ACCELERATE YOUR CAREER

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FAST TRACK TO SUCCESS

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Patrick Harper-Smith
& Simon Derry

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PATRICK HARPER-SMITH AND SIMON DERRY

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THE FAST TRACK WAY

Everything you need to accelerate your career

The best way to fast track your career as a manager is to fast track the contribution you and your team make to your organization and for your team to be successful in as public a way as possible. That's what the Fast Track series is about. The Fast Track manager delivers against performance expectations, is personally highly effective and efficient, develops the full potential of his team, is recognized as a key opinion leader in the business, and ultimately progresses up the organization ahead of his peers.

You will benefit from the books in the Fast Track series whether you are an ambitious first-time team leader or a more experienced manager who wants to develop further over the next few years. You may be a specialist aiming to master every aspect of your chosen discipline or function or simply be trying to broaden your awareness of other key management disciplines and skills. In either case, you will have the motivation to critically review yourself and your team using the tools and techniques presented in this book, as well as the time to stop, think, and act on areas you identify for improvement.

Do you know what you need to know and do to make a real difference to your performance at work, your contribution to your company and your blossoming career? For most of us, the honest answer is "Not really, no." It's not surprising then that most of us never reach our full potential. The innovative Fast Track series gives you exactly what you need to speed up your progress and become a high performance manager in all the areas

of business that matter. Fast Track is not just another "How to" series. Books on selling tell you how to win sales but not how to move from salesperson to sales manager. Project management software enables you to plan detailed tasks but doesn't improve the quality of your project management thinking and business performance. A marketing book tells you about the principles of marketing but not how to lead a team of marketers. It's not enough.

Specially designed features in the Fast Track books will help you to see what you need to know and to develop the skills you need to be successful. They give you

→ The information required for you to shine in your chosen function or skill—particularly in the Fast Track top ten;

→ Practical advice in the form of Quick Tips and answers to FAQs from people who have been there before you and succeeded;

→ State of the art best practice as explained by today's academics and industry experts in specially written Expert Voices;

→ Case stories and examples of what works and, perhaps more importantly, what doesn't work;

→ Comprehensive tools for accelerating the effectiveness and performance of your team;

→ A framework that helps you to develop your career as well as produce terrific results.

Fast Track is a resource of business thinking, approaches and techniques presented in a variety of ways—in short, a complete performance support environment. It enables managers to build careers from their first tentative steps into management all the way up to becoming a business director—accelerating the performance of their teams and their careers. When you use the Fast Track approach with your team it provides a common business language and structure, based on best business practice. You will benefit from the book whether or not others in the organization adopt the same practices; indeed if they don't, it will give you an edge over them. Each Fast Track book blends hard practical advice from expert practitioners with insights and the latest thinking from experts from leading business schools.

The Fast Track approach will be valuable to team leaders and managers from all industry sectors and functional areas. It is for ambitious people who have already acquired some team leadership skills and have realized just how much more there is to know.

If you want to progress further, you will be directed toward additional learning and development resources via an interactive Fast Track website, www.Fast-Track-Me.com. For many, these books become the first step in a journey of continuous development. So, the Fast Track approach gives you everything you need to accelerate your career, offering you the opportunity to develop your knowledge and skills, improve your team's performance, benefit your organization's progress toward its aims, and light the fuse under your true career potential.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

PATRICK HARPER-SMITH is one of the founding directors of Project Leaders International Ltd—a consulting organization that works with client companies in the areas of training, consulting, and supporting software. He works with clients to establish, expand, and diversify their businesses through the application of strategy, project management processes, and innovation strategies.

Patrick has had a varied international career within the travel, financial services, and consulting industries. At U.S. consulting firm Kepner-Tregoe, he managed and developed highly profitable operations in the Southeast Asian region. He also worked for Jacques Borel, founding and developing their voucher business in Hong Kong. At American Express he was Director of Training for the whole of South-East Asia (600 offices in Asia- Pacific and the marketing of the Corporate Card in ten Asian markets).

Patrick gained an associate degree from Université de Paris and is a program director on the Project Leaders International strategy and innovation and project leaders programs. He is also PRINCE2 qualified.

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SIMON DERRY is also a director of Project Leaders International Ltd. He is a professional consultant with over 15 years' experience working with leading organizations in a variety of industry sectors and management levels.

Following graduation from the University College of Swansea, Simon attended the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and then served five years as an officer with the Royal Regiment of Artillery. In 1993 he joined the NHS as directorate manager at Northwick Park Hospital NHS Trust. He then became customer service manager for Psion in 1995, the leading hand-held computing company in the world at the time, where he established the customer services, technical support, and helpdesk operations.

In 1998 he joined an international management consultancy and training firm where his remit was the design, development and implementation of service improvement projects with various clients worldwide, including Dell, Sun Microsystems, Siebel, Cisco, and other IT and telecom companies. He has detailed knowledge of the incident management and problem management aspects of the ITIL framework and is PRINCE2 accredited.

Simon also has an MBA from Henley Management College (now Heney Business School), where he focused on project management selection systems and creativity and innovation in the workplace.

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A WORD OF THANKS FROM THE AUTHORS

We would like to thank the following for their generous contributions to this book.

→ **Liz Gooster, Pearson.** There are many exciting new ideas in the publishing world at present, but without an enthusiastic champion, most will simply die a slow death. Liz had the confidence to commission the Fast Track series and associated web-tool on behalf of the Pearson Group at a time when other publishers were cutting back on non-core activities. She has remained committed to its success—providing direction, challenge, and encouragement as and when required.

→ **Ken Langdon.** As well as being a leading author in his own right, Ken has worked with all the Fast Track authors to bring a degree of rigour and consistency to the series. As each book has developed, he has been a driving force behind the scenes, pulling the detailed content for each title together in the background—working with an equal measure of enthusiasm and patience!

→ **Mollie Dickenson.** Mollie has a background in publishing and works as a research manager at Henley Business School, and has been a supporter of the project from its inception. She has provided constant encouragement and challenge and is, as always, an absolute delight to work with.

→ **Critical readers.** As the Fast Track series evolved, it was vital that we received constant challenge and input from other experts and from critical readers.

→ **Professor David Birchall.** David has worked to identify and source Expert Voice contributions from international academic and business experts in each Fast Track title. David is co-author

of the Fast Track *Innovation* book and a leading academic author in his own right and has spent much of the last 20 years heading up the research program at Henley Business School— one of the world's top ten business schools.

Our expert team

Last but not least, we are grateful for the contributions made by experts from around the world in each of the Fast Track titles.

