

Identifying Project Management Concepts

Project management to some people means steering personnel forward until the project goal has been accomplished. To others, it means authorizing personnel to perform tasks, mediating disputes, and keeping the project team informed. Although a broad range of approaches exist, project management is the planning, coordination, and management of tasks and resources to accomplish a specific goal or set of goals within a budget and time constraint.

Many years ago, people thought that project management applied only to projects as large as building Toronto's CN Tower or building Las Vegas' Hoover Dam. Today, project management systems appear on a large percentage of desktops and manage many types of projects, ranging from producing a technical manual to building the underwater tunnel between England and France.

Before you can manage projects, it is important to understand project management elements and phases.

What is a Project?

In order for you to understand project management, you must first understand what a project is. A *project* is a set of activities (tasks) that must be completed by a certain number of individuals (resources) within time and cost constraints. The manner in which a project proceeds is represented by a project model. The phases of a project model might include defining the project, creating a project plan, tracking and updating the project plan and closing the project.

You define a project by setting project *goals*, defining the *scope* of the project, determining the *resources* required and any *scheduling factors*.

Project goals determine the purpose of the project and tell you what it is you want to accomplish. For example, the project goal might be to construct a new building. The scope of a project decides which and how many tasks are required to accomplish the project goal. For example, if you construct a building, you may decide to build two stories but leave out a second conference room.