Chapter 1

Project Management: The Key to Achieving Results

In This Chapter

- Defining a project and its four stages
- Breaking down project management
- Identifying the project manager's role
- Determining whether you have what you need to be a successful project manager

Successful organizations create projects that produce desired results in established time frames with assigned resources. As a result, businesses are increasingly driven to find individuals who can excel in this project-oriented environment.

Because you're reading this book, chances are good that you've been asked to manage a project. So, hang on tight — you're going to need a new set of skills and techniques to steer that project to successful completion. But not to worry! This chapter gets you off to a smooth start by showing you what projects and project management really are and by helping you separate projects from nonproject assignments. This chapter also offers the rationale for why projects succeed or fail and gets you into the project-management mindset.

Determining What Makes a Project a Project

No matter what your job is, you handle a myriad of assignments every day. For example, you may prepare a memo, hold a meeting, design a sales campaign, or move to new offices. Or you may make the information systems more user-friendly, develop a research compound in the laboratory, or improve the organization's public image. Not all these assignments are projects. How can you tell which ones are and which ones aren't? This section is here to help.

Understanding the three main components that define a project

A *project* is a temporary undertaking performed to produce a unique product, service, or result. Large or small, a project always has the following three components:

- **Specific scope:** Desired results or products (Check out Chapter 3 for more on describing desired results.)
- **Schedule:** Established dates when project work starts and ends (See Chapter 5 for how to develop responsive and feasible project schedules.)
- **Required resources:** Necessary number of people and funds and other resources (See Chapter 6 for how to establish whom you need for your project and Chapter 7 for how to set up your budget and determine any other resources you need.)

As illustrated in Figure 1-1, each component affects the other two. For example: Expanding the type and characteristics of desired outcomes may require more time (a later end date) or more resources. Moving up the end date may necessitate paring down the results or increasing project expenditures (for instance, by paying overtime to project staff). Within this three-part project definition, you perform work to achieve your desired results.

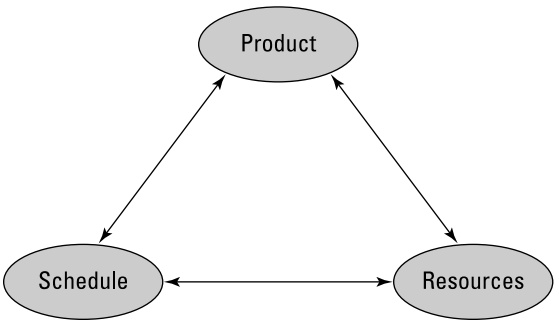

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Figure 1-1: The relationship between the three main components of a project.

Although many other considerations may affect a project's performance (see the later section "Defining Project Management" for details), these three components are the basis of a project's definition for the following three reasons:

- The only reason a project exists is to produce the results specified in its scope.

- The project's end date is an essential part of defining what constitutes successful performance; the desired result must be provided by a certain time to meet its intended need.
- The availability of resources shapes the nature of the products the project can produce.

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, 5th Edition (*PMBOK 5*), elaborates on these components by

- Emphasizing that *product* includes both the basic nature of what is to be produced (for example, a new training program or a new prescription drug) and its required characteristics (for example, the topics that the training program must address), which are defined as the product's *quality*
- Noting that *resources* refers to funds, as well as to other, nonmonetary resources, such as people, equipment, raw materials, and facilities

PMBOK 5 also emphasizes that *risk* (the likelihood that not everything will go exactly according to plan) plays an important role in defining a project and that guiding a project to success involves continually managing tradeoffs among the three main project components — the products to be produced and their characteristics, the schedule, and the resources required to do the project work.

Recognizing the diversity of projects

Projects come in a wide assortment of shapes and sizes. For example, projects can

- **Be large or small**
  - Installing a new subway system, which may cost more than $1 billion and take 10 to 15 years to complete, is a project.
  - Preparing an ad hoc report of monthly sales figures, which may take you one day to complete, is also a project.
- **Involve many people or just you**
  - Training all 10,000 of your organization's staff in a new affirmative-action policy is a project.
  - Rearranging the furniture and equipment in your office is also a project.

