

Preface

We enjoy working with people on projects. This is what the two of us have done for most of our professional lives (some 60 plus years between the two of us). Projects fascinate and challenge us because they comprise people trying to work together to do something they could not do individually, given limited resources. This book contains some of our experiences working with people on projects and in other situations. It contains some of our trials and triumphs and many of our mistakes.

The intended audience of this book includes anyone who works with people on projects and in many other circumstances. We think this is a large audience because our view of projects encompasses most people. Project managers are one obvious group who may benefit from our experiences. The same is true of people who want to be project managers one day. This book may help them avoid many of the problems we have encountered. We feel this book contains items for almost everyone else regardless of their title, type of employment, or whether or not they work on projects. We have found that most people have the ability to shape their relationships with other people, and this act of shaping represents a large part of this book.

The two of us have been working with people on projects for many years. Roy began doing this professionally in 1960, whereas Dwayne began in 1980. Our paths crossed in 1998 when we were thrown together on a project that we call Delphi in this book. This project sounded like a good idea when we started. Everything you could want on a project was in place. A study contract preceded a second contract that built a prototype. These two contracts led to an initial production contract—Delphi. The requirements were set, funding was in place, and the people were ready. The, project, however, was full of problems. These problems were so plentiful and severe that we almost cancelled the project. We persevered, worked with the people, finished the pro-

ject, and delivered a product that the users are using happily every day. Such an ending, rare given the circumstances, was quite satisfying.

We enjoyed working with the people on this project so much that we decided to share our experiences in a book. The two of us came to this book project from different backgrounds. Roy is known as a good storyteller. He has the talent for filling the time spent in airports, hotel lobbies, and while watching system testing by telling stories of the many places he has been and the many things he has done (boxing, automobile racing, hunting in Africa, etc.). Dwayne is a writer of sorts, having published several books and many articles. Roy transformed our experiences into chapter titles and themes, and Dwayne typed most of the words. Hereafter, we use forms of the word “we” to describe the two of us. Unless specified, the word “I” refers to Dwayne.

Each chapter in the book has three basic sections. The first section contains stories from our past. Most of the stories are about problems we had on projects. We tend to remember problems more than successes. Also, problems tend to provide more opportunities for learning. Our project had plenty of problems, so we learned much during our three years together.

The second section of each chapter contains warning signs of coming trouble. These are things that we noticed at the time, but did not understand what they meant. After the trouble occurred, we remembered what preceded the trouble and the warning signs. For example, one warning sign is when we visit a builder, ask to see the printout of the schedule, and hear, “We tried to print it yesterday, but there’s something wrong with the plotter and the software.” Red lights should flash and sirens should wail (see Chapter 9 for some reasons why).

The third section of each chapter contains preventative measures. These are things we can do to create an environment in which problems do not seem to grow as readily. This sounds like a section for the project managers of the world. Nevertheless, as we stated earlier, we find that anyone on a project can contribute to a good environment.

The book is a collection of independent chapters. We urge the reader to read Chapters 1 and 2, as they define terms that we use throughout. After that, browse the table of contents and read what interests you most. We have tried to group the chapters with other chapters having a similar theme. The eight parts of this book hold these little groups. As stated earlier, Part 1 contains two chapters that introduce terms we use throughout the book.

Part 2, Chapters 3 through 5, is about things that happen at the start of a project. These include the proposal, staffing-up, and starting the project short-handed. Part 3, Chapters 6 through 10, discusses some basics of project management. These include planning, requirements, design, tracking a schedule, and risk mitigation. Part 4, Chapters 11 through