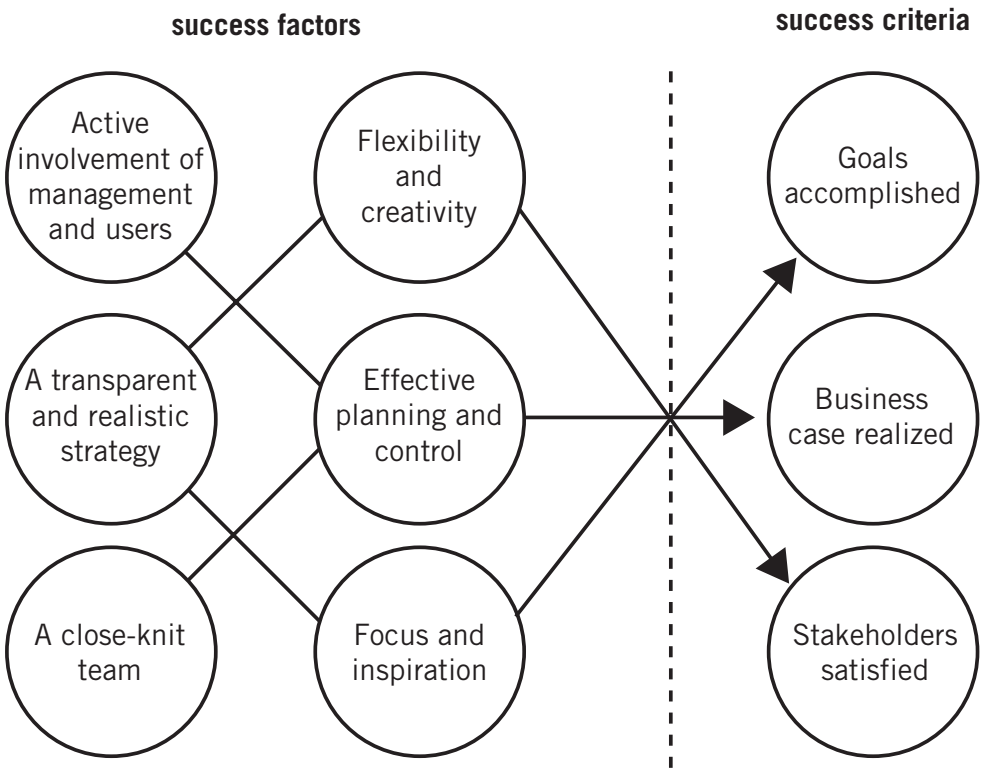


Figure 3.2 Universal Success Model for projects

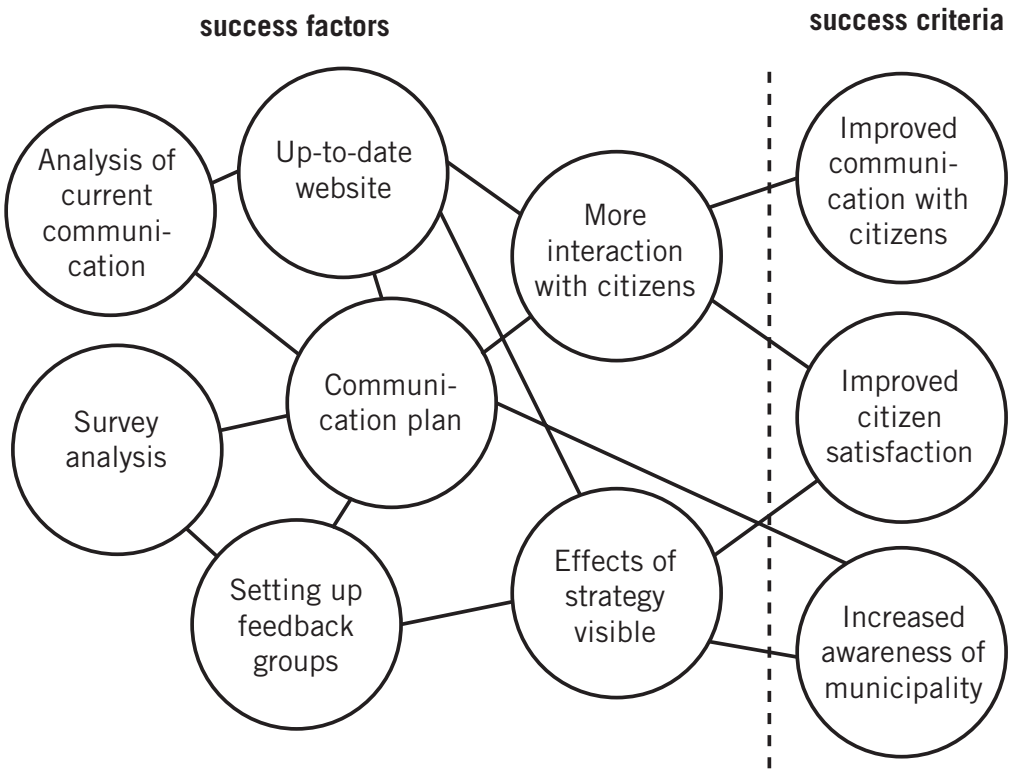
If your project has:

(A) active involvement of management and users,
(B) flexibility and creativity,
(C) a transparent and realistic strategy,
(D) effective planning and control,
(E) a close-knit team,
(F) focus and inspiration, then your project must become a success.

But if any or several of these success factors are lacking, success will become increasingly difficult to achieve. The substance of these success factors and how you can improve them will be described in the next chapters. Please keep in mind that these six success factors cannot be seen separately. You need them all, related as they are, to follow a successful approach. For example, you need focus and inspiration to form a close-knit team, to get management and users committed and to define a transparent and realistic strategy. Furthermore, effective planning and control depends on the power of the team and the feasibility of the strategy.

Since you need all of the success factors, you might come to the conclusion that you need to invest in all of these six factors simultaneously and to the same extent. Fortunately, due to the way they are interrelated, this is not the case. You can choose a success factor (almost randomly), invest in it and then work towards the other success factors. This 'island hopping' strategy works perfectly, as long as you keep an eye on the status of all success factors. After all, it is just like a cockpit where you need to keep an eye on all the gauges.

Back to Cees again. If Cees had paid greater attention to the citizens in his project, his chances of success would have increased. If the website had been part of a more comprehensive communication plan, the impact of the website as such would have been bigger. His chances of success would have increased if he had involved the citizens (and the municipality) more closely during the project by means of feedback or working groups. He could have managed those factors better.



Figuur 3.3 Projectspecifiek SuccesModel voor 'gemeente Transparant'

In this way, each project has its own success model and project-specific success criteria and success factors. Involving your stakeholders is a key requirement when determining the success criteria. As far as the success factors are concerned, these are primarily the project team's responsibility. It is up to the project manager and his team to decide which key performance indicators they need to use in order to enable the project to succeed. The following rules apply when finding the 'right' project-specific success factors:

(A) The project team accepts responsibility for determining the success factors. The final choice of success factors and the analysis on which this choice is based are shared with and acknowledged by the various stakeholders.

(B) The various success factors are interrelated and have at least one logical connection with each of the project-specific success criteria.

(C) The success factors have been defined in such a way that the essence of each factor is clear, as well as the action plan regarding that specific factor, if applicable.

When the success factors have been determined and the first success model for the project has been drafted, this model needs to be used as a management tool. This means that the success factors need to be translated to and become a part of the project plan. Just like the success criteria need to be a part of the project task/definition. Each success factor can be seen as an action point or focus centre that needs further detailing and action. However, this simple and very project-based line of thinking still does not guarantee project success. After all, many success factors can hide challenges that cannot be overcome without any resistance.

The Mayor and Aldermen decide to set up a follow-up project and again ask Cees to manage the project. After some hesitation, Cees accepts. The deciding factor in this was that the Mayor and Aldermen assured him they would take 'Transparent municipality 2' even more seriously. To convince him, they allow Cees to determine his own timeframe and budget for the project. Once Cees has prepared a first draft of the success model for 'Transparent municipality 2', he starts interviewing again. His interview partners easily agree on the success criteria. The success factors offer more food for thought. After his first interviews, Cees lists the various challenges of the project:

- How can we, as a project team, properly assess citizens' expectations, without conducting the citizen satisfaction surveys all over again?
- How can we intensify communication with the citizens, without this turning into a never-ending process (the project must have an end date), in such a way that we are talking to a representative group of citizens?
- How can we increase awareness among the civil servants that communication about policies and their effects need to be a key priority, without degrading the civil service into a political communication agency?
- How can we make the effects of municipal policies visible to citizens, even in areas that do not seem to have citizens' interests directly at heart but rather serve long-term objectives?

Cees goes back to the Mayor and Aldermen with these issues. He asks them whether they recognize these issues and whether he can and may centre his approach around these points.

To maximise the effect of steering your project towards success, you need a clear understanding of the key challenges in your project, in addition to the success criteria and success factors. You need to ask yourself which key task or challenge needs to be met in each of the success factors. Once those tasks have been listed and translated into a strategy and tactics for each task, your Circle of Success is complete.

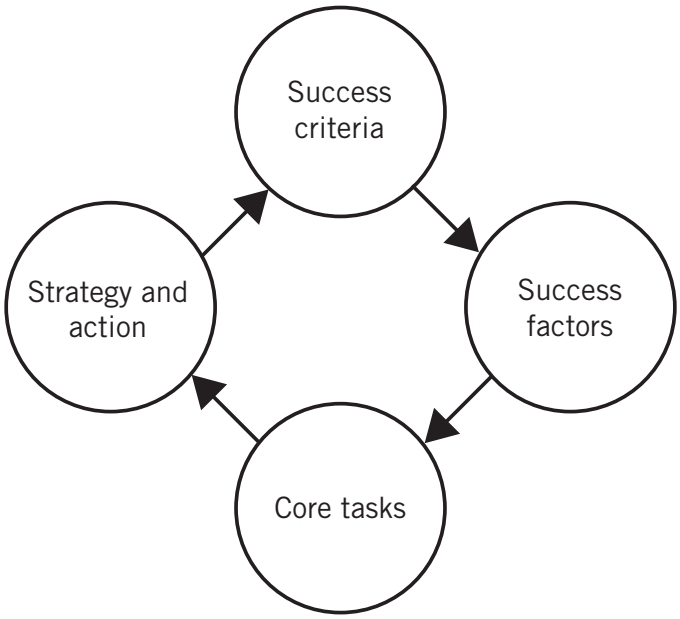


Figure 3.4 The Circle of Success

This circle demonstrates that the Success Model is a dynamic management model. Working on the key challenges of the project brings with it a better understanding of the project – not only for the project manager and his team, but also for the stakeholders. This may shed a different light on the success criteria and success factors as the project progresses.

A Project Start-Up at the beginning of a project is a standard part of each project management method. Its goal is to explore and determine in one day the goals, results and approach of the project with the project team and a number of stakeholders (at least with the client/commissioning authority). Defining the success criteria and success factors must be included in the start-up. Following on from the start-up, we also have Project Fresh-Ups: meetings in which the project team and a number of stakeholders determine whether the project is still on the right track (towards success). The Success Model, and its re-evaluation, should also be an integrated part of these fresh-ups. You can read more about organizing and setting up a Project Start-Up in Chapter 11.

Cees has discussed the key tasks with the Mayor and Aldermen. It has been decided that Cees and one of the aldermen will translate the key tasks into a strategy and tactics. This serves as further proof of the joint commitment to turn the project into a success. Cees is aware that all the signs indicate that the project is heading for success. His wife, however, remains somewhat sceptical. 'I know you well enough', she says. It only takes something minor to happen and you'll take it far too personally again. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but you'll eventually end up on your own again.' She gives him three more pieces of advice:

- Go along with what others find important, without relinquishing control or setting aside your own views altogether.
- Don't just put a lot of effort into the project itself, but also into the image created by your project.
- Make sure the success of your project is accountable. Not just for yourself (that will not be the problem) but also for others.

Literature

Wijnen, G. & Storm, P. (2007). *Projectmatig werken*, Utrecht: Spectrum.

'Simplicity is the master's hallmark. If there is one area of expertise that is loaded with methods and systems, it is the field of project management. If you are not engaged in scope management, configuration management, risk management, probabilistic planning, document management, people management, internal and external audits, systems engineering, contract management, information management, communication management, traffic management or stakeholder management, you do not belong. Whether you are working in construction, for an engineering firm or a major client, every one of them is a discipline that can make or break a project. Every one of them is a discipline you need to study for and which provides a decent living for a whole army of consultants. Sometimes this is so consuming and so complicated, that you can't see the wood for the trees anymore. A fake reality can develop without warning, where everyone has lost track of the situation and no one understands the essence anymore. It is strange that people who have been educated so well can actually make things so complicated that not a soul can follow them anymore.

This is also what happens to me in my project, the Alliantie A2 Hooggelegen, more often than I want to admit. It is a wonderful project in which we are experimenting with a new form of collaboration. It is a way of working I can recommend to anyone. If there is something I don't understand, my natural instinct is not to admit it and to immerse myself in it. This is something I have stopped doing because you quickly get bogged down. If it happens to me, I immediately raise the alarm. What helps me most in such cases are my prime teachers What, Why, When, How, Where and Who. If they cannot explain it to me in five minutes, it's no good. Or in other words, you haven't come to the core of the matter yet. This criterion also applies to myself of course. The ultimate test is to be able to explain it in five minutes to someone from outside the project, preferably someone outside the field. I usually look for a test person among friends or family. If they understand it, I know I'm on the right track. If you can implement this in your project organization, you've hit the jackpot. You're back to simplicity, the hallmark of every successful project.'

Ton Swanenberg, Alliance manager,
Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management

4

Success factor 1: focus and inspiration

In Chapter 3, focus and inspiration are mentioned as one of the universal factors for project success. In this chapter we will show you how to work on this success factor. Let's start with focus.

An ambitious project

Marianne Dingemans is a teacher at a university of applied sciences, Hogeschool West. She has been asked to become project manager on behalf of the university for the Network Open University (NOU) project.

The NOU project is an initiative by the Open University Holland to design, together with universities of applied sciences, a new part-time curriculum for intermediate and higher vocational education on a national scale. This new part-time curriculum is necessary to tailor education better to adults in employment and to contribute substantially to the need for more higher educated people in the Netherlands.

Marianne finds this ambition appealing. She believes that it is indeed necessary to look for new forms of education that will allow better combination of learning and working. She herself combined her own job with regular studies for years. She noticed there was a substantial gap between theory and practice. What she learned in training, was difficult to apply in her job. Marianne wonders what the ambitions of the initiators are.

The NOU project has the following objectives.

1. To offer a training environment in which (future) healthcare workers can be given up-to-date, efficient, practical and lifelong training by offering tailor-made courses and training, in which educational needs and professional competences are aligned.
2. To develop a virtual environment that provides access to *blended learning* modules, communities, e-portfolios, knowledge databases and databases for job searches or internships.

3. To develop a planning model that provides insight into the information needed by participating healthcare institutes. This will allow the pursuance of a joint labour market policy and alignment with regard to the recruitment and advancement of personnel in order to prevent staff shortages in healthcare.

Marianne realizes that the ambitions of the NOU project are very ambitious. This project aims to radically change the established way of working in education and practice. She wonders how the initiators plan to fulfil these ambitions.

The desired results of the NOU project are:

1. *Training environment*:
   - Teaching guideline and tailor-made education within the professional column (intermediate/higher) for all participants.
   - An APL procedure to make this possible. APL stands for Accreditation of Prior Learning.
   - A Skills laboratory where doctors, healthcare personnel and students can train skills in the best possible way. This is where healthcare innovation and training innovation meet.
   - Work experience places. In the NOU's focus area (the west of the Netherlands), work experience places are operational in various healthcare categories. By using these work experience places, retraining and part-time education can be realized in close consultation with employers in this part of the country.
2. *Virtual infrastructure*:
   - An e-portfolio: a web-based tool enabling participants to manage their own competence development during their entire career.
   - A set of blended learning modules. In blended learning, face-to-face education is combined with digital education.
   - A portal for all partners of the NOU: participants, teachers and trainee supervisors. This portal provides access to the e-portfolios, the blended learning modules, a database for

work experience places, a knowledge database and all the future communities that will be set up.

3. *Strategic personnel planning*:
   - An experiment will be set up in which healthcare institutes and training institutes will jointly look at staff shortages and coordinate the necessary training activities on a regional basis. The aim is to develop a strategy that will create job guarantees for (future) healthcare employees.
   - Insight into staff shortages in healthcare institutes will be gained through national and regional labour market research.

That is quite something, thinks Marianne. What can our university contribute to this and what would my focus be? I'm particularly interested in developing blended learning modules. We could certainly use them in our own future curriculum.

Focus in a project

The project Marianne Dingemans has become involved in, is driven by problems, opportunities and ambitions. For example, a structural problem, insufficient healthcare personnel with adequate training to fill the available positions, an opportunity offered by new techniques to make training more efficient and the ambition to combine learning at school with learning on the job. This combination in itself is not necessarily a problem, but it shows how easily the project can become adrift from lack of focus. Let's assume the structural problem should be the main factor in designing an approach for this project.

In the past there have been numerous attempts to tackle this problem, but these were evidently not as far-reaching or consistent as they should have been. The Network Open University project focuses on a more integrated approach, with a view to real and lasting improvements. This approach focuses on change and follows a two-track policy:

1. Find another way to match the supply and demand of healthcare employees.
2. Find another way to train healthcare employees.

Together, this should lead to a more effective management of the efforts put into training, recruiting, employing and supervising healthcare personnel. More effective management should among other things result in:

- Training taking place '*just in time*'. If people acquire knowledge that is not used afterwards, this knowledge will be lost;
- Better alignment of the training objectives of a course with the competences required in practice;
- Better alignment of the training efforts 'on the job' by, for instance, supervising doctors with the training efforts 'at school' and vice versa;
- Healthcare employees are better able to combine work and training, for example, because they have remote access to carefully designed training modules.

This is great, though very comprehensive at the same time. The following table shows the scope of the project and the parties involved.

WHO WHAT	Intermediate and higher educational institutes	Healthcare institutes	Innovation centres	Subsidy providers	Consultants Suppliers
Teaching guideline					
APL procedure					
Skills laboratory					
Work experience places					
E-portfolio					
Blended learning modules					
Collective portal					
Collective personnel planning					
National and regional labour market research					

Table 4.1 Involved parties project Netwerk Open Hogeschool

This means there will be five different categories of organizations, all of them affected by nine different parts of the project. This can easily result in the project having a different appeal for each of these categories and the collective focus rapidly dissolving into particular interests and personal opinions. In each participating organization, there are probably three levels involved in the project:

1. Management or the board.
2. Operational managers of the employees allocated to the project.
3. The employees themselves.

We do not know how many people this adds up to, but the point is, however, that interests can be different on each level. The board or management will tend to concentrate on the strategic side of the project: 'What will the results of the projects mean for our position in the field? What are the strategic opportunities and what are the strategic threats?' Operational management will be mostly concerned with the consequences for daily operations: 'Can we provide adequate manpower for this project? What will that cost and what will we get in return? Which employees would benefit most from participating in the project?'. Employees will be primarily interested in the content of the project. Like Marianne herself, who is particularly interested in the blended learning modules.

What can Marianne do to achieve and keep a collective focus? First of all, she must distance herself from her personal interest and look at the project in general: what is the essence of it? Let's make a list of a number of alternative answers to that question. The essence of this project is:

1. To develop and apply new training methods and techniques;
2. To develop and apply a totally new curriculum for part-time healthcare education;
3. To coordinate the personnel planning of the various healthcare institutes and to integrate them as much as possible;
4. To enable healthcare employees to plan their own careers and to combine their jobs with part-time training;
5. To persuade boards and management of healthcare and training institutes to share their resources and powers.

This is probably not an exhaustive list, but let's keep it at this. One or two answers need to be selected from this list. How will Marianne go about this?

It will only be possible to achieve focus if all stakeholders share the same understanding of what the essence is. In this case, different stakeholders are highly likely to choose different alternatives, with a number of them saying, 'They are all essential'. As project manager, you might be tempted to respond with, 'Let's just start. We will see where it takes us'. If you take that position, you will in no way be able to actually lead the project. You might be lucky enough to follow. Our advice to Marianne would therefore be: don't. Be sensible and do not shirk confrontation. Confront each important stakeholder with the following questions: when you look at this list...

- ... do you miss anything essential?
- ... which of the essentials mentioned are important, urgent and conditional (conditional meaning 'being a condition to take on the other challenges')?
- ... why do you choose that one?'

Continue doing so until the vast majority of stakeholders have agreed on the essence of the project. Another approach you could take would be to bring them all together in order to try and reach an agreement in one long session. However, we prefer you to spend some time on this, to speak to each stakeholder individually and to inform each party about the viewpoints and motivations put forward by the others.

In this project, one possible outcome of this exercise is that the following two objectives are considered essential by all interested parties.

- To coordinate the staff planning of the various healthcare institutes and integrate them as much as possible.
- To enable healthcare employees to plan their own careers and to combine their jobs with part-time training.

All other objectives and components should support these two. This will probably result in the healthcare institutes taking the lead in the project, with the universities playing a supporting role.

The rationale behind this approach is that it is never too early in a project to get everyone on the same wavelength. Once that has been achieved, the project can be divided into subprojects with each team having its own focus, in addition to the overall focus of the project. After all, in such an extensive project, it is simply not feasible to have everyone involved in everything.

In the NOU project there are several possibilities for subdividing the project into subprojects. An obvious subdivision would be to allocate each participating organization its own subproject. However, this would not be wise, since the organizational interests are likely to become leading. We would therefore opt for 'mixed' subprojects that each of the participating parties can make a significant contribution to. The following alternatives are conceivable.

- A subdivision according to sub results. The table shows the sub results under WHAT, such as teaching guideline and APL procedure.
- A subdivision according to target audience. Target audiences can be distinguished according to functional segments in healthcare.
- A subdivision according to area of expertise, such as HR, e-learning and infrastructure.
- A mixed subdivision combining any of the above.

Figure 9.3 (Chapter 9) is an example of a possible subdivision of the NOU project.

Inspiration

A year later, a lot of time and money has been spent on Marianne's project, but with little visible result so far. Some of the participating parties are in danger of quitting. They are afraid the project will not be able to meet the high expectations. Marianne experiences difficulties in maintaining the level of commitment and motivation from the allocated teachers at Hogeschool West. They experience lack of support for the project from management and feel left out in the cold.

Apparently, the NOU project is going through a bad patch. That is nothing unusual for such a complex and long-term project. When you look at the history of projects, you will notice that the lines of 'commitment needed' and 'inspiration offered' often do not run parallel. See Figure 4.1.