A project by any other name just isn't a project

People often confuse the following two terms with *project:*

- **Process:** A *process* is a series of routine steps to perform a particular function, such as a procurement process or a budget process. A process isn't a one-time activity that achieves a specific result; instead, it defines *how* a particular function is to be done every time. Processes, like the activities that go into buying materials, are often parts of projects.
- **Program:** This term can describe two different situations. First, a *program* can be a set of goals that gives rise to specific projects, but, unlike a project, a program can never be completely accomplished. For example, a health-awareness program can never completely achieve its goal (the public will never be totally aware of all health issues as a result of a health-awareness program), but one or more projects may accomplish specific results related to the program's goal (such as a workshop on minimizing the risk of heart disease). Second, a *program* sometimes refers to a group of specified projects that achieve a common goal.

- **Be defined by a legal contract or by an informal agreement**
  - A signed contract between you and a customer that requires you to build a house defines a project.
  - An informal promise you make to install a new software package on your colleague's computer also defines a project.
- **Be business-related or personal**
  - Conducting your organization's annual blood drive is a project.
  - Having a dinner party for 15 people is also a project.

No matter what the individual characteristics of your project are, you define it by the same three components I describe in the previous section: results (or scope), start and end dates, and resources. The information you need to plan and manage your project is the same for any project you manage, although the ease and the time to develop it may differ. The more thoroughly you plan and manage your projects, the more likely you are to succeed.

Describing the four stages of a project

Every project, whether large or small, passes through the following four stages:

- **Starting the project:** This stage involves generating, evaluating, and framing the business need for the project and the general approach to performing it and agreeing to prepare a detailed project plan. Outputs

from this stage may include approval to proceed to the next stage, documentation of the need for the project and rough estimates of time and resources to perform it (often included in a project charter), and an initial list of people who may be interested in, involved with, or affected by the project.

- **Organizing and preparing:** This stage involves developing a plan that specifies the desired results; the work to do; the time, cost, and other resources required; and a plan for how to address key project risks. Outputs from this stage may include a project plan that documents the intended project results and the time, resources, and supporting processes needed to create them.
- **Carrying out the work:** This stage involves establishing the project team and the project support systems, performing the planned work, and monitoring and controlling performance to ensure adherence to the current plan. Outputs from this stage may include project results, project progress reports, and other communications.
- **Closing the project:** This stage involves assessing the project results, obtaining customer approvals, transitioning project team members to new assignments, closing financial accounts, and conducting a post-project evaluation. Outputs from this stage may include final, accepted, and approved project results and recommendations and suggestions for applying lessons learned from this project to similar efforts in the future.

For small projects, this entire life cycle can take just a few days. For larger projects, it can take many years! In fact, to allow for greater focus on key aspects and to make it easier to monitor and control the work, project managers often subdivide larger projects into separate phases, each of which is treated as a miniproject and passes through these four life cycle stages. No matter how simple or complex the project is, however, these four stages are the same.

In a perfect world, you complete one stage of your project before you move on to the next one; and after you complete a stage, you never return to it again. But the world isn't perfect, and project success often requires a flexible approach that responds to real situations that you may face, such as the following:

- **You may have to work on two (or more) project stages at the same time to meet tight deadlines.** Working on the next stage before you complete the current one increases the risk that you may have to redo tasks, which may cause you to miss deadlines and spend more resources than you originally planned. If you choose this strategy, be sure people understand the potential risks and costs associated with it (see Chapter 8 for how to assess and manage risks).
- **Sometimes you learn by doing.** Despite doing your best to assess feasibility and develop detailed plans, you may realize you can't achieve what you thought you could. When this situation happens, you need to return to the earlier project stages and rethink them in light of the new information you've acquired.