EXPERT	TOPIC	BUSINESS SCHOOL/ COMPANY
Dr. Svetlana Cicmil	Managing in complexity—project management as practical wisdom (p.14)	Bristol Business School, University of the West of England
Dr. Stephen Simister	Managing risk on projects (p.26)	Henley Business School, University of Reading
Professor Svein Arne Jessen	Contemporary project management and leadership (p.66)	BI Norwegian School of Management, Norway
Professor David Birchall	Improvisational working within projects (p. 86)	Henley Business School, University of Reading
Professor Stephen Wearne	Is project management a problem or an opportunity? (p.101)	Manchester Business School, University of Manchester
Professor Kam Jugdev	Building knowledge networks in project management (p.128)	Centre for Innovative Management, Athabasca University, Canada
Professor Christophe Bredillet	P2M, the methodology that supports the construction of complex business infrastuctures (p.151)	ESC Lille, France
Associate Professor Dirk Pieter van Donk and Dr. Eamonn Molloy	Rationality and irrationality in project management (p.167)	Faculty of Management and Organization, University of Groningen, The Netherlands and Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FAST TRACK

This book offers a practical look at the topic of project management. So, let's start by knocking on the head a misconception that is very popular with manuals, training courses, and people discussing project management; namely, that process and qualifications are the be-all and end-all of project management. Believers in this misconception concentrate on getting qualifications or using certain techniques and software, usually at the expense of the real issue—that projects are there to deliver measurable benefits and value to an organization. Project management is about flexibility in all things and not rigid adherence to a single way of doing something. This book provides a practical framework for managing projects—not a straightjacket to hinder or restrain the project manager.

A concentration on methodologies can make us fail to relate a project to the business, leading to a ludicrous situation in which we are ticking every box on the event/activity critical path, delivering the project on time and within budget—and having no effect or even having a negative effect on the performance of the business. This may be because the project has, for example, ceased to be relevant. This is called *doing things right*. Fast Track managers' approach is different—they are intent on *doing the right thing*. They not only relate the project objectives to the needs of the business as their starting point, but they also check that those needs have not changed during the course of running the project. The business need is paramount, not the process of getting there!

Now let's look at who classically project managers are. Project management started off in the engineering department, managing complex projects to deliver, for example, ships and airplanes. At that time there were full-time project managers developing the techniques and
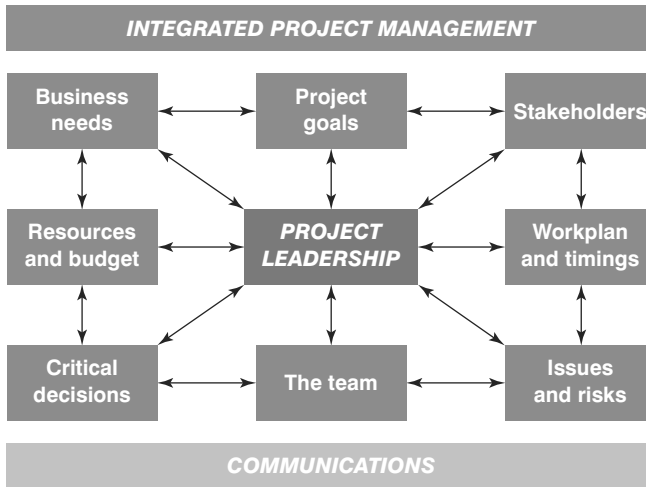
methods that we use today. IT managers then picked up project management, realizing that complex software development tasks had much in common with engineering projects. And it's moved on from there so that today many project managers are not full-time; they have day jobs as well, but they see project management skills as an essential tool in the Fast Track manager's armory, no matter what their function is. Nowadays, more or less everyone is a project manager, and not necessarily running long-term projects but ones that are complete in a month or even a week.

Take the example of sales managers charged with organizing the annual sales conference. They will find that if they approach the task as a project, they are much more likely to deliver a conference that is not only better than all the ones that went before, but that is also within budget and, crucially, has a positive effect on the performance of the business. This performance improvement is measurable after the conference, in terms of increased sales and profits.

We've worked, for example, with Coca-Cola marketing people; they did not regard themselves as project managers, yet when they implemented the essentials of project management to their marketing plans and promotional activities, they improved performance.

So this book is for project management professionals, but it is also for non-project managers who want to use the skills of project management to improve their and their teams' performance.

Although the emphasis of this book is on the practical implementation of projects to meet business needs, we do need to have some framework or structure. To that end we have developed a ten-step integrated project management process (see figure on the next page). It's been used for and with many of our clients over several years and has been updated and modified along the way. However, unlike many project management processes, it is not a rigid straightjacket but a flexible approach, integrating the core best practice tools of project management with broader business needs, and involving people across the whole business, as required.

INTEGRATED PROJECT MANAGEMENT		
Business needs	Project goals	Stakeholders
Resources and budget	*PROJECT LEADERSHIP*	Workplan and timings
Critical decisions	The team	Issues and risks
COMMUNICATIONS		

We start by assessing you and your team's current abilities in project management so that you can develop your own plan for improvement. We then show you how to link projects to business needs or identify new projects from those business needs. From there we look at the project goals and business case, checking that a successful project will deliver improved performance and achieve its measures of success.

Then you need to find out who the stakeholders are in the project, including senior management (if it is a major project), and identify anyone who could throw a wrench in the works at some point by, for example, explaining that they are undertaking a similar task. After all, if no one will sponsor the project at senior level, it's better to kill it off now than make a half-hearted go of it. Stakeholders can be both a positive and a negative influence on your project, so you need to find out who they are right at the outset and what their attitudes are.

We will explain the importance of techniques such as critical path analysis, showing how to use them in the context of the business. This allows you to work out the many issues and assess the risks that you are taking in implementing the project. But implementation depends on much more than the techniques of project management; it also depends on the behavior of the people in the project team, as well as the other stakeholders. Remember that people run projects, not software! Among other

abilities, project managers need to be able to plan, to take critical decisions, to measure risk, and to plan avoidance tactics. We'll help you to bring your skills up to speed. However, project management skills should be an enabler of projects rather than a set of rules to be slavishly followed. After all, the success of your business depends on the creativity and adventurousness of people—and so does every project.

Another topic is the management of resources and budgets, which are frequent sources of problems and even project failure. Notice how we've called this "another" topic and not the final topic because in real life you will find yourself moving through these processes and employing these skills at various points in the project life cycle.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Fast Track books present a collection of the latest tools, techniques, and advice to help build your team and your career. Use this table to plan your route through the book.