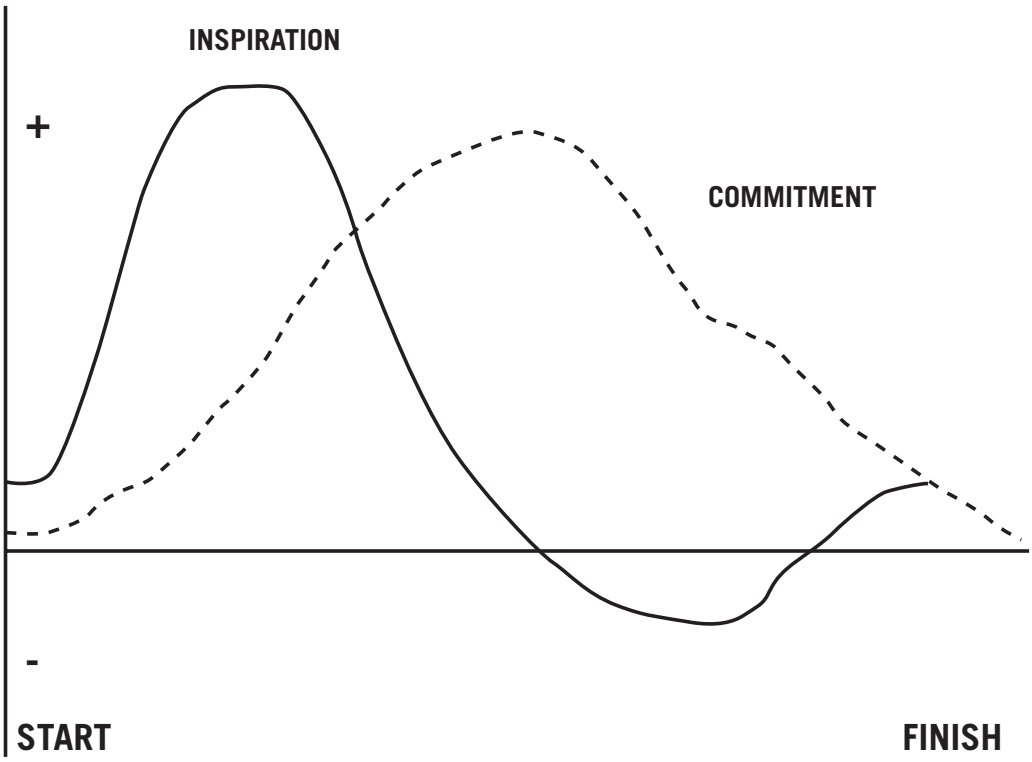


Figure 4.1 Possible course of inspiration and commitment during a project

The lines in Figure 4.1 do not run parallel. At the start, the level of inspiration is high, while the effort and commitment needed are still low. During that phase, most people enjoy participating in the project. It is all about new ambitions and opportunities where anything is possible. The main thing now is to contribute ideas and share experiences. When the commitment needed reaches its peak, inspiration drops to an absolute low. At this stage, the project becomes a burden for many parties. There is no room for new ideas anymore, backlogs need to be cleared, and differences of opinion are not seen as interesting viewpoints but as conflicts. Those involved would much rather spend their time on other matters.

This figure is hypothetical and suggestive and deliberately so since we want you to consider what you can do to build up inspiration so that it reaches its peak when the required effort is equally high.

To be able to answer that question, we will first look at the symptoms and causes of fading inspiration.

Symptoms of an imminent or actual fall in inspiration are:

- Not meeting one's commitments.
- Failing to attend standard meetings. Failing to prepare for standard meetings.
- Meekly going along with developments.
- Thinking and talking about problems, instead of solutions.
- Inferiority behaviour ('Calimero' behaviour).
- Postponing important decisions.
- Hiding behind rules.
- Confusion and arguments about 'where we are'.
- Endless discussions leading nowhere.

When you see an increase in this kind of behaviour in your project, you can assume that inspiration is fading fast.

Naturally, such behaviour does not come out of the blue. Common causes or sources are:

- Unexpected setbacks.
- Conflict of interests between parties involved.
- Shortage of people and resources.
- Negative publicity about the project.

- Ambiguous allocation of tasks.
- Opposition or lack of understanding from future users of the project result.
- Management decisions hampering the project's progress.

These causes are partly inevitable in a project like Marianne's. It is therefore more a matter of how you deal with them.

At the start of the project there is often naivety. One only looks at the bright side of things and is not prepared for conflicts of interests and opposition. They will occur, however. The project manager takes this into account and tries to 'arm' his team against the disappointments stemming from the causes mentioned above. He can do this by bringing up problems early and deliberately. 'Suppose future users are not impressed, what will we do? What are our options?' By asking questions like that, he encourages his team members to think ahead, to be realistic and to think in options. Some team members will resist this. 'Defeatism is not in our vocabulary. Why don't we just get cracking and users will find out soon enough how valuable the results of our project will be for them.' If it is just a minority taking this stance, the project manager can initiate a useful discussion between the optimists and the realists. The outcome is interesting, but the process itself even more so. An evaluation of that process will make the team understand that it needs both optimism and realism. The word 'project' stems from the Latin word for 'cast forward'. The essence of project management is therefore to think ahead on a regular basis and think about what you might come across. If the team is able to look forward now and then, it will be much more capable of dealing with setbacks.

This approach can be used to eliminate naivety. People will not be so easily disappointed anymore. It does nothing, however, for boosting inspiration. For that, we need other tools. Which sources can you draw on for inspiration? This will differ from person to person, so you will need to draw on various sources. We list the following:

- Visible progress. People who focus on results often think this provides the greatest encouragement. 'It wasn't easy. We had to work very hard to get there. But the result makes it all worthwhile.'
- Surprising developments or events. This particularly appeals to people who focus on experiences. 'When I saw the project plan, I thought, my goodness, what a lot of paperwork, where's the fun? But it wasn't so bad after all. I have seen and done things I would never have experienced otherwise.'
- Predictability. Some people just hate surprises. They remain inspired and committed if things go as predicted and agreed.
- Successes. Recognition could be another word. For many people it is essential they receive recognition for what they have done and ventured upon.
- Fun. Especially as a team. Have some fun after a hard day's work. Have a laugh, put yourself and each other into perspective.
- Beauty. Perfection. 'Perhaps it wasn't necessary to execute it so precisely and perfectly, but now we've done it like that, I am so proud. This cannot be matched.'
- Discover. Learn. Create. For the innovators among us, this is essential if we want to keep them committed. Many of them are brimming with ideas at the start of the project, after which they gradually give up. A project offers something to learn until the end.

Seven sources of inspiration, and there are probably even more. The challenge is to use several of them, even though this might seem contradictory at times. After all, how can you combine surprise and predictability?

And yet, this is possible. Starting with the last point, a project not only involves new concepts. The idea is not to reinvent everything. Solutions that have proven their worth will be used as well. That is why you must ensure that parts of your project are reliable and predictable. The parts that cost a lot but bring little innovation. Make sure that people who thrive on predictability have a leading role in those areas.

More generally, we would like to make the following suggestions regarding sources to draw on for inspiration:

- Look for a successful and more or less comparable project previously executed elsewhere. Embark on a journey and become inspired by the personal experiences of the people who participated in that project.
- Bring forward the real challenges – the most difficult tasks – in your project. Don't just start with the easy tasks only, the ones that everyone feels comfortable with.
- Make your project's progress visible. Chapter 9 will show you how.
- Celebrate your successes, even small ones. And involve the stakeholders.
- Lessons learned can also be seen as successes. 'We did it wrong at first, but have now got the knack of it.'
- Add variation to collaboration in your project. We sometimes make use of 'complementary' assignments, whereby two or more sub-teams are given tasks in which the result of one is additional (complementary) to the other. Sometimes we make the tasks 'competitive', so that two or more sub-teams are given the same task and compete with one another to find the best solution.
- Keep an eye on who communicates with whom. In every organization, even a project organization, there is a distorted balance in internal communication. Small 'cliques' of people talk to each other all the time, but not to other 'cliques'. Should this happen, arrange for regular confrontation and exchange between the 'cliques'.
- Actively look for feedback from people around your project. Ask them how they view and experience the project, the approach, the collaboration and the interim results. Present this feedback to the project team and ask them what can be learned from it.
- Appeal to your team members' imagination. Engage from time to time in an 'out of the box' exercise, try to think 'the unthinkable', leaving behind constraints and objections.

This last advice brings us to the subject of creativity and resourcefulness. We will look into this in more detail in Chapter 8.

'He who uses a scissor, must learn to use glue.'

Robert de Roos, project manager,
Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management

5

Succesfactor 2: active involvement of management and users

The project environment

In the Success Model for projects, the project environment and more specifically the main stakeholders are decisive for a project's success. They are the ones that eventually determine whether a project is successful or not. But what does a project environment actually look like? Which people are a part of it? Which groups can be distinguished? What do they want with or from the project? How can you align all these parties and requirements? And how can you influence the environment and manage it adequately?

Two mobile telephony providers have just been merged and the new HR department has been given the assignment to build the new organization taking four core values as a starting point:

- customer focus
- professionalism
- flexibility
- transparency

Marleen de Boer has joined the new HR department as one of the senior HR advisors. The new HR director assigns four senior advisors with the task of adopting one of the core values and drawing up a project plan for its implementation. Marleen has volunteered to become the project manager for 'customer focus'. She starts by listing all the parties that are somehow involved in her project, which she has nicknamed "The Right Customer".

HR	Marketing/ sales division	Higher management
1. Colleague for professionalism	1. Division management	1. Group management
2. Colleague for flexibility	2. Heads of departments	2. Staff (ICT and Finance)
3. Colleague for transparency	3. Employees	**Customers**
4. HR director	**Operations/helpdesk division**	1. Consumers
5. Fellow HR colleagues	1. Division management	2. Enterprises
Network division	2. Heads of departments	3. Government
1. Division management	3. Internal employees	**Partners in the value chain**
2. Heads of departments	4. External employees	1. Suppliers
3. Employees	5. Management temp agency	2. Business partners

Table 5.1 Stakeholders in 'The Right Customer' project

Marleen has a broad outlook and considers all aspects of customer-focused working. Not only are the new employees, management and directors part of her target group – it also covers the main partners in the value chain and customers themselves. There are a great many parties who have a direct or indirect interest in Marleen's project. Especially when you realize that these parties are not homogenous units but, in turn, consist of different groups and parties again.

Two questions pop up in Marleen's mind:

1. How can I add some sort of order and structure to the vast group of potential stakeholders (and maintain an overview)?
2. How do I know I have the right information about a stakeholder?

Mapping the project environment

To somehow manage the project environment, this environment must be:
(A) mapped,
(B) ordered and structured,
(C) specified for each stakeholder.

Before Marleen starts describing the interests of all parties, she first wants to get a better understanding of which types of stakeholders belong together. Grouping can be done according to the influence group the different types of stakeholders belong to:

- decision makers (those who decide);
- users (those applying the result);
- budget owners (those providing the financial resources);
- suppliers (those providing other resources/knowledge).

These four categories can subsequently be subdivided into internal and external stakeholders, resulting, in principle, in a maximum of eight possible groups of stakeholders involved in a project. These groups are classified according to their relationship with the project, that is a project-specific project environment, rather than their position in the existing organization.

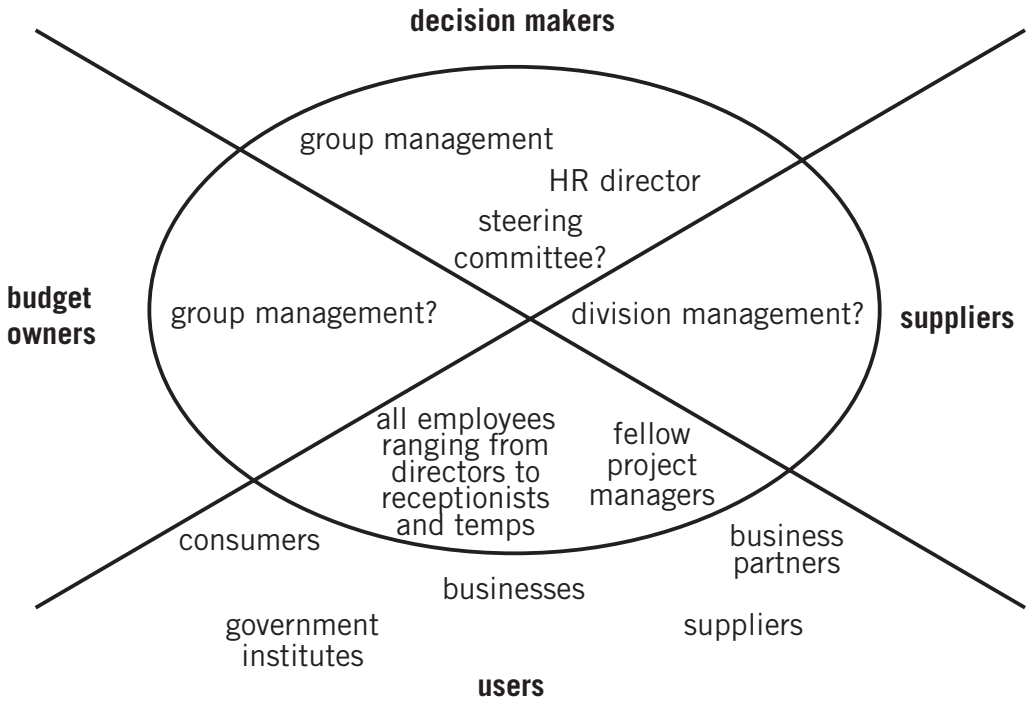


Figure 5.1 Mapping the project environment (Wijnen and Storm, 2007)

What strikes Marleen immediately is that she has a large number of users, both internal as well as external. She also notices that her question, as to who the commissioning party is, has not really been answered yet. Is it the HR director, group management or perhaps a steering committee yet to be set up? To make things (more) transparent for herself, she makes two assumptions:

1. Group management will finance her project, although she does not quite know which financial resources will be necessary. She argues that, whatever happens, at least her time and that of others must be financed.
2. The directors of the divisions are her suppliers, since they need to provide manpower to execute her project and implement customer-focused ways of thinking and working.

With the outline of the project environment and her assumptions, Marleen goes back to the HR director. The conclusions of that meeting are that:

- after some initial hesitation, the HR director confirms that the project also has an external project environment;
- the large number of users in relation to the other groups is acknowledged and recognized; their involvement is one of the major challenges of this project;
- the HR director will endeavour to form a steering committee, which as a minimum will consist of herself as prime commissioning authority, a representative of group management and a key user.

Marleen has taken a major step by outlining the environment. Even the steering committee will have a balanced representation. Marleen must now gain more in-depth knowledge about the nature of her stakeholders and what they want with the project. What does Marleen need to know about the various stakeholders?

The most important thing to find out is the stakeholder's interest in the project. Does he want to make a profit, gain specific experience, strengthen the image of his organization, take up a new market position, or bring about change in his organization through this project? When listing stakeholders' interests you need to distinguish between the interest of the organization or unit on the one hand and the individual interest of the person representing that organization in this project on the other. After all, organizations have different interests from individuals. Whereas organizational interests tend to be more general, individual interests can be very specific and personal. These individual interests of a stakeholder are not the same as the organizational interests he is representing in the project.

For a project manager, listing the parties and the corresponding individual and organizational interests constitutes a major step forward in managing the project environment. As project manager though, you would like to find out even more about each stakeholder:

- Apart from the organizational interest, you would also like to know the organization's characteristics that are relevant for the project. This concerns the main aspects of the organization's structure – what is an organization made of and what are the main building blocks – as well as the characteristics of its culture: what is the interaction like?
- Apart from personal interests as such – why would this particular employee participate in the project, what does he want to gain from it? – you want to know what lies behind this individual and his interest. At least with regard to his position – which one and with what authority? – and his behavioural patterns: what is his natural way of thinking and behaving?

	Organization/ organizational unit			**Representative of this organization**		
	Interest	Structure	Culture	Interest	Position	Patterns
Division network – director X						
Departm. network A – head of Y						
Departm. network A – employees						
Departm. network B – head of Z						
…						

Table 5.2 Stakeholders specified for The Right Customer

Marleen realizes this will be a long list and she cannot judge everyone's interests and backgrounds equally well. She will have to research the various stakeholders, not only to gain a better understanding of their interests, but also of the interests that go beyond this. After all, a project cannot simply serve all the interests of the various stakeholders. Should you combine the interests of every stakeholder, this would conflict with the project's requirements in terms of time, money and quality. Simply adding them up will therefore not work. What you can do, is try and reconcile them in an overarching interest.

Situated on the A2 route from Utrecht to Amsterdam is the Hooggelegen interchange. Within the context of the expansion of the A2 to five lanes each way, special attention is being paid to the two kilometre section around Hooggelegen. This short stretch of road contains two works of art and the traffic flows to and from Utrecht city centre create high traffic volumes. Should traffic flow stagnate, this has a huge impact on the traffic on the A2 itself as well as the traffic to and from Utrecht city centre. A lot of time was lost in a previous phase of the project and the conclusion is that two years is too short for completing the project simultaneously with surrounding projects. As a solution for this time pressure in combination with the complexity of the traffic flows, the commissioning party Rijkswaterstaat (Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management) has decided to opt for a new form of collaboration: an alliance.

The project team setting to work after the contract has been awarded consists of Rijkswaterstaat employees and employees from the chosen building consortium. Together they will share the benefits and the burdens.

In the start-up phase, the project team conducts a stakeholder analysis, followed by a stakeholder meeting. The list of stakeholders is huge. The main parties are:

- the various divisions of Rijkswaterstaat
- the five participants in the consortium
- the city of Utrecht
- the surrounding projects (more particularly the overarching project Holendrecht-Ouderijn and an adjacent tunnel project)
- the project office Leidsche Rijn
- the surrounding neighbourhoods

- the various interest groups
- the road users.

The stakeholder analysis results in a wide variety of interests, demands and wishes. Parallel to further in-depth research, the project team investigates how they can possibly reconcile these interests. They come up with two possibilities:

- All parties involved should want to learn from this new form of collaboration.
- The project needs to fit into all other activities in the immediate environment in the best possible way.

These two umbrella stakeholder interests, combined with 'a sound financial return on investment for all parties involved' constitute the success criteria for the project.

Umbrella stakeholder interests are therefore interests that:

- serve the individual and specific interests of all stakeholders;
- a stakeholder cannot pursue on his own; you need each other to get there which brings parties together;
- can be translated into success criteria or are directly linked to them.

The umbrella interest brings focus to what really matters with regard to the project environment.

Another way to create focus can be found in science. Research (Selin, 1992) shows that a lack of involvement of management and users is the most important cause of project failure. Turning it round, you could say that active involvement by management and users is an important factor towards Project Success. In real life, however, the commissioning party is quite distant to many projects, or at least is perceived as such. Just like the end-user who is not actively involved until late in the project and then suddenly realizes what the project and the project results really demand from him.

How do I involve my client?

Before we can discuss how to involve our clients, we first need to ascertain what a project manager may expect from a client. In the field of project management, more and more attention is being given to professional commissioning practice. But what constitutes a professional commissioning party, what should he contribute to the project and what are in fact his role and position regarding the project?

A professional commissioning party is responsible for creating the right Success Conditions for the project: conditions that keep the project challenging, since that is a characteristic for all projects, but realistic at the same time. These include:

- Support from the other departments/stakeholders by supplying the appropriate and necessary resources.
- The requirement of the user to be able to at least test and try out what the project delivers.
- Realistic agreements as to time, money and quality (also with other stakeholders, the users and/or higher management).

These Success Conditions are not at the client's sole discretion to command and decide upon. For support and help from other departments, stakeholders and users, he depends on the intentions and wishes of others to complete the project successfully. Also with regard to time, money and quality, a client cannot often map out his own course. In essence, a client does not focus on the realization of the project result –that is what the project team should do – but focuses on widely supported choices by the environment as to when the project should deliver what against which costs to whom and, subsequently, what should be done with it.

For a client, a project is therefore also 'work'. The project team, headed by the project manager, works towards delivering the project results. The client, often together with a steering committee, works towards delivering the project decisions.

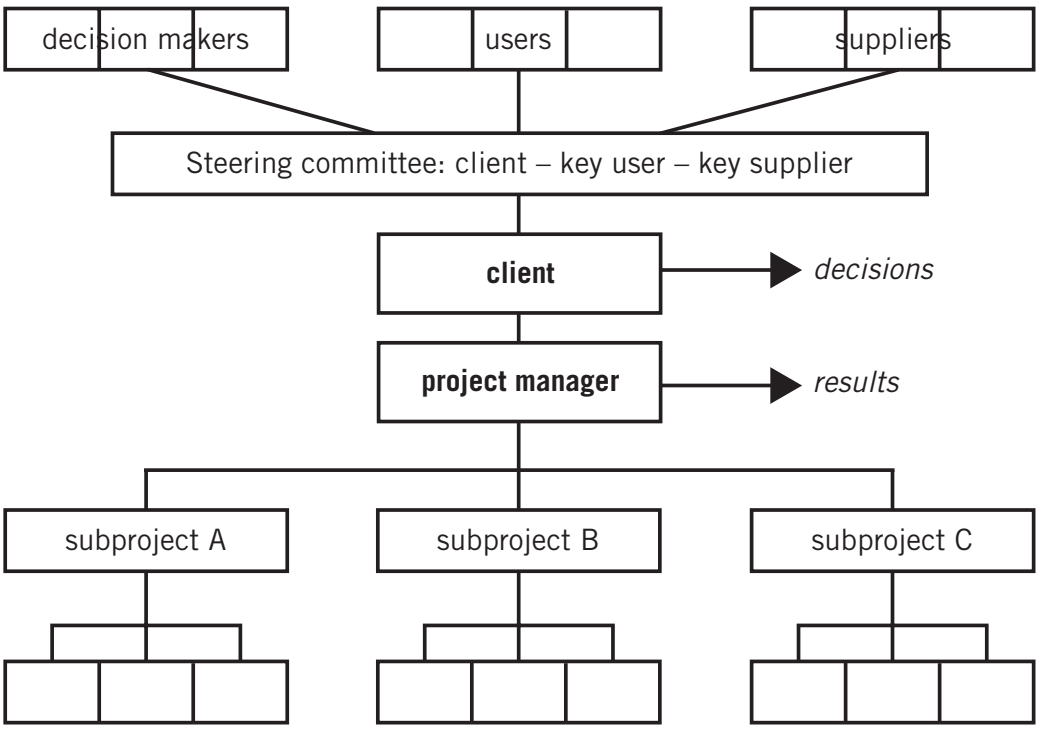


Figure 5.2 Idealized project organization

Back to Marleen and her project The Right Customer. Now that she has created an overview of the project's stakeholders, Marleen wants to define what the essence of customer focus should be. She starts by formulating a definition of customer focus. To do so, she takes two questions she wants to answer together with representatives of the various stakeholders:

- What does customer focus mean for you and how do you measure related success?
- Where do you recognize customer focus in your daily activities and those of the people in your immediate working environment?

An initial overview of the answers clearly shows a common theme. The main point is that customer satisfaction, both internal and external, determines customer focus; the main characteristics in behaviour being that clear agreements are made regarding result and process, assumptions are checked and commitments met.

In addition, however, many remarks are made that do not relate to the common theme. The Marketing/Sales Division in particular is agitated by the definition. Their main argument is that in sales you sometimes have to sell something you cannot fully live up to. That is part of the sales process. The discussion becomes heated and Marleen is unable to break their resistance. She goes back to the client to report this. The client raises the issue at the next steering committee meeting and the group management representative takes up his responsibility. He invites the key managers of the Division to a meeting and discusses and underlines once more the importance of this customer focus. After that, opposition seems to fade. The group management representative urges Marleen not to hesitate should she ever need his help again.

A year and a half after the project has been completed, a customer satisfaction survey is conducted. The results are disappointing. The key complaint is that commitments are not met. Marleen had quite different expectations. Internally, the focus on customers seems to go very well in daily operations, but the effect for the customer is apparently next to nothing. The members of the steering committee meet with Marleen once again to discuss this. Further analysis shows that the recent introductions of two new services to the market are the key miscreants. In order to gain market share quickly, they had been knowingly launched with teething troubles. The project cannot be blamed for that, is their conclusion.

Interaction between Marleen and her client seems to have gone well. The moment the steering committee was needed to help break the project out of an impasse, she took action. The steering committee has at any rate demonstrated sufficient responsibility for the project. However, looking at the customer satisfaction survey, this has not proven fruitful. What can we learn from this?

A project and a project manager cannot simply be held responsible for the realization of the project objectives. They are supposed to contribute, in particular by delivering the appropriate project results, but project objectives are influenced by more than just the project itself. Look at the example of Marleen, in which two recent market introductions were a key influencing factor. Or imagine being the project manager of the Betuwe railway, with one of your project objectives being a decrease in heavy goods traffic by means of this railway, resulting in a reduction in traffic jams. If the economy is thriving, traffic jams may nevertheless increase, even though the project has been successful. Are you as project manager to blame for that? The realization of the project results is mainly the project manager's responsibility, and the project objectives those of the client, who will have to manage and work on achieving his original ambitions.