- **Sometimes things change unexpectedly.** Your initial feasibility and benefits assessments are sound and your plan is detailed and realistic. However, certain key project team members leave the organization without warning during the project. Or a new technology emerges, and it's more appropriate to use than the one in your original plans. Because ignoring these occurrences may seriously jeopardize your project's success, you need to return to the earlier project stages and rethink them in light of these new realities.

Defining Project Management

Project management is the process of guiding a project from its beginning through its performance to its closure. Project management includes five sets of processes, which I describe in more detail in the following sections:

- **Initiating processes:** Clarifying the business need, defining high-level expectations and resource budgets, and beginning to identify audiences that may play a role in your project
- **Planning processes:** Detailing the project scope, time frames, resources, and risks, as well as intended approaches to project communications, quality, and management of external purchases of goods and services
- **Executing processes:** Establishing and managing the project team, communicating with and managing project audiences, and implementing the project plans
- **Monitoring and controlling processes:** Tracking performance and taking actions necessary to help ensure project plans are successfully implemented and the desired results are achieved
- **Closing processes:** Ending all project activity

As illustrated in Figure 1-2, these five process groups help support the project through the four stages of its life cycle. Initiating processes support the work to be done when starting the project, and planning processes support the organizing and preparing stage. Executing processes guide the project tasks performed when carrying out the work, and closing processes are used to perform the tasks that bring the project to an end. Figure 1-2 highlights how you may cycle back from executing processes to planning processes when you have to return to the organizing and preparing stage to modify existing plans to address problems you encounter or new information you acquire while carrying out the project work. Finally, you use monitoring and controlling processes in each of the four stages to help ensure that work is being performed according to plans.

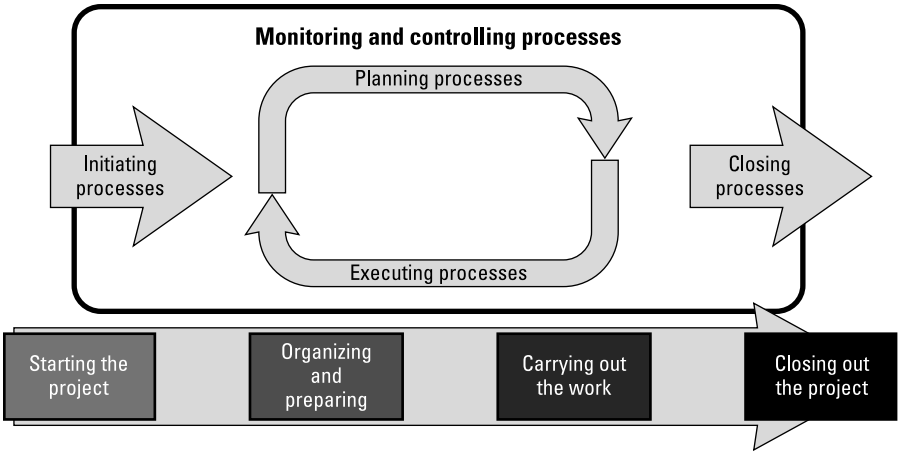

Figure 1-2: The five project-management process groups that support the four project life cycle stages.

Illustration by Wiley, Composition Services Graphics

Successfully performing these processes requires the following:

- **Information:** Accurate, timely, and complete data for the planning, performance monitoring, and final assessment of the project
- **Communication:** Clear, open, and timely sharing of information with appropriate individuals and groups throughout the project's duration
- **Commitment:** Team members' personal promises to produce the agreed-upon results on time and within budget

Starting with the initiating processes

All projects begin with an idea. Perhaps your organization's client identifies a need; or maybe your boss thinks of a new market to explore; or maybe you think of a way to refine your organization's procurement process.

Sometimes the initiating process is informal. For a small project, it may consist of just a discussion and a verbal agreement. In other instances, especially for larger projects, a project requires a formal review and decision by your boss and/or other members of your organization's senior management team.

Decision makers consider the following two questions when deciding whether to move ahead with a project:

- ***Should* we do it?** Are the benefits we expect to achieve worth the costs we'll have to pay? Are there better ways to approach the issue?
- ***Can* we do it?** Is the project technically feasible? Are the required resources available?

