

Creating the Plan

Beyond the loathing and the fear lies one of the best-kept secrets in American business. "Planning," it turns out, is really no more—and no less—than another word for good management.

—BRUCE G. POSNER—

"Planning is the key," the project manager explained to her assistant as their lunch came to an end. "I invited you here today to emphasize that point. As part of this team, I expect you to understand the importance of planning ahead."

She stopped as the waiter approached and accepted the tab. She looked at the total for a moment, then whispered to her assistant, "Can you lend me twenty dollars?"

All successful projects begin with a clear definition of the end result. You need to identify the purpose and structure of the job, what the outcome will look like upon completion, the problems that will be solved, and the objectives you need to meet in your capacity of project manager. Before you actually begin work on any project, be sure that you ask these questions:

- ***Exactly what objectives am I expected to meet?*** Has the project been defined well enough so that you understand your assignment?

If not, you need to ask for clarification. By identifying objectives, you will be able to define the proper end result.

- ***Who is the project for?*** Another way to define the end result is by making sure you know who will use the project results, and for what purpose. Does an executive want the information in order to make a more informed decision? Or is the report going to be published for all to see? In other words, who is the audience?

- ***What problems will be solved by the end result?*** Coming up with a new procedure, identifying the feasibility of an idea, or arriving at conclusions about the market's response to a new product; all are end results of projects. However, to ensure that the end result is worthwhile, you also need to know what problems are to be solved by the effort you put into the project.

Setting Leadership Goals

After you arrive at a clear definition, schedule, and budget for your project, you need to plan for leading your project team. Because team members often view projects as intrusions into their normal routines, or extra work imposed on them, you may have to contend with resistance within the team, or at the very least assist team members in resolving scheduling conflicts.

To make a project work smoothly, you may also need to alter your

Other Resources

Project management planning contains many aspects—from configuration management and problem tracking systems to asset management training, consulting, and career advancement issues—that are beyond the scope of this book. For an interesting online exercise including free advice and consultation, check the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) website www.mit.edu/ist/pmm/. Although the methodology on this site is directed at specific projects, its toolkit and requirements sections are very useful to any project manager.

leadership style. Define your functions clearly along with the specific functions of the team. Some suggestions are listed in Figure 3-1 and expanded on here:

1. ***Clarify your leadership role.*** While department managers develop their leadership style over time, the project manager does not have the same luxury. As a project manager, you often are thrust into the role on a temporary basis, often having to lead individuals who do not report to you in normal circumstances. Even employees reporting to you will be operating in a different environment as part of the project team. Thus, it is essential that you let your project team know how you perceive your role as team leader.

Your stance should be altered to suit the complexity of the project, the time it will take, and the size and personalities of your team. Most projects will require you to act not so much as supervisor, but more as a coordinator. Your primary function will involve oversight, or working to ensure that resources work together, schedules are followed, budgets are controlled, and the end result is kept firmly in mind. As a department manager, you may perform daily routines along with employees; as project manager, your role probably will not allow for as much direct participation in the execution of tasks.

Figure 3-1. Project leadership goals.

1. Clarify your leadership role.
2. Follow through on all aspects of the job.
3. Emphasize organization and scheduling.
4. Be aware of team priorities and conflicts.
5. Be available to team members.
6. Ask for participation and respond to it.
7. Always remember the end result.

2. ***Follow through on all aspects of the job.*** Remember that because projects are exceptions, team members won't understand their roles as well as you would like. Most employees are going to approach their tasks with a point of view developed in the department, where permanent assignments are typical. You may need to work closely with some team members to ensure that they understand what they are expected to do. Your emphasis should be on the fact that the routines performed are temporary in nature. Some individuals will have difficulty understanding the perspective, so your job is to educate and train.

3. ***Emphasize organization and scheduling.*** You will depend on exceptional organization and strict adherence to a schedule in order to meet your deadline. Thus, the division of assignments to team members has to be thought through carefully. It may help to write down everything and to develop checklists to ensure that work progresses as expected, everyone knows what their role is in the bigger picture, and each phase is finished on time. Also keep a checklist for yourself of problems that arise as you progress through the job. Attack problems immediately and resolve them to ensure that you will be able to finish one phase and get the next one going.

4. ***Be aware of team priorities and conflicts.*** On a practical level, your team members need to continue performing their regular routines in addition to working on your project. That means they face deadlines and crunch times in their departmental cycles, and during those times your project will take a low priority. This situation is augmented when team members report to you for the project and to someone else in their departmental routines.

Talk to each team member and identify how their work cycles progress. Arrange your own schedule to allow for their routine demands. If necessary, reassign tasks or provide double coverage for ongoing project demands so that work doesn't have to stop for a week at a time. Also, stay in touch with each team member's supervisor to help avoid priority conflicts.

5. ***Be available to team members.*** As an effective project manager, you need to provide team members with the support they need.

This means that you are the problem solver on the team. You need to make yourself available to help team members work through problems, including project-related difficulties as well as scheduling conflicts.

6. ***Ask for participation and respond to it.*** A project team should function more efficiently than a department in at least one important respect: The project requires true teamwork, whereas the department is characterized by a well-established relationship between a leader and followers. Using the model of the organizational chart, a department tends to work vertically, whereas a project team tends to function more horizontally. You are the project leader, but the team attribute is emphasized more. Thus, the level of participation by team members also tends to be different. Ask your team to offer ideas and solutions, to explore alternatives that can make the project more successful. Be willing to change your procedures when a team member comes up with a better idea.

7. ***Always remember the end result.*** Project managers can lose sight of the desired end result when they are busy solving schedule and budget problems, working through team members' conflicts, and trying to balance their own recurring duties with those of the project. You will need to remind yourself constantly what you are trying to achieve in the project and how your decisions need to be aimed at that end result.

Building Your Resource Network

Project managers plan effectively by identifying and then building a network. This network consists of people from their department, other departments, and in some cases, outside of the company.

Having the right people on your project team is essential for the success of the project, whether their role is active or advisory. You will coordinate and execute your project with a combination of a fairly small core team and an extensive advisory network. This keeps down costs and maximizes efficiency. The bigger the team, the more difficult it will be to keep things organized, so the small core team can help to streamline the entire process.