What can you do when a client offers little or no support for a project? This may seem strange, since the client is the one commissioning the assignment after all. Still, it happens all the time. Perhaps it is better to start with what you should not do, in any case.

What you should not do:

- Assume that a low level of commitment from the client is normal in projects and all part of the game. Be aware that you will need your client to make your project successful, especially when the project encounters some difficulties.
- Set to work, based on the thought that your client will eventually demonstrate commitment and trusting it will be there at a later stage when you actually need it.
- Be susceptible to statements like 'you're the expert, you therefore know best', 'I have every faith in your capabilities', 'why don't you make a draft first' and 'my door is always open for you'. With particular regard to the last one, an important rule for a project manager should be to first see before believing.

What you should do:

- Ask your client the 'right' questions. Questions regarding the project goal, like 'Why should we want this project?' and 'What do we want to achieve with this project?'. You should follow this by questioning the client about his views on the project deliverables, the influencing factors and how to deal with them, and of course the Project Success.
- Agree on the process of how to bring questions regarding the goal and result of the project to the table. In other words: break down the project definitions into small pieces and actively involve the client in completing each step, so that there is an ongoing dialogue between yourself and your client on the details and reasons of the project.
- Present the client with issues from other stakeholders. For example, you could use the power of the end-user to make the client aware of the project's importance. Do realize that a project is as much an adventure for the client as it is for you.

How do I involve the users?

Users are generally a large group of people consisting of several subgroups. It is simply impossible to involve them all on a personal level. In Marleen's case, users include the entire organization from group directors to helpdesk employees, and in the case of A2 Hooggelegen, it is Rijkswaterstaat as road authority, the city of Utrecht as authority for the surrounding road network, and all the road users of this stretch of the A2. A personal approach hardly seems feasible nor desirable in these cases. It is not feasible because the group as such is too large, and not desirable because (a) the operation would become too lengthy and costly and (b) it would encompass a multitude of demands and wishes that cannot be dealt with at project level.

Marleen is not at all confident that all employees will fully support the definition of customer focus and be willing to contribute to the implementation and application of her code of conduct. This issue is further complicated because she cannot see how to involve the external parties in an easy and practical way. She decides to discuss this issue with the HR director.

It does not take long for them to conclude that it would be a sound strategy to involve all parties at the earliest possible stage. Within this context, they realize that deciding at top level on the definition of customer focus and the accompanying code of conduct is not really in keeping with this strategy – just as the intervention by the group management member, though effective, was not in keeping with this line of thinking either.

Marleen submits her strategy proposal to the steering committee, and the proposed strategy is adopted. However, the steering committee puts forward a number of demands that must be met in the execution:

- Implementation should not become stagnant. In other words, it should be finished within a year.
- The definition previously decided upon cannot be subject to further discussion, and nor should the main characteristics of the code of conduct.
- Only Marleen and the project team will be allocated time for the project, all other employees need to fit it into their current workload.
- Standard processes will be used where possible to involve the external parties and the customer; a budget for extra customer activities can and may be requested beforehand.

This is a substantial, but realistic and justifiable list of requirements. Marleen sets to work with her project team to prepare a plan of action based on this list.

Marleen must find an approach that meets the requirements of the group directors while enabling her to involve the users actively at an early stage.

There are ten rules of thumb she can apply for successful implementation of her project The Right Customer. These rules are:

1. A good process leads to a good result. Consideration for the way users carry out the implementation with one another is just as important as its content. Invest in initiating proper interaction. It would be a good thing, for example, to talk to one another and provide feedback, separately from the content.
2. The initial results may be small, but should be cherished. Actively involving users and implementing project results is like changing course with a giant oil tanker. You need to put a lot of effort into getting the wheel to move, but once on track, the ship will keep going.
3. Small teams are powerful. A small and manageable group of people with a clear goal can display a lot of power and pick up speed. Make use of these dynamics in the implementation.
4. Change comes with feeling. Users need to be able to experience and feel what the project result can and will mean to them. We experience and feel with our hearts, not our heads. And when we can feel something, we are willing to fight harder for it.
5. Learning is experimenting. When users start to deploy the project results, this usually demands a new way of working, acting and/or thinking. You need to get used to that as a user and this therefore takes time to learn. Practice makes perfect, which provides the project team with insights into what is effective and what is not.
6. Conflicts are healthy. And even necessary for successful implementation of project results. It would be preferable if these conflicts, as an expression of potential opposition, occur in the initial phases of the project and its implementation, when they can be effective. Don't forget: '*Rats and people come to love the things they have suffered for.*'
7. Easy does it. We tend to find complex solutions for complex issues. Keep implementation of the project results as simple and clear-cut as possible. A straightforward approach is easy to manage and explain.

8. People want to be acknowledged. People consider it important to participate, to belong, to be heard and to be able to contribute. Especially when it concerns things that touch on their daily activities. You may rest assured that there is a lot of willingness which you may draw on as project manager.
9. Hidden rules make the game. Working methods and their underlying ethical standards have a history. They are the lubricating oil of the organization and employee interaction. Keep this in mind and use the unwritten rules in the organization to make implementation smoother.
10. Put the user first. As mentioned before, it is fatal to delay paying attention to and involving the end-user until the final stage of the project (the actual physical implementation stage). Don't forget that it is the user you are doing it for!

For The Right Customer, Marleen and her project team prepare the following approach. Internally, she and her project team members will focus on the departmental heads as key change agents. She requests her steering committee to activate group management in encouraging the various division directors to support this process. She invites the departmental heads for a series of start-up meetings. The aim of these meetings is to inspire the departmental heads, and to persuade them to form small teams within their departments who will be responsible for implementing the code of conduct. The departmental heads are encouraged through small experiments and practical exercises to apply customer focus in practical situations. Marleen wants to receive regular feedback from the various departmental heads; not only on the successes, but also on issues encountered by the department that hinder a customer-focused way of working. She forwards this feedback to her steering committee, requesting appropriate action. She then informs the departments about the action taken. Each month, the steering committee highlights the most successful or remarkable actions taken to further stimulate customer focus in the organization. These actions are rewarded. Externally, Marleen takes the approach of forming several feedback groups. The management of the temp agency, as well as a number of its employees and temps are involved. To get the customer itself involved, she devises a simple solution. Based on

the network of her project team, the steering committee and the departmental heads, she selects a small feedback group of external customers she can use to check and submit her initiatives to. Nothing grand and sensational, but efficient and effective.

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'It doesn't really matter whether we all move a little to the left or to the right, as long as we move together.'

Jan van Boxel, Project manager, Interpolis

6

Success factor 3: a transparent and realistic strategy

What is strategy?

Strategy is often seen as an abstract and not quite tangible description of how to realize a goal or result. It triggers all kinds of questions:

- What does a strategy look like?
- In what way is a strategy different from a plan?
- How do you determine a strategy?
- What does strategic thinking and acting actually mean?
- Is it something I can or should do, or should it be the domain of higher management?

Many organizations spend a lot of time and effort on finding and following 'the right' strategy. In these cases, strategy is linked to the organization's mission and vision and describes how the organization can realize its mission. Finding and following 'the right' strategy also plays an important role in projects, and triggers the questions mentioned above. For that reason alone, it is important to address these questions regarding your project. Most importantly though, having a clear-cut and realistic strategy and being able to think and act strategically, is a decisive success factor in a project.

How do project strategy and organizational strategy relate to each other?

QUESTION	Organizational strategy	Project strategy
Whose domain is strategy really?	Mainly that of higher management. After all, they have to implement the strategy afterwards.	Mainly that of the project manager, in close communication with his client and his project team.
What is the purpose of a strategy?	To accomplish the mission and vision and to provide guidance for the plans of the various organizational units.	To accomplish the goals of the project and to manage handling the core tasks in the project.
What is a strategy?	A clear-cut description of the way the mission should be accomplished.	A clear-cut description of the approach to take to tackle the various core tasks in the project.

Table 6.1 Organizational strategy and project strategy

Jaap Koopmans is project manager for the renovation and widening of the Leenderheide interchange. This interchange is the connection between the Eindhoven bypass and the A2 towards Maastricht. The building consortium that employs Jaap has been awarded the contract based on MEAT criteria (most economically advantageous tender). The 'Leenderheide interchange' is not a stand-alone project. It is part of the entire widening and renovation of the A2 from Amsterdam to Maastricht; an umbrella project with many subprojects executed by various building consortia, like the previously mentioned 'A2 Hooggelegen' project.

Jaap has two commissioning parties. His direct reporting line is to the management board of the joint venture established by the building consortium. The other commissioning party is Rijkswaterstaat (Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management), as budget owner of this project and the responsible authority for all the A2 projects. In addi-

tion to the two commissioning parties, the municipalities of Eindhoven and Valkenswaard are also important stakeholders in the project. Their opportunities for economic development and national positioning are directly dependent upon a successful and swift realization of this infrastructural improvement. Furthermore, Philips is a significant and dominant party as the most important employer in the region. Philips has tailored its investment plans and business location policy to the widening of the A2 motorway.

Jaap has recently started on the preparations and execution of the project's realization. He has several years of experience in similar infrastructural projects. There are two things that make this project special in his opinion:

1. If he were to execute everything 'in the normal way', the project would require another year in the execution phase. The other parts of the bypass would be finished, leaving Leenderheide as a bottleneck for another year.
2. There is considerable political pressure on the project, both nationally, since the A2 widening is a spearhead of the coalition, and locally, since the interests of the municipalities involved and the Philips company weigh heavily.

Jaap wonders how he can incorporate these two challenges into his project's approach.

What is strategic project management?

Back to the Circle of Success. Strategy and action form the connection between the core tasks and the success criteria.

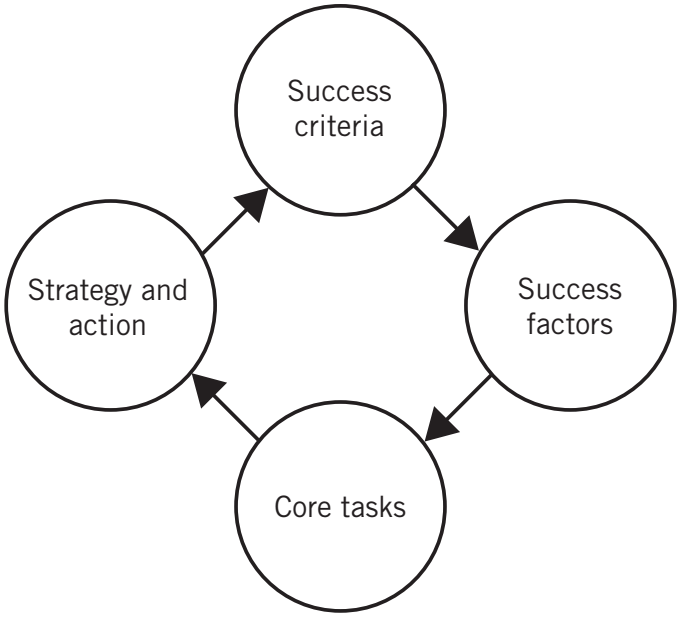

Figure 6.1 The Circle of Success

In the Circle of Success, strategy is linked to action to demonstrate that a strategy should guide a project's daily operations – from strategy to tactics to action.

Jaap is aware of his two key challenges, but how does he get from there to a strategy he must follow? For that, he needs to take the following steps:

1. Outline various scenarios: what are the things that could possibly happen?
2. What are the preferred and non-preferred scenarios: what would my preferred one be?
3. Assess your own influence on making this preferred scenario happen: how can you maximize the chances of success?
4. Formulate and establish this influence concisely: how can you formulate it in such a way that it will guide your daily activities?

During the Project Start-Up, the discussion comes round to the political pressure on the project. Henry, 'Easy for them to say, in the end they will try to blame us anyway. We should prepare ourselves for that.' Margriet, 'Or they keep quiet for a long time and when they do speak up, it will

most likely cause delays.' Finally, Jantien says with a sigh, 'Wouldn't it be great if they could behave more like partners to us. After all, they are the ones who want this project so much, aren't they?'

Jaap summarizes the discussion: 'It looks like there are three possible scenarios:

- *Scenario 1: we will be opponents*
- *Scenario 2: we will be following each other*
- *Scenario 3: we will be standing side by side.'*

At first, Scenario 3 meets with some scepticism. It seems too good to be true. However, since this would be an attractive scenario for the future and since it could also contribute substantially to the other key challenge, the team decides to investigate this scenario in more detail.

'What can we do to accomplish such a shoulder to shoulder position?' The first, perhaps rather foolish thoughts:

- *we bribe them*
- *we make them co-owner*
- *we – or friends of ours – will go into politics.*

This exchange of ideas eventually leads to three directions that could be taken to bring the municipalities into a partnership:

(A) Securing. Carefully identify the interests of the municipalities. Start the discussion and gradually make it clear that we will consider their interests in equal measure to those of the Rijkswaterstaat and the joint venture. We could even set up an administrative control body, in which all parties participate. In return, we expect the municipalities to understand and support our interests, for instance by providing an adequate licensing procedure.

(B) Excluding. In the first phase we distance ourselves from the municipalities. We put the interests of the Rijkswaterstaat and the joint venture first in order to make it clear that their interests will be served less or not at all if they don't participate and cooperate. Flex your muscles first to make them think 'If you can't beat them, join them'.

(C) *Divide and rule. Quite often, partners in a joint adventure do not hold an equal interest or share. In this case, the joint venture has a greater share than both the municipalities together. Just like part of controlling the administrative process is a responsibility of the Rijkswaterstaat. Let them squabble, as long as we keep managing the process.*

Jaap and his team are in favour of the 'securing' strategy, as it best corresponds to their ideas of a partnership and because they believe it will immediately alleviate pressure in terms of time. Their motto is: 'Fulfilling it together!'

Jaap has implicitly taken all the necessary steps to determine a strategy for his key challenges, even as far as finding a motto that symbolizes this strategy. Translating a strategy into a slogan or guiding motto is an important step in its application and use. It makes it easy to assess whether choices and actions are strengthening or weakening the chosen strategy. In the case of the Leenderheide project, the 'securing' strategy means finding harmony with all parties involved. Not just the municipalities, the Rijkswaterstaat and the members of the joint venture itself, but perhaps also other parties, like the road users, the provincial authorities and other adjacent projects on the A2. Jaap will not exclude any parties but secure them, in order to achieve the motto of 'fulfilling it together'.

Jaap should be aware, however, that everything comes at a cost. Also the choice of a strategy. One of the obvious advantages of the chosen 'securing' strategy is that Jaap will have an easy job creating support and realizing a project that offers the best possible functional and long-term solution. The downside is that the scope will quickly come under pressure, as additional things need to be taken into account to serve the various interests. This is not possible within the set requirements regarding time and money, so it is therefore important that Jaap and his team, with a view to keeping their strategy transparent and most of all realistic, quickly learn how to involve various parties and to serve various additional interests,

without having to foot the bill.

This holds true for every strategic choice. When you make a clear and concrete decision to do something in a certain way, it always has its upside as well as its downside. You need to critically assess yourself and your team with regard to the ability to fulfil the strategy. This strategic self assessment contains five questions.

1. What is the essence of our strategy?
2. What are the advantages?
3. What are the disadvantages?
4. What is the impact of these disadvantages on us?
5. What do we need to develop for that?

To conclude this paragraph, we will put strategy in perspective with all the other things that need to be managed in the project. Everything that needs to be done in a project whilst steering towards Project Success can be measured along two axes

A. The axis from control to innovation. In projects, there are many things that must be taken care of in a well-controlled and reliable manner. The way to do this is explained in Chapter 9 in which we deal with the success factor 'effective planning and control'. Certain matters in a project, however, need to be tackled in a new and innovative way, as each project has its unique challenges that require a non-standard approach.
B. The axis from result to objective. Each project must deliver results and, at the same time, these results need to fulfil ambitions. The way you manage the project results is different from the way you manage the project objectives. The first requires a more project-based approach that focuses on results and systematic working. Managing fulfilment of the project objectives asks for a process-based approach with greater focus on high quality interaction.

Figure 6.2 Strategic project management (Storm, 2006)

Each project has its own mix. Not every project is of an equally innovative or strategic character. On the other hand, none of the four focus areas should be left out of project management. In each project, attention must be given to operational project management, the project environment, the innovative parts of the project and the strategic core tasks.

Can you picture the ideal mix for your project and do you have sufficient management focus on all four areas?

How can I think and act strategically?

Understanding the concept of strategic project management does not necessarily mean you know how to apply it. In the previous section, we looked at a model to arrive at 'the right' strategy – like a cookery book explaining the steps needed to achieve the best result. To give strategy greater prominence in your project, you could also take a different route, by adopting a more strategic way of working yourself without focusing too directly on the question of 'what does my strategy look like?'

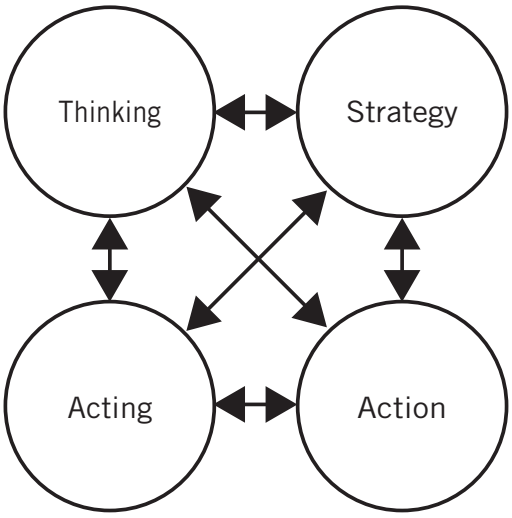

Figure 6.3 Strategy: where would you like to start?

But what would be a strategic way of working? What are the appropriate lines of thinking if you want to be more engaged in strategy? And what sort of behaviour comes with it?

Jaap presents his project plan to his immediate commissioning party, the management board of the joint venture. His strategy of 'securing' creates quite a stir there as well. The risk of potential changes in scope, which the joint venture would have to pay for, is deemed high. The general feeling is to simply do it like we always have done. Do your job as you should do and within the agreed scope. Should anything come up which is not in our current contract, treat it as contract extras.

Tip 1: Know that there are several roads leading to Rome
Make sure you are at least aware of these roads. The management board suggests a road that, like the road Jaap wants to take, may lead to project success. You choose the road that you expect will lead to maximum success with minimum effort. As long as you keep all the options in mind and make a justifiable choice.

Jaap tries to explain to the management board why he has opted for 'securing'. If we don't make any effort to unite the parties around us, such a union can still come about anyway, but we will have no control over it. We might end up in a position facing both the municipalities, the representatives of the road users and the provincial authorities as a united force opposing us. They have their own connections within Rijkswaterstaat and we might become isolated. Not an entirely far-fetched scenario, is the conclusion.

Tip 2: Do not allow 'opponents' to merge into a coherent unit
The essence of this thought is that interaction – and serving the interests of all parties in the best possible way – is not supported by large power blocks. It might seem easier for the process, though, as there would be fewer discussion partners. 'Together we are strong' is an adage that would also apply to the members of such a power group. More than anything else, however, the inception of large power groups will result in (a) greater focus on the dominant interests, (b) investment in preparing for battle and (c) negative and defensive relationships. The result of large power blocks emerging is a lose-lose situation, rather than win-win solutions. Just think about the effects of the cold war.

Naturally, the various road users are all given brief consideration during the stakeholder analysis. The swift conclusion is that a smooth traffic flow is essential for success. Special categories of road users, like ambulances, police and the fire brigade, are hardly touched upon. It is not until a very late stage that they turn out to have an important say in the various licensing procedures, besides also having specific requirements regarding access to the bypass.

Tip 3: Never consider your opponents or challenges to be weak or easy

There is no need to be fearful of and find fault with everything. After all, a lot of the things happening in your project are operational in nature, rather than strategic. However, as soon as issues or focal points touch on the core challenges of the project, you need to adopt a critical attitude. People are often inclined to downplay a matter, 'I'm sure it will all work out.' Such an attitude does not suit strategic project management.

Following the stakeholder analysis, Jaap and his team set out to talk to the various stakeholders. These discussions focus primarily on the question of when a stakeholder considers the project to be a success. These talks go smoothly at first. The project team receives a warm welcome, ample time is taken and the meetings are conducted in a constructive atmosphere. The outcome of these talks is an extensive list of requirements from the various stakeholders, without a clear idea of what their own contribution might be towards fulfilling them. This matter is discussed as part of a subsequent round of talks and, not unexpectedly, these meetings progress with much more difficulty.

Tip 4: Regularly test your partners' loyalty

Loyalty can be tested by asking your partners for an active contribution to find out if they really are prepared to deliver. The easiest way to show commitment is to pay lip service. It is easy to say 'yes', but far more difficult to suit the action to the word. Everyone says the environment is important, but as soon as we need to pay more, we have a lot more reservations. It is important to check and test your partners' commitment at the earliest possible stage and to repeat this process from time to time. After all, the commitment people have and feel, is not a static variable.

Karin is a civil servant at the engineering department of Eindhoven municipal authorities. The Leenderheide interchange is part of her portfolio. She has just finished her first meeting with Jaap, the project manager of the building contractor. She thought it was a rather surprising discussion as she was asked for her opinion on when she would consider

the project a success. Everything she said was taken seriously, without the contractor taking up a defensive position or thinking solely about money. She gives feedback about the meeting to the responsible alderman. There must be a snag somewhere, is their conclusion. After all, a contractor is only after the money...

Tip 5: Denounce your own assumptions as a matter of course
Thinking in platitudes, like in this case thinking a contractor is only after money and simply taking this for granted, is a common pitfall in strategic project management. It may be true, but not necessarily in all cases. There may be other, less obvious, explanations why parties behave as they do. Be aware of your own assumptions and dare to let go of them.

The Leenderheide project has many stakeholders and a lot needs to be done in a very short space of time. As the project unfolds, Jaap and his team tend to focus more and more on keeping the execution running smoothly. Execution is in danger of overtaking the design process, and could result in major risks. After two months, Jantien and Henry raise the alarm at one of the project team meetings. 'We thought our motto was 'fulfilling it together'! It now seems like all we do is focus on the execution, with hardly any communication with our stakeholders anymore. It's no surprise they have become restless after all the promises made at the start.'

Tip 6: Spend some time each day on the key strategic challenges
The tasks and challenges that are the core of the project and therefore a critical success factor cannot be dealt with in one-off actions. They need constant attention from the project manager and his team. Each project team meeting, each discussion and each progress report must partly focus on the developments regarding the core tasks. Their status must be part of the dashboard which reflects the status of the project.

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Tip 7: Reward creativity and innovative capability

Strategically, you are always looking for innovative ways to solve or approach a challenge or task. Creativity and innovative capability are therefore core capabilities of a successful and strategically operating project team. This is not only needed for the big issues, but can also be applied to more obvious and practical matters, like the issue being dealt with by Jaap's team. This will be explained further in Chapter 8, where we will look at flexibility and creativity.

For some of the team members, contacting the stakeholders about the project's success was quite a new concept. Jaap was a prominent player in this field and handled most of the action. Now it is up to his colleagues to play the same game. Not only is it new, but also rather nerve-racking. What do you say, how do you start a conversation, how do you handle possible complaints or remarks, how much can you disclose, and what kind of agreements can or should you make?

Tip 8: Practise before you actually start

In the practical example of Jaap and his team, it seems logical to perform a dry run first, for example by role-playing short conversations as if they were actual talks with stakeholders. New ways to tackle something must be tried out first before actually applying them. Let's return to Marianne once again and think about her question of how she should subdivide her NOU project. Will she opt for a subdivision according to sub-results, target audiences, expertise areas or a mixture of the above? She could talk and think about it endlessly, or she could spend a day looking at what happens when you choose one or the other. Time spent on such a strategic issue should never be an objection and by using a simple simulation you can quite easily experience the consequences of the different options.

Get to work on strategy!