If the answer to both questions is "Yes," the project can proceed to the organizing and preparing stage (see the following section), during which a project plan is developed. If the answer to either question is a definite, iron-clad "No," under no circumstances should the project go any further. If nothing can be done to make it desirable and feasible, the decision makers should cancel the project immediately. Doing anything else guarantees wasted resources, lost opportunities, and a frustrated staff. (Check out the later sidebar "Performing a benefit-cost analysis" if you need extra help determining the answer to the first question.)

Suppose you're in charge of the publications department in your organization. You've just received a request to have a 20,000-page document printed in ten minutes, which requires equipment that can reproduce at the rate of 2,000 pages per minute.

You check with your staff and confirm that your document-reproducing equipment has a top speed of 500 pages per minute. You check with your suppliers and find out that the fastest document-reproducing equipment available today has a top speed of 1,000 pages per minute. Do you agree to plan and perform this project when you know you can't possibly meet the request? Of course not.

Rather than promising something you know you can't achieve, consider asking your customer whether she can change the request. For example, can she accept the document in 20 minutes? Can you reproduce certain parts of the document in the first ten minutes and the rest later?

During some projects, you may be convinced that you can't meet a particular request or that the benefits of the project aren't worth the costs involved. Be sure to check with the people who developed or approved the project. They may have information you don't, or you may have additional information that they weren't aware of when they approved the request.

Beware of assumptions that you or other people make when assessing your project's potential value, cost, and feasibility. For example, just because your requests for overtime have been turned down in the past doesn't guarantee they'll be turned down again this time.

Performing a benefit-cost analysis

A *benefit-cost analysis* is a comparative assessment of all the benefits you anticipate from your project and all the costs required to introduce the project, perform it, and support the changes resulting from it. Benefit-cost analyses help you to

- Decide whether to undertake a project or decide which of several projects to undertake.
- Frame appropriate project objectives.
- Develop appropriate *before* and *after* measures of project success.
- Prepare estimates of the resources required to perform the project work.

You can express some anticipated benefits in monetary equivalents (such as reduced operating costs or increased revenue). For other benefits, numerical measures can approximate some, but not all, aspects. If your project is to improve staff morale, for example, you may consider associated benefits to include reduced turnover, increased productivity, fewer absences, and fewer formal grievances. Whenever possible, express benefits and costs in monetary terms to facilitate the assessment of a project's net value.

Consider costs for all phases of the project. Such costs may be nonrecurring (such as labor, capital investment, and certain operations and services) or recurring (such as changes in personnel, supplies, and materials or maintenance and repair). In addition, consider the following:

- Potential costs of not doing the project
- Potential costs if the project fails
- Opportunity costs (in other words, the potential benefits if you had spent your funds successfully performing a different project)

The farther into the future you look when performing your analysis, the more important it is to convert your estimates of benefits over costs into today's dollars. Unfortunately, the farther you look, the less confident you can be of your estimates. For example, you may expect to reap benefits for years from a new computer system, but changing technology may make your new system obsolete after only one year.

Thus, the following two key factors influence the results of a benefit-cost analysis:

- How far into the future you look to identify benefits
- On which assumptions you base your analysis

Although you may not want to go out and design a benefit-cost analysis by yourself, you definitely want to see whether your project already has one and, if it does, what the specific results of that analysis were.

The excess of a project's expected benefits over its estimated costs in today's dollars is its *net present value (NPV)*. The net present value is based on the following two premises:

- **Inflation:** The purchasing power of a dollar will be less one year from now than it is today. If the rate of inflation is 3 percent for the next 12 months, $1 today will be worth $0.97 one year from today. In other words, 12 months from now, you'll pay $1 to buy what you paid $0.97 for today.

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- **Lost return on investment:** If you spend money to perform the project being considered, you'll forego the future income you could earn by investing it conservatively today. For example, if you put $1 in a bank and receive simple interest at the rate of 3 percent compounded annually, 12 months from today you'll have $1.03 (assuming zero-percent inflation).