PART	OVERVIEW
About the authors	A brief overview of the authors, their backgrounds and their contact details
A **Awareness**	*This first part gives you an opportunity to gain a quick overview of the topic and to reflect on your current effectiveness.*
1 *Project management in a nutshell*	A brief overview of project management and a series of frequently asked questions to bring you up to speed quickly
2 *Project management audit*	Simple checklists to help identify strengths and weaknesses in your team and your capabilities
B **Business Fast Track**	*Part B provides tools and techniques that may form part of the integrated project management framework for you and your team.*
3 *Fast Track top ten*	Ten tools and techniques used to help you implement a sustainable approach to project management based on the latest best practice
4 *Technologies*	A review of the latest information technologies used to improve effectiveness and efficiency of project management activities
5 *Implementing change*	A detailed checklist to identify gaps and to plan the changes necessary to implement your projects
C **Career Fast Track**	*Part C focuses on you, your leadership qualities, and what it takes to get to the top.*
6 *The first ten weeks*	Recommended activities when starting a new role in project management, together with a checklist of useful facts to know
7 *Leading the team*	Managing change, building your team, and deciding your leadership style
8 *Getting to the top*	Becoming a project management professional, getting promoted, and becoming a director—what does it take?
D **Director's toolkit**	*The final part provides more advanced tools and techniques based on industry best practice.*
Toolkit	Advanced tools and techniques used by senior managers
Glossary	Glossary of terms

FAST-TRACK-ME.COM

Before reading this book, why not start by visiting our companion website www.Fast-Track-Me.com? This is a custom-designed, highly interactive online resource that addresses the needs of the busy manager by providing access to ideas and methods that will

improve individual and team performance quickly and develop both your skills and your career.

As well as giving you access to cutting-edge business knowledge across a range of key topics—including the subject of this book—Fast-Track-Me.com will enable you to stop and think about what you want to achieve in your chosen career and where you want to take your team. By doing this, it will provide a context for reading and give you extra information and access to a range of interactive features.

The site in general is packed with valuable features, such as

→ **The Knowledge Cube.** The K-Cube is a two-dimensional matrix that presents Fast Track features from all topics in a consistent and easy-to-use way—providing ideas, tools, and techniques in a single place, anytime, anywhere. This is a great way to delve in and out of business topics quickly.

→ **The Online Coach.** The Online Coach is a toolkit of fully interactive business templates in MS Word format that allow Fast-Track-Me.com users to explore specific business methods (strategy, ideas, projects etc.) and learn from concepts, case examples, and other resources according to your preferred learning style.

→ **Business Glossary.** The Fast Track Business Glossary provides a comprehensive list of key words associated with each title in the Fast Track series together with a plain English definition—helping you to cut through business jargon.

To access even more features, carry out self-diagnostic tests, and develop your own personal profile, simply log-in and register. Then click on My FastTrack to get started! Give yourself the Fast Track Health Check now.

My FastTrack

These are the different areas you'll discover in the My FastTrack area.

My HealthCheck

How effective is your team compared with industry "best practices?" Find out using a simple Red, Amber, Green (RAG) scale.

After identifying areas of concern, you can plan for their resolution using a personal "Get2Green" action plan.

My Get2Green Actions

What are the specific actions you and your team will implement in order to "Get2Green" and improve performance? Log, prioritize, and monitor your action points in the My Get2Green Action Plan area to help you plan for future success—fast.

My Career

Reflect on your current role and plan your future career—how prepared are you for future success?

Fast-Track-Me.com provides the busy manager with access to the latest thinking, techniques, and tools at her fingertips. It can also help answer some of the vital questions managers are asking themselves today.
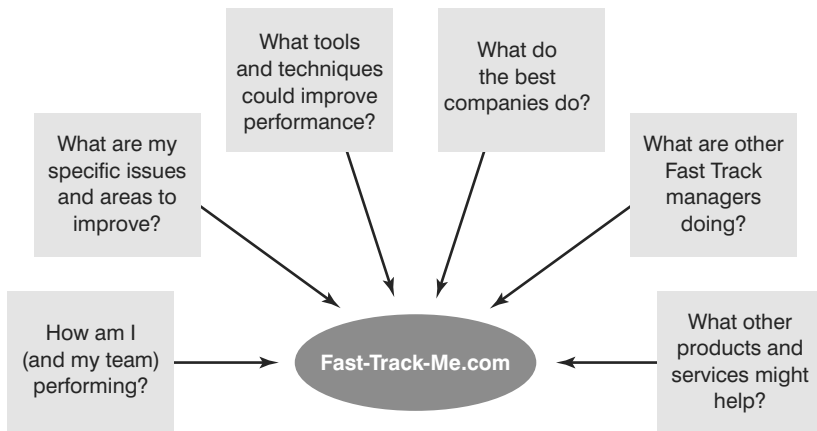
Don't get left behind: log on to www.Fast-Track-Me.com now to get your career on the fast track.

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PART A

AWARENESS

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This book introduces a sustainable approach to project management aimed at keeping you, your team and your organization at the forefront of the process, thus contributing towards the future of all three. The starting point is to gain a quick understanding of what project management is and what it is not, and to be aware of your own and your team's capabilities in this area right now. For this reason we will ask you a number of questions that will reveal where you and your team need to improve if you are truly to meet the aims of project management—and ensure your service to customers is among the leaders in your industry.

"Know yourself" was the motto above the doorway of the Oracle at Delphi and is a wise thought. It means that you must do an open and honest self-audit as you start on the process of setting up your framework for project management.

The stakes are high. Project management is at the heart of success in this global, competitive marketplace. Your team, therefore, need to be effective project managers and you need to be a good leader in project management. Poor leadership and poor team effectiveness will make failure likely. An effective team poorly led will sap the team's energy and lead in the long term to failure through their leaving for a better environment or becoming less effective through lack of motivation. Leading an ineffective team well does not prevent the obvious conclusion that an ineffective team will not thrive. So, looking at the figure below, how do you make sure that you and your team are in the top right-hand box—an innovative and effective team with an excellent leader? That's what this book is about, and this section shows you how to discover your and your team's starting point.
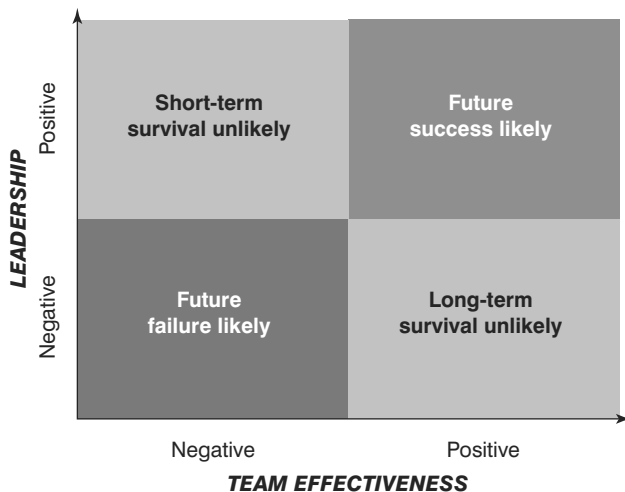
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1

PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN A NUTSHELL

This chapter is about raising the awareness of the need for good pro-ject management techniques across an organization. There is usually significant room for improvement in both individual and corporate capabilities and in the effectiveness of teams in managing projects.