In the previous section, you could see in Figure 6.3 that it makes no great difference where you start when you want to increase the focus on strategic project management in your project: whether you start by formulating a strategy, defining strategic actions, thinking and talking more strategically or behaving in a more strategic manner. One will lead to another as a matter of course.

Action is therefore needed to increase the strategic value of your project management. If you need something to go by, you can take the following steps to implement strategic project management:

1. Discuss the success of the project, since the most important core tasks and challenges you face will partly have their origin in the success criteria.
2. Determine what your key challenges/core tasks are to turn your project into a success, because strategy in projects is mainly related to the question of what the basic approach is to successful completion of the core tasks.
3. Think of several strategies to conquer a core task. After all, it important to keep in mind the various roads leading to Rome and not be satisfied with the first approach that springs to mind.
4. Choose a strategy and translate this into action. Realize that a choice always has its upside as well as its downside. A strategy on paper alone, without actions, is meaningless.
5. Reflect on what you need to develop in strategic actions to live up to the strategy. You can use the eight tips for strategic thinking and acting, focusing on the question of where your strengths lie and which development points need the most attention.

'Many project KPIs have been developed. Managing all these performance indicators at the same time is counterproductive. After all, you get what you reward.'

Arthur Bouland, Project Director, Sogeti

7

Success factor 4: a close-knit team

In Chapter 3, a close-knit team is mentioned as a universal success factor. In this chapter we will show you how to work on that success factor.

Fréderique Maes is a young business administrator working for a large Dutch cheese producer and is the project manager of a project to develop a new cheese for a young target market under the age of 35. Time to market is short and the cheese must generate sales within a year.

'Two weeks ago, I started my assignment as project manager and began with some fact-finding interviews. I wanted to know what the production of a new cheese means to people and who should be involved in this project. I have since spoken to the marketing manager about the problems in the market for cheese for people under 35. Sales of the current 40+ cheeses are plummeting. He also informed me that sales of our competitors' 20+ holey cheese have gone up in supermarkets. I also spoke to the purchase manager. Prices of raw materials from our current suppliers, such as milk and additives, are stable because of price fixing based on purchase quantities. New additions to the products have quite a few consequences. The production manager suggests we take changeover costs into account when changing the production scheme of various cheeses. Furthermore, I had a talk with one of our food technologists who monitors the quality of our current products. We discussed our current array of cheeses and I have explained our ambitions with the new cheese. He gave me a few tips regarding patent applications.

I now have a better understanding of what this project needs and what kinds of things should be taken into account. It is obvious I need a team of people who have market and marketing expertise, product knowledge and production technology skills.'

Is teamwork necessary in a project?

In organizations, people are put into teams for all kinds of reasons. Quite often, organizations have very clear expectations of the unique contribution a team can make. Sue Mohrman, Susan Cohen and Alan Mohrman give an account in their book *Designing Team-*

based Organizations (1995) of their research into the expectations people have of teams. To sum up, organizations expect a team to contribute to:

- individual performance, especially when tasks are too large or too complicated for one person;
- the learning effect for the individual, especially when professional development is most effective under direct supervision in practice;
- maintaining individual motivation, especially when this motivation is under pressure from work characterized by threatening situations or recurrent setbacks;
- synergy between individuals, especially when team members strongly depend on one another at the same time for the performance of their duties, like in an army combat unit;
- aligning the goals of the organization and the individual, especially by bridging the gap between individual goals and organizational strategy through the team's goals;
- a mentally healthy working environment; support and encouragement from team members can contribute to higher job satisfaction;
- continuity in the job, the way of working and working morale.

Based on the above, you might come to the conclusion that performing duties as an individual is less productive than as a team. That, however, is not the case. Working as a team costs money as well: the so-called coordination costs. Team members need to agree on things, align, plan, take decisions together, and understand who does what and why. Only then can they make the most of their teamwork. All this costs time and energy. It is therefore wise to discuss whether a certain assignment should be done as a team or by an individual.

Take, for example, writing a book like this. If you are an expert in the field of project management and are also a talented writer, you have the option of writing the book on your own. It saves time coordinating with others and this time can be spent writing. Moreover, you only have to take your future readers into account. However, if

you feel the need for inspiration as a writer and time is too short to do it all on your own, the time spent on coordination will be nothing compared to the time you save by getting colleagues to write on different chapters at the same time.

For some groups in organizations, teamwork is a necessity. The nature of the work, the circumstances, and the conditions that apply to the work all have a major impact on this necessity. This is certainly true for project teams. Take Fréderique's team. No one in her team can develop the new cheese on their own, and produce and launch it within a time-span of one year. The expertise of several specialists from various departments is needed and must be coordinated in order to produce a profit generating cheese.

What are the characteristics of a project team?

The tasks faced by teams, differ, just like the circumstances and conditions that apply to those tasks. These differences are the reason why not all teams are the same. A production team will face different requirements from a project team. To explain these differences, we will take a side step to teams in the world of sports.

Robert Keidel has carried out extensive research into different kinds of sports teams. He distinguishes three types:

- baseball team
- football team
- basketball team.

The nature of the game varies greatly between these types of teams. Keidel examined the question: 'How does each of these sports influence the nature of the team, the team interaction and the type of coaching?' Table 7.1 shows the typical differences between these sports teams as well as the requirements with regard to organization and coaching.

Characteristic	Baseball team	Football team	Basketball team
Number of players	Large number of players and a large pitch	Very large number of players and a small pitch	Small number of players and a small pitch
Involvement of players in the game	Sub-teams specialized in attack or defence are involved in the game in turns	Sub-teams specialized in attack or defence are involved in the game in turns	All players are simultaneously involved in the game
Interaction	Minimal and limited to a few team members at the same time	Limited with team members (regulated, short and fast), very high with opponents	Very high, constant and very fast with all team members as well as opponents
Interdependency between the players	Low, individual performance is decisive	Very high, if one player fails, the whole team fails	High, but if one player fails, there is a fair chance that a team member can correct the mistake

Characteristic	Baseball team	Football team	Basketball team
Task specialization	Limited, there are only a few very specialized players	High, several specialized roles and specialized teams for defence and attack	Low, even though each player has his own role and position
Time limitation	None	Yes	Yes
Regulation of game strategies	Very strict, teams playing against each other take turns in attacking or defending, never simultaneously	Strict, switch between attack and defence is regulated but less predictable than in baseball (where each team is given equal opportunities to attack)	Limited, switch between attack and defence is partly regulated and unpredictable

Characteristic	Baseball team	Football team	Basketball team
Management and organizational characteristics	• Need for coordination is limited • Need for coaching is limited • Coach can influence through a) selection of players and b) specific tactics	• Need for coordination is high • Need for coaching is very high • Need for detailed teamwork plan is very high • Organization is hierarchical and functional • Roles and sub-teams are coached separately; • Coach can influence through game strategy and direct, frequent instructions during play	• Need for coordination is high and must come from the players themselves • Need for coaching is limited • Need for detailed teamwork plan is very limited • Organization is collegial • Only the team as a whole can be coached • Coach can influence by building a close-knit team and by interrupting play when the opponent is doing better than his own team

Table 7.1 Characteristic differences between the three types of sports teams (Storm, Boogaard and Savelsbergh, 2004)

Keidel speaks of a team in which 'team flow' is much more important than individual qualities or the game plan. Examples of organizational teams where this kind of game is important are operating teams, campaign teams, design teams and project teams. A parallel can be drawn between the three sports teams Keidel distinguishes and the teams operating in a company. However, there are at least two main differences. First of all, the different teams operating in a company are not competing independently of each other. They need to work with the results of the other teams. In this way, the different teams become team members of one another and sometimes also opponents. The second difference is that a team operating in a company competes not only in one sport but in several sports at the same time. A team must sometimes organize itself as a baseball team, sometimes as a football team and sometimes as a basketball team, depending on the 'sport' it is playing. Table 7.2 illustrates which games are being played by Fréderique's R&D project team.

	An R&D project team plays:
Baseball	In the definition phase: everyone does their own thing, but in consultation with one another.
Football	In the realization phase: cooperation is needed in a larger group within a clear structure.
Basketball	In the prototype phase: bringing everything together in a short space of time to make a cheese that can be produced, and which will be profitable and in demand.

Table 7.2 Different 'sports' for one team (Storm, Boogaard and Savelsbergh, 2004)

Each team in a company or a task-oriented organization has its own mission. For project teams, their mission in most cases is to renew or improve systems and procedures or realize new products or services to fulfil the strategic direction of top management and/or the optimization targets of middle management. Projects go through

different phases and play different games. Changing team members is therefore not unusual in project teams. These changes can have a negative effect on team collaboration each time. That is why a constant emphasis on teamwork is so important in a project team.

How does a group of individuals become a team?

'The five of us have been working as a team for a month now. Henk, who is 49, is a food technologist who helped develop the OldDuckCheese which has been profitable for over twenty years now. Stef comes from the marketing department. He is 41 and has been with the company for nine years. Piet is 58 and is an ambitious process technologist who has been with the company for 35 years. I have deliberately opted for a relatively small team. Koos has been a financial controller for 25 years and specializes in cost accounting. So far, we have met four times. It has been a long time since a new cheese was developed and, from what I understand, everything was done differently back then. I also get the impression that I'm not being taken seriously with my 29 years of age. And moreover, a female business administrator, who apparently has no clue about technology or money. There also seems to be some sort of friction between Henk and Piet. Something happened in the past, and I need to find out what it is. Koos and Stef are on the same wavelength during discussions, but Piet and Henk do not always understand them. Their backgrounds and experience are quite different, which could explain things. For the coming period, my key challenge will be to turn this team into a 'lean and mean fighting machine', in which everyone respects each other's knowledge and expertise.'

A team is not built by simply appointing a group of people as such. Team building is a process; one you could compare to nursing a vegetable garden.

After the seeds have been sown, the land is still not a vegetable garden yet. This comes with careful nurturing. Regular weeding and watering and the addition of fertilizer if needed. Your garden

will provide a better crop if plants can benefit from one another's position in the garden. And it will continue to be a vegetable garden if you carefully refill the holes after harvesting.

The same applies to building a close-knit team. In teambuilding, there are four main themes: searching for acceptance, exchanging data, integrating the objective and managing the team approach. We shall start with a brief description of each one:

- *Searching for acceptance*. When you become a member of a team, you will implicitly start asking yourself questions like: 'Do I fit in?' 'Will I be accepted?' 'Is my knowledge sufficient?' 'Do I have sufficient experience?' These kinds of insecurities will trigger your search for acceptance.
- *Exchanging data*. Interaction in a team is mostly a matter of exchanging information. When you start participating in a team and related discussions, you will wonder when to speak and when to remain silent. This will certainly be the case in projects with a political slant. Some people will hold back and others will put themselves forward more, depending on the moment or the setting, or the subject under discussion.
- *Integrating goals/objectives*. In a teambuilding process, there will be the inevitable question: what is it that we really want to achieve and why? It will become clear that there are various objectives at stake: organizational objectives, project objectives and individual objectives. If these goals appear to differ, attention must be paid to goal integration.
- *Managing the approach*. This concerns the distribution of power and influence in a team, how roles are allocated, who is the expert on the project's contents, who will act as chairperson etc. Many of these issues relate to controlling the process in a team: 'What are our rules and how do we stick to them?' 'What do we do as a team and what do we do on our own?' 'What should we update each other on?' The distribution of influence in the team will also be determined. To prevent the team from being controlled by the process, it is important for the project manager to start influencing the process.

Good teamwork is created by paying repeated attention to each of these issues from the very start. After all, certain issues often come back after some time, just like weeds that have been removed. The process of teambuilding can be seen as a spiral in which relapse and growth take turns. Although recurrence of a theme can be a source of annoyance and confrontations, addressing the themes can also release new energy.

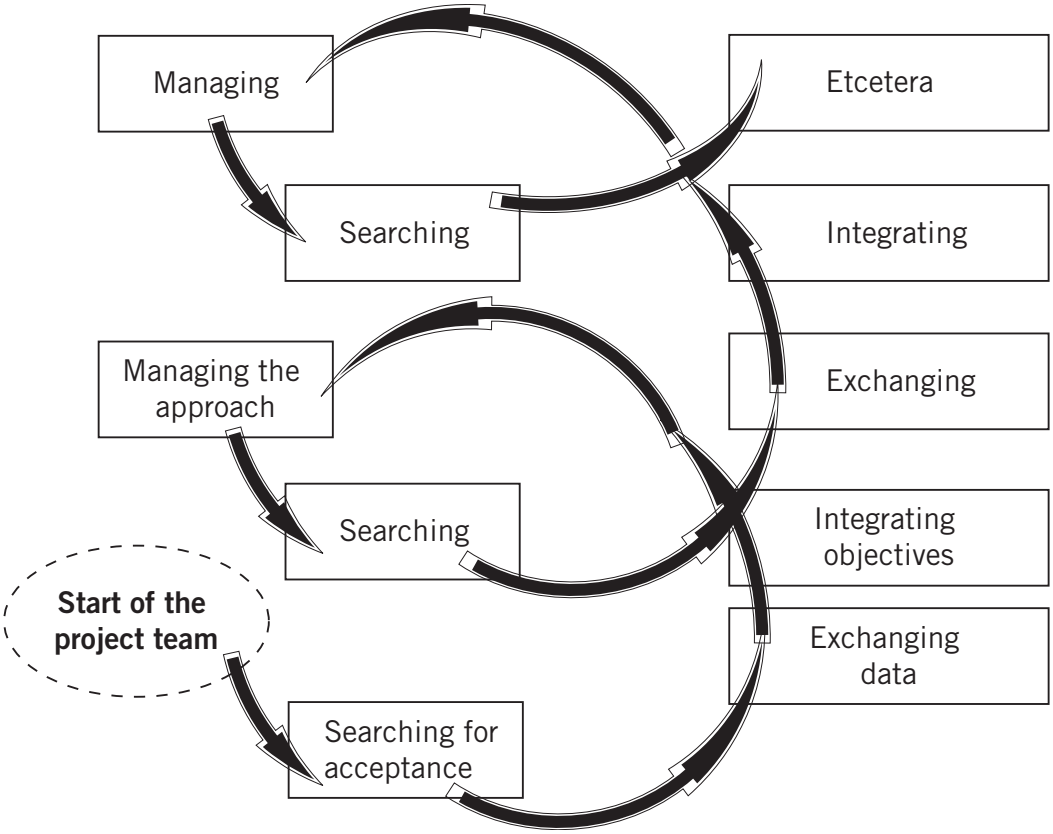

Figure 7.1 Development spiral of teams (Wijnen and Storm, 2007)

'Yesterday we had another team meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to brainstorm about the qualities of the new cheese, based on the characteristics and wishes of the target audience we are aiming for with this cheese. Every suggestion we made was met by a "Yes, but..." from Piet and Henk. In the end, the atmosphere had deteriorated to such an extent that Koos and Stef kept their mouths shut. I decided to spend the rest of the meeting on the way we work as a team. I invited them all to express what it was they valued in each of the team members. After some initial

hesitation, a lively discussion developed and a lot of positive feedback was exchanged from different viewpoints. I was also honest in discussing the "yes, but" behaviour and how this hampers us in our exploratory process. It was the right time to do so. The feedback I received was that I was a keen observer, capable of giving astute feedback to the group. I have decided to discuss our team interaction on a regular basis.'

In the situation outlined above, a problem of acceptance will always cause tension in the background. By turning an area of tension into an area requiring special attention, you create the opportunity to discuss the issue thoroughly so that you can start working in harmony.

It is essential for the project manager and team members to learn to identify any stagnation in the teambuilding process. If it happens, it is crucial to address the issue. We will come back later to the process of continuous team improvement, but let's first take a look at team diversity. As Fréderique's diary shows us, this is not always a blessing, even though diversity is needed to complete the task.

How can we make the most of each other's diversity as a team?

Generally speaking, project managers and potential team members do not always team up in a market of supply and demand. Even if that were the case, it would still not guarantee the formation of a perfect team as the perfect team does not exist.

Project team members are usually chosen for the contribution they can make to the project goal. The diversity of everyone's background makes it possible to tackle problems with a variety of complex aspects. However, it is equally important to pay attention to personal skills that can contribute to the team's functioning.

'We are now doing quite well as a team. Stef turned out to be a real source of inspiration. He outlines images of cheese and young people as if starring in a TV commercial and in doing so creates enthusiasm in the

team. Koos brings us back down to earth and keeps us from daydreaming. He carefully outlines the sales opportunities. Henk excels as our think-tank. He is critical but constructive and clearly explains to us what you can and cannot do with cheese. Piet is the practical guy. He can already envisage the production plant in full swing and is already assembling a test setup in his laboratory. We are starting to believe in it. And then there's me, moving forward at full speed. I sometimes fear I'm pushing the others too hard, but we are in such a good flow right now. We could do with another team member though, someone who can keep us together and relieve me of some of my coordinating tasks.'

Fréderique's diary show us that the personal skills in this team are quite complementary. You could look at these qualities from a variety of angles:

- From a time-oriented angle: is someone mainly focused on the past or the future?
- From a human angle: does someone have an enterprising nature (carrying the load) or a supportive one?
- From a world view angle: is someone more of a thinker (philosopher) or a doer?

These three polarities, positioned in three different directions, result in six personality characterizations, as shown in Figure 7.2.

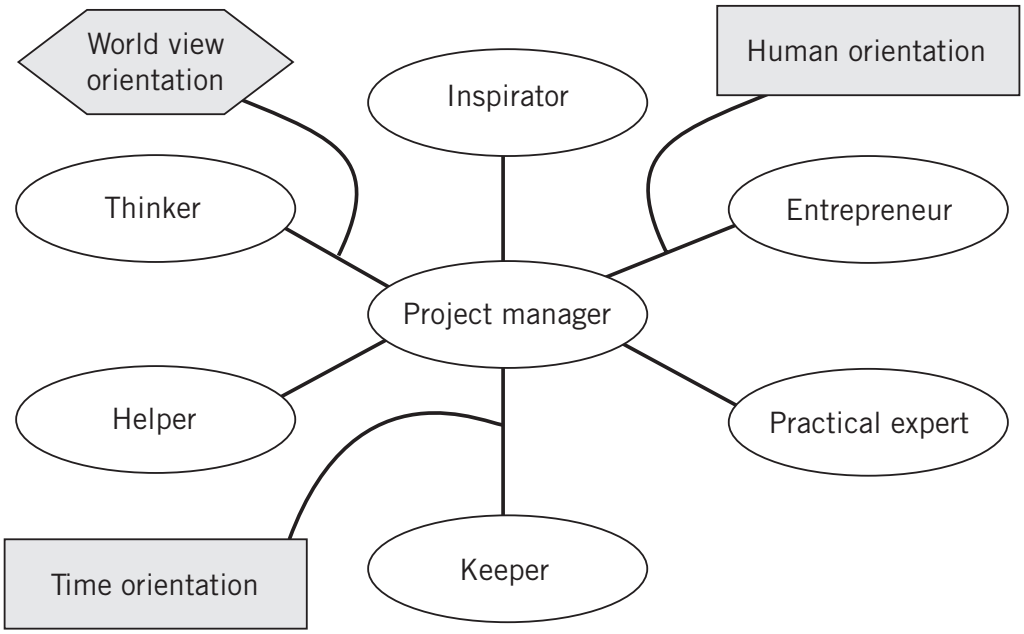

Figure 7.2 Team role qualities (from: Wijnen and Storm, *Project-based working*, 2007, p. 212)

In Fréderique's team, Stef's personal qualities can best be described as those of an Inspirator. This role is characterized by:

- a strong imagination;
- clear formulation of objectives, based on vision for the future;
- searches for new ideas and developments;
- inspires others to take on challenges.

But when Stef becomes extreme, then:

- his ideas become unrealistic;
- he cannot bear it if his ideas are not accepted by the others;
- he is on a one man mission, without paying attention to what is happening around him.

Koos' personal qualities are more like those of a Keeper. This role is characterized by:

- respect for the past;
- creating order;
- steering towards accuracy and carefulness;
- preventing repeated mistakes.

When Koos goes over the top, then he:

- will denounce every change or development;
- will be obsessed by details;
- will stagnate and no longer move.

Henk's qualities resemble those of a Thinker. This role is characterized by:

- a love of analyzing situations and finding connections;
- clear thinking;
- sound reasoning;
- abstract descriptions.

When Henk becomes too much of a Thinker, he can:

- become too critical;
- become irritated by spontaneous suggestions that do not seem logical to him;
- dampen the enthusiasm of others in taking action;
- become fixed in his views.

Piet's personal qualities can best be described as those of a Practical Expert. This role is characterized by:

- interest in practical and effective solutions;
- assessing proposals based on own practical experience;
- ideas on feasibility through own practical experience;
- preference for lively meetings.

When Piet goes over the top:
- he cannot understand people hesitating over his proposals;
- he gives up when others become vague or theoretical;
- he becomes rather chaotic.

Fréderique describes her own personal qualities as those of an Entrepreneur. This role is characterized by:
- preference for 'full speed ahead';
- no hesitations about what needs to be done;
- being able to get people moving in one direction;
- willingness to be unpopular for some time if it leads to results.

When Fréderique goes over the top in her enterprising role:
- she becomes intolerant towards others working conscientiously;
- she puts too much pressure on others;
- she can become very pushy.

What they are lacking in the team, is someone who is supportive, the Helper. This role is characterized by:
- creating conditions for good results;
- ensuring others can make their contributions;
- easily adaptable to new circumstances and new ideas;
- sensitive to atmosphere and work climate;
- consideration for others.

Even this type of person can go over the top, and will:
- never take the lead;
- take no initiative;
- efface themselves;
- become interfering.

Every human being has each of the above qualities to a larger or lesser extent. It is the task of the project manager to identify the various qualities in people and to stimulate them in such a way that the team can realize the project within the given requirements. Qualities must therefore be utilized in a balanced way. It is therefore important for team members to recognize each other's qualities, appreciate them and see them as complementary. The project manager must prevent certain qualities from becoming dominant, as this could obstruct the project process. If both Stef and Henk were to allow their inspiring qualities to dominate, Fréderique's project could become nothing more than a fantasy if this behaviour is not compensated for. Too much thinking and lack of action will also lead to stagnation. Too many helpers without leaders will result in vagueness and insecurity. The project manager should therefore maintain a careful balance. He is ideally an Integrator, someone who can identify his own and others' qualities and merge them into an effective organism. This starts with 'knowing yourself' and 'knowing your team'.

Train as a team and evaluate its status on a regular basis!

What does a healthy team look like? A healthy team can be characterized by the following.

- In a healthy team, the collective task is of greater importance than the individual tasks. Team members not only have their own tasks, but all have one or more shared tasks.
- A team's reputation is strongly dependent upon its success in realizing the collective task. This task is accepted by both the team members and the team's environment (for example management or the customer).
- Team members acknowledge their interdependency when fulfilling their own as well as their collective tasks. There is mutual trust and respect. It is generally accepted that you help one another occasionally.

- Unexpected issues can be tackled together without the need for escalation. The team has sufficient knowledge and resources – except in extreme circumstances – to execute the individual and collective tasks. Where resources fall short, the team is ingenious enough to get through the problem in one piece.
- Team members will not let themselves be played by managers, customers or colleagues. When an attempt is made, the team members will present a united front.
- Team members are self-reliant when it comes to learning from their shared experiences. They take the time to evaluate situations and learn from their mistakes. They show interest in one another's ideas and will join forces to come up with even better ones. They try new methods to achieve even better results, also with regard to their own decision-making process or the way they conduct meetings.

As mentioned earlier, the teambuilding process can be seen as a team development spiral. Topics like the evaluation of progress can be discussed regularly and used to strengthen the team's interaction. Although this is often initiated by a negative situation, it can also be the result of positive experiences. A team that is capable of learning from situations can continuously improve the way it interacts. This also benefits performance and the team's interaction with its environment. Several studies show that joint reflection on experiences, active requests for feedback on the team's functioning and experiments as a team have a positive effect on teamwork and the team's performance. This does, however, require time and a certain team learning routine.