To address these considerations when determining the NPV, you specify the following numbers:

- **Discount rate:** The factor that reflects the future value of $1 in today's dollars, considering the effects of both inflation and lost return on investment
- **Allowable payback period:** The length of time for anticipated benefits and estimated costs

In addition to determining the NPV for different discount rates and payback periods, figure the project's *internal rate of return* (the value of discount rate that would yield an NPV of zero) for each payback period.

Outlining the planning processes

When you know what you hope to accomplish and you believe it's possible, you need a detailed plan that describes how you and your team will make it happen. Include the following in your project-management plan:

- An overview of the reasons for your project (Chapter 3 tells you what to include.)
- A detailed description of intended results (Chapter 3 explains how to describe desired results.)
- A list of all constraints the project must address (Chapter 3 explores the different types of constraints a project may face.)
- A list of all assumptions related to the project (Chapter 3 discusses how to frame assumptions.)
- A list of all required work (Chapter 4 discusses how to identify all required project work.)
- A breakdown of the roles you and your team members will play (Chapter 10 explains how to describe roles and responsibilities.)
- A detailed project schedule (Chapter 5 explains how to develop your schedule.)
- Needs for personnel, funds, and nonpersonnel resources (such as equipment, facilities, and information) (Chapter 6 illustrates how to estimate resource personnel needs, and Chapter 7 takes a close look at estimating nonpersonnel needs and developing your project's budget.)

- A description of how you plan to manage any significant risks and uncertainties (Chapter 8 explains how to identify and plan for risks.)
- Plans for project communications (Chapter 13 discusses how to keep everyone who's involved in your project up-to-date.)
- Plans for ensuring project quality (Chapter 12 covers how to track progress and maintain control of your project throughout its life cycle so as to achieve success.)

Always put your project plans in writing; doing so helps you clarify details and reduces the chances that you'll forget something. Plans for large projects can take hundreds of pages, but a plan for a small project can take only a few lines on a piece of paper (or a tablecloth!).

The success of your project depends on the clarity and accuracy of your plan and on whether people believe they can achieve it. Considering past experience in your project plan makes your plan more realistic; involving people in the plan's development encourages their commitment to achieving it.

Don't let the pressure to get fast results convince you to skip the planning and get right to the tasks. Although this strategy can create a lot of immediate activity, it also creates significant chances for waste and mistakes.

Be sure your project's drivers and supporters review and approve the plan in writing before you begin your project (see Chapter 2). For a small project, you may need only a brief e-mail or someone's initials on the plans. For a larger project, though, you may need a formal review and signoff by one or more levels of your organization's management.

Examining the executing processes

After you've developed your project-management plan and set your appropriate project baselines, it's time to get to work and start executing your plan. This is often the phase when management gets more engaged and excited to see things being produced.

Preparing

Preparing to begin the project work involves the following tasks (see Chapter 11 for details):

- **Assigning people to all project roles:** Confirm the individuals who'll perform the project work and negotiate agreements with them and their managers to make sure they'll be available to work on the project team.

- **Introducing team members to each other and to the project:** Help people begin developing interpersonal relationships with each other. Help them appreciate the overall purpose of the project and explain how the different parts will interact and support each other.
- **Giving and explaining tasks to all team members:** Describe to all team members what work they're responsible for producing and how the team members will coordinate their efforts.
- **Defining how the team will perform its essential functions:** Decide how the team will handle routine communications, make different project decisions, and resolve conflicts. Develop any procedures that may be required to guide performance of these functions.
- **Setting up necessary tracking systems:** Decide which system(s) and accounts you'll use to track schedules, work effort, and expenditures and then set them up.
- **Announcing the project to the organization:** Let the project audiences know that your project exists, what it will produce, and when it will begin and end.

Suppose you don't join your project team until the actual work is getting underway. Your first task is to understand how people decided initially that the project was possible and desirable. If the people who participated in the start of the project and the organizing and preparing stages overlooked important issues, you need to raise them now. When searching for the project's history, check minutes from meetings, memos, letters, e-mails, and technical reports. Then consult with all the people involved in the initial project decisions.