Example 1

A sales department manager was assigned the project of developing procedures for the sales force for following up with customers. Salespeople had not been delivering orders correctly and in some cases did not supply all of the information necessary for order fulfillment. This situation led to a higher than acceptable level of returns and numerous customer complaints. The sales manager was asked to revamp procedures, rewrite a manual, and design a new order form that would ensure that the fulfillment department would be able to correctly deliver the goods.

The project manager wrote up a list of the people who could help meet the project objectives. They included:

- ***Salespeople Familiar With the Order Completion Process and Its Problems.*** Their participation would include suggestions on how to improve the entire process, most notably in the design of an improved order form. In addition, these employees would be valuable in suggesting ways to improve their follow-up procedures with customers.

- ***The Manager of the Fulfillment Department.*** This individual was aware of the same problems, but from the other side. This manager would provide the project manager with information about how to help the fulfillment side to work more efficiently, including suggestions for form design and improved communication between the sales and fulfillment departments.

- ***A Customer Service Employee.*** This employee from the customer service department had recently completed a report summarizing the nature of complaints received from customers. This employee was aware of the errors reported by customers as well as the growing trend in complaints. The problems related to delays, shipment of the wrong products, incomplete orders, and lack of follow-up by the salesperson.

- ***Outside Supplier.*** The supplier provided input on the design and printing of new forms.

In addition, the project manager assigned two employees from the sales department to help with the task of compiling information from other team members and designing preliminary forms, writing drafts of new procedures, and following up on suggestions from others. One of the most important functions of the project was to come up with one form and one procedure that would satisfy the requirements of three departments: sales, fulfillment, and customer service.

Example 2

A sales manager included two sales department employees on the project team, but also included advisory team members from the sales, fulfillment, and customer service departments. The ''core'' project team included the project manager and two sales employees; this group managed the majority of the work compiled from others and put in the greatest number of hours.

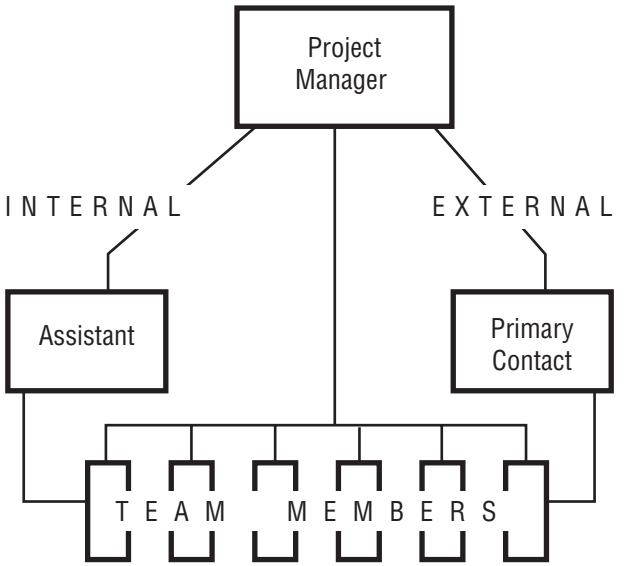
Structuring Your Project Team

In addition to separating out your core team and advisory team members, you also need to decide how to organize the structure of the project team. You may employ a direct report structure or an organizational structure. The best alternative depends on the nature of the project, the number of team members, and your personal preferences and management/delegation style.

A direct structure is one in which you, as project manager, are in direct contact with each and every team member, without a middle reporting layer. This alternative makes sense when your core team includes relatively few people and is similar to the organizational makeup of a small department. It is simple, involves a desirable element of direct contact, and lacks the bureaucracy that sometimes results when middle reporting layers are created. The direct team structure is illustrated in Figure 3-2.

The organizational structure becomes necessary when the complexity of your project requires a larger team, meaning that the control and monitoring functions take up most of your time. The larger, more

Figure 3-2. Direct team structure.

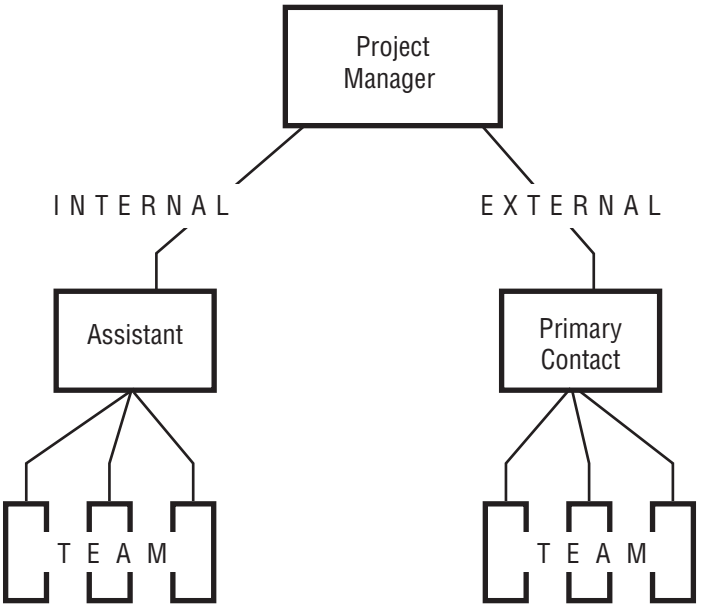


complex project demands a more formal reporting network, including at the very least an internal assistant to oversee the work of team members. You delegate supervisory responsibility to the assistant so that your own time can be used to control and oversee the project. To operate as an effective project manager, you should continue to keep in touch with all team members and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. Remember, the project is temporary and has to operate efficiently; complex power structures will destroy the project completely. The purpose of the organizational structure is to share responsibility for a large group while effectively managing the budget and schedule. This structure is illustrated in Figure 3-3.

Example

You are responsible for two projects. The first is a short-term, fairly simple job involving three employees in your department. For this project, you are using the direct team structure. Your second project is far more complicated, both in its objective and the size of your team. You

Figure 3-3. Organizational team structure.



appoint an assistant to coordinate the work of the internal team members, and you also depend on a fellow manager who is the primary contact for outside resources (i.e., project team members in that manager's department). Your primary function is to ensure that the budget is not exceeded and that each phase is completed on time.

Defining the Project's Scope

Once your team is in place, an initial meeting to discuss the project's scope can be revealing. Even if you believe you have a thorough grasp of the project, you may be surprised to learn quite a lot from team members. This is likely to expand the project to include valuable benefits or processes you had not anticipated.