Real improvements in teamwork and team performance are not the result of the usual one-off teambuilding activities, many of which are *off the job*, such as survival trips. That is not what football teams do either – they do not play tennis to improve their football game. To have real influence on a team's performance, the team needs to understand which factors influence this performance. The team needs to come up with ideas on how it can exert a positive influence

on these factors. The strategy's effectiveness should then be tested and its effect evaluated. In football, the weather and pitch conditions can influence performance, but other factors also include the team's line-up and the instilled team patterns of passing, attacking and defending.

We can therefore see that both game conditions and the team's line-up as well as the team process and common values have an influence on team performance. The same holds true for teams in a business environment. Although the game conditions may seem to lie outside the team's scope, such as sluggish decision-making by the steering committee, if the team finds this a hindrance, it can do two things: (A) blame the steering committee for schedules not met, or (B) try to speed up the steering committee's decision-making process. A good team process is necessary in the second option in order to turn a negative context into something positive. It is important that the conditions, the team line-up and the team process are all seen as factors influencing team performance and that the team feels and takes the responsibility to influence these three factors in a positive way.

Following this argument and on the basis of the many studies (see Savelsbergh, 2010) related to learning as a team and its positive effects, we suggest the following principles for continuous team development:

- Improvement starts with a valid diagnosis of the team's interaction and performance and an idea of the influencing factors based on the context and formation of the team.
- Development should be aimed at step-by-step improvement. You cannot do it all at once. Make a team decision as to what to tackle first and what to do next. Create a development plan – which things do you want to do better as a team or perhaps even excel in?
- How good is the team now? The team's current level of development determines the ambitions for improvement. Making these ambitions known encourages you to spend time and effort on improving and learning.

- The team needs to gradually learn how to become responsible for its own development.

Learning and developing as a team requires a certain shared pattern of behaviour. This pattern consists of:

- Asking open questions both within and outside the team.
- Listening to each other's ideas and agreeing on shared ideas.
- Reflecting on shared experiences: what was our intention, what have we done, what was the effect and what can we learn for next time?
- Evaluating team results: what was our goal, what have we achieved and what can we learn from this?
- Asking for feedback from the main stakeholders regarding the team's functioning and acting on it.
- Trying out new approaches and measuring their effects.

Teams will not usually take the time, particularly when under pressure, to engage in anything else other than those tasks needed for the end result. Furthermore, not all team members are used to analyzing the mistakes they have made with their team, nor are they per se interested in the views of others from a different department or background. To instil this kind of behaviour in the team's routine, it is essential to deliberately make time for it. At first this can be encouraged by an outsider, but the team should gradually learn to take its own responsibility for its further development.

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'Puma is a joint venture between the maritime contractors Boskalis and Van Oord that has been specially established for the design and construction of the Maasvlakte 2. In order to make Puma and the construction of the Maasvlakte 2 a success, we as management team have decided to commit ourselves to collaboration in the broadest sense of the word. First of all, an internal programme – In Search of the Puma Feeling– was set up to create our own identity by determining our own specific culture – The Puma Way of Working – and our specific success criteria. We then focused on our client – the Port of Rotterdam Authority – to set up a similar programme with them. This resulted in joint outings and joint teams per discipline. Our target for the coming year is not only to intensify this collaboration, but also to make it visible via measurements. Naturally, we also developed the necessary tool for this in a joint effort. Furthermore, we are also on the brink of starting up a similar collaboration process with our main subcontractors, who also help determine the project's success.'

Peter Klip, Project Director, Puma

8

Success factor 5: flexibility and creativity

In Chapter 3, flexibility and creativity are mentioned as a universal success factor. In this chapter, we will show you what this entails and how you can work on this success factor.

In what respects does a project need flexibility?

Dick has been the project manager of the renovation at Velzerbroek railway station for five months now. The renovation is necessary because of the increase in the number of travellers, rendering the current size of the platforms insufficient. Moreover, the station's surrounding area is currently being redeveloped and the municipality aims to achieve greater uniformity in this area. Dick's project team consists of seven professionals from different backgrounds so that a sound design for the project's end result can be achieved as well as proper control of the development. His team members bring expertise in technical design, architectonics, finance, transport dynamics and marketing to the team. It took them a while to understand one another at first due to their different backgrounds, but now that they have a clear idea of the future railway station and everyone has found their role in the team, they are making steady progress. There is frequent coordination regarding everyone's decisions. Meetings and the decision-making process are structured and take up little time. The interim result, a design for the platform roof, was achieved within time and budget. It was all going well until last Monday. The previous week, Dick had been invited to a meeting with Mr. Wouters of Prorail, one of the commissioning parties. Dick had not spoken to any of the commissioning parties for a long time; not since the contract was awarded in fact. Mr. Wouters expressed his dissatisfaction with the way he has been involved in the design process so far. His dissatisfaction partly stems from the fact that a study by Prorail has shown that the number of people travelling via Velzerbroek station will double in the next two years. Dick had been totally unaware of this study until last Monday and the results are unnerving for his team, to say the least. Furthermore, Mr. Wouters mentioned that he has spoken to the municipality, one of the two other commissioning parties. He learned that the municipality has started

on the development of an Opera Theatre, only a hundred metres from the station under renovation. Based on the experience of other railway stations, he informs Dick that the noise and vibrations caused by trains braking and departing will need to be reduced by means of special technical facilities in the station's design.

All this has proven to be a tough wake-up call for Dick. We were doing so well together, he thinks, but we quite forgot about the world around us. The entire purpose of the renovation was to build a station that could cope with the rising number in travellers and which would fit in well with the surrounding area under redevelopment. The project's context has continued to make progress, but our project result and approach became stagnated.

Projects are unique, one-off assignments. 'One-off' and 'unique' refer to a situation for which a standard approach is usually unsuitable. In order to handle these kinds of assignments, there are high expectations associated with bringing people together from different disciplines in multidisciplinary project teams. The team members are expected to be able to recognize when they come to the end of a path and to have the flexibility and creativity to choose another one. They are expected to work together as a close-knit team, but also be able to adapt to changes in the context of the project and in the needs of the project's stakeholders. This requires a project team to look at itself (how are we doing as a team), as well as the outside world (what is happening to our stakeholders, how do they view us, our approach and our results). Ancona and Bresman (2007) have come up with the term X-teams to express this requirement for an external view for successful project teams. In addition to a changing context as a trigger for a team's flexibility, the focus of a project will also change during its lifecycle. At the start, a project will require more of an exploratory focus: the exploration phase. Questions will arise such as: What does the environment look like? What are the needs? Who are the stakeholders? The initial phase often involves gathering as much information and as many ideas as possible. There is then a gradual need to switch towards choosing one direction and finding out the best way to achieve this goal: the exploitation phase.

And at the end, the team will have to shift its focus towards careful implementation, distribution and/or transfer into the existing organizational structure of the commissioning party: the export phase. The goal at this point is an effective handover of the product and the acquired knowledge. During the switch from the exploitation phase to the export phase, the team once again needs to change tact. The team needs to let go and often hand over knowledge that is difficult to transfer. Successful project teams are capable of adjusting the objective and focus of the project if required by the world around them or the phase of the project. They are capable of coming up with alternative ways of working and/or more satisfying results. A flexible attitude like this does not often emerge automatically. How can you create this type of flexibility in your team and also stimulate creativity at the same time? That is what this chapter is about.

As part of a professionalization course for project managers, five project managers from different construction companies have taken up the ambition to examine the question of how to ensure collaboration between the different construction parties in a project from the very start. Their aim is to advise colleagues on how to stimulate collaboration between parties in building projects. This is the first time they are conducting research together and the start therefore feels somewhat strange. Their first idea is to gather information about collaboration between various parties in a construction project. They decide to think up some questions with which to interview project managers in various construction firms. This leads to a lot of moaning and groaning. How do you conduct a proper interview that produces some kind of result? And what should the eventual result be? Many ideas are expressed but no one really listens to one another. Everyone is concentrating on their own thing. Little attention is paid to the nature of the collective exploratory process. The eagerness to spend time on it is slowly fading. But the deadline to present concrete results from the research is fast approaching.

Finally Robert suggests that they already have quite a lot of experience themselves of collaboration in projects. He asks the group: 'Why should we interview project managers if we already have so much experience ourselves? Why don't we just bundle our experiences?' No one embraces

this idea either. After all, they had already taken the decision to interview others.

After the next fruitless meeting, Harold eventually poses the question: 'What was our goal again?' 'Yes,' says Theo, 'let's go back to that for a minute.' According to Fred, the goal is to formulate several recommendations of how you can successfully stimulate collaboration between parties in your project. Harold nods in assent, but also asks whether the end result needs to be a piece of advice. This triggers Theo who comes up with the idea of creating something that draws attention to 'collaboration from the start' when initiating a project. This gets things going in the group. Theo's idea is embraced by Robert who says: 'In order to make it easy to broach the subject at the start of a project, we could present it as a game.' 'Yes,' agrees Theo, 'if we gather the main collaboration issues from our own experiences, we could make this into a sort of board game with questions to answer.' The group gets down to work...

The above-mentioned case clearly shows that a project team can sometimes be at risk of becoming deadlocked on the unknown by continuing to talk about the impossible which then results in inertia. It may also happen that actions are repeated in the team which cause the team to move further and further away from their original goal. In the above case, the team was in danger of becoming stuck in the exploratory phase. The team kept dreaming of what it could do, but did not switch to a single vision of what it really wanted to achieve. Repetitive actions in such a team put the team in danger of ending up in a vicious circle. Something needs to change, otherwise the project is doomed. The team must have the courage to ask questions like: What was our goal again? Is that still what we think now? What is our current focus? What will our approach be now? Could we take a different approach? Of course, team members must first be made aware of the need for change. The reason for change could be critical and urgent, such as when a client changes their requirements. Another reason could, however, be a more insidious frustration or a downwards spiral. In that case the problem is a lot less specific and seems less urgent, but nevertheless still requires action.

Flexible responses to insidious frustrations, vicious circles or acute problems

In cases of insidious frustration, the precise problem and cause are often vague and difficult to identify. It is often a subdued feeling or atmosphere that has been created by something that is difficult to put your finger on. Everything seems to be going well, and yet..... something is missing. How do you get things moving if this is the case? In a vicious circle, there is also no clear problem and cause. What is clearly visible, though, is a repetition of events that follow on from one another and strengthen each other. This may result in an upwards or downwards spiral, which causes the project team to stagnate in the end. A critical problem can usually be specified and put into words. There is a certain urgency that automatically stimulates people to be open to change. We will briefly discuss these situations that will eventually cause a project to fail if no adjustments are made.

Changing course in the case of insidious frustration

When there is a feeling of insidious frustration, it is first of all essential that not only you as project manager but also your team members understand that something is not quite right. Share your observations with them and suggest finding out what is going on. When clarifying the problem, it is wise to take a divergent approach. Start by outlining the current situation with your team by asking questions with as many objective and subjective characteristics as possible. All these characteristics can point towards a problem. When the situation has been aptly described to everyone's satisfaction, it is time to identify the core problem and switch to convergence. After all, you cannot tackle a wide range of problems simultaneously and at random. It is then necessary to look for solutions. When generating solutions you take a divergent approach once again. What kinds of solutions are there, have we worked with some before? At this stage, it is also important to stimulate creativity in your team. Can we take a different approach, are there other ideas we can think of, and which ones can we combine? We will discuss

ways to stimulate creativity later on. After the solution generating phase, there is a final convergent action: choosing a way forward and making plans to implement the chosen solution. Figure 8.1 represents this process in diagram form.

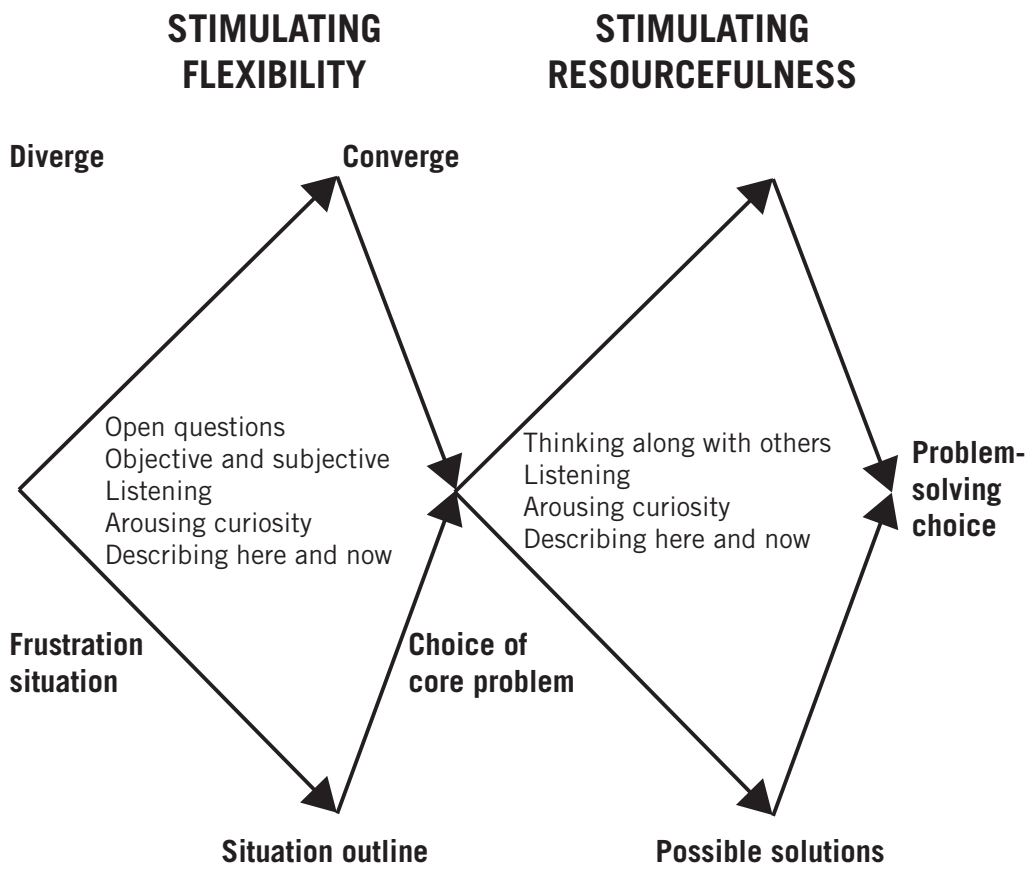

Figure 8.1 Cycle of problem clarification and choice of solution

In summary: when you want to tackle insidious frustration as project manager, it is important that you:

- observe your team and listen to what people say to each other and the way they say it;
- call your team together and describe what you observe;
- invite your team members to a process of clarification and problem-solving (see Figure 8.1);
- concentrate in this process on your role as process supervisor instead of participating in the discussion about the content, by:
  - inviting each of them in turn to explain what is going on, and encouraging them to listen to each other;
  - inviting them to consider whether their own ideas conflict with or can be merged with the ideas of others;
  - making them aware of expressing facts and opinions;
  - making them aware of open and closed questions;
  - inviting your team, when the process stagnates, to consider any other approaches it could take?

Escaping from a vicious circle

The management of X-org has been negotiating for some time with the Innovate project team about the room for the project. A separate project room had been reserved for this strategic project, so that a meeting room was available for the team at all times. At the moment, however, there is a lack of space in the company and several projects are running simultaneously. Management is hesitant to release the project room, partly because the project manager is also one of the five members of the management team. Decision-making has been postponed for the third time in a row. This causes uncertainty in the Innovate project team since they will need the meeting room in the coming period more than ever. The project manager tries to talk to his two friends in the Management Team unofficially. He wants to convince them of the need for the room by explaining about the team's planning and meeting structure and the extra hassle the team will face if they are unable to use the room. The other members of the management team have heard about these one-to-ones. They have become distrustful and feel they are missing out on information. It feels like it is no longer about a yes or no answer regarding a

dedicated project room for Innovate, but rather about 'us against them', even though decision-making was still in an exploratory phase. This new chasm leads to even more questions in the MT and an even slower decision-making process. What should be done next?

This example illustrates how one event succeeds the other, and that is no coincidence. When these events are positive, succession and amplification is only desirable. But when the events are negative, you need to escape the vicious circle.

In a vicious circle, the parties involved keep repeating the same actions and everyone contributes, often with the best intentions, to the circle being kept intact. Like in the example of X-org:

1. Uncertainty about solid decision-making.
2. Leading to postponement of decisions.
3. Which in turn causes more uncertainty.
4. Which leads to a meeting in secrecy.
5. The other party feels they are missing out on information and is distrustful in subsequent meetings.
6. This creates a new chasm.
7. Which in turn causes greater uncertainty.

This type of process can develop in or around a project team; no one is to blame but it happens anyway. Imagine you stumble whilst holding a breakable object, which in turn lands in front of a cyclist, who falls and verges towards the wheels of a truck, the driver of which tries to avoid running over the cyclist and hits the corner of a school where....etcetera.

What is important in situations like this is to identify this vicious circle and subsequently try and escape from it, which is not that simple as experience tells us. It requires distancing yourself from it and then making a list of the successive events and its effects. In order to gain understanding with your team of a downwards spiral and to learn from it, the following questions can be asked.

- What event keeps repeating itself?
- What are the effects of that repetition?
- How do we react to those effects?
- How are we trying to influence what follows?

- What are the (adverse) consequences of this influence?
- How do they amplify one another?

By doing this together, each person in the team can discover how they contribute to keeping the vicious circle intact. It will also make clear to everyone what is causing the circle to be maintained. To break out of the circle, it is necessary to:

1. define the problem. For example: 'Our meetings are often cancelled (no time), which leads to insufficient coordination of decisions and results in a lot of repair work (even less time)';
2. find solutions and choose one;
3. test whether the solution is effective;
4. decide on what to do next.

Solving critical problems

In contrast to insidious frustration and the vicious circle, a critical problem is very specific. There is a great urgency to find a solution and everyone is aware of that!

During the development of a new TV, the project team is faced with a huge increase in the prices of the LEDs they have chosen. One of the suppliers has gone bankrupt and the only remaining manufacturer has tripled the price of his product. If the project team continues the development process using LEDs, the cost price of the TV will exceed the currently estimated market price. Estimated sales will ultimately be insufficient to recover the development costs. In other words, they need to find other possibilities to substitute the LEDs in their TV.

It is clear to all team members that they need to find solutions to substitute the LEDs. There is no need to clarify the problem as the core issue is clear after all. Everyone is also aware of the need to change the original innovation project. The project manager's focus in this case is therefore on stimulating creativity in the team.

Creativity in your project team

In order to encourage creativity in students, a university developed a course entitled 'Failure 101'. Students were given the assignment to build the highest possible building using ice cubes and in doing so to look for 'an insight into each failure'. The students who managed to build the highest buildings were also those who experienced the most failures. Those who stuck to a definite idea from the start, never made the top of the list.

This leads us to conclude that when there is no known solution – there is no recipe – creativity is more important than having a definite plan. But how do you stimulate creativity in your team? On the one hand you can do this by asking questions like: can we do it differently? Or you can think of five ways in which to... and come up with '*out of the box*' ideas yourself. On the other hand, there are a number of structured approaches you can use to stimulate creativity in your team. A few examples are:

- The thinking hats of Debono.
- Brainstorming and Brainwriting.
- Nominal group technique.
- Delphi method.

We will now briefly discuss each of these methods.

Thinking hats of Debono

This method of the six thinking hats is a technique to arrive at a decision based on different perspectives. The technique was created by Edward de Bono and is based on the assumption that people tend to look at problems from the same angle all the time. This tool enables people to look at an issue or problem from six different angles. It forces them to view a problem from a different perspective. The method is based on imaginary coloured hats that symbolize six different styles of thinking:

- The white hat looks at the information that is needed and which is available.
- The red hat represents the expression of intuition and emotions.

- The black hat stands for risks and problems.
- The yellow hat symbolizes advantages and value.
- The green hat focuses on alternatives.
- The blue hat focuses on managing the thought process: the 'chairman's hat'.

By applying the method of the six thinking hats:
- meetings are constructive, creative and better structured;
- your solutions are supported and innovative instead of black and white conclusions;
- gaps in culture and hierarchy are bridged;
- subjects are investigated in greater depths;
- changes are easier to cope with.

This method is slightly less structured than the ones following but is certain to cause a lively discussion.

Brainstorming and Brainwriting

The advantage of brainstorming mainly lies in the high level of participation and the large number of alternatives that are arrived at.

During a brainstorming session, a small group of people meet to express ideas and to encourage one another to think of even more creative ideas. The rules are as follows:
- Each person is invited to put forward ideas during a limited time to help solve a problem, an approach, a product design etc
- Each person takes turns to suggest an idea that is written down on a flip-chart or they each write them down on post-its that are then stuck on a flip-chart (brainwriting). The advantage of the latter is that none of the ideas are discussed at this stage and every individual is given the opportunity to formulate his own ideas.
- None of the ideas may be criticized.
- Everyone is then encouraged to think about each other's ideas in order to come up with even better (combined) ideas.

Nowadays, a digital form of brainstorming is becoming more popular, making it possible to brainstorm without face to face meetings and to implement brainwriting immediately. If you decide not to hold face to face meetings, you will miss out, however, on the enthusiasm and fun generated by such a session. Being away from your own workplace in a social team context is precisely what increases the level of participation.

Nominal group technique

The main benefit of the nominal group technique is that multiple ideas are generated, participation is balanced and participants go away feeling that the decision-making process was fair.

The first stage of the nominal group technique is similar to brainwriting. The participants meet and each person writes down ideas to solve a problem. Each person then presents one idea to the group without it being discussed further. The ideas are summarized and written down on a flip-chart, so that everyone can read them. The process then continues as follows:

- The group discusses the ideas that have been written down in order to clarify them and possibly combine them.
- Each individual then ranks the ideas for himself.
- To arrive at a group decision, all the rankings are added up and the top rating is chosen.

This process is slightly more time-consuming but eventually leads to a decision supported by the entire group. In situations in which this is particularly important, this method is preferable to a brainstorming process, which primarily generates ideas for directions to take.

The Delphi technique

The benefit of the Delphi technique is that participants do not need to meet. This can be an advantage in some cases or exactly the opposite in others. It is an opportunity to collect ideas, views and independent feedback. The process does however take up much more time than the other methods discussed.

When using the Delphi technique, participants respond to one

another via a series of written opinions and suggestions regarding an issue. They respond to a problem or issue in several rounds and are given feedback, after which they can again put forward ideas and comments. Finally, there is a voting round in which the solution that is given priority is chosen.

Which method you choose to stimulate team creativity depends on the issue at hand and the specific situation. That is why we have listed a number of advantages and disadvantages for each of the methods. When making a choice, ask yourself the following: is speed imperative, are people close to one another, are people used to a certain technique, how involved is everyone in the decision-making process? Decide on the most suitable method on this basis.

The project manager as a stimulus for flexibility & creativity

In the previous section, we clearly explained what we mean by the success factor 'flexibility and creativity'. It means being open to and responsive to changes in context, the project's lifecycle and critical or more insidious threats to the project. We also explained why project teams should not hesitate in discussing their goal and approach if needed and changing tack.

In order to stimulate this flexibility and creativity in the project team, the project manager must:

- Keep a broad outlook on things and stimulate his team members to scan the project's context. This will enable him and his team to identify possible changes in the context that influence the project goal or approach well in time.
- Be able to identify and mark the point at which they are unable to proceed on the same track. He is capable of creating an atmosphere in his team in which people are willing, despite efforts already made, to consider a possible switch.
- Help his team take a factual look at the past and the future.

- Ensure that everyone is actively involved in a switch, that people listen to each other and that the good elements of ideas are combined.
- Challenge his team to use the world around them when looking for ideas and solutions.
- Encourage his team to let go of assumptions and continue asking questions until ideas are sufficiently clear and concrete.
- Change the focus on 'what we do not want to achieve' into 'what we can and want to achieve'.
- Encourage the group to develop alternative ideas/solutions/approaches and choose the best ones.
- Avoid decision-making problems in the group by staying neutral and encouraging critical questions.
- Pursue an idea, solution or approach until an action plan has been prepared with allocated responsibilities, a time schedule and a tangible and measurable result.