Starting with the basics

Just what is project management?

A quick Internet search will reveal many varied definitions of projects and project management, but knowing many definitions doesn't make you a better project manager nor make project management any easier. Here are our definitions.

→ A **project** is a series of activities designed to achieve a specific outcome within a set budget and timescale.

→ **Project management** enables managers to focus on priorities, track performance, overcome difficulties, and adapt to change. It gives managers more control and provides proven tools and techniques to help them lead teams to meet objectives on time and within budget.

Project management is not necessarily about doing the tasks included in the scope of the project, but instead it is the management or organization of the activities included in the scope of the project. Projects are not processes, and they are not routine "business as usual." We often forget that projects are about managing people and performance just as much as they are about planning and plans.

Why is project management so important today?

Working with our clients over the past decade or so made it clear to us that more and more managers were being "asked" by organizations to deliver projects. The managers in question came from a range of disciplines and professions, but almost all of them had one thing in common—none had formal project management training.

"Professional" project managers used to be found only in some large corporations that had dedicated project management offices (PMOs) involved with large strategic programs and initiatives. In addition, many IT departments had project managers working almost continually on software development, upgrades, and roll-out projects. In contrast, for the vast majority of our clients, project managers had "day jobs." They had to fit in the management of projects along with their day-to-day line management activities. These managers were often marketing or customer service managers who were involved from time to time in the delivery of projects for their departments or the wider business.

Project management has stopped being a specialization for a few dedicated individuals and has entered the broad mainstream. We believe that it is a key management capability for the twenty-first century that all managers should acquire and develop.

This book will help you to assess your current skills and then guide you through a project management process. It will show you how to identify the activities involved in the project, how to prioritize them, and how they interrelate. It will help you focus on the critical activities, estimate the risks involved, and plan to avoid them or to mitigate their consequences. Finally, it will show you how to monitor your progress, anticipate problems, and overcome any that occur.

This book is about acquiring and developing this management competence and deploying it not only for the business's benefit, but also for your

own self-development along the way. This is because project management is a skill that people will expect you to have as you rise in the business.

So why is it so difficult—what typically goes wrong?

So now we understand why project management is important, but unfortunately things still go wrong! Consider each of the following potential pitfalls and identify which, if any, will apply to you and your team and what you can do about them quickly.

1 **The project does not have clear goals and objectives.** If project objectives are not clearly stated and understood by the project manager and his team, it is almost impossible for them to plan the relevant activities within the overall project because they simply do not know "what to aim for." An objective such as "Improve customer service" does not help the team plan effective activities and does not help them assess the effectiveness of the overall project. "Answer the phone within four rings, nine times out of ten" does.

2 **There is a lack of alignment to the business.** If projects are not aligned with the corporate strategy or to the business need, then they are in danger of helping the company improve in areas or activities that are not critical to the future direction of the organization. If the project or its objectives are not aligned, resources are being consumed to move the company further from the goals and aspirations that the senior management team has articulated in the strategy. We have seen a project team spending time and money on a division of the business that management had already sold—good for the buyer's shareholders but not so good for shareholders of the selling company.

3 **Key sponsors and stakeholders do not play their parts.** If senior sponsors do not participate in the planning, monitoring, and implementation of certain projects, there are a number of negative implications for the project manager and his team: They get insufficient resources and management attention, tardy decision making delays the project, and budgets may be

inadequate. If senior managers are not seen to be backing a project, functional managers and owners of resources do not see it as having a high priority. In addition, when stakeholders are not involved at the correct time, the project team may overlook important objectives or critical decisions.

4 **The team communicates its objectives poorly.** If the project has clear goals and objectives but these are not communicated appropriately across the team and business, then problems are going to occur during planning and implementation. If they are not told, how are people expected to understand your aims and objectives?

5 **The scope of the project creeps up.** If objectives and project deliverables are not clearly established, there is a danger that the project will suffer from "scope creep." This means that the project will be expected to deliver more benefits than were originally planned, resulting in it being late, over budget, or both. If scope creep occurs, it will be even more difficult to assess the overall success of the project measured by the achievement of the project objectives. It is, however, acceptable to increase or decrease the scope of the project if it is agreed by all parties.

> **Tip**
>
> *QUICK TIP PLANNING*
> Expect to revise your plan several times before implementation and even again when the project is underway. This is what project management is all about. Learn to accept the inevitability of change. Even with the most accurate planning, projects will change, and so the plan needs to be flexible.

6 **The team lacks information on their performance in the project.** If, during the planning and implementation of the project, the manager and team have no sense of what they should be doing or delivering at a given point in time, then their chances of delivering a wholly successful project are substantially reduced.

7 **People are unclear about who is responsible for what.** The simplest of mistakes often occur from a lack of basic, clear

delegation of tasks. This leads to omissions in the project—"Oh! I thought you were doing that"—or duplication of effort, resulting in a waste of time and resources—"We've done that, too," or "Our part of the project covers that as well." When time and resources are critical, there is no excuse for unclear responsibilities.

8 **The team manages and integrates external suppliers poorly.** All too often, stakeholders in a project are viewed as being only those who are internal to the project. However, external stakeholders, such as suppliers, are equally important to the successful completion of the project.

These potential pitfalls can be addressed individually or as part of an integrated framework, such as that presented in Chapter 3. They can also be tackled as part of project or portfolio management and even be included in the monitoring of external trends and influences.

CASE STORY **BISCUIT MANUFACTURER, SIMON'S STORY**

Narrator Simon was brought in as a third-party project management consultant to help with project communication issues on a multisite, international project.

Context A multinational project involving work in the UK and the Middle East. The project was to install equipment on two sites and process products between those two sites.

Issue Planning schedules was a nightmare. The UK site had shop-floor staff working three eight-hour shifts five days a week (Monday to Friday) and management staff working between 9 am and 6 pm (Monday to Friday). The Middle East sites had staff working between 6 am and 2 pm (Saturday to Wednesday).

Solution Simon created a unique project schedule that took into account the different staff work timetables in the UK and also the different work dates in the Middle East. He also recommended appointing a sub-project manager for the Middle Eastern part of the project, who was aware of the working patterns there but could also communicate easily with the UK.

Learning Having a single time frame for the project that took into account three different work schedules made life easier to plan. Having a local manager in the Middle East made communication a lot easier—although the sub-project manager was under a lot of pressure and ended up working very odd hours!

So just what is project management? Frequently asked questions

The following table provides quick answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about project management. Use this as a way of gaining a quick overview.

