

The Reluctant Project Manager

Hints & Tips to Get Your Project Finished!

For many managers, projects are just another task they would rather not have to do.

Many organisations are not set up with projects in mind but, if they are going to develop as a business, they need to successfully undertake projects, none the less. New products need to be launched, new IT systems need to be implemented and new HR policies need to be put in place.

In an ideal world, managers would be trained in project management skills as part of their career development and would be equipped to take on these challenges. But if you are reading this, that's probably not the case.

This booklet is designed to help you avoid the pitfalls and get that project completed, without the benefit of classic project management expertise. It's not pretty, but it works!



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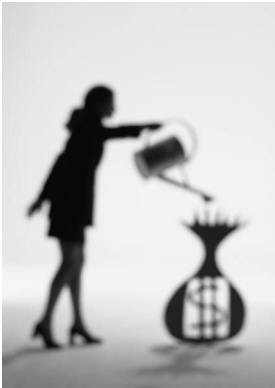
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Projects in Context

So what's the big deal anyway?

You might think that projects are something other companies do, like road builders or event organisers. But they are the most effective way to introduce change in any organisation so even if your products and services are fairly standard, you would still benefit from a successful project or two.

Incremental change is all very well but if you are faced with changes in legislation or a dynamic new competitor, you need a step change to stay competitive. A professionally managed project will help you achieve the change you need efficiently.



But we do this anyway as "business as usual"!

There's a distinction to be made between a properly managed project and a series of tasks that goes on indefinitely. Without the specialist skills that running a project introduces, such as planning, risk management or change control, introducing change can be frustrating, slow and expensive. Worst of all, the staff or customers that are affected can lose heart just when you need their support.

So when do I know it's a project?

I won't bore you with the formal definition but if the task has a specific objective, with a specific fund of money and people to work on it, to be completed within a defined timescale and that will be disbanded when you finish, it's a project. There are small ones (£100k–£1m) and large ones (£1m+) but they all have the same challenges to be overcome. It's just a case of how to project manage it not if.

How do other companies approach these projects?

For some organisations, projects are 'business as usual' and have an organisation to match with a Chief Projects Officer, Project Support Office and fulltime Project Managers. But most companies are like yours: a functionally organised structure with department heads. The approach to adopt is called **matrix management**; although staff report vertically, they are assigned to projects under the control of the project manager and so report to two bosses for the duration of the project. Yes, this raises its own issues which we will come to soon but realistically it's the only way to work

I've been a manager for ages. Why should this project be a problem?

I'm afraid there is a difference between line management experience and the skills and techniques needed to manage a project successfully.

Project management presents a number of unique challenges that you are unlikely to have faced in your line management role:

- As we've seen, projects introduce a lot of **change** very rapidly and it's important that you are able to manage this change effectively, both in making sure it is implemented to meet the business needs of the project but also to help people accept and make the most of this change in their day-to-day activities
- You will probably be working with a new team who are unfamiliar with you and each other so you need to demonstrate your **leadership and team building** skills to get the best out of your team. We will talk more about this later.

- Because of the inherent uncertainty in a project, you will need to manage this **risk** effectively. This means that you will need to spend time identifying risks, deciding how to handle them and then making sure this happens. Again, we will return to this later in this booklet.

If I do what you say, how will that benefit my project?

Basically, by avoiding mistakes and improving quality. A rigorous approach helps you decide what you want, how you are going to do it and making sure the right person does it at the right time and cost. It's difficult to put a price on this but in most cases it will easily outweigh the additional time and cost of managing the project properly.



About SGK Consulting

If you would rather do this properly, we provide project management consulting and training to equip you with the expertise and knowledge to manage your next project with poise and panache.

We've even been known to roll our sleeves up and get stuck in ourselves on an interim project management basis.

So please get in touch and we'd be glad to meet up and see how we can help

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