Literature

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''Ensure LOL, Leadership Of Life. Don't let it happen to you,
be in charge. But LOL also stands for Laugh Out Loud.
Laugh at yourself, don't take yourself too seriously.
In projects you need both skills.'

Judi Donk, Manager COE ECM, Achmea

9

Success factor 6: the power of records, effective planning and control

Systematic and controlled working is just as essential to project management as the Elfstedentocht skating competition is to Friesland. This competition is eagerly awaited each year. As soon as temperatures drop below zero, skates are pulled out of the closet. Unfortunately, it is not possible to hold the event every year as the weather does not always cooperate. This also happens to many projects – you do your best to make it work, but unfortunately there are many unforeseen circumstances. According to various studies, the majority of projects in IT, construction and manufacturing are not completed on time, within budget or with an effective result. How is that possible? Were the setbacks really unforeseeable or was it due to the project's planning and control?

In this chapter we will show you how to adequately plan and control your project.

What is the status?

Jolanda is project manager of a hospital's subproject entitled Moving In. The other subprojects are Structural renovation, Technical installations and Temporary housing. At a meeting involving the entire team, the project manager of the overall project wants to know from Jolanda what the status of her subproject is. Jolanda explains that all the necessary preparations have been made and that her team is ready to start on the relocation of the first department. 'I'm looking forward to it, because after all that talking and planning, it's now time for action.' The project manager nods with satisfaction and says he feels positive about it.

It's great that everyone feels positive about it, but what does the project manager actually know about the status? Is it effective to manage a project based on feelings?

Many methods have been designed to support project planning and control. Effective planning and control of a project depends on two things:

1. Choose the appropriate method for your project.
2. Use that method correctly.

In the following sections we will look at a number of simple methods. We will also explain how to use them.

Before we do that, though, we must first clarify what we mean by a 'controlled project'. Control does not mean everything turning out exactly as originally estimated. Control means that:

- plans or estimates are based on factual knowledge available at the time;
- plans or estimates are regularly updated when new facts become available;
- adjustments are within the margins agreed upon by the project's client;
- deviations from original plans or estimates can be explained by objective causes.

Take the example of the North-South subway project for which there are all sorts of estimates. The fact that the total costs of the North-South subway are more than double the original estimate leads to the conclusion by some that the project has been controlled inadequately. Our opinion is that there may well have been inadequate control of the project, but that this may not necessarily be due to the fact that the costs have turned out to be double the original estimate. The project lacks control because it was necessary to perform extensive research and analyses in order to identify the causes of these cost increases.

A project manager should not therefore be ashamed if things turn out differently than originally planned. He should, however, be embarrassed if he does not identify deviations in time, cannot provide any objective explanations for them and/or is unable to keep possible future deviations under control.

In time: planning and recording progress

The fact that projects are not completed on time, within budget and according to specifications is usually not caused by a sudden, drastic event, but is rather the result of an insidious process. In sailing terms you could say that projects tend to start drifting off course due to winds and currents. If you do not monitor this, you will not notice anything until it is too late. You then need to get back on course, often against the wind or current. This takes extra time and can lead to rushed work that produces a sloppy result.

Our *first tip*, therefore, is to monitor your project's progress carefully. In technical terms, keep an eye on 'slippage'. There is a simple tool available to do so (see Figure 9.1).

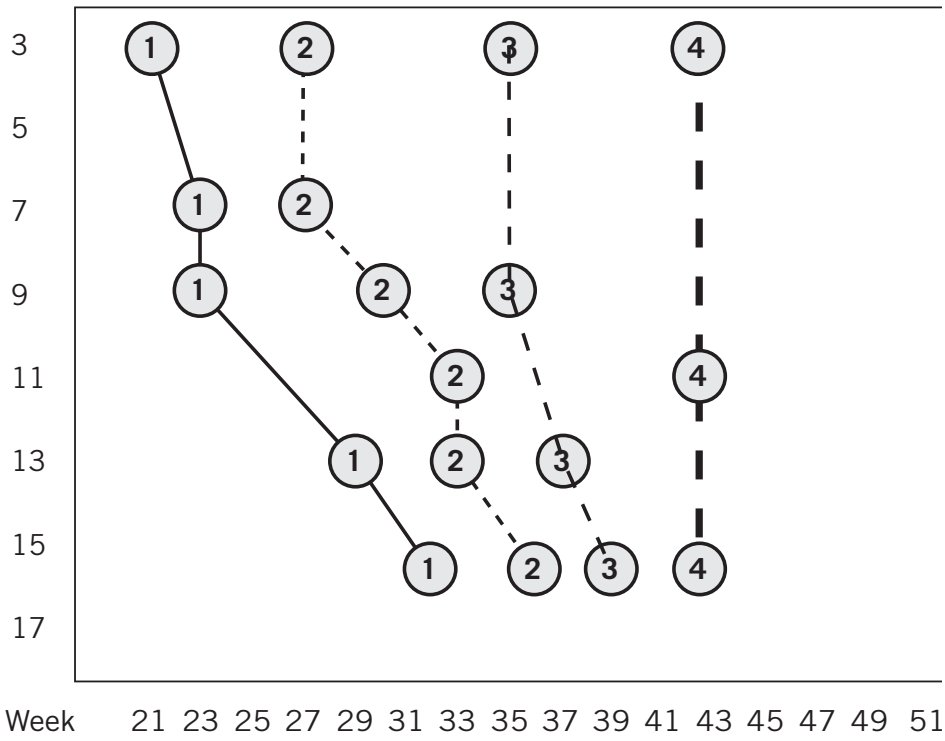

Figure 9.1 A slip chart: successive delays per milestone

The first thing you notice in the slip chart is that both axes denote time. In this case, they denote weeks, but days or months can also be used, depending on the progress your project needs to make.

Another thing you notice is that the chart records milestones. A milestone is a visible interim result that needs to be delivered during your project.

The horizontal axis refers to the time at which a milestone is expected to be achieved. The vertical axis refers to the point in time this expectation is recorded. The figure shows that in Week 3 (vertical axis), Milestone 2 was expected to be reached in Week 27 (horizontal axis). It turns out later that this expectation had to be adjusted. What is also clearly visible is that delays in previous milestones lead to delays in later milestones.

Unfortunately, slip charts are seldom used. What we do see, on the other hand, is that the question 'Will we finish on time?' is quite a common one. The final date is indicated by the last milestone. Figure 9.2 shows the kind of information this gives you, i.e. that everything is fine, whereas Figure 9.1. clearly shows that a number of things are anything but fine. How serious this is, needs to be investigated.

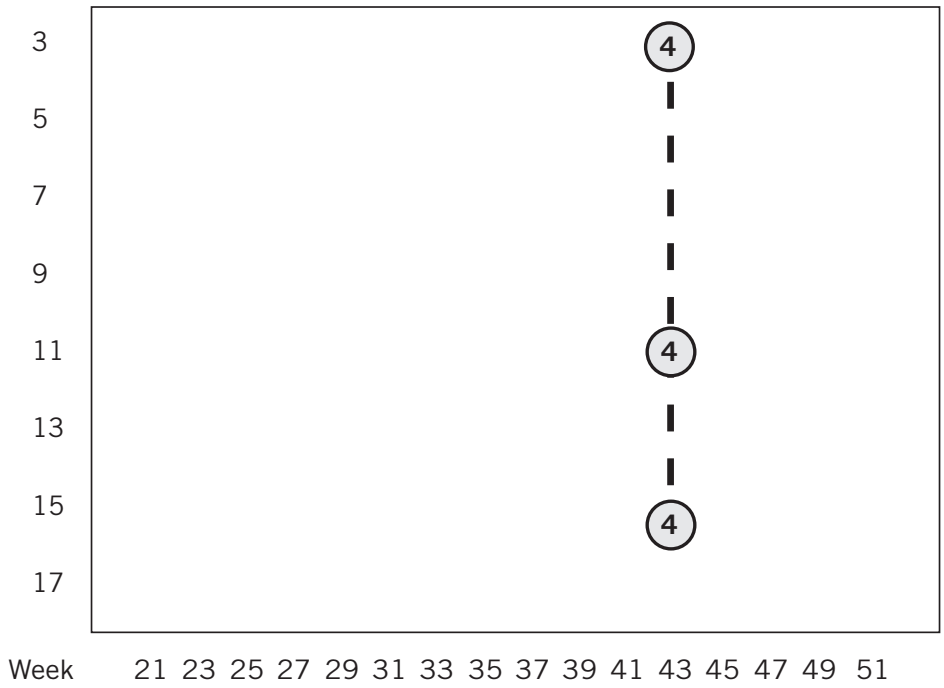

Figure 9.2 The picture that emerges if slippages are not recorded

In order to make a slip chart and keep it up to date, you need to define your project's milestones clearly. Our *second tip* is to make sure you have defined at least ten milestones in your project, which are all related to measurable, essential accomplishments. In practice, we often encounter the following kinds of milestones:

- The project plan is ready.
- The renovation has started.
- The move has been prepared.

While these are valuable events, they cannot be measured as accomplishments. This is, however, the case for the following milestones:

- The project plan has been approved without comments by the client.
- The building contractor has started tearing down the walls of the second floor.
- The contents of department XYZ have been packed according to agreements made with the removal company.

People sometimes find it difficult to identify ten milestones, but if you make the milestones specific, you will easily think of twenty or thirty accomplishments in no time. You can then choose ten or fifteen milestones that are the most important, spread over time.

Project planning software – like MS Project and Project Manager Workbench – is being used more and more often. This software can assist in identifying, planning and controlling all the activities in your project so that they are organized and interrelated. The disadvantage of these programs is that they inadvertently supply misleading information if you do not record actual progress on a weekly basis. This requires a great deal of discipline from every employee in a project, and this discipline is often lacking.

Another question that arises is: is it better to plan and control a project through milestones (the accomplishments) or through activities (the efforts)? Our *third tip* is: if the project entails no more than a hundred or so activities, we suggest you use the first and manage the project through accomplishments. This is based on the

following:

- It is easier and more convenient for everybody to monitor ten to fifteen milestones than seventy to a hundred activities.
- A milestone is the result of efforts by several employees. An activity often relates to the work of one or a few employees only. By working with milestones, employees are encouraged to coordinate with one another.
- Reaching a milestone is more of a motivator than starting or finishing an activity. Concerts, plays, dance festivals etc. are all managed through milestones. It is an important reason why they take place at the agreed time. As everyone knows: 'It's now or never, tomorrow is too late.'
- Most people are mature and experienced enough to know how to plan the necessary activities. As long as they know when something needs to be accomplished.

The fact that managing through milestones is easier and, in smaller projects, more effective, does not mean that it does not require discipline. As project manager, you need to invest in creating that discipline from the start. How? Our *fourth tip* is to schedule a progress briefing during (part of) every regular project team meeting. A briefing means a quick round of the following questions to each of the people in the meeting in turn:

1. What did you plan to achieve (in the past period)?
2. What did you achieve?
3. What does this mean for the next milestone?
4. What did you plan to do?
5. What did you do?
6. What will you achieve in the coming period?
7. What kind of support do you need and from whom?

This may seem like a lot, but if everyone gradually learns to (a) keep their answers short and factual and (b) listen carefully to the others, this round of questioning will take up less and less time. Nonetheless, it will give everyone a good overview of the state of affairs. It will also call for some restraint as it is a briefing, not a discussion. You will notice that after a while, people will start to see it as a pleasant way of keeping up-to-date with things and being able to say their piece, without whinging and whining. Moreover, it saves you a lot of time, because a lot of people expect you to update them about the status. Now the tables are turned and the ball is in their court.

In order to hold a progress briefing, everyone needs to know what to do and achieve, and that this is all coordinated with one another. You will therefore need a so-called Work BreakDown (WBD), which is nothing more than a simple schedule. And now for our *fifth tip*.

In Chapter 4, when talking about the NOU project, we spoke about subdividing a project into subprojects. This type of subdivision is very useful for determining who does what when. All you have to do is combine the subdivision into subprojects with the division into milestones. Figure 9.3 shows you a simple example of this.

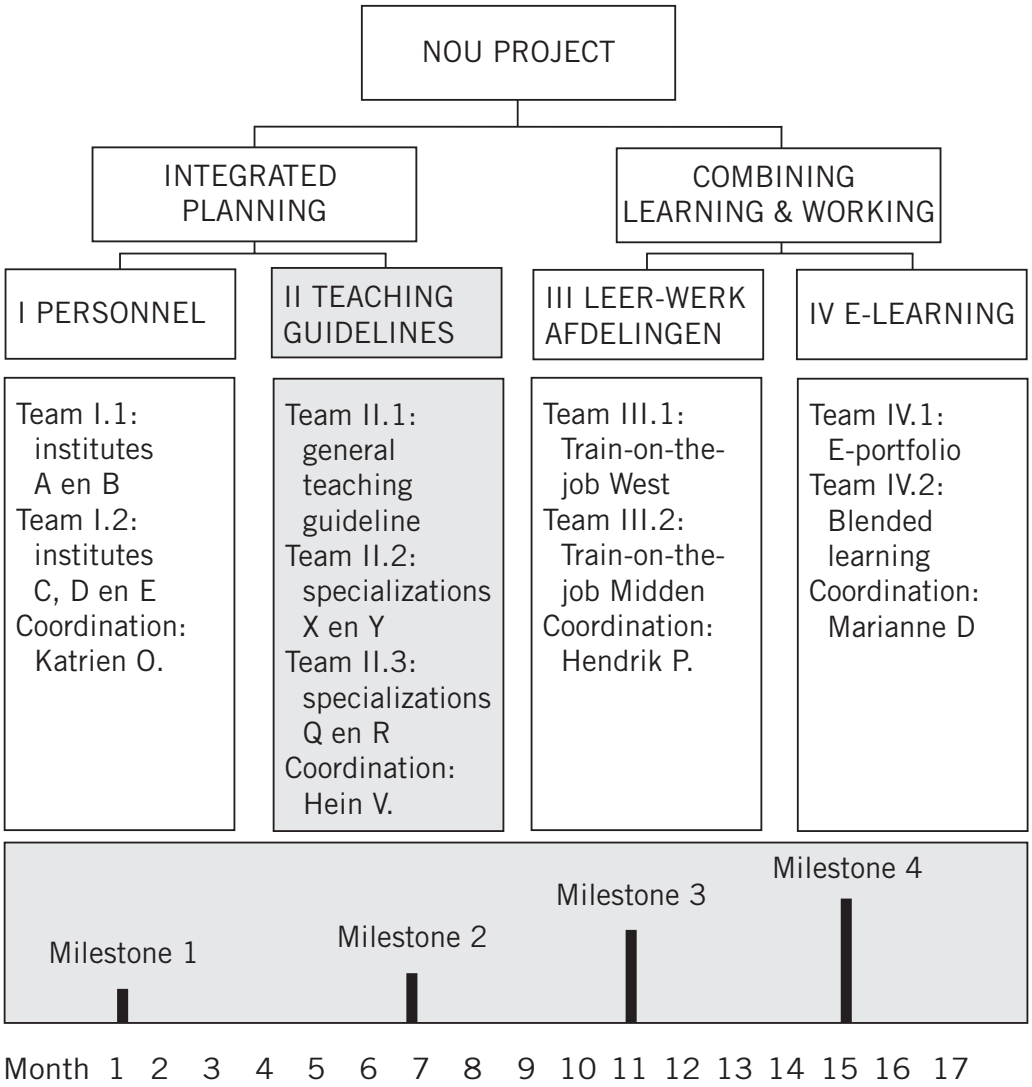

Figure 9.3 A simple Work BreakDown for the NOU project

Our advice would be not to do this by yourself, but together with your project team. Various subdivisions are possible and the process of weighing the pros and cons is one that requires everyone's presence. This will also ensure that everyone understands the collective approach and why this approach has been chosen.

The project's progress can now be monitored per subproject by adding a slip chart underneath the milestone schedule (in grey).

Within budget: controlling the money and resources

The great thing about time is that everyone has a watch and uses the same measure of time. We all know what we're talking about when it comes to time. Money is a more complex subject matter.

Example: people often talk about the costs of a project, when they actually mean expenses, which is in fact something else. At home we usually operate on what is known as a cash basis, which means that we look at our income and our expenditure. In corporate jargon, this is called cash flow. However, organizations not only work on a cash basis, but also on a transaction basis. This means we look at our costs and revenues. What is the difference? Take your car for example. You regularly spend money on it. You might even earn revenue at times. But the total amount of money spent per year does not equal the total amount of money your car costs each year. After all, you also need to take into account depreciation. You do not notice that for a long time since you are not actually spending that money. You only reserve the money, so that it can be used together with the money you get in part exchange for your old car to buy a new one. Organizations tend to make this even more complex. You are carrying out a project and for that project you incur both costs and expenses. However, the organization increases the costs with so-called overhead. These concern, for example, the office costs of the people working on your project.

Unfortunately, we have to make it even more complicated in order to keep it realistic. We not only have income versus expenses and costs versus revenues, but also obligations versus rights. Suppose you sign a contract with a supplier for your project. At that moment, you have both acquired a right and have both undertaken an obligation. This is something the accountant would like to know so that he can record this in his administration. He wants to do this to avoid surprises. Expenses and income form a daily current, like the time passing on your watch. They are the most visible items. Rights and obligations have greater intervals and are much less conspicuous. If you do not keep track of your rights and obligations, you may be unpleasantly surprised to find the project more expensive afterwards than you thought at the time of completion.

Someone may suddenly turn up with a claim for payment. Just think of the plumber who sends a bill six months later for a job you have long since forgotten.

It sometimes happens that the project manager's financial records does not correspond to that of the finance department because they both keep different accounts. Our *sixth tip* therefore is to discuss beforehand with someone from the finance department about which accounts to keep in your project – expenses, costs, obligations – and how you can ensure that both of you have access to the same information.

After speaking to the finance department, it is time to draw up your project's budget. Our *seventh tip* is to do this as follows. Make an estimate of the required deployment of people (in hours or days) based on the Work BreakDown you have already drafted. Once again, this is an exercise you should preferably do with the people concerned. Multiply your estimates with the standard rate per hour or day; your finance department should be able to help you there. If your project requires placing sizeable orders, the estimated costs of these will be added to the costs per milestone per subproject. Say, for example, your project has ten milestones and four subprojects, your budget will then consist of forty cost estimates. If you wish, you can add these up to arrive at total cost estimates per milestone or per subproject.

This replaces the usual estimates per cost category. Examples of cost categories are: labour costs, office costs, travel costs and insurance costs. The finance department uses a standard list of cost categories (and cost centres and cost units). They will have a strong preference for estimates based on cost categories. If more than eighty percent of your project consists of routine activities that entail the use of expensive tools and goods, it would be better to follow the method used by the finance department. However, we will assume that your project:

- contains few routine activities;
- requires no sizeable orders of goods;
- mainly requires the efforts of people.

In that case it would be easier and more efficient to focus your project's cost control on managing the deployment of people, adding the occasional order of goods needed for the project where applicable.

During the project, the costs will turn out differently than estimated. However, as you now have quite a few partial estimates, you can keep a fairly accurate track of which deviations occur and what they relate to. This will enable you to consult with your client well in time about possible adjustments to your project.

Tip eight: if you want to determine the costs of your project, you can use a technique that may seem complex at first, but which is in fact easy if you use it regularly. To demonstrate the use of this technique, let's look at a fictitious example (see Table 9.1).

Project	**Per milestone**						**Total**	
NOU	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***rest***	***until now***	***until end***
Estimated cost	10	15	15	40	40	340	120	460
Actual cost	12	16	18	36	30		112	
% Finished	100%	80%	90%	100%	40%			

Table 9.1 Cost report for the Quality control Introduction project

For the NOU project, the table shows what the estimated costs and the actual costs are up to now for each milestone and to what extent the milestone has been achieved. It may seem strange that only 80% of Milestone 2, which is already behind us, has been achieved, even though the report was created while we were between Milestones 5 and 6. However, it happens quite often in projects that some milestones are not completed by the estimated time. Some elements may have been subject to delays or need to be done all over again. Generally speaking, you do not stop the entire project because some element of a milestone is still missing. The project will continue as usual, with permission from the client, but your report must take into account any outstanding work.

Based on these figures, you can calculate the so-called *cost performance index (CPI)*. The CPI is calculated as follows.

CPI = *estimated costs* of the work that has actually been done, divided by the *actual costs* of the work that has actually been done

CPI = (10) + (15 x 0,8) + (15 x 0,9) + 40 + (40 x 0,4) / 112

CPI = 10 + 12 + 13,5 + 40 + 16 / 112

CPI = 0,82

This CPI is cause for concern: we are spending more money than estimated in relation to what we have achieved. If you looked no further than the difference between the total estimated costs and total actual costs up until now, you could come to the opposite conclusion i.e. that we have spent less money than estimated.

A CPI like this can also be calculated for each milestone and each subproject. The advantages of this method are:

- The CPI is comparable for all (sub)projects, irrespective of nature or size.
- The CPI is easy to assess. If it is '1', your project's costs are under perfect control. If it is less than '1', you are spending more than estimated. If it is more than '1', you are spending less than estimated.
- You can easily see where and when you have overspent or underspent by looking at the CPI per subproject, per milestone.
- You can illustrate the cost control development of your project by making a histogram of the CPI levels over time.

Once clients have become used to it, they will appreciate being updated on your project's cost control in this way. They will be able to see the status and understand the actual situation at a glance, instead of being presented with a distorted picture in which only total estimated and actual costs are reported.

According to specification: planning and controlling quality

The quality planning process always starts with discussing and agreeing on the desired quality of the project's result with the client and the user.

The result of a project nearly always consists of three or four complementary elements. Complementary here means 'complementing each other' and 'interdependent'.

Years ago, the Netherlands was captivated by the passport project. The aim of this project was to make sure Dutch passports complied with new European guidelines and be less susceptible to fraud. During the project, all attention was focused on the sub result 'fraud-proof passport', with less attention being paid to the equally important sub result of 'amending Dutch legislation to provide a legal basis for the new passport design and its subsequent production, distribution and registration system'. As a consequence, little attention was paid to the connection between these two elements. When a bill was submitted to parliament before the passport's fraud-resistant features had been proven, difficulties ensued. 'We will not amend legislation until we know how the passport and its corresponding system actually work'. A deadlock had been reached.

Tip nine: make a list, together with your client, of the three or four essential sub results that needed together to reach a valuable and effective end result. There always tends to be one that is forgotten at first..

We previously noted that costs are less easy to understand than time. This is even more so for quality. Our *tenth tip* is therefore to look at quality from different angles during that discussion. We mention four examples:

1. The *experience angle*. Let's take an example from 1989, when Aldo van Eyck commented on the design by Richard Meier of The Hague's city hall by saying that 'The connecting bridges could have broken up the space, but have been constructed one above the other. As a consequence, you only see the people on your own bridge or miniature people down in the hall'. This shows Van Eyck taking the perspective of the users of the project result – in this case a building – to see what their experiences will be and where there can be room for improvement.
2. The *product quality*. There are two key questions here: (a) what should the result consist of (the features) and (b) to what extent must they be met? Looking at Richard Meier's city hall, you could consider the number of workplaces and the average floor space per workplace. In Jolanda's subproject, the result's product quality could be described as 'spaces that have been furnished according to the specific layouts'.
3. The *quality of use*, sometimes also called user-friendliness. Another comment made by Aldo van Eyck concerning Richard Meier's design was: 'Toilets have been positioned so poorly that people have to squeeze past one another to reach a toilet.' For Jolanda's subproject, this could be that 'all employees are able to start work again within two hours of the rooms being furnished'.
4. The *feasibility*. Results can be specified and designed in such a way as to make them extremely attractive in terms of experience, product quality and quality of use, but very difficult or costly to realize. Considering the feasibility of production or design is an important issue for the project manager.