We hope that these FAQs give a quick start to getting to grips with project

FAQ 1 Where do I start?	1	Often people feel overwhelmed when initially presented with a project. If you have used a methodology or process previously, then ask yourself whether you found it useful or whether it worked for you. If it is appropriate, use the same approach. The starting point is often to really understand the business need, rather than the first activities within the project. Ask the key stakeholder why the project is necessary and what they are hoping to achieve. Once you understand this, you can get more involved with activity.
FAQ 2 Do I have to get a project management qualification?	2	Absolutely not! A lot of project management qualifications are very, very intensive and geared toward full-time, specialist project managers in a certain area or discipline. In our experience most project managers have a "day job" as well as the management of a project. Get some core project skills and techniques under your belt rather than getting a full qualification. Later on, when you are more experienced, you may want to get qualified.
FAQ 3 How many objectives should my project have?	3	It depends. What are you trying to achieve? Too many objectives and they could become contradictory; too few and there is a risk that your project does not deliver enough value. There is no set number, but you need to ensure that the business needs are met. There should be a direct link between the business needs and the project objectives.
FAQ 4 To whom should I go for support?	4	Formally, you should have a project sponsor. His role is to ensure that the rest of the business supports you and your project. In addition, a project review board (PRB) may be available to listen to your comments and answers to questions about the progress of the project. If you are new to project management, then get yourself a mentor to help you with certain project management techniques and answer your questions.

FAQ 5 What's the value of stakeholder analysis?	**5** This is a relatively new phenomenon in project management, which recognizes that even the best-planned projects may fail if they do not get the support of the key people "behind the scenes." Spend some time at the beginning of a project thinking through who could accelerate or kill off your project if they so wanted. These are the key stakeholders, and you need to keep them on your side. Remember, if there is a sniff of success about your project, then everybody will want to be involved.
FAQ 6 How do I get the right people in my project team?	**6** Your core project team will help determine success. In terms of getting the right people, you might want to look at a balance between experience and new people with new ideas. In the projects we have managed we often look for a balance of skills—including those with technical experience of planning and executing the project, as well as those with excellent communication and "people" skills. As contract project managers, coming into a company's project from outside, we would look for a team that can complement our skills, not duplicate them. We look for those people who have knowledge of the subject matter rather than technical planning skills. Only you will know whether the right balance has been struck.
FAQ 7 Do I need to know how to use the Microsoft Project application?	**7** It is people, not software, who run projects. Undoubtedly some project software can be a real benefit, but some very complex and sizeable projects have been successfully delivered using a spreadsheet and Post-it notes! Learn to use a manual technique first and then see if software can help. You may need someone to manage the data production, but focus on the outcomes rather than the tool you use.
FAQ 8 Do I plan from the start or from the projected finish of my project?	**8** Research shows that most people seem to plan from the projected end point of the project. This is sometimes known as the "backward pass" technique. Start from an end point, plan activities and resources, and then put in a projected start date. The start date you will come up with is probably half a year ago, so this is where the fun of "crunching" your project plan starts!
FAQ 9 Are all my activities part of a project?	**9** "To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail!" Once you have some experience in managing projects, there is a temptation to use the technique on all and every task laid before you. Ask yourself: "Do I need to sit down and

	plan this in detail?" If the honest answer is no, then don't overcomplicate things. Use your judgement in deciding the detail required. Think about who is going to use your plan and how.
FAQ 10 What are the most crucial techniques in project management?	**10** Project management is a huge subject area. There are many tools and techniques that you can use, and it is difficult to come up with the crucial few. However, it is often best not to start project activities until you know the following: → Who is the project sponsor, and are they enthusiastic? → What are the agreed objectives? → Has a project plan been calculated?
FAQ 11 In project planning, how do I know that I have remembered everything?	**11** There is no foolproof way to ensure that nothing has been forgotten. History is full of projects that forgot crucial elements until the last minute. Use the project team, sponsors, and stakeholders to help you plan. Ask yourself: "If we complete all the activities, will we meet the project's objectives?" Learn from previous similar projects.
FAQ 12 How do I stop scope creep?	**12** Here are some suggestions to help you avoid scope creep: → Understand the business need and get key stakeholders to sign off the objectives. → Make all objectives SMART: specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, and time bound (see page 41). → Have a clear change control process, with formal sign-off for changes. → Manage all issues and potential changes through regular meetings. → Communicate, communicate, communicate.
FAQ 13 If a project is running off track, how do I kill it before it does damage?	**13** Using a stage-gate process is possibly the best way of ensuring that a project with the potential to go off course can be stopped quickly and easily. Break your project into phases (stages), and between each phase have decision-making meetings (gates). Review progress at each gate and decide "Go," "No Go," "Hold" or "Kill." Have clear criteria at each stage gate.
FAQ 14 There is a "review cycle" as part of my project —how many "cycles" should I plan for in my project?	**14** The risk here is that you review too many times, with the project running over budget and time. Based on research and prior learning, agree in advance how many "cycles" you will plan for: Cost and time those in advance. For example, a client was creating a news-sheet for publication. He had planned on three editorial cycles, that is, editing the copy, sending back for corrections, and amendments. He knew that on average each cycle took a week and added $2,000 to the project in terms of staff costs. If the three cycles were exceeded, then he might have to go

	with what he had or kill off the project. In fact, after two editorial cycles most work was good enough, and he therefore went ahead with it. The project budget was underspent and he had even "gained" a week too.
FAQ 15 I have no project budget—how do I go about calculating one?	**15** As early as possible in the planning phase, use tools like the responsibility assignment matrix (RAM) and the resources matrix (see page 58) to break down resource requirements to the level at which you can start costing tasks and pieces of work. These are simply matrices listing those involved in doing tasks across the top and the project plan down the side. They can detail the resources required or the skills necessary for each task. Use them to add up the costs and assess potential risks, and then use this information as the basis for budgeting.
FAQ 16 My project is complex; do I have to break it down into every single activity?	**16** Delegate where possible. Agree on an overall structure to the project and where possible delegate the creation of a work breakdown structure (WBS) to relevant managers and specialists. However, you and your core team will have to bring all the WBS parts together, so check for duplication, look for synergies and efficiency savings, and then create a master WBS.
FAQ 17 What tools can I use in creating a WBS?	**17** A spreadsheet is as useful as any specialist software. In fact the sticky note is also invaluable for creating an overall structure and outline to the project and is very flexible in breaking a WBS into its constituent parts. Make sure you understand the process of creating a WBS and project planning before investing in specialist software.
FAQ 18 How much detail is required in the WBS?	**18** You have to weigh the risks of underplanning against the costs of overplanning. The creation of a WBS is an iterative process: Go over it several times until you are happy that everything is covered to the level you, as project manager, are happy with. There is no simple answer here, so getting experienced assistance will help.