Performing

Finally, you get to perform the project work! The performing subgroup of the executing processes includes the following tasks (see Chapters 13 and 14 for more details):

- **Doing the tasks:** Perform the work that's in your plan.
- **Assuring quality:** Continually confirm that work and results conform to requirements and applicable standards and guidelines.
- **Managing the team:** Assign tasks, review results, and resolve problems.
- **Developing the team:** Provide needed training and mentoring to improve team members' skills.
- **Sharing information:** Distribute information to appropriate project audiences.

Surveying the monitoring and controlling processes

As the project progresses, you need to ensure that plans are being followed and desired results are being achieved. The monitoring and controlling processes include the following tasks (see Chapter 12 for specific activities):

- **Comparing performance with plans:** Collect information on outcomes, schedule achievements, and resource expenditures; identify deviations from your plan; and develop corrective actions.
- **Fixing problems that arise:** Change tasks, schedules, or resources to bring project performance back on track with the existing plan, or negotiate agreed-upon changes to the plan itself.
- **Keeping everyone informed:** Tell project audiences about the team's achievements, project problems, and necessary revisions to the established plan.

Ending with the closing processes

Finishing your assigned tasks is only part of bringing your project to a close. In addition, you must do the following (see Chapter 15 for a discussion of each of these points):

- Get your clients' approvals of the final results.
- Close all project accounts (if you've been charging time and money to special project accounts).
- Help team members move on to their next assignments.
- Hold a post-project evaluation with the project team to recognize project achievements and to discuss lessons you can apply to the next project. (At the very least, make informal notes about these lessons and your plans for using them in the future.)

Knowing the Project Manager's Role

The project manager's job is challenging. For instance, she often coordinates technically specialized professionals — who may have limited experience

working together — to achieve a common goal. Although the project manager's own work experience is often technical in nature, her success requires a keen ability to identify and resolve sensitive organizational and interpersonal issues. In this section, I describe the main tasks that a project manager handles and note potential challenges she may encounter.

Looking at the project manager's tasks

Historically, the performance rules in traditional organizations were simple: Your boss made assignments; you carried them out. Questioning your assignments was a sign of insubordination or incompetence.

But these rules have changed. Today your boss may generate ideas, but you assess how to implement them. You confirm that a project meets your boss's (and your organization's) real need and then determine the work, schedules, and resources you require to implement it.

Handling a project any other way simply doesn't make sense. The project manager must be involved in developing the plans because she needs the opportunity to clarify expectations and proposed approaches and then to raise any questions she may have *before* the project work begins.

The key to project success is being proactive. Instead of waiting for others to tell you what to do,

- Seek out information because you know you need it.
- Follow the plan because you believe it's the best way.
- Involve people whom you know are important for the project.
- Identify issues and risks, analyze them, and elicit support to address them.
- Share information with the people you know need to have it.
- Put all important information in writing.
- Ask questions and encourage other people to do the same.
- Commit to your project's success.

Staving off excuses for not following a structured project-management approach

Be prepared for other people to fight your attempts to use proven project-management approaches. Take it from me: You need to be prepared for everything! The following list provides a few examples of excuses you may encounter as a project manager and the appropriate responses you can give:

- **Excuse:** Our projects are all crises; we have no time to plan.

  Response: Unfortunately for the excuse giver, this logic is illogical! In a crisis, you have limited time and resources to address the critical issues, and you definitely can't afford to make mistakes. Because acting under pressure and emotion (the two characteristics of crises) practically guarantees that mistakes will occur, you can't afford not to plan.

- **Excuse:** Structured project management is only for large projects.

  Response: No matter what size the project is, the information you need to perform it is the same. What do you need to produce? What work has to be done? Who's going to do that work? When will the work end? Have you met expectations?

  Large projects may require many weeks or months to develop satisfactory answers to these questions. Small projects that last a few days or less may take only 15 minutes, but either way, you still have to answer the questions.