These four perspectives have an influence on one another. Higher feasibility may lead to lower product quality, for instance. Whether that is a problem or not, is up to the client and the users. Your task as project manager is to ensure they take the trouble of finding a combination, through a reiterative process, that they are satisfied with.

In this type of process, it is highly likely that the client and users will start piling on their requirements. Unrestrained accumulation of demands almost certainly leads to major disappointments. Our *eleventh tip* therefore is not only to describe the requirements your project's result must meet, but also those requirements it does not have to meet. As a rule, users find this irksome, but it can help you limit the number of requirements and, as a consequence, increase your level of control over the project.

Quality comes in stages. At each stage, you need to assess whether the quality achieved equals that agreed upon. The same principles apply here as they do to time and costs. Over time, things turn out differently from what we estimated.

Tip twelve: add quality assessment moments to your project plan. At these points in time, assess the results achieved so far and the process producing these interim results with the parties directly involved. Those directly involved include not only people responsible for the interim results, but also the users of these results. *Tip thirteen:* use the following core questions to give structure to the assessment:

1. Do the results comply with the demands or expectations regarding the various types of quality? What are the causes of deviations, if any? What deviations might present a problem for acceptance of the end result by the client and/or users?
2. What test methods have been used to evaluate the quality of the interim results? Are these methods in line with the stipulations of the project plan?
3. Have any changes been made to the requirements placed on the interim results? If so, why? Have these changes been reported to and assessed by the project manager?

4. What foreseeable and unforeseeable problems occurred during realization of the interim results? How have these problems been solved? What new knowledge and insights were gained in this process? Have these new insights been recorded?
5. How much attention has been paid to the relationship or interaction between the interim results, by whom and in what way? What conclusions can be drawn at this moment in time regarding the interaction between the interim results?
6. What are, on balance, the shortcomings of the interim results and/or the process of realization and evaluation? How will these shortcomings be eliminated and with what effects for the project plan?
7. Is the impact of the changes and shortcomings such that consultation with the client – and possibly the stakeholders – is required at short notice to adjust the project assignment?

Quality assessment requires a formal and structured approach. 'Formal' means that all findings are recorded as completely and objectively as possible. Such an approach requires the project's management to be alert to changes in the specifications of the goals, the results and the preconditions of the project. As a rule, changes must first be reported to the project's management before being implemented. The project's management needs to assess these changes as to their impact on time, money and quality before giving permission for their implementation. In extensive, complex and innovative projects, change management is almost a project in itself.

How are risks handled?

The above shows that deviations in time, money and quality can occur in any project. One way of controlling this is to notice deviations on time, identify their causes and adjust the project. Another method is to look ahead: ask yourself where problems might occur and reduce their probability or impact. Risk management can be a helpful tool in this. Risk management has become a profession in itself. In this book we will restrict ourselves to the key principles of risk management.

Tip fourteen: if you want to control the risks in your project, start with the high-risk events. We often come across risk lists, containing items like: 'The environment poses a risk to this project'. A general statement like that only gives room for worrisome discussions. A risk can only be managed if you can make it specific. What can happen and where could this occur? An example of a high-risk event could be: 'The neighbourhood files a petition with the council to stop the project because of nuisance.'

If you make risks concrete and specific, this will of course result in an endless list containing every possible risk. 'Many and long' make projects unmanageable. The same is true for risks. How can you keep the risk list to a minimum?

Tip fifteen: create a risk list per milestone and focus your risk management on each milestone individually. The risk list per milestone will be a lot shorter than for the entire project. It does mean, however, that you will not be performing just one risk analysis. You will need to perform a risk analysis for each individual milestone.

Tip sixteen: don't draw up a risk list on your own, but do it together with a number of your team members. This can be a different group for each milestone, depending on the type of expertise you need for it. In this risk analysis session, you will go through the following steps:

1. Create a list of numerous risks for the milestone in question. Key questions are: which event could seriously impact time management in achieving this milestone? Which event could seriously impact quality management of the milestone's inte-

rim results that need to be delivered? Which event could seriously impact cost management of this milestone? It is of course possible that one event may pose a threat to time, money and quality management, but do not assume this automatically.

2. Go through the list together and assess for each risk what (a) its probability is, and (b) the level of impact should this risk actually occur. Dare to be critical and ask one another: what experience is your estimate based on? In general, we divide the answers into four categories, varying from 1 (slight probability, limited impact on the project) to 4 (very high probability, very high impact on the project).
3. Select the greatest risks. When using the four categories mentioned above, these risks will have a score of 9 or 12 and higher. *Tip seventeen:* discuss this level with your client.
4. Develop a plan to reduce the risk for each of the greatest risks. We always use the following questions: (a) What can you do yourself to minimize the probability? (b) What can you do yourself to reduce the level of impact? (c) What can others do to help you with (a) and (b)?

This last item will result in actions. These actions must be incorporated in your project plan. Each team member must know which risk management actions he is responsible for. *Tip eighteen:* At each progress meeting, you, as project manager, should also discuss the progress being made in terms of risk management.

Finally: a systematic and controlled way to success

Success is determined by a combination of performance and experience. Although time, money and quality control can make a contribution, they are not, in themselves, sufficient for success. A project is an interaction between various parties. One of these parties is the project team. The team does the actual work, but others play their part as well in helping to determine the project's success. We will discuss this in further detail in other chapters, but would like to make a few apt remarks here as well. You can influence the experience of your project's success by not only showing progress in time, money and quality, but also by regularly checking how the other parties experience and assess your project. A simple way of doing this, is to agree beforehand on which success criteria you will report on and subsequently specify and illustrate them using smileys.

Literature

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'Time is the most short-lived element of a project.'

Henk Ensink, Project manager, Sogeti

10

Leadership

Many scientific studies have proven over time that project leadership is an important factor in project success. In this chapter, we will show you how to work on leadership.

A project screaming for leadership!

Maurits Schalenburg is project manager of a large IT project at the BeSure health insurance company. The project's aim is to transform, or migrate, the 2300 workplaces of the acquired health insurance company HealthCare to BeSure's standard workplaces. Maurits has been hired especially for this job because he has managed similar operations in other companies.

BeSure acquired the smaller health insurance company HealthCare a year ago. Both organizations still have their own IT departments, policies and standards. BeSure wants the migration to contribute to the uniformity of the two organizations. Moreover, managing workplaces based on one standard will be more cost efficient. People from both organizations will be involved in the project to make sure that the new standard will be implemented as well as possible. Incidentally, the organizations and their ICT departments are located in different places.

Maurits has become involved in the project as an external consultant from Fusion. Fusion specializes in the project management of these types of migration projects and has developed a special approach for this. This approach is based on subdividing the project into certain focus areas which are then distributed over a number of sub teams. The teams will supply the pieces of work to one another. Maurits intends to approach this project in the same way.

The goals of the project are:

- *To prepare HealthCare for their new work workplace environment.*
- *To migrate the HealthCare workplaces, including the transferral of data, to the new work environment.*
- *Handing over the migrated workplaces to a single control organization.*

With these goals in mind, Maurits realizes that he must keep a watchful eye on the interests of the various parties involved in the project. He

decides to divide the overall project into several areas: Intake, Build, Test and Control, and Data Migration. This division is largely based on the sequence of the migration process. Intake defines which applications a user currently needs at his workplace and which data needs to be migrated. Build ensures that programs are built that will enable a user to use the same functionalities. Test and Control will test these programs for usability in the new environment and robustness with regard to maintenance. Data Migration will make sure that, when all applications are ready, data from the old environment will still be available for the new environment. It seems logical to Maurits to staff Intake with people from HealthCare. After all, they know the user organization and work at the same location. Build and Data Migration are the software producers who must make the transformation of applications and data possible. It does not really matter where they are based and to which organization they belong, considers Maurits. Test and Control is responsible for merging the project result into the existing management and control organization at BeSure. Maurits decides therefore that at least two members of the future control organization should be part of this team. Furthermore, with work pressure and lack of resources being as it is in both organizations, he will also need to hire a lot of external resources.

Is leadership an art?

In their efforts to achieve results, people in organizations, projects and sports teams are guided by four drivers. By and large, they are guided by (1) general impersonal rules, like laws or regulations, (2) peer pressure and (3) their own ambitions and standards. The fourth element is (4) personal leadership, which focuses on allocation of tasks, relationships between people, individual and group development and the vision of the future, to name a few. These drivers are closely linked to each other, correct each other and, in the proper combination, are responsible for a balanced management of people in organizations and projects. Leadership, for example, can step in when rules are lacking or peer pressure is still low at the start of a project. Drivers can be complementary or sometimes impairing,

like when a coach gives directions that contradict group standards.

The real art for a project manager is therefore to find out to what extent he must guide the project himself and, moreover, to what extent he is capable of adequately dividing his attention and guidance between:

- The task at hand: what is the status of the task or assignment I am facing with my team? Will we achieve the results the organization demands from us? Here, the project manager deals with the demands and opportunities provided by the organization and environment.
- The team and its members. How is the team doing? Are individual tasks and roles meeting the expectations of team members? Are they happy with the way their personal and shared interests are being taken care of? Are they getting on? Here, the project manager is involved in supporting and coaching his team mates and the team as a whole.
- The future of the project, the team and its people. What will the future bring? Where will the team be positioned in the organization and the environment? What is my plan for myself, my team and the team members? Here, the project manager is involved in forecasting, defining goals and training his team, but also inspiring and directing.

The combination of these three areas of attention is stressful. The project manager constantly needs to reconsider how much time he will spend on each aspect. The more time he spends on short-term results, the less focus he can give to developing a long-term strategy. To explain the stress involved in dividing your attention between the various aspects, we will take a close look at this.

Focus on task or team?

Traditionally, studies on leadership generally talk about two types of leadership: task-oriented and people-oriented leadership. In task-oriented leadership, the project manager focuses on achieving the result and managing the path towards that achievement. Analysis of the work, planning and control are of vital importance. In people-oriented leadership, the project manager focuses on people and the collaboration in the team, and on his own experiences, feelings and attitude. Here we want to refer to Bowers and Seashore (1966), who, when talking about people-based leadership, not only refer to the support and guidance of individual team members, but also the support and guidance of the group as a whole. Creating preconditions, inspiring, creating space and safety, stimulating teamwork and involvement in the decision-making are key elements of this.

It is obvious that managing both the task as well as the team members is of importance when leading a project. The crux is to apply the right mixture at the right moment. In order to choose the most applicable mixture in each situation, Fiedler (1967) describes three types of situations which can help you decide on the right mixture of task or people-based leadership. He typifies a situation through:

- the extent to which a project manager is accepted and respected by his team members;
- the extent to which the official position of the project manager gives him power and influence in the team;
- the extent to which the project task focuses on a clearly visible goal and the roads that lead towards achieving that goal.

When the project situation scores a high or low mark for each of these characteristics, the project manager should focus more on the tasks. A low score means the project manager is having a hard time and will first have to earn respect by achieving results and clarifying the assignment and the approach taken by the team. A high score means the project manager is having a relatively easy time and can suffice with task-oriented leadership since group members are willing and able to accept the clear, well-structured tasks and

understand the objective. If the project situation is such that the project manager is having neither a hard nor easy time of it, group members will appreciate some freedom in defining their tasks and will rather look to their leader for support in the individual work situation of each group member.

Focus on task at hand or on future?

When the project manager focuses on the future, it means he is thinking ahead, rather than focussing on the task at hand or today's conflict. He spends time working on future plans and objectives for himself, his team and the team members. When looking at the future, he tries to picture the long-term results. And he tries to relate that back to the short-term demands on human effort, resources and strategy. When focussing on the task, he primarily concentrates on the present tasks at hand. How can the current tasks result in the required achievements with some degree of certainty and efficiency? The project manager is faced with the choice of how to manage his project when demands and opportunities related to current tasks conflict with the demands and opportunities related to the fulfilment of future objectives.

In his project, Maurits has chosen for a strict division of the work among the four sub teams. This choice was made for reasons of efficiency. In this way, the Build team can build the software much faster because it is their specialization. The members of the Intake team have also built up an effective routine. However, this division does make the work rather monotonous. And one thing that is seriously lacking is coordination, especially between the Build and Test teams. Apparently, the Test team's requirements are not communicated clearly to the Build team. Maurits starts an investigation and discovers that communication is purely digital and limited to a few words only. This calls for his attention, but the deadline for one of the migration packages is approaching and the client wants a final report, so he will have to focus on that first.

A common phenomenon in projects is that the work currently being executed brings with it so many issues and escalations, that the project manager is inclined to concentrate on a list of issues and start ticking off boxes. Taking the time to think ahead, forecast future developments and create plans on how to deal with them, often gets set aside unintentionally. And it is this unintentional lack of focus on the future that can lead to unwanted long-term effects. Alarm bells may well go off to warn the project manager that he needs to pay more attention to the future when he finds himself solely dealing with nothing but current issues and *team troubles*.

Focus on current team or future?

Although the development of a close-knit team does not solely depend on the project manager (see Chapter 7), he does play an important role in this. He can play his part by:

- setting an example for the rest of his team in adhering to shared ethical standards;
- striving for team stability in order to create time to build a basis for trust, respect and a shared purpose;
- encouraging rules to be agreed upon for essential issues;
- involving team members in decision-making processes;
- planning regular and sufficient team meetings to arrive at shared goals and approaches and to reflect on shared experiences and draw lessons from them;
- facilitating interaction between team members: not by participating in discussions on issues, but by observing the process of interaction and its effects and helping to improve it;
- collecting feedback from several important stakeholders regarding the team and by evaluating this feedback with the team.

Maurits has looked into the matter – how can things have gone so wrong between the Build team and the Test team? Ninety percent of what the Build team produces is rejected by the Test team. He has discovered that both teams have not only become very close, but also very closed off. Team members are attuned to one another and have acquired a lot of experience together. When they refer to other teams in the project, they

talk about 'us' and 'them'. The Build team blames the Test team for not specifying what it is they reject and, more specifically, why. The Test team blames the Build team for not taking the trouble to follow guidelines. Both are taking a defensive stance. Maurits talks to the leaders of the sub teams about how to alter this attitude. They realize they have placed too much focus on their own sub teams, instead of paying more attention to the project as a whole. They decide to call all the team members together for a meeting to allow them to find out where to build bridges and how to go about doing so.

The leaders of the Build team and Test team have been focusing on their own little group only. With a view to the future, however, they have decided to invest in the relationship of their people with the total project. This will enable team members to obtain an idea of the entire migration process and the consequences of certain choices, which will allow everyone to look further than their own area of expertise. This could also increase flexibility, as people could be moved from one team to another from time to time.

The meeting has brought new energy to the entire team. Each sub team has defined the areas it wishes to improve and how it aims to do so. Mutual trust has increased enormously. After all, they must be able to rely on each other should problems occur during the actual migration later.

Maurits realizes he will also have to adjust the way he manages the Migration project as a whole. He decides to form a team with the leaders as well to focus on the overall management. They will also keep an eye on the relationships between the sub teams and build bridges to other parties related to the project. By propagating this kind of unity in their teams, Maurits expects to further break down any barriers between the teams.

Conclusion

The real art a project manager needs to develop is the ability to continuously find the right balance between (A) attention for the demands and opportunities presented by the organization and environment regarding the task to complete, (B) attention for the people having to work together in the completion of the task and (C) attention for the creation of an inspiring picture of the future. The approach the project manager is most comfortable with will be dominant, especially in stressful situations when he acts on autopilot. By deliberately experimenting and observing the effects of his own behaviour, a project manager can gradually learn to apply the desired mix of task, people and future-oriented leadership in a flexible way.

What makes leading a project so special?

A project manager manages a temporary alliance. This requires the project manager to bring together people who hardly know one another, or not at all, into a productive collaboration. As management based on rules and peer pressure is still often undeveloped at this stage, this increases the need for management by a leader. Towards the end of the project, the problem arises of employees not wanting to leave the project team (they try to protract their work) or already focusing on another new project (they try to rush their work). Peer pressure then drops again and individual ambitions related to the project have mostly been fulfilled. Again it is the project manager who needs to maintain a high level of motivation and keep the group united.

Almost every project is carried out on behalf of one or more parent organizations. Managing a project not only means managing the people in the project, but also cooperating with managers at all levels of the parent organization. This makes the nature and form of project management different on a number of points from management positions like departmental heads, plant managers, division managers or members of the management board. What is typical of

a project manager is that he:

- shares his responsibilities and authority with others outside the project, who are not necessarily higher in the parent company's hierarchy;
- often cooperates with professionals whose areas of expertise are not as familiar to him;
- is mainly called to account for his specific core qualities and personal leadership, especially because of the previous two points;
- has to deal with a great many different, often changing, parties from both inside and outside the organization.

What do these typical aspects demand from a project manager?

Shared leadership: who is responsible for what?

The project manager more or less determines his leadership depending on the chosen division of responsibilities and powers between the project management and the parent organization. His formal powers are therefore often smaller than those of other managers. Furthermore, the project team members that report to him will find themselves in a triangular relationship in one way or another.

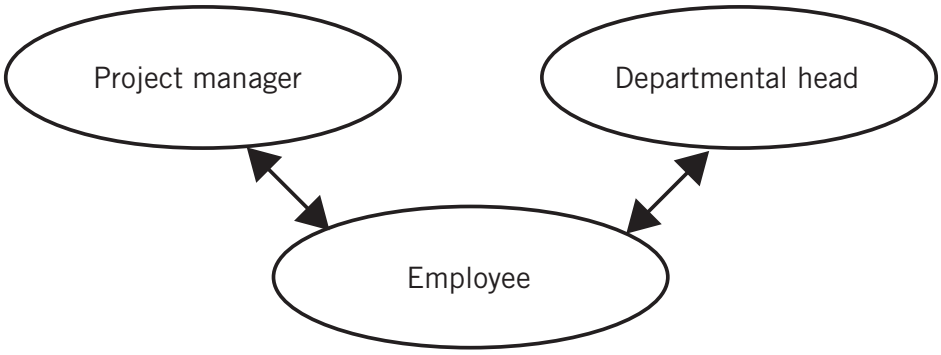

Figure 10.1 Double boss problem

Maurits has a single point of contact in each of his project's sub teams: the team leader of that particular team. The team leader of the Intake team has been replaced twice since the start of the project. First there was Joris, who was replaced by Johan and Johan will shortly be replaced by Piet. Joris, Johan and Piet all belong to the ICT project department at HealthCare. The department is experiencing a shortage of staff and the ICT project has a low priority for HealthCare. Mr. Overkercke, the departmental head for Joris and Johan, therefore decides to pull his people from the project on a regular basis. This annoys Maurits. What can he do to convince Mr. Overkercke that it would not be a good idea to replace Johan with Piet? Especially now the Intake team is at a crucial stage and collaboration is going so well. Besides, Johan has already come to talk to him about wanting to stay with his team.

When friction occurs between a project manager and departmental head, employees are faced with loyalty issues. A clear distribution of management powers at the start of a project would be a good step towards diminishing these issues.

In organizations with different types of 'bosses', the following three-way split is often made:

- The hierarchical boss, authorized with regard to the employee as a member of the organisation. He makes decisions on appointments and promotions, coordinates appraisals and provides advice on management development.
- The functional boss, authorized with regard to maintenance of the employee's skills and knowledge, and methods of working. He is the one who determines the working method used, the application of tools, and the appraisal of effort and capabilities.
- The operational boss, authorized with regard to the nature and timing of the employee's work. He decides on the daily work allocation, priorities of tasks and the assessment of results.

When an organization considers a project to be a separate undertaking, all the corresponding powers and responsibilities will transfer to this project. The project manager will then often fulfil all three manager roles. He will take care of the training and development opportunities of the people in his team, he will appraise and reward them, manage them professionally and also decide on task allocation and execution. When a project is allocated fewer powers and responsibilities, the project manager will act more as an operational boss and limit himself to managing task allocation and execution. It is important for the employees in the project to be clear about this as it will provide them with answers to questions like: to whom do I report about what? And with whom do I need to consult first before...?

Managing professionals: go ahead, but how?!

The double-boss phenomenon in combination with managing professionals can be quite demanding for a project manager. The problems encountered by project managers as a result often relate to people management: ensuring commitments are met, ensuring people do things as set out, attracting interest for your project from other parties, etcetera. How do you manage that when you have no authority and you are not the ultimate expert?

You will only succeed if you are capable of exerting influence as a person, whilst respecting the knowledge, skills and positions of your project employees, and appreciating the interests, fears, communication needs and challenges of your team members. Research (Thamhaim, 2004) not only shows that leadership is an important influencing factor for the success of a project; it also explains why. As a leader you exert a significant influence on the fulfilment of the personal and professional needs of your people. When team members are able to fulfil their personal and professional needs within the project, they will be prepared to work much harder as everything that benefits the project will also be of benefit to themselves. Compare it to the way a football coach influences his team.

In his team line-up, he will take the wishes and opportunities for the development of his players into account.

To get people going and motivate them to start working collaboratively, the project manager must be capable of exerting influence as a person. To do so, he needs to get in touch with his inner self and that of others. This calls for insight into one's own functioning and for an attitude as coach rather than one as boss.

The approach taken by 'the boss' is often purely task-oriented. He focuses on managing what needs to be done and considers the people in this process to be 'tools' who should do as he says. A coach is both task-oriented as well as people-oriented. He regards people as a source of qualities he can draw on to reach the best result. He achieves this by showing a personal interest in individuals and in the group and by making real contact with them. To be able to adopt a coaching attitude, a project manager:

- must have the courage and willingness to really delegate;
- must be aware of his own functioning, views and attitude;
- must be able to handle a mixture of task, people and future-oriented management styles;
- must be able to exert influence as a person.

Personal influence

As mentioned previously, personal influence is only possible when you are able to make real contact with an individual or a group. What this requires is open communication about what you are thinking and feeling. This will touch the other person and, in turn, will affect his views, feelings and behaviour.

If you want to enhance your ability to connect with others, it will help if you become aware of your own patterns in behaviour, assumptions and qualities. Patterns are often instilled as a result of self preservation and can be obstructive when making real contact. An example is a directive style of management. This is often based on assumptions about the world around us, like the assumption that people are lazy and therefore need firm management. By asking others for feedback and reflecting on his own personal qualities and by listening to inner feedback from his own physical and emotional

reactions, a project manager can gain a better understanding of his own personality and develop it further.

The project manager and his core qualities

Core qualities are the qualities of a person that outsiders can immediately name. They are part of your body, your breath, your movements; in short, they are your most fundamental personality characteristics. They are an intrinsic part of you and have not been acquired, like skills. They are your fundamental qualities and you can never turn them off.

In order to exert influence effectively, you need to become more aware of your subconscious core qualities. It will help you look at yourself and, as a consequence, at other people and things through different eyes. It will help you become better aligned – like fine-tuning a radio station – to your own core qualities and those of others.

To identify your core qualities, it is useful to go through the following questions one by one:

- What are my fundamental qualities? For example 'ability to take action'.
- What is it people sometimes hold against me? For example 'being pushy'. This gives you the upside and downside of your core quality; in other words your core quality and your pitfall.
- What is it I would like to develop? Your pitfall 'pushiness' challenges you to develop more 'patience'. This is therefore your challenge.
- Which people am I allergic to? This acts as an alarm bell for potential conflicts with people who demonstrate too much of their challenge; for example 'passivity' in this case.