Tip

QUICK TIP **SCHEDULING**
Start non-critical tasks as early as resources will allow to free up resources later.

FAQ 19 Where do I put in milestones?	19 Wherever and whenever you want to check progress against the plan, put a milestone into the project schedule and coordinate a review meeting at that point. Be careful not to have too many review meetings: make the milestone meetings event-oriented rather than on a regular schedule. Put them at critical points or phases in the project.
FAQ 20 How do I get people to turn up to an end-of-project review?	20 If people are looking forward to the next project, or if the project was not a great success, there will be a reluctance to attend an end-of-project review. Make the review informal—if you serve beer and pizza and use it as a chance to thank people as well as review performance, people may be more inclined to attend! A key principle is that the project team should look to learn before, during, and after each project.

management. The rest of this book shows you how to move from understanding what the key elements of project management are to an active implementation of project management within your team, department, or across the company.

EXPERT VOICE

Managing in complexity—project management as practical wisdom

Dr. Svetlana Cicmil

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Given the highly complex nature of projects and the project management task, it is relevant to ask questions about the degree to which a rational approach to decision making will achieve the desired outcomes. Much of the thinking and writing about project management has emphasised the use of tools and techniques and a 'scientific' or instrumental approach to the task. It would be easy for the newly appointed project manager to make assumptions about the power of a technocratic approach in shaping projects and the project environment. My research[1] is focused

[1] Cicmil, S. and Marshall, D. (2005), "Insights into collaboration at project level: complexity, social interaction and procurement mechanisms," *Building Research and Information*, 33(6), 523–35; Cicmil, S. (2006), "Understanding project management practice through interpretative and critical research perspectives," *Project Management Journal*, 37(2), 27–37.

around the question posed by many starting a project management career: 'What does it mean to be, or take to become, an expert or virtuoso project manager?'

In the course of my research I have developed a framework of the complexity of projects and project environments that enables the exploration of how project managers cope with complexity in practice, how they think in action and what kind of knowledge, skills and competencies they find useful in accomplishing their project management tasks and responsibilities. I have identified three key interrelated concerns, which call for a range of alternative skills for coping with and responding to the challenges in project environments. These concerns result from the fact that projects do not follow a neat pre-planned pathway. The initial plans get influenced by the evolution, emergence and radical unpredictability of the outcomes of decisions, actions and interactions among project participants, as well as by the impact of technology during the project's life. The three interrelated themes of project complexity are:

1 **Criteria and measurement of project performance.** This concern is part of project-related decision making from a conception and approval stage, when the project proposal is evaluated against its prospective, expected or desired benefits. Because we all have only limited decision-making capability in our thought processes, if we are confronted with time and information limitations then we tend to reduce the overall complexity of the problem or challenge to something with which we can cope. This is described as a process of "bounded rationality." In a project, there is a complex interplay between often multiple and conflicting agendas and understandings of technology, and success and risks, among diverse decision makers and project stakeholders. This all results in ambiguity and the equivocality of set project goals, key performance indicators and project success/failure criteria, which then continue throughout the project life cycle. Multiple perspectives are always present on all project issues, where gain and loss often depend on the perspective taken by the stakeholder in question. Coping with the resulting tension between rationality and power requires individual and institutional transparency and accountability. It also needs contractual and institutional checks and balances, driven by performance-enhancing possibilities through participation and future-oriented options rather than by explicit rules governing practices. Ultimately, a helicopter view, an integrative perspective, sound judgement in decision making and the willingness to act in the face of these uncertainties marks out the effective project manager.

EXPERT VOICE

2 Inherent unpredictability of future events affecting the project. People's actions, responses and behavior during project work, as well as changes in technology, expectations and a wider environment affecting project participants and stakeholders, always induce a degree of apprehension in what acting 'professionally' means in the circumstances of 'not knowing' exactly what is coming next. This exposes shortcomings of a dominant 'control' paradigm of project management and its understanding as a technical discipline driven by the assumption of the possibility of detailed planning and prediction. The notion of time-flux accounts for long-planning horizons, implying inevitable change of scope and ambition over time among multiple project parties. This calls for project control that is not just structurally formalized through contracts clauses, penalties and law, but also socialized through participation and collaboration among participants. In this way it becomes possible for the project manager to deal simultaneously with both project implementation (i.e. ensuring that the required work is being accomplished) and direction (facilitating joint action required for project completion) when there is no value equilibrium. Consequently, the distinguishing feature of project managers is not control, but the ability to operate effectively in an ambiguous environment. It is also the ability individually and collectively to maintain their sense of self and their defenses against uncertainty in order to create a collaborative atmosphere in which further joint action is possible toward accomplishing the project.

3 Multi-agency interfaces. Social interaction and processes of relating among project actors (project promoters, funding bodies, public, law representatives, contractors, etc.) with different professional backgrounds, cultures, logics of representation, value systems, and positions of power are complex. During the project's life, over time, these interactions change and will simultaneously be changed by power asymmetries, collaborative intentions, emotions, resistance, micro-diversity, collective learning, and identity-change processes. But because projects are social settings in which people accomplish their tasks not only by performing their job competently but also by interacting with each other, the progress of work as well as the control of project implementation is embedded in and created by this very micro-diversity in the project setting. Good project management therefore is about understanding the potential as well as the complexity of this micro-diversity and relationships over time, and capitalizing on that understanding in order to accomplish the project. This requires the project manager to be sensitive to the

patterns of conversational, cultural, and power-relating that go on in a given project and to be prepared to engage and participate creatively in these processes of interaction. Conversational skills and self-awareness are needed for the project manager to secure the emergence of collaborative action to enable the 'next step' and create a position from which further actions, acceptable to them and other project actors, are possible.

Managing in complexity, i.e. coping simultaneously with unpredictability, change, continuous renegotiation of goals, anxiety and risk, while acting creatively in the moments of 'dislocation' (not knowing, not being in control) outlined previously requires many skills. These include:

→ The ability to pay attention to the quality of conversations that enable action (conversational skills for persuasion, renegotiation of original promises and plans, maintaining encouragement, motivation and confidence, etc.) in the environment where there is a high level of diversity and tension between agendas, interests, or values.

→ The capacity to use both rhetoric (facilitating conversations by introducing 'persuasive themes' that encourage new patterns of behavior and relating) and technical or control devices (contracts, plans, report documents).

→ A good enough control of anxiety when facing unpredictability, with an ability to "think on one's feet."

→ A deep understanding of a project's micro-diversity—both its destructive and constructive potential—and an ability to build alliances and supportive collegiate networks.

→ A sensitivity to one's own action and self-awareness in the environments where multiple value systems and asymmetries of power have emerged under particular historic and social circumstances, often creating "winners and losers."

→ The ability to face as well as to exercise power.