- **Excuse:** These projects require creativity and new development. They can't be predicted with any certainty.

  Response: Some projects are more predictable than others. However, people awaiting the outcomes of any project still have expectations for what they'll get and when. Therefore, a project with many uncertainties needs a manager to develop and share initial plans and then to assess and communicate the effects of unexpected occurrences.

Even if you don't encounter these specific excuses, you can adapt the response examples I provide here to address your own situations.

Avoiding "shortcuts"

The short-term pressures of your job as a project manager may encourage you to act today in ways that cause you, your team, or your organization to pay a price tomorrow. Especially with smaller, less formal projects, you may feel no need for organized planning and control.

Don't be seduced into the following, seemingly easier shortcuts:

- **Jumping directly from starting the project to carrying out the work:** You have an idea and your project's on a short schedule. Why not just start doing the work? Sounds good, but you haven't defined the work to be done!

  Other variations on this shortcut include the following:

  - **"This project's been done many times before, so why do I have to plan it out again?"** Even though projects can be similar to past ones, some elements are always different. Perhaps you're working

with some new people, using a new piece of equipment, and so on. Take a moment now to be sure your plan addresses the current situation.

- **"Our project's different than it was before, so what good is trying to plan?"** Taking this attitude is like saying you're traveling in an unknown area, so why try to lay out your route on a road map? Planning for a new project is important because no one's taken this particular path before. Although your initial plan may have to be revised during the project, you and your team need to have a clear statement of your intended plan from the outset.

- **Failing to prepare in the carrying out the work stage:** Time pressure is often the apparent justification for this shortcut. However, the real reason is that people don't appreciate the need to define procedures and relationships before jumping into the actual project work. See Chapter 11 for a discussion of why this preparation step is so important — and get tips on how to complete it.

- **Jumping right into the work when you join the project in the carrying out the work stage:** The plan has already been developed, so why go back and revisit the starting the project and the organizing and preparing stages? Actually, you need to do so for two reasons:
  - To identify any issues that the developers may have overlooked
  - To understand the reasoning behind the plan and decide whether you feel the plan is achievable

- **Only partially completing the closing stage:** At the end of one project, you often move right on to the next. Scarce resources and short deadlines encourage this rapid movement, and starting a new project is always more challenging than wrapping up an old one.

  However, you never really know how successful your project is if you don't take the time to ensure that all tasks are complete and that you've satisfied your clients. If you don't take positive steps to apply the lessons this project has taught you, you're likely to make the same mistakes you made in this project again or fail to repeat this project's successful approaches.

Staying aware of other potential challenges

Projects are temporary; they're created to achieve particular results. Ideally, when the results are achieved, the project ends. Unfortunately, the transitory

nature of projects may create some project-management challenges, including the following:

- **Additional assignments:** People may be asked to accept an assignment to a new project in addition to — not in lieu of — existing assignments. They may not be asked how the new work might affect their existing projects. (Higher management may just assume the project manager can handle everything.) When conflicts arise over a person's time, the organization may not have adequate guidelines or procedures to resolve those conflicts (or they may not have any guidelines at all).
- **New people on new teams:** People who haven't worked together before and who may not even know each other may be assigned to the same project team. This lack of familiarity with each other may slow the project down because team members may
  - Have different operating and communicating styles
  - Use different procedures for performing the same type of activity
  - Not have time to develop mutual respect and trust

  Flip to Part III for guidance on how to put together a successful team and get off on the right foot.
- **No direct authority:** For most projects, the project manager and team members have no direct authority over each other. Therefore, the rewards that usually encourage top performance (such as salary increases, superior performance appraisals, and job promotions) aren't available. In addition, conflicts over time commitments or technical direction may require input from a number of sources. As a result, they can't be settled with one, unilateral decision. (See Chapter 10 for suggestions on how to work effectively with people when you have no direct authority over them.)

Do You Have What It Takes to Be an Effective Project Manager?