Broadly speaking, you need to make sure your team members understand exactly what the project is designed to accomplish. This is not always possible by project title alone. So a starting point is needed to explain why the project is being done, what problems it is intended to

fix, and how improvements are going to work. This requires not only a clear definition of what needs to be done, but also of the desired outcome. As obvious as all this might seem, many plans are launched without this initial discussion among leaders and team members.

As a secondary point, it is essential to discuss how this project fits into the larger organizational puzzle. Many people, even including managers, have a myopic view of the organization and how their functions fit into it. For example, a mailroom employee might say that the business of the organization is to receive and send mail. An accountant may say the business of the organization is to document expenses and write checks, and a marketing employee sees the business as attracting a larger market. These are all aspects of the overall company, but invariably there is more to it. The discussion any group of organizational employees can have about this question is going to be enlightening, especially if your team includes people from different departments.

If the project crosses departmental or sector lines, the scope is going to be more complex than a project existing within departmental lines. Your actions have to consider territorial interests, schedules, and possibly even conflicts among supervisors and managers, some of whom may view a change in agenda as a direct threat. Who is impacted? How can you describe a project in terms of *benefits* rather than as imposed changes?

Finally, invite team members to talk about the stakeholders to the project. These are often much more complex than some people will assume. A stakeholder is not always limited to the people who generate input, process it, or receive the output. Every business operating unit affected by the process is also a stakeholder. If your project has a direct impact on sales and marketing, you need employees from those departments on your team, so that impacts on those departments and on customers will be monitored and considered. In other words, the assumption should not be limited only to those who are expected to do the work; it has to expand to include a range of departments and individuals affected by the work as well. In some very formalized projects, especially those operated as part of a Six Sigma venue, stakeholders are named to sit on a steering committee overseeing the project or assigned a position on the team. In some instances, oversight commit-

tees have to approve recommended changes. The scope of this close oversight is going to vary based on your mandate, the scope of the project, and management's philosophy about how closely project managers have to be monitored or how freely they are allowed to operate.

This initial discussion with your team should be at the core of your project announcement meeting, which can be thought of as the kickoff for the team itself. The tone set during this meeting relies on how willingly team members are participating, overall organizational morale, internal team building and training, and your own leadership style.

Holding a Project Announcement Meeting

Getting your project off to a healthy, well-defined start depends on your approach. How you lead, how you define work processes and goals, and how you organize your team all determine how the project will proceed. It is important as part of this preliminary step to communicate your purpose and your approach to the project team. Thus, the project announcement meeting is essential.

An initial gathering of your project team helps set the tone of teamwork from the very beginning. For a relatively small investment of time, you can achieve a lot in terms of communication and, at the same time, help avoid misunderstandings about the purpose of the project, team member participation, and authority/responsibility levels.

Example

The accounting department manager was assigned the project of establishing departmental budgeting procedures. This included meeting with every department manager and identifying budget problems in the past, then developing procedures to document budget assumptions for the future. However, none of the department managers were informed that the project even existed. When the project team members showed up to interview department managers, it caused confusion, suspicion, and resentment. The project was off to a poor start.

This project would have been easier to execute if the project man-

ager had held an initial meeting that included department managers. This meeting would have been an opportunity to explain the assignment, the procedures that would be followed, and the probable end result.

If you receive a project assignment, begin with an announcement meeting that includes all members of the team and all departments affected. Also, ask your supervisor to attend and explain the project to the attendees. Once everyone knows what you are doing and why, as well as where the project originated, your job will be much easier.

If your idea for an announcement meeting meets with resistance, explain why the meeting is important with these three points:

1. Announcing a new project defines it for everyone involved and clarifies the intended purpose. The time invested in the meeting will save a lot more time later on.

2. The meeting helps ensure success because everyone gets the message at the same time and from the same source. Your ability to lead the team is aided greatly when the project is launched from the top.

3. A demonstration of executive support for the project manager helps the team achieve its goals. However, it is also necessary to let others in on the decision when they will be affected by the project's outcome.

If you have identified your project team by the time the announcement meeting takes place, it makes it easier to explain the scope of the project to other managers, supervisors, and department members. There is, however, an important difference between trying to complete a project task that conflicts with departmental routines and working with other managers to resolve problems. There are two classifications of managers who will be affected by your project:

- Those whose procedures will be affected by the outcome of your project

- Those supervising employees who will also be a part of your project team

The crossover issues involved with project management can be the most difficult to resolve, so inviting those managers to your announcement meeting is a smart idea. The alternative is to face continual struggles, conflicts, and even resentment from other managers.

Setting Project Objectives

Once your project has been launched, how do you get your team members to work together? Appointing people and handing out assignments is only the beginning. Communication between the project manager and the rest of the team is the only way to ensure that your project is going to succeed.

After the announcement meeting (which should be attended by all affected managers and external resources), you next need an initial core team meeting. Attendees are those people who will be doing the actual work on the project and coordinating the contributions of all outsiders. Obviously, your project will never get off the ground if you hold an endless series of meetings; therefore, this second meeting should be brief and limited, and afterward, there may be little or no actual meetings whatsoever. This meeting has the purpose of identifying how each team member will take part in the overall work. The agenda should be limited to five points, as listed in Figure 3-4 and explained here:

1. ***List the problems the team will solve.*** Start with a list of your own and invite team members to add to it. Different points of view will help you to better define your objectives in the project.

2. ***Offer solutions the team should achieve.*** After identifying problems, try to match up likely solutions. This defines the basic work of the project. Ask the team to propose alternatives and expand on your list. This exercise also helps to define the team's approach to the work ahead.

Figure 3-4. Agenda for an initial project meeting.

1. List the problems the team will solve.
2. Offer solutions the team should achieve.
3. Describe information the team will need.
4. Propose initial assignments.
5. Plan the entire project in advance.

3. ***Describe information the team will need.*** Write down information you need to find out and identify your possible sources. Again, ask the team members to add to your list.

4. ***Propose initial assignments.*** Identify task areas and suggest which team members you believe are best suited to take responsibility for them. However, don't finalize any assignments at this point. This is supposed to be an initial planning and brainstorming meeting only. Allow team members to define their own roles as much as possible, which will encourage participation.