These proposed skills of an expert project manager embrace intuition, judgement, and social and political virtuosity in local contexts. They can be sharply contrasted with the mainstream, conventional prescriptions for 'best practice' in project management, which promote a more instrumental, technical kind of expert knowledge. The project manager's daily job (monitoring, control, replanning, reporting, communication with stakeholders, decision making) should be seen as social and political action guided by a context-dependent skill: an

EXPERT VOICE

ability to think and act by transparently acknowledging and deliberating about values and interests in the context and by encouraging dialogue and voices from different project groups in deciding on the project direction. This is a move beyond the limited perception of project managers as skilful technicians and requires innovative and creative models of management development and education, acknowledging the role of experience and self-reflection in creating the kind of well-rounded, social competence of project managers, just outlined.

2

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AUDIT

To improve performance, you first need to understand what your starting point is, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and how each will promote or limit what you can achieve. There are two levels of awareness you need to have. The first is to understand what the most effective teams or businesses, in terms of project management, look like and behave and how near your team is to emulating them. The second is to understand what it takes to lead such a team—do you personally have the necessary attributes for success?

Team assessment

Is my team maximizing its potential to manage projects?

Use the following checklist to assess the current state of your team, considering each element in turn. Use a simple Red-Amber-Green evaluation, where Red reflects areas where you feel strongly that the statement is not correct in your organization and suggests there are significant issues requiring immediate attention. Amber suggests areas of concern and risk, and Green means that you are happy with your current state.

ID	CATEGORY	EVALUATION CRITERIA	STATUS
Project management			RAG
P1	Business needs	Projects are well aligned to business imperatives and reflect customer and consumer needs; interdependencies with other projects are highlighted.	☐
P2	Project goals	All projects have clear objectives with agreed key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets, and each has established a business case or return on investment.	☐
P3	Stakeholders	Key stakeholders are identified and their commitment assessed; teams actively plan to take action to win over resisters.	☐
P4	Workplan and timing	Tasks and priorities are defined; the critical path identified and milestones agreed.	☐
P5	Issues and risks	Issues and risks are identified, corrective actions agreed, and change requests managed; contingency plans are in place.	☐
P6	The team	Project leaders are selected appropriately, and teams are built with clear roles and responsibilities.	☐
P7	Critical decisions	Critical decisions are identified, a decision-making process is agreed, and buy-in to the resulting decisions is gained from key stakeholders.	☐
P8	Resources and budget	Resource requirements are identified and assessed in terms of quantity and quality, and budgets are agreed.	☐
P9	Project leadership	The right people are appointed as project sponsors; project leaders have the right skills, right way of thinking and right level of commitment.	☐
P10	Communications	A process of communication is agreed that ensures the right information goes to the right stakeholders in the right format at the right time.	☐

CASE STORY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, GRAHAM'S STORY

Narrator Graham is a project manager within a central government department on a major infrastructure project (he is a contractor on a long-term contract).

Context In common with other government projects that operate across a number of departments, a steering committee of senior staff had been appointed to oversee progress. This group meets once a month, causing the project team to drop things for half a day to prepare for the meeting, spend half a day in the meeting and another half a day in following up.

Issue The time taken up by these meetings was causing project delay and cost overrun, as well as morale problems among the project leaders and teams.

Solution Graham assigned one person per team to the task of looking after each steering committee. Their job was simple—save project team time. They used only information that the project team was already generating and did not ask for any help in preparation. They got close to members of the committee and used that relationship to shield the teams. They did all the follow-up.

Learning Do not just accept procedures that are counterproductive. You do not necessarily have to take them on and get them changed, but look for a way of reducing the pain on project teams.

Self-assessment

Do I have what it takes?

This section presents a self-assessment checklist of the factors that make a successful Fast Track leader in project management. These reflect the knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and behaviors required to get to the top, irrespective of your current level of seniority. Take control of your career, behave professionally, and reflect on your personal vision for the next five years. This assessment creates a framework for action throughout the rest of the book.

> **Tip**
>
> *QUICK TIP* **REVIEW**
> Review past projects of a similar nature. Find out the pitfalls and potential risk areas—and also where easy wins can be made.

So, this next section "audits" you as an individual in the knowledge, competencies, attitudes and behaviors usually associated with success in the leadership and management of projects. Use the checklist on the next page to identify where you personally need to gain knowledge or skills. Fill it in honestly and then get someone who knows you well, your boss or a key member of your team, to go over it with you. Be willing to change your assessment if people give you insights into yourself that you had not taken into account.

Use the following scoring process:

0 A totally new area of knowledge or skills

1 You are aware of the area but have low knowledge and/or lack skills

2 An area where you are reasonably competent and working on improvement

3 An area where you have a satisfactory level of knowledge and skills

4 An area where you are consistently well above average

5 You are recognized as a key figure in this area of knowledge and skills throughout the business

Reflect on the lowest scores and identify those areas that are critical to success. Flag these as status Red, requiring immediate attention. Then identify those areas that you are concerned about and flag those as status Amber, implying areas of development that need to be monitored closely. Status Green implies that you are satisfied with the current state.

ID	CATEGORY	EVALUATION CRITERIA	SCORE	STATUS
Knowledge			0–5	RAG
K1	Industry and markets	I have a deep knowledge of my industry in terms of scope (boundaries), overall size and growth, and major trends. As a result I have a clear understanding of the type of projects that will naturally occur.		
K2	Business context	I have a good understanding of where my project(s) fit and link to the business strategy. I make people aware of what they contribute to the long-term growth strategy of the organization.		
K3	Portfolio management	I know how projects relate to each other and understand priorities, resource limitations, and potential areas of internal project conflict.		
K4	Best practice	I am aware of the latest thinking in project management as a discipline and know about those tools and techniques rated as "fit for purpose" within my organization.		
Competencies				
C1	Project management	I have the ability to define, plan, monitor, and control change activities in order to deliver identified performance improvements on time and within budget.		
C2	Risk management	I can think ahead and identify, prioritize, and mitigate barriers to effective and enduring implementation within projects.		
C3	Decision making	I am proficient at identifying areas for decisions, generating options, understanding the risks of alternatives, and communicating decisions to stakeholders.		
C4	Communication	I have a high level of skill in communicating high-level visions, objectives and detailed plans to differing project teams as clearly and concisely as possible.		