You're reading this book because you want to be a better project manager, right? Well, before you really jump in, I suggest you do a quick self-evaluation to see what your strengths and weaknesses are. By answering the following ten questions, you can get an idea of what subjects you need to spend more time on so you can be as effective as possible. Good luck!

Questions

1. Are you more concerned about being everyone's friend or getting a job done right?
2. Do you prefer to do technical work or manage other people doing technical work?
3. Do you think the best way to get a tough task done is to do it yourself?
4. Do you prefer your work to be predictable or constantly changing?
5. Do you prefer to spend your time developing ideas rather than explaining those ideas to other people?
6. Do you handle crises well?
7. Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?
8. Do you think you shouldn't have to monitor people after they've promised to do a task for you?
9. Do you believe people should be self-motivated to perform their jobs?
10. Are you comfortable dealing with people at all organizational levels?

Answer key

1. Although maintaining good working relations is important, the project manager often must make decisions that some people don't agree with for the good of the project.
2. Most project managers achieve their positions because of their strong performance on technical tasks. However, after you become a project manager, your job is to encourage other people to produce high-quality technical work rather than to do it all yourself.
3. Believing in yourself is important. However, the project manager's task is to help other people develop to the point where they can perform tasks with the highest quality.
4. The project manager tries to minimize unexpected problems and situations through responsive planning and timely control. However, when problems do occur, the project manager must deal with them promptly to minimize their impact on the project.
5. Though coming up with ideas can help your project, the project manager's main responsibility is to ensure that every team member correctly understands all ideas that are developed.

6. The project manager's job is to provide a cool head to size up the situation, choose the best action, and encourage all members to do their parts in implementing the solution.
7. Self-reliance and self-motivation are important characteristics for a project manager. However, the key to any project manager's success is to facilitate interaction among a diverse group of technical specialists.
8. Although you may feel that honoring one's commitments is a fundamental element of professional behavior, the project manager needs both to ensure that people maintain their focus and to model how to work cooperatively with others.
9. People should be self-motivated, but the project manager has to encourage them to remain motivated by their job assignments and related opportunities.
10. The project manager deals with people at all levels — from upper management to support staff — who perform project-related activities.

Check out the table of contents to find out where I discuss these different aspects of the project manager's job in more depth.

Relating This Chapter to the PMP Exam and PMBOK 5

Pay special attention to Table 1-1, which notes topics in this chapter that may be addressed on the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification exam and that are included in *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge,* 5th Edition (*PMBOK 5*).

Table 1-1 Chapter 1 Topics in Relation to the PMP Exam and *PMBOK 5*

Topic	*Location in This Book*	*Location in PMBOK 5*	*Comments*
Definition of a project	"Determining What Makes a Project a Project"	1.2. What is a Project?	The two definitions are essentially the same.

(continued)

Table 1-1 ***(continued)***

Topic	*Location in This Book*	*Location in PMBOK 5*	*Comments*
The stages in a project's life cycle	"Describing the four stages of a project"	2.1.1. Characteristics of the Project Life Cycle	The four project life cycle stages are the same in both books.
Definition of project management	"Defining Project Management"	1.3. What is Project Management?	The two definitions are the same.
The five project-management process groups	"Defining Project Management"	1.3. What is Project Management?	The two sets of five process groups are the same.
The initiating processes	"Starting with the initiating processes"	3.3. Initiating Process Group	The processes listed in both sources are essentially the same.
The planning processes	"Outlining the planning processes"	3.4. Planning Process Group	The processes listed in both sources are essentially the same.
The executing processes	"Examining the executing processes"	3.5. Executing Process Group	The processes listed in both sources are essentially the same.
The monitoring and control processes	"Surveying the monitoring and controlling processes"	3.6. Monitoring and Controlling Process Group	The processes listed in both sources are essentially the same.
The closing processes	"Ending with the closing processes"	3.7. Closing Process Group	The processes listed in both sources are essentially the same.
The project manager's role	"Knowing the Project Manager's Role"	1.6. Role of a Project Manager	The lists of roles in the two sources are essentially the same.