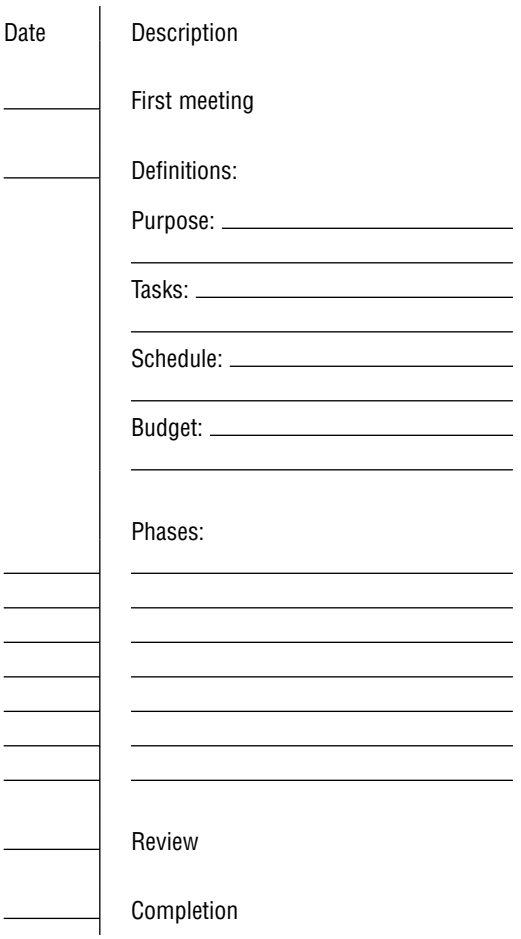
5. ***Plan the entire project in advance.*** Establish the initial division of responsibility. This gives the team a good idea of the overall scope of the project. Later, when you put together a schedule and budget, you can fine-tune this step in consultation with team members. You can then take into account any scheduling conflicts and strive for a fair division of workload.

Developing the Initial Schedule

Once you have drafted the preliminary division of responsibilities, you will have a fair idea of how the project will proceed. At this point you can develop your first draft of a schedule. This should be divided into phases. A worksheet for the schedule is provided in Figure 3-5.

Begin with two dates: start (i.e., first meeting) and completion. In between, you will need to identify logical phases (including responsi-

Figure 3-5. Initial schedule.



bility for completion among team members) and a realistic deadline for each phase.

Some phases can overlap. This provides some flexibility in the schedule. When two or more team members are working independently, it is not always necessary for one phase to be completed before some of the work on another phase can begin. What may seem a tight deadline at first glance can be loosened up considerably with some overlapping. At the same time, it is also helpful to allow flexibility; if

one phase falls behind, it may be possible to catch up in a subsequent phase.

Your initial schedule should include deadlines for the following items:

- Definition of the project's purpose, tasks, scheduling, and budget
- Identification of each project phase
- Review of completed phases
- Completion (e.g., preparation of a report, documentation, forms, and other project results)

Remember that this is the preliminary schedule for the project, intended only to give you a general idea of the scope of the project. You need to maintain flexibility at this point because as your team begins to develop its own ideas about the scope of the project, the schedule will need to be modified.

After the initial review of the schedule, you need to develop a more comprehensive phase and task listing that includes the final schedule, information sources and types, and a budget. As you move from a preliminary to final schedule, ask team members for suggestions.

Identifying Key Elements Necessary for Project Success

If you begin your project with an announcement meeting and an initial project team meeting, you will already have a fairly good idea of the project's scope. Now you need to identify the elements needed to achieve your goals. These include information resources, a budget, and commitment from your team members.

Information

The first element is information resources. Raw data and other information will come from other departments, existing reports or studies, and

outside sources. If the information you need does not exist or is not available to you and your team members, you need to research and develop data on your own.

Analyze your information requirements by answering these questions:

- ***What sources can supply available information, and what information will have to be developed by the project team?*** If information already exists, identify it and make use of it. Developing your own information bank takes time and resources that can be better spent on other project phases.

- ***How will we verify information?*** Be aware that someone else's information may be out of date, inaccurate, or contain the wrong emphasis. If your conclusions will be based on information supplied by someone else, you need to be able to check original sources and verify its accuracy.

- ***How much time will it take to get information from an outside source?*** Build time into your schedule to allow for delays between the request for and delivery of information.

- ***How much time will it take to study and arrange the information we receive or develop?*** Getting the information is just the first step. Translating raw data into useful information takes a considerable time commitment; this activity has to be built into your project schedule. How will the team approach and interpret information? Establish standards for the objective analysis of information. Strive to remove bias from your work so that your conclusions are objective. Use the scientific method. The scientific method is an approach to research that ensures objectivity and tests results without built-in bias. It can be used in business as well as in the laboratory. The workings of the scientific method require precise and specific working steps to ensure complete objectivity. It begins with definition and clarification; then it involves steps to ensure that the test is valid and appropriate. For example, applied to a market survey, you would want to make sure you sampled typical consumers to see whether a product would be purchased

by them. If your sample population does not represent the larger population as a whole, then the sampling data will be wrong as well.

The problem of ensuring that the hypothesis of a test is valid is, perhaps, the most difficult part of any test; the scientific data goes on to document the methods used by the testing group to ensure objectivity and to prove whatever conclusions are reached. By following the rules from beginning to end of the process, you ensure consistency and reliability in the final conclusion. It is further explained on the website http://teacher.nsrl.rochester.edu/phy_labs/AppendixE/AppendixE.html.

Budget

Your project budget should be planned with staffing and information sources in mind. Will you need to buy equipment, pay for outside information, cover travel expenses, or print up a final report? If you need to develop illustrative material, what is the cost? In other words, you need to think of everything. The project budget is just like a departmental budget, except that you have no historical spending pattern for reference.

Maximum control will be possible if you break down your budgeting process by project phase. In that way, you can monitor actual versus budgeted expenses as the project proceeds. Without this feature, you will have difficulty controlling overall expenses. Your objective should be to identify variances as soon as they occur and take steps to correct the problem and prevent further overruns.

In addition, plan for a budget review process. Will you break down each project phase and compare budget to actual? Will you delegate budget review? And what steps will you take if you discover overruns?

Team Commitment

The level of motivation among your core team members defines the entire project. You can lead by example by maintaining a sense of participation and commitment. But also be aware of these factors:

- ***Day-to-day commitments.*** Team members have to continue executing their own departmental routines as well as respond to your project requirements.

- ***Priorities.*** If team members view projects as impositions on their schedules, it will be difficult to inspire and lead them. Preliminary planning, responsibility assignments, and a participative management style help alleviate this problem.

- ***Coordination.*** If you can demonstrate through organizational ability and preplanning that you will help team members work well together, they will be more likely to respond in a positive manner. However, if they sense that the process is poorly defined, that objectives are not spelled out, or that procedures are inefficient, you will not achieve a coordinated team effort.

- ***Leadership support.*** As project manager, your emphasis should be on coordinating the team's efforts, staying on schedule, and meeting your budget. Beyond that, you also need to support team members in varying degrees. Some people may work well alone, whereas others will need to be trained and walked through their assignments. Expect team members to look to you to help them solve task-related problems, understand how to approach their assignments, overcome resistance from outside sources, and manage their own scheduling conflicts.

Your project will work best when you invest energy and time in planning thoroughly—before the project actually begins. Teams function well when the leader defines and organizes the task ahead and when the end result is explained clearly and agreed upon by the whole team. This is possible only when you choose the best people for the job; the specific team should be an appropriate match for the project. Chapter 3 explores the selection of team members and identification of areas of responsibility.

WORK PROJECT

1. Describe a project team situation where the use of the direct team structure is appropriate, and explain the advantages of this system.
2. Describe the types of project teams that are better managed using the organizational team structure. Compare this method to the direct team structure.
3. List the five topics that should be included on the agenda of the initial project meeting.



Choosing the Project Team

You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.

—DALE CARNEGIE—

''I don't think I'm going to enjoy myself working on this project,'' an employee told a friend. ''We just finished up our first meeting, and the manager talked the whole time about teamwork.''

''Then why are you so worried?'' the friend asked.

''It wasn't what he said that disturbed me,'' the first one replied. ''It was those steel marbles he played with the whole time.''

The members of the core team ultimately determine whether or not a project succeeds. Whether it's a troop of Boy Scouts or the crew of an aircraft carrier, everyone on the team needs to agree on common goals before they can work together.

The larger your team and the greater its diversity, the more complicated your project management task. A team with only two members—

one leader and one subordinate—involves a singular line of communication. A team consisting of people from several departments involves more complex communication, as well as the opportunity for conflicts in goals and motives.

The Imposed Team Problem

As the theory goes, a project manager is named and allowed to gather a team of his or her own choosing. In practice, however, teams can be selected before you are even consulted.

At the time you receive the project assignment, you may be advised that the team has been selected in advance. For example, an executive may believe the team should be selected at the senior-most level, and the motive may be a worthwhile one. When team members need to be drawn from several different departments, the executive may believe it's easier to gain cooperation from other department managers when the assignment comes from the top. However, an imposed team poses several problems for you as project manager.

If you are given the assignment and team members without the opportunity to be involved in their selection, you start out with a clear disadvantage. If you haven't been allowed to pick individuals for your team, it's also possible that they may not have been given a choice. In addition, it is possible that the people selected may not be qualified, and other department managers may not be happy with the choices, either.

An equally poor situation is created when an executive asks other department managers to pick employees from their departments to serve on your project team. There will be a tendency to select the most dispensable employees for the task, meaning that you will not be provided with the best available team members for the job. Remember, it often happens that a project team consists not of the most capable people, but of the most available. When the project manager does not pick the team participants directly, problems will arise.

To solve the problems associated with the imposed team, consider the list of ideas presented in Figure 4-1 and explained below:

Other Resources

You will find many useful free resources at the Free Management Library. Check the link for ''Team Building and Group Leadership'' for suggestions on building and managing your team: www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/project/project.htm.

1. ***Suggest a different approach.*** Merely complaining about the methods used to put together the project team is not an effective technique, nor will it lead to improved procedures. It is far more effective for you to offer a solution that makes sense to top management. If you can demonstrate how selecting your own team would improve the quality of the end result, senior management will be more likely to allow you to participate in team member selection.

2. ***Do your best with what you are given.*** Even when you recommend a more sensible approach, you may still end up with an imposed team. Do your best to define and achieve goals, even if the team is not of the caliber you would have wanted. You can nonetheless make your point to management and ask for a different process in the future; however, once your team has been picked, it is difficult to go back, remove some people, and replace them with others.

Figure 4-1. Guidelines for working with an imposed team.

1. Suggest a different approach.
2. Do your best with what you are given.
3. Give team members the chance to excel.
4. Request team members who work out well.
5. Ask to take part in the selection process.
6. Suggest that department managers should be involved as well.

3. ***Give team members the chance to excel.*** Just because a team is imposed doesn't always mean that its members are incapable of performing well. Give all team members the chance to do their best work as part of your team. Some people whose performance level is rated low, or who have never been rated, may not have been given the right chance. It is a sad reality that some employees are not given the chance to excel. Everyone deserves the chance to succeed.

4. ***Request team members who work out well.*** Learn from your own experience. If a team member did well on a past project, request him or her for your current project team. Even if your supervisor does not allow you free rein in naming your team, you may still be able to influence the team selection by stating your preferences.

5. ***Ask to take part in the selection process.*** You may not have the absolute right to pick your core team, but you should be able to be involved at some level in the selection. Since you are the one who is going to be expected to execute the project, make this point: The team is critical to the success of the project, so you as project manager should have a voice in the selection process.

6. ***Suggest that department managers should be involved as well.*** Other department managers can be brought in to consult in the selection of your team. The manager of a team member's department should be included in the decision for several reasons. First, these managers have to fill in for lost time when their departmental staff is reduced due to your project; thus, they are in the best position to know how to coordinate the demands of the department versus your project. Second, department managers are in the best position to know who is qualified and experienced in the areas you need on your project. Third, involving managers improves your working relationship with them. No one likes to find out after the fact that their staff has been reassigned, even on a temporary basis. By consulting with them beforehand, even if only as a courtesy, you make your job much easier.

In the most enlightened business environment, upper management provides you with an assignment and then asks you to put to-

gether a team. But there will still be restrictions. For example, you probably won't be allowed to recruit core team members from other departments without limitation. It's more likely that you will be free to recruit employees from your own department and request help from others, subject to approval from the top as well as from the affected departments' managers.

The Commitment Problem

Even when a clear schedule is prepared and controlled carefully, when the budget is monitored and overspending is avoided, and when precise project goals are defined, a project can still lack an organized structure.

Some people take the approach that a specific number of bodies are needed to execute the tasks of a project. Under that approach, it doesn't matter who the people are. It only matters that they are able to follow orders and that they have the time to spend on the tasks of the project. This theory is based on the idea that time and labor are commodities, and individual skills are of secondary importance.