ID	CATEGORY	EVALUATION CRITERIA	SCORE	STATUS
Attitudes			0–5	RAG
A1	Flexibility	I have developed the mindset that if things go astray, I seek and act upon other ways of reaching the project objectives.		
A2	Continual improvement	I learn from past successes and failures and strive to get better and better with each new project.		
A3	High expectations	I expect the best from all involved in the project and set high professional standards throughout.		
A4	Results-oriented	Achieving the goal, despite setbacks and changes, is uppermost in my mind for the duration of the project. This is linked to remaining flexible in all things.		
Behaviors				
B1	Directional	I make decisions or take risks on my own when appropriate. However, I can be autocratic and controlling if the project faces a crisis and there is no time to consult.		
B2	Analytical	I insist on detailed facts, observations, and analysis to enable the right strategic decisions to be made and risks to be assessed.		
B3	Opinion seeking	I ask for input and opinions in order to make decisions, so building confidence in teams and individuals and getting buy-in from stakeholders.		
B4	Democratic	I encourage team participation and involvement and empower team members, to help strengthen commitment to the project.		

Tip

QUICK TIP PLANNING
With multiple projects, put them in order of priority as soon as possible to avoid damaging and costly conflicts later on.

Audit summary

Take a few minutes to reflect on the leadership–team effectiveness matrix that follows and consider your current position: Where are you, and what are the implications?

→ **Bottom left—poor leadership and an ineffective team.** This will result in failure: who knows, you may already be too late.

→ **Top left—great leadership but a poor team.** You have a great vision but will be unlikely to implement it, and so it will have little impact. You will need to find a way of taking people with you and introducing systems and processes to improve team effectiveness.

→ **Bottom right—poor leadership but a great team.** You are highly effective and efficient as a team but may well be going in the wrong direction through poor leadership.

→ **Top right—clear leadership and direction combined with an efficient and effective team.** This is where we want to be. Lots of great new ideas for project management linked to current business goals and with a team unit capable of delivering on time and within budget. You don't need this book—please give it to someone else!

Tip
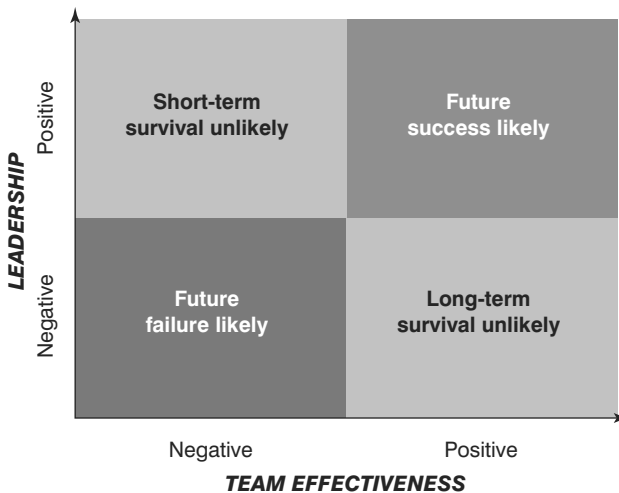
QUICK TIP RESOURCES
Estimate costs carefully. Use estimation techniques when getting many different costs for the same task. Remember that once costs are approved, you are bound by them.

STOP – THINK – ACT
Part A has given you a quick overview of what project management is, and you will also have assessed the performance of yourself and your team against best practice checklists. This will have raised your awareness of what is possible and clarified where you are now.

   Take time to reflect on your profile in order to identify any "quick wins" you could achieve today and to see which chapters of the book could help the most. Look for areas where you could get a "quick win" and improve matters in the short term. Ask yourself and the team these questions:

What should we do?	What will we change today, and what difference will it make (why)?
Who do we need to involve?	Who else needs to be involved to make it work and why?
What resources will we require?	What information, facilities, materials, equipment, or budget will be required, and are they available?
What is the timing?	When will this change be implemented—is there a deadline?

Visit www.Fast-Track-Me.com to use the Fast Track online planning tool.

Managing risk on projects
Dr. Stephen Simister

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There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction. (John F. Kennedy)

Projects are undertaken in order to realize opportunity. Risk is present in all projects. Hence, projects are a balance of risk and opportunity. A high-risk project will have to yield a high level of opportunity to make the project worthwhile. The challenge for project management is to reduce the risk while maximizing the opportunity. My focus here is on risk.[1]

Project managers are routinely involved in making decisions that have a major impact on risk. In practice, many key project decisions are taken, consciously or otherwise, to mitigate risk. But risk management is concerned with establishing a formal set of processes and practices by which risk is managed, rather than being dealt with by default. The effective management of risk, while the responsibility of project management, can only be achieved by the actions of the whole project team, including the client.

Risk management is a process for identifying, assessing, and responding to risks associated with delivering an objective—for example, constructing a new office building—and the focus here is on commercial-type risks. Health and safety-related risks are likely to need separate consideration and are outside the scope of this discussion. Risk management formalizes the intuitive approach to risk that project teams often undertake. By utilizing a formal approach, project teams can manage risk in a more proactive manner, shaping and molding the future state of a project. In addition, there needs to be an overall risk management strategy so that this risk management process is implemented in a coordinated fashion. This strategy should include how risk management will be integrated into the project management process throughout the project's life cycle.

Risk management should be flexible, adapting to the circumstances of the client's needs and the project. Some clients require a snapshot of the risks at the outset of the project, with an initial risk assessment, the provision of a one-off risk register, and a quick estimate of the combined effect. Other projects may require a full risk management service, with risk being continually addressed throughout the project.

Risk management should be undertaken as part of a structured, formal process that needs to be aligned to the overall approach to project management. These are the key elements that need to be considered as part of a risk management process:

→ Identify staff and resources that will be involved in the risk management process.

→ Define lines of reporting and responsibility for the risk management process.

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[1] Further information can be found in Simister, S. J. (2004), "Qualitative and quantitative risk management" in P.W.G. Morris and J.K. Pinto (eds), *The Wiley Guide to Managing Projects*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. For opportunity management see Hillson, D. (2008), *Effective Opportunity Management for Projects: Exploiting Positive Risk*, Abingdon: Marcel Dekker.

→ Link the risk management plan to other project management tools, such as safety, quality and environmental management, and planning and reporting systems.

→ Consolidate all risks identified into an appropriate and digestible response strategy, in order that cumulative effects can be perceived.

→ State risk audit intervals and key milestones.

→ Include risk milestones in project plans.

→ Identify possible response strategies and programs for each risk category, including contingency plans and how to handle new or unresolved risks.

→ Assess the costs involved.

→ Monitor the success of responses strategies and produce feedback for reporting into future projects.

The management of risk is such a key element in any project that the project manager needs not only to be knowledgeable about the process, but also to be proactive in examining and monitoring risks throughout the lifetime of the project. Part of good decision-making practice is clearly to assess the risk as part of the decision-making process, but it is often given scant attention. An important consideration for the project manager is that of recognizing when to call in experts to ensure that the approach is sound. The potential downside of poor risk management is the impact not only on project success but also on realizing new opportunities by undertaking future projects. Appropriately, Sir Winston Churchill said, 'The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.'

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Items in **bold** relate to entries in the Glossary.