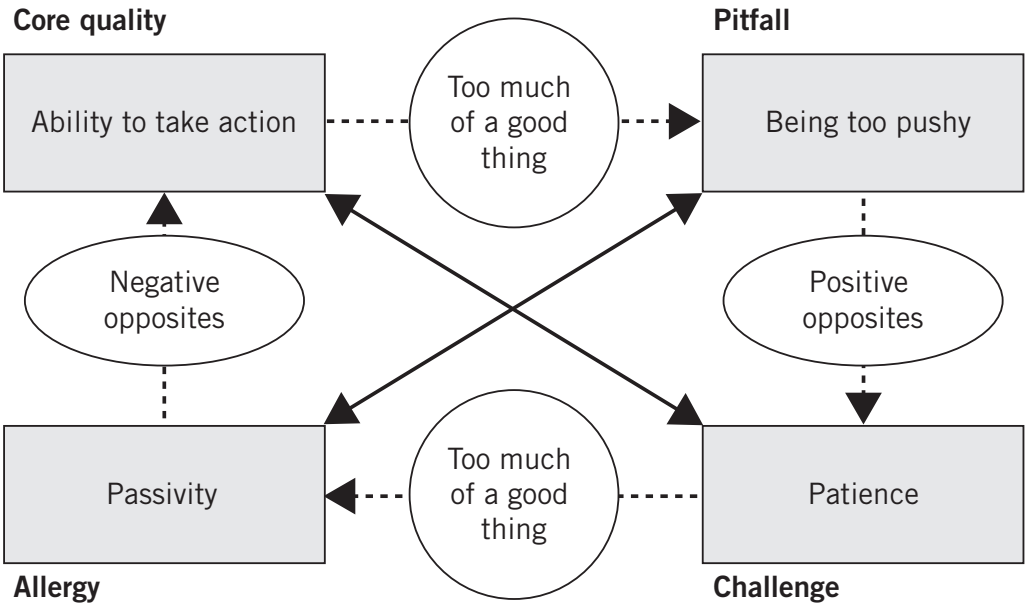

Figure 10.2 Core quadrant of the thinker (from: Wijnen and Storm, 2007)

The idea is that a project manager learns to look at his own core qualities and those of the people involved in his project. Learning to observe things in yourself and in others is an important key in optimizing the social skills needed to steer projects as effectively as possible to their end result. The main aim is to feel free to be who you really are.

A final point for attention: the world around the project!

Likert (1961) mentions that a leader should pay particular attention to the communication and information flows between groups. After all, a group – such as crews, committees, project teams, departments and management teams – develops in relation to other groups. Each group must stay up-to-date with what is happening in the other groups surrounding his own. Likert's studies have shown that many groups quickly tend to cut themselves off from the rest of the world, partly with a view to self-preservation in the short run. Because in the long run, every group will suffer from a lack of infor-

mation about the state of affairs elsewhere in the organization. It is the explicit task of the leader, according to Likert, to keep an eye on that long-term self-preservation.

In order to manage his individual team members and the team as a whole, while taking into account future developments, the project manager must look further afield than just to his project team. After all, the project team is no more than a temporary alliance, established to achieve a certain goal. External influences from outside project teams come from a wider variety of angles than in the case of departmental teams. Furthermore, the outside world will look at a project with greater intensity, if only because of the special attention it attracts at the start and finish.

The project manager should therefore maintain contact and conduct frequent negotiations with the world around the project. The first party he deals with will naturally be the commissioning party. After all, the project exists thanks to the client. A good relationship and interaction with the client serves at least two purposes. The project manager and client will share the same view of the project's expected result as the project manager consults and updates the client on a regular basis. In turn, the client will show greater understanding of the project's needs and be more inclined to support them. In addition to the client, there may be many more parties with whom it would be better for the project manager to build and maintain good relationships. As mentioned earlier, he is involved in shared leadership and, thus, with the managers of his team members in the parent organization. Furthermore, the project execution and results can affect several parties and processes outside the project's scope. Maintaining contact and interacting with other parties or groups outside the project also serves a variety of goals. On the one hand, parties that are kept updated and know what to expect will feel more involved and more secure. On the other hand, the project can take into account certain restrictions relating to the project environment that may otherwise never have been known.

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‘Use humanity to create commitment and treat people the way you wish to be treated yourself.’

Hanneke van de Velde, Project manager, Interpolis

11

What if I have to take over a project that is deadlocked?

In Chapter 2, we mentioned the reasons why an organization might want to start a project. We also mentioned what could cause a project to be subsequently discontinued. Is it because there are insufficient resources, because the reason for starting the project no longer exists, because the desired result of the project proves to be unrealistic, because the project raises too much opposition in the environment or because the project's priority has dropped in relation to other projects? All of them legitimate reasons for suspending a project or cancelling it altogether. This chapter will not deal with these types of cases. This chapter will discuss projects that, for unclear reasons, are not making any satisfactory progress, but still need to be completed properly. And you are the person they have asked to make this happen.

How can a project become deadlocked?

Projects can be put on hold, but they can also gradually come to a standstill. If you know what the cause is, it will be easier to get the project going again.

Type 1: There is a lack of momentum

The exam period is coming up again next week. At the start of term, Peggy had firmly decided not to leave things to the last minute. But now time is running out again. She still has a week to prepare and from experience she knows this should be sufficient. Today she wanted to get down to studying and got out of bed on time. 'First a shower,' she thought. 'Then a bit of tidying up and some shopping for tonight.' And soon it was time for lunch. She cleared up, did the dishes, took a short break from all that work and by then it was already time to start dinner.

This may well be a recognizable pattern for some people but, as a result, Peggy had to prepare for her exams in the evenings leading up to them. In Chapter 2, three types of projects are described: problem-driven, opportunity-driven and ambition-driven. In addition to their own specific rationale, these three types of projects also have

their own typical dynamics.

TYPE OF PROJECT	Level of urgency	What to do as project manager?
Problem-driven	High	Ensure ample time is taken to think the project through properly.
Opportunity-driven	Average	Striking and maintaining a balance between speed and thinking it through.
Ambition-driven	Low	Stimulate the urgency of the project, by defining short-term milestones among other things.

Table 11.1 Dynamics in different types of projects

Studying has a similar set of dynamics to an ambition-driven project. That might explain why it is difficult to make progress at times.

Type 2: Wanting too much in one go

Mark is project manager of the implementation of a new version of Lotus Notes. He has completed the third version of his project plan and has just finished discussing it with his client. The main conclusion is that the plan itself looks good, but that an improvement of the time-recording system in relation to invoices being sent to customers could also fall within the scope of the project. Mark has been asked to make a list of the consequences in terms of time and money.

The constant desire to add new aspects to a project, which prevents the project from getting up to speed, can occur in three phases:

(A) The start-up phase: like in Marcel's case, in which the discussions about what lies within or outside the scope of the project are difficult or impossible to wind up.

(B) The realization phase: during the realization of the project there are constant requests to add items to the project.
(C) The completion phase: the project cannot reach completion because of the endless list of remaining items.

In essence, these discussions relate to the project's scope and are difficult or impossible to wrap up. This can be due to:

- The nature of the project. Projects with a project result that is difficult to define beforehand, such as projects that affect an organization's culture. It might be better to simply make a start instead of constantly keeping discussions focused on the project's scope. Of course, this decision must be made in consultation with your client.
- Uncertainty on the part of the client who is not really sure of what he wants and is therefore afraid of making any definite decisions. It would be better to identify this problem, discuss it and find out what the underlying causes are than discuss the content of the project.
- It is during the course of the project that people tend to 'wake up'. As the project becomes more concrete and its impact more clear, discussions are raised as to what should or should not be part of the project. This can partly be prevented by moving these discussions to the initial phase of the project by giving the project a precise position in the organization.

Type 3: Eager for swift results

The Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management has made a great effort to realize a large number of projects related to emergency acts. It must be made clear during Minister Eurlings' term of office that congestion problems are being taken seriously. To make this possible, procedures that would normally take years have been shortened considerably and, at the same time, as much as possible is being done in parallel in the projects themselves. Shortened feasibility study phases (what should be done in essence), swift routing decisions (how should the route be mapped) and deploying available knowledge and expertise where possible (design and construct). It's time for action!

This approach seems to be having a positive effect. Wherever you look in the Netherlands, you can see road works in progress, roads being widened and improvements being made to motorways. Although this causes additional congestion, it is clearly only a temporary nuisance. There is also, however, a downside to this approach. Just think of the adverse effects on the non-emergency act projects, the hefty additional costs associated with this accelerated process and the sustainability and future stability of the solutions chosen.

The desire for swift results and management tailored to this outcome will come at the expense of the time taken to think the project through. If questions that should have been answered beforehand are raised during the project's execution, this can seriously disrupt and delay a project – a phenomenon seen in many problem-driven projects.

Type 4: Everyone is doing it as an add-on

Johan is project manager of three projects at Canon. One of these projects is the market introduction of a compact laser colour printer for the business market, specially designed for portable use. He has one and a half days each week to work on the project. His core project team consists of three colleagues from the technical, marketing and purchasing departments. They have each been given one day a week for the project. They manage sub project teams consisting of six to ten employees who need to fit the project activities into their regular work load. Johan wants to organize a Project Start-Up for his project and wonders whom to invite for this.

This is a logical but difficult question for Johan. He could, of course, limit the start-up to himself, his three core project team members and the client, but deep down he also feels the need to involve those employees who will be doing the actual work for his project. If he does not do this, he runs the risk of his project being overlooked in daily operations. Johan has two options:

(A) He considers everyone involved in the project to be members of the project team and approaches the project as such. This

will require a lot of extra investment from him and his core project team members in terms of time, but has the advantage of maximizing focus on his project.

(B) He leaves the responsibility where it currently lies, i.e. with the members of his core team, who should manage and control their own teams, and with the various line managers who are responsible for managing their employees. This does, however, require Johan to manage agreements carefully.

Choosing one of these options will allow you as project manager to achieve a far better result than following a mixture of both.

Type 5: Discussions as to why

The Betuwe railway organization had already started preparing for execution of the project when a discussion was suddenly raised in the media as to whether it would be better to transport containers using large river barges. This was due to the result of a study that showed this to be a feasible and cheaper solution in achieving the same goals.

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, discussions as to the reasons behind a project can flare up every now and then, especially in long-term projects. This can also occur in projects with shorter completion times.

Petra is the project manager of an open day which is organized every year. The necessity of the day itself is something agreed upon by the entire management board, but the purpose of this day is subject to lengthy discussions each year. Is its purpose to attract new employees or to please customers, is it an opportunity for new employees to become more familiar with the company, or should it boost the organization's orientation towards the outside world? As a consequence, Petra runs out of time each year to work on the preparations for the day itself.

Discussions about the reasons for a project need to be conducted thoroughly. After all, they concern the very reason for the project's existence. As a project manager, you should learn to cherish them.

It would be much more worrying if these discussions did not take place at all. For the project's progress and the success of the project it is important that:

- These discussions are conducted at the right time. Preferably as early as possible in the project and not during the execution phase.
- The right people are involved in these discussions. The client and/or the steering committee must play a dominant role, at the very least, and the user should not be forgotten either.
- The project manager and his team do not bear the consequences of the time spent on conducting these discussions. After talks about the ambitions of the project have been finalized, the project must again be translated in terms of time, money and quality.

How do you perform a project diagnosis?

If you know why the project has become deadlocked, you will have a better idea of what is needed to get it going again. You will also need a thorough understanding of the consequences of that deadlock. What is the actual status of the project now?

Johan has not been able to get the Canon Mobile project off the ground. Due to the limited attention received by the project, the deadlines for market introduction hardly seem feasible anymore. It has been decided to merge the management of all projects and Johan has handed over the mobile printer project to Henriette. She can almost give it her full attention and the three core project team members are also available for more days now. Henriette wants to make a quick assessment of the project and asks herself what she wants to know about it and how to obtain the answers.

If you want to find out how a project is doing, there are four angles you need to look at:

- Why does this project exist?
- Who are involved in the project?
- What should the project deliver?
- How is the project being approached?

For a complete diagnosis of the project, it is obviously not enough to simply answer these questions; use them as the main themes of your research. Each theme has its own focus areas.

Main themes	Points requiring attention
Why	• the objectives/ambitions that need to be realized • the problems the project needs to address • the business case on which the project has been based • the stability of the objectives • the success criteria of the project
Who	• commissioning practice and the way this is structured • the stakeholders of the project • the project team • the project employees • line management
What	• the project results • the main sub results • requirements and preconditions • the key interim results (milestones) • the completion and acceptance protocol
How	• the project structure and organization • the project approach • the success factors of the project (universal and specific) • risk management • communication in and around the project

Table 11.2 Points requiring attention in a project diagnosis

To find out what the status is of all these items, Henriette has two options:

A. What is on file?

A proper project file needs to be put together for each project. This raises the question of what kind of records should be kept in the file as a minimum. These should include:

- The project mandate. This describes the reason for the project, what the objectives are and what the level of authority of the project manager and project organization is in this context.
- The project assignment. This describes in more detail what the goal and desired result of the project are, what the Success Model looks like, which preconditions should be met, what the project organization looks like (and why) and what the main risks are that need to be taken into account in the project.
- The project plan. This describes how the project is subdivided (work break down) and phased (structured time-wise), how the project is managed in terms of time, money, quality, information and organization, how success factors are controlled, how risks are managed and how communication concerning the project is handled.
- Progress reports and change documents. The progress reports describe what has been achieved and when in relation to the original project plan. The change documents describe what has been changed and when in relation to the original project assignment.
- The final reports, such as the completion and acceptance protocol, the project end evaluation and the final project archives.

If something has not been recorded, this must immediately be addressed when trying to save the project. When studying the documents, it is important to pay attention to the following"

- Has everything been described in SMART terms (specific, measurable, acceptable, result-oriented and time-based)?
- Are the goal and ambitions to be achieved with the project aligned with the result and the chosen approach?

- Have the criteria for assessing the project's success been recorded and are they realistic and feasible?
- Are the preconditions to be met by the project realistic and feasible?
- Are the core tasks of the project clear and has the approach (the way the project has been subdivided and phased) been aligned to this?
- Has the project organization been set up and is it operational, both on the side of the project team and on the side of the client and supporters?
- Does communication focus on the main target groups to be reached by the project?

The records in the file give you a good overview of the things that have and have not been given sufficient attention in the project. This will provide you with the direction to follow to get the project going again. The above-mentioned questions can help you find that direction, though of course common sense and intuition are also excellent counsellors.

B. What do the people involved have to say?

In Chapter 5, the various parties involved were classified into four categories: decision makers, users, suppliers and financiers. Naturally, you are advised to speak to the key persons in each of these categories. It is also advisable to ask those involved previously, especially the former project manager, about their experiences with the project. But in the end, the client will be your most important partner in a deadlocked project. After all, he will have to be prepared to put renewed effort into the project together with you and bring the project to a favourable conclusion.

After her initial desk research, Henriette schedules interviews with the various people involved to learn (A) how they view the causes for the project's deadlock and (B) what needs to be done according to them to get the project going again. With the background information about the project and these two questions, she starts with her first interview. This is with

one of the steering committee members. His answers to these questions are brief and concise: 'It is simply a matter of not having devoted enough time to the project. The former project manager, Johan, did not have his complete focus on this project, let alone on the various project team members and employees. This has now been fixed, and all the signals are set to go again. This is not a complex project in terms of content and marketing as long as enough effort is put into it!' After the meeting, Henriette realizes she hasn't really learned much more. She wonders what to do to get more out of her next interview.

Henriette has studied the project in depth and has come up with two questions she wants to present to the people involved. These questions are relevant in themselves and give the discussion partners the opportunity to answer according to their own view. However, there is also a downside. The questions place greater emphasis on the past and do not build on the conclusions Henriette has drawn from her desk research.

To maximize the outcome of interviews with stakeholders, you should:

(A) Position yourself as if you are starting the project again, as if this is the actual start of the project. You can more or less stick to the list of things that should have been described, starting with the goal, the success criteria and the result of the project. A bit of fake naivety can do no harm: 'Could you please tell me once more what you consider ...?' and 'When would you call the project a success?'

(B) Question the people directly about things you have found out during your desk research. Suppose you think that a clearly defined goal or result is missing, or that it is the result of several things added up, make this the key subject of your interviews.

(C) Use your skills to conduct a good interview. Consider asking open questions, summarizing at regular intervals, and asking follow-up questions (constantly ask why) and, at the end of the interview, state which conclusions you have drawn and what your next steps will be.

How do I start up my project?

Every project needs a start-up moment, which makes it clear to everyone that the project has begun. In many cases, this is linked to the start of the realization phase of the project and has all the characteristics of a literal kick-off. The project manager and, in some cases, the client face 'the troops', explaining to the project team members what the project entails and wishing everyone every success. This may be followed by drinks or a fun activity and realization is ready for take-off. This is actually an excellent way to mark the (re)launch of the project. But is that all you can, should or want to achieve with (re)launching a project?

The Canon Mobile project has been kicked off. It did feel a bit strange to Henriette since it was more of a re-launch, but she looks back with satisfaction. The client has once again expressed his full commitment and the dinner afterwards was held in an excellent ambiance. Everyone was eager to make the project a success. This week, the discussions in the project team mainly seem to focus on who is supposed to be doing what. This is something Henriette presented quite clearly last week. No one had any comments or questions at the time. So where are these discussion coming from all of a sudden?

Before you start on the realization phase of the project, you as project manager want everyone involved to have understood and endorsed the project mandate, the project assignment and the project plan. This means that everyone, from stakeholders to project team members, should support the goal, the success, the result, the set-up and the approach of the project. Is this simply a matter of discussing with your client what the project should deliver and the approach to be taken and then subsequently presenting it?

Farmer Jones was about to turn 50 and all the animals on his farm agreed that this needed some special attention. So they decided to offer him a special gift on his birthday, but could not easily decide what this gift should be. One evening they all went to the barn and held a brainstorm.

Several ideas arose and in the end they had to choose between five. They each committed to giving 5 points and to then see which idea received the most. It turned out they would prepare a huge English breakfast for farmer Jones with bacon and eggs. Early that morning they went to the chickens and collected the eggs. They then went to the pig, armed with a razor sharp knife. The poor pig turned almost white and protested. 'This was not the plan,' he said. 'Why not?' the other animals replied. 'You were committed to the idea of bacon and eggs, were you not?' they asked. 'Yes,' the pig answered, 'then I was committed, but now... I am involved!'

Paying lip service is easy, suiting the action to the word rather less. The example of the pig clearly shows why. People often do not realize what they have agreed to until it is facing them squarely and they experience what it will take to fulfil their promises. The lesson when starting up a project is that the key stakeholders need to be involved at the earliest possible stage. In addition to creating a symbolic launch moment, this is the second goal to be achieved during the project's start-up.

Each project is a succession of choices that are linked to one another. Take Henriette's project, for example. This involves choices regarding:

- the *technical content*: the mechanisms, the casing, the paper tray and paper feed, the display and the control panel;
- the *production*: where to produce, with what machines and at what costs, how to assemble the product, what to purchase;
- the *marketing*: which markets, which target groups, how to launch the product, at what market price, with what future developments;
- the *management*: who will manage the project, how will this be structured, what is part of the management and what is part of the project;
- the *approach*: who will participate in the project organization, what will the approach be, what are the main risks, how will we handle these, what is the project's budget and when is the project a success?

When all these choices have been made and the operational part of the project finished, the project has been completed. The sooner this selection process is completed, the sooner the project is finished. A third goal of the start-up of the project is to make as many of these choices as possible as quickly as possible, thus enhancing the quality of the decision-making process.

Henriette will be organizing a Project Start-Up (PSU). She has set aside one and a half days for this with the members of her core team and the employees reporting to them. The kick-off to the PSU will be orchestrated together with the steering committee, who will join them again at lunchtime on the second day to hear the main results.

Henriette has the following objectives with her PSU:

1. To discuss and to determine the goal and result of the project.
2. To put together an initial version of the Success Model.
3. To list the main core tasks.
4. To think about and determine the project approach (phasing and subdivision).
5. To establish working agreements regarding subsequent steps in the short run (who/what/when).

The agenda she has prepared for the meeting looks like this:

Time	Subject and result	Process
Day 1		
9.00	Welcome and kick-off by the steering committee: when does the steering committee think our project will be a success? Clear to everyone.	The steering committee welcomes everyone, gives a presentation and provides an opportunity for questions and clarification.
10.00	Getting to know one another: project team members present know each other's views on the success of the project.	Get to know one another in pairs and ask one another: when is the project a success for you? Write the answers on a flip-chart. Finish by discussing the findings with everyone.
11.30	Break	
11.45	Discussing the project's goal and result. Goal and result have been determined together.	In three groups: list the main goals and results of the project on a flip-chart. Then discuss in a plenary session, looking for similarities and differences.
13.00	Lunch	
14.00	Success Model: agree on a first version of the Success Model.	One group working on the success criteria (determine the main four or five). Another group working on success factors (list ten to fifteen). Then discuss and combine them in plenary session.

15.45	Break	
16.00	List the core tasks: main tasks have been determined.	Brainstorm about the tasks in the project (what can go wrong – no 'yes, buts') in a plenary session. Give rankings as to urgency and importance. Incorporate highest in plan.
17.15	Snack	
17.45	Teamwork exercise – let's see if we can fulfil our promises...	Overcome a fictitious challenge, unrelated to the project, as a team. Reflect on the teamwork demonstrated. And have some fun.
19.00	Dinner	

Day 2	Subject and result	Process
9.00	Review: we have reviewed the content and process of Day 1.	Ask everyone – what does it mean for this morning?
9.30	Determine project approach: determine main sub results and interim results together.	One group determines main sub results (partly based on goal and success criteria), other group determines main interim results (partly based on preconditions and success factors). Present them.
10.30	Establish working agreements.	Determine in the three sub project teams who will do what in the coming period.
11.15	Prepare feedback for steering committee.	Jointly determine who will present what feedback and which questions we want to ask the steering committee.
12.00	Presentation to steering committee: project assignment and plan have been discussed and possibly agreed upon.	Henriette presents goal, result and Success Model. Core team members present approach and submit questions to the steering committee.
13.00	Group lunch and close	

This is an excellent set-up for a PSU, which will undoubtedly result in a good start to the project. It allows the three goals of the project start-up to be realized:

(A) The project has been launched symbolically and visibly.
(B) Everyone is actively involved.
(C) Several important decisions are made in one and a half days.

Naturally, PSUs can be organized at various times; it is up to you as project manager to decide when you think it necessary and useful to actively involve your team members, speed up the selection process or create a symbolic moment. At an earlier stage of the project, a PSU can help you define a clear project assignment and, at a later stage, during realization, to properly kick-off a subsequent phase or revitalize a project. In this case, it is also called a Project Fresh-Up (PFU).

'I was asked to take over a project. Two thirds of the completion time had passed and hardly anything had been achieved so far. There was a lousy atmosphere surrounding the project. All I did, at first, was to listen to the complaining. I then asked what needed to be done in the short term and this is what I focused on. This seemed to be catching as team confidence picked up and ideas started flowing again. I kept focusing on the elimination of obstacles and paid considerable attention to the key team players and less to the project's administrative side. This approach eventually resulted in a timely delivery of the desired result.'

Henk de Graaff, Project manager, Interpolis

Postface
What next…?

We have come to the end of this book. We hope it has broadened and strengthened your interest in the profession of project management. If so, you may want to read more on the subject. You could read about:

- Mega projects and what it takes to manage these large and complex projects; for example, how to manage these projects better without getting lost in the content yourself;
- Developments and opportunities in the world of projects; for example, career opportunities for project managers and how to take advantage of them;
- Project management as a profession; for example, linking Project Success to the various project management methods and what you need to do if you want to be certified as a project manager.

We have written a number of articles on these three areas of interest. If you want to learn more about one or more of these subjects, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

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You've made it: you've been allocated your own project. You are responsible for managing planning, budget and risks in order to fulfil the assignment successfully. Add to that the soft side of project management, managing expectations, and you realize that you are facing a tough job.

The real art is to focus on what you want to achieve and not just on the pitfalls ahead. This book sets out a model that will help you make your project a success: the Success Model. The model unites the 'hard' and 'soft' elements of project management. Using clear practical examples, the authors explain their model step-by-step.

Project Success: creating excellent projects is part of a series of books by VKbanen and Spectrum about applying for jobs and successful performance in a (new) job. These books are characterized by their topical interest, practical examples and an approach that, contrary to many books by experts, allows for personal choices by the reader.

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