The problem, though, is that randomly selected team members, even if they are involved directly with the topic of the project, may not belong on your team for one or more of the following reasons:

- They do not work well with you.
- They do not work well with the rest of your core team.
- They do not have the time available to commit to your project.
- Their department managers do not want to give up the time required.
- The employee is not committed to the project.
- The employee does not have adequate experience to be an asset to the team.

These issues need to be addressed when the suggestion is made to include an individual on your team. Otherwise, the problems will be-

come all too apparent as time progresses. For a team, it takes only one poor fit to derail the whole process.

Your ideal team member will be committed to the project and put in the time and energy to make it succeed. Commitment is not limited to having hours available for the tasks; a valuable team member understands the need for and importance of the end result and is willing to work with you to make the project a success. If that commitment is not there, you will be struggling with the person for the entire time you are working on the project. Chances are you will spend so much time correcting their work, revising it, or assigning uncompleted tasks to other team members that you would be better off with a smaller core team.

You may run into this problem with more than one team member, which makes your problems even more difficult. Unhappy team members not only distract others, but they augment the unhappiness of other members. If people on your team see themselves as anonymous parts of a project for which they will receive no direct credit, they won't be committed to the job. Everyone needs some form of recognition; but because the project is by nature a temporary assignment, many team members will not see how they will benefit from participation. The belief that they will not get recognition prevents them from being committed to the project.

The problem is more than just a negative attitude on the part of core team members. These problems are human and should be expected to some degree. Why should people work hard to make a project succeed if someone else benefits and receives recognition?

As the leader, it's your job to help core team members get beyond the initial attitude that develops in some cases. You need to identify specific features that will give team members a reason to become interested and committed. Real teamwork doesn't happen just by assigning tasks to team members; it is the result of action and opportunity. Action is more than just taking the required steps; it is a forum for the team to develop on its own terms. An absolute requirement is that each team member be given the opportunity to take charge of their part of the project. Once they take ownership, so to speak, people usually also improve their attitude. They will still require supervision, but try to

balance oversight with allowing people to apply their initiative and creativity. The question you should ask when putting together your team is, ''How can I inspire each person working on this project so that everyone will want to succeed?''

Ten Important Team-Building Guidelines

Every team is different. So even an early success with one team is no guarantee of success with another; too many variables come into the picture. You need to establish a team based on sound leadership and management concepts. These include:

1. ***Determine your own management style and stick with it.*** Team members, like employees in a department, are going to be confused if the manager's style is inconsistent. Find a way to lead that works effectively for you and stick to it. This doesn't mean there are no exceptions, and you may need to remain flexible, especially in a project environment. The landscape may change as you proceed, and in some instances your leadership style will have to evolve as well. But as a general rule, you will need to establish clearly that you are the leader, even when asking the team to participate.

2. ***Make sure your team includes essential members.*** Political motivations often lead to including people who are not needed on the team. Or team members might be added automatically just because you as project manager already supervise them or you have a cordial relationship with them. These are not good reasons for selecting team members. Your team should have all the people it needs, but none of the people it can do without.

3. ***Set goals early and focus work on achieving those goals.*** The project can become chaotic when the circumstances change, and a good leader has to remain focused on the end results that the project needs to achieve. If you set your goals early, communicate them to all team members, and continually use those goals as a basis for your decisions, your project will succeed.

4. ***Include the whole team in the plan.*** The plan is not a solitary function, and including all of your team in developing the plan allows individuals to take a form of ownership in the project. The outcome is then more important to them, and true team spirit and teamwork are more likely to result. The best teams are those in which the plan of action is developed as a group, not imposed on them.

5. ***Use individual talent effectively.*** You may select team members based on certain assumptions, only to discover hidden talents once your project is underway. For example, if part of your team is located in Portugal, you might be surprised and happy to learn that one of your local team members is fluent in Portuguese. This can be quite an asset for telephone, e-mail, and other correspondence, and it may help avoid misunderstandings or translation delays. Once you discover talent, use it as efficiently and as effectively as you can.

6. ***Recognize individual effort.*** A team member or subgroup might excel, developing their tasks quickly, keeping ahead of schedule, or taking the initiative to suggest additional controls or other improvements. When anyone on your team excels in any way, be sure to acknowledge the progress. This means offering praise in front of the entire team, telling the member's supervisor, and documenting the excellent work in reports to management.

7. ***Capitalize on what works.*** When you find a process that works, whether pertaining to your own leadership style, building teams with members work well together, or approaching problems using brainstorming meetings, stick with it. Teams function best when they find effective ways to work and repeat their success throughout the project.

8. ***Always rely on procedures and schedules.*** If work gets off track or if unexpected problems and delays arise, decide how to work out the problems by always referring to team procedures and schedules. If you get behind schedule, look for ways to double up on the work to catch up on lost time. Ask team members to make suggestions. Follow procedures whenever possible, but be open to ingenious detours that team members recommend.

9. ***Emphasize productivity, even in meetings.*** The team will fall apart if it loses momentum. It is boring to take part in a team that falls into a bureaucratic slowdown, and then everyone loses interest. Teams excel when, even as a group, members are allowed to tackle problems, overcome them, and keep moving forward. This is true even in meetings. Some teams work effectively when they are allowed to execute their assigned tasks, but they fall apart if meetings are poorly organized. So all of your team meetings have to be tight, well organized, run from an agenda, and emphasize participation. Try to end meetings early whenever possible, and keep everyone focused on what has to be accomplished—nothing more.

10. ***Strive for meetings at the same time and interval.*** The meeting is the communications lifeline of every project team. So it has to have a concise agenda, strong leadership, and clear results. Equally important, it helps to make meetings effective when you are able to hold them at the same time every week and for the same duration. For example, you might set the rule that you will meet every Monday from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M. The time should conflict as little as possible with departmental and other duties, but consistency in time and duration helps make the whole project more organized.

Following these guidelines helps team members work together well. Teams do not always operate automatically but are most likely to require firm management and guidance. With this in mind, it pays dividends to determine exactly which individuals or subteam groups are going to be responsible for each phase of your project.

Defining Areas of Responsibility

Successful teams are those that strike a balance between two conflicting attributes: individual initiative versus group needs. On the one hand, each individual wants to believe that he or she has the opportunity to make decisions—the authority to apply talent in coming up with effective solutions. On the other hand, the larger goals of the project must rule, and each individual needs to work with the others as a single team trying to achieve that goal.

How can you achieve a compromise between the desire to satisfy an individual ego and the less personal team priority? The answer is to break out the project tasks into areas of responsibility rather than to merely pass out tasks.

Building a team is very difficult when you are the sole authority for assigning jobs to the bodies in your team. An alternative is to break down the project and refine its phases into distinct assignment ranges, then give each team member the responsibility for executing one or more of those ranges (subject to overall supervision and direction from you).

Example

A project manager in the market research department had experienced difficulty getting team members to work well together. So when a new project was assigned, she took a different approach. Instead of listing project phases and assigning tasks to team members, she identified experienced and dependable team members. She then tried to match responsibilities to each individual. Every phase of the project was scheduled on the basis of responsibility ranges (with listings of tasks within that range). Team members assigned ranges were given considerable freedom to accomplish their roles in terms of working with other team members, meeting deadlines, and solving problems on their own.

There's an important point concerning this approach: As project manager, you need to set boundaries on ranges of tasks while ensuring that each core team member agrees on overall goals. For example, a project team member assigned the role of analyzing and interpreting market test data will need to be told what tests apply and should be directed to meet with you to discuss conclusions before incorporating them into the final report.

The advantage to this approach is that you allow team members to manage their own area of responsibility. Then your role is limited to final approval and to ensuring that the whole team stays on track. You need to stay in touch with team members as they execute their phases,

not only to supervise but also to verify that goals are being met. You also fill the needed role of quality control oversight.

The area of responsibility approach grants each individual the full benefit of the doubt in terms of ability to get work done. Some team members will want closer supervision, and you can provide that if necessary. However, this approach is designed to give the greatest degree of incentive possible. It also expresses your confidence in the team. When people believe that they have the greatest amount of freedom, they are more likely to excel in their tasks.

Estimating Time Requirements

Project managers may run into problems because they try to assign tasks rather than broader areas of responsibility. In the belief that a highly structured form of management is preferable in running the project, they overlook the desirability of giving team members a share of the larger job.

Scheduling and assigning are two functions that cannot be separated from one another. They are part of the same process of defining areas of responsibility. The team member who has responsibility for a range of duties can either be told what to do or be given a well-defined end result and then left alone to achieve it.

Although you may give a team member the responsibility for a full phase of the project, it is more likely that you will want to coordinate the phase by defining functions to be executed by the team member. The method you use should depend on timing, the complexity of the phase, and the time requirements for completion, not to mention the team member's ability and desire to execute that part of the job with minimal supervision.

Example 1

One project manager broke down each phase according to the tasks involved. He then met with his team and passed out the schedule, commenting, ''This is the list of tasks. You have one week to complete them.''

Example 2

Another project manager took a different approach to determining the time requirement for task completion. She first prepared a list of tasks within phases and then estimated the time each would require. She met with the team and asked everyone to provide their own time estimates for task completion.

Whenever conflicts arose, the entire team worked to resolve them. The purpose of this exercise was to identify potential weak links in the schedule and plan for them, with the purpose of doing away with problems that would hold up the entire project. Ultimately, the project manager allowed each team member to determine his or her own time estimate within each phase. The only deadline she imposed was to adhere to the larger project deadline.

Phase flexibility helps team members define their work requirements in the best way, as long as the larger deadline can be met as well. When phases take longer than you would like, you can absorb the difference by overlapping phases where possible. For some projects, entire phases can be broken down by area of responsibility in the same way. For others, one phase will require participation from several team members. In both cases, decisions concerning time demands and deadlines should be set with the team rather than imposed on them. Your role is to ensure that schedule deadlines are met.

Working with Other Departments

One of the potential conflict areas for your project arises whenever you have team members from other departments. You need to ensure that the project's work schedule works well with your team members' departmental deadlines.

Everyone likes to believe that what they are working on today has the highest priority. This causes conflict because other people feel the same way. Remember, though, that a department has one set of deadlines and your project has another. It's not a matter of which priorities are the highest; they are separate. When your schedule comes into conflict with a department's priorities, always assume that the recurring

tasks of the department have to come first. There are three reasons for this:

1. ***You need the other manager's support.*** No matter how the employee ended up on your project team—voluntarily, by imposition, or by agreement with the department manager—remember that your success requires the cooperation of others. In that regard, the department manager is part of your project team, even if participation is limited to support.

2. ***A department's work is permanent and your project is temporary.*** Keep your project in perspective. Employees from other departments have to continue functioning in their primary role, and they are aware that their manager does their work evaluation, therefore their departmental duties are priorities to them.

3. ***Departmental tasks recur and often are tied to specific deadlines.*** You have to deal with intermediate phase deadlines as part of an overall project deadline, both of which might be critical. But in addition to the pressure to complete work on their areas of responsibility, team members also have to deal with recurring routines and deadlines in their departments. When setting your schedule, be aware of potential schedule conflicts. Try to anticipate workload problems for team members, such as the close of a monthly cycle, and arrange your deadlines with those team members and their departments in mind.

When conflicts of any nature arise, your first step should be to meet with each department manager and try to work out solutions that satisfy everyone. Avoid placing team members in the middle of a conflict between two demands, project and departmental.

The purpose of meeting with department managers is to resolve conflicts so that they will not recur. Make your position clear: You are meeting because you respect the priorities of the department. You will enlist much greater cooperation by communicating your desire to work with the manager instead of against the goals of that department.

Example 1

The project manager was under pressure to complete the last phase of the project. He was behind schedule, and his boss was demanding the final report. But two of his team members could not complete essential final steps because of deadlines within their departments. The project manager met with the department manager and tried to explain his deadline problems, insisting that the team members be allowed to work on the project first. The department manager would not cooperate.

Example 2

A project manager realized it would be difficult to complete her project on time because of a conflict with another department's deadline. She met with the manager and explained the problem. Together, they came up with a solution that involved recruiting additional help from a third department to relieve deadline pressure for two project team members.

The Executive Point of View

You need to keep in mind the point of view from above. Executives assigning projects may be supportive when you run into problems meeting deadlines, or they may be surprised to hear that you are not able to solve your project scheduling problems.

Given the nonrecurring and uncertain nature of projects, and the cultural environment in many companies, inflexible attitudes about meeting deadlines can be unrealistic. Nonetheless, you may still need to contend with those attitudes. An executive naturally would prefer to give out assignments and walk away, confident that the final report will be delivered on or before the deadline. You may need to solve schedule conflicts on your own, without help from above.

When you realize you cannot make your deadline, it is always best to let your superior know immediately. But don't be surprised if you get one of these responses:

■ ***"It's your project, and you'll have to solve your own problems."*** These exact words may not be used, but the message is clear. You were trusted with the assignment, and meeting deadlines is one of the problems you are expected to overcome. Realistically, you would expect credit for delivering the project on time without supervision; by the same argument, the blame would be yours as well if you were late. Adopt the attitude that you are responsible for meeting the deadline, especially if you believe the deadline is realistic. The problems you encounter along the way are related to your work as a project manager. You will show your ability to work as a project manager by solving the tough problems without extra help. On the other hand, if you believe from the beginning that the deadline is unrealistic, it's your duty to document your belief at the beginning of the project.

■ ***"If you don't get cooperation from another department, let me know and I'll talk to the manager."*** While this seems like the most supportive position, be careful. A well-intentioned executive could do more harm than good by bearing down on a manager who is resisting working with you—burning a bridge you might otherwise be able to build with that manager directly. Try to resolve conflicts directly without resorting to help from above.

■ ***"I'd like to help, but there's really nothing I can do."*** This message could mean the executive does not want to get in the middle of a conflict. Or it could mean the executive realizes that interceding would cause even more problems, and it's better to require you to solve the problem on your own.

■ ***"Don't make waves. Just do your best to work around the problem."*** As passive as this sounds, it could be the best advice of all. Project managers should be results-oriented leaders. At the same time, because their projects affect several departments, they also have to be astute diplomats within the company, getting help while not offending anyone else. If you force another manager to provide employees for your project team, you set your priorities above those of the department. The consequences of this attitude can be far-reaching and cost you a lot of support, not just for the current project but for future projects as well.

Delegation Problems and Solutions

As a manager, you are familiar with the delegation and monitoring process. As project manager, you need to employ the same skills, but the problems you face may be far different than those you face in a departmental setting. Some common problems and solutions are listed in Figure 4-2. Let's discuss each in more detail.

Making Appropriate Assignments

Problem: Emphasis is on assignments, not on people. As a department manager, you are accustomed to overcoming a series of recurring problems. Your subordinates are permanent, so their task assignments are fixed and well defined. As a project manager, the envi-

Figure 4-2. Delegation problems and solutions.

Problem	Solution
Emphasis is on assignments, not on people.	Pick the right people, not just the right numbers.
A highly structured working environment is imposed on the team.	Encourage individual responsibility and effort.
The leader is too involved and too assertive.	Lead your team in a different way.
The team is isolated due to lack of delegation.	Coach the team, but allow it the freedom to act.
Team members let their egos rule.	Stress team and project goals over individual success.

ronment is temporary. Problems are unique to the project and nonrecurring. Your team members do not have well-defined areas of responsibility unless you define them.

Solution: Pick the right people, not just the right number. You may find yourself thinking about projects in departmental terms, and this is a mistake. For example, if you know it takes seven people to manage your department's workload, that doesn't mean that the project's workload is best defined by the number of people on your team. That should not be your emphasis. An alternative is to pick the people first and then match them to phases and tasks—not by the number of people, but by area of responsibility. If you need more people than estimated at first, they can be added later.

Deciding How Much Structure to Impose

Problem: A highly structured work environment is imposed on the team. You may have learned from experience that a department works well when every task is clearly defined, even before an individual is given a job. The lines of duties are clear in the department. For projects, however, you should encourage team members to think more independently, perhaps with greater freedom than you would want to allow employees in your department. Imposing an overly structured environment on your team members stifles their freedom to act and impedes both creativity and team spirit.

Solution: Encourage individual responsibility and effort. Team members will respond best when they are given a degree of independence. Teamwork, ironically, often grows by allowing team members to solve problems as individuals. They may work together better when the restrictions of a department are removed. Give your team the freedom to tackle their areas of responsibility.

Proving Your Leadership Abilities

Problem: The leader is too involved and too assertive. You may be what is called a hands-on manager, someone who likes to roll up your sleeves and do your share of the work. That approach may be appropriate in your department, but for the project, that approach

could impede progress. If you insist on doing the project your way, you could prevent the team from forming its own identity. For projects, you might do better with a less assertive approach.

Solution: Lead your team in a different way. Think of your project team in different terms than your department. Reduce your role to that of monitor. Watch the budget and schedule, and supervise only to the degree required by the team. You may need to execute tasks to keep matters on schedule, but as long as your team is able to move matters along without you, let them excel on their own.

Delegating Work Effectively

Problem: The team is isolated through lack of delegation. Project management provides an excellent opportunity for improving your delegation skills. If you do not delegate properly, your team will feel left out of the work of the project. Just as department managers need to keep staff in the loop, you also need to keep core team members involved in operating each phase of the project.

Solution: Coach the team, but allow it the freedom to act. It would be a disaster for a sports team's coach to take the place of a player because the job was not being done properly. If you see one or more team members failing in their area of responsibility, don't step in and take over; work closely with them, not just to help complete the tasks, but also to recognize the phase and project goals. Help your team to succeed instead of allowing delegation to work in reverse.

Identifying Goals

Problem: Team members let their egos rule. You face a difficult challenge when your team stops operating as a unit and becomes a group of individuals in conflict. When team members compete with one another for credit, for work, or for deciding how to proceed, recognize that the problem is not theirs. It is yours. A team running on ego does not function well, but the problem is with the team's leadership. When intended project goals are replaced with individual and personal goals, that means that stronger leadership is needed.

Solution: Stress team and project goals over individual suc-

cess. As the team leader, you are responsible for developing the motives of your team members. You may need to remind individuals more than once that they are working toward a common goal, and that individual credit and recognition have no place on your project team. You can get the point across by example. Don't discuss ''your'' project; describe it as ''our'' project, a joint effort. And whenever talking to others about the project, include the team as a whole, and never claim individual credit for the project's success.

The personal elements of your project have to be resolved before the budget and schedule can be established and made to work. The structure of your team defines budget and schedule requirements significantly. And your success as project manager rests with the selection of your core team more than with other considerations.

WORK PROJECT

1. List three or more ideas for solving the problem of having a project team imposed on you, and explain how this problem can be solved.
2. Explain why the ''area of responsibility'' approach is different from assigning tasks to team members.
3. Explain why you should always assume that an outside department's priorities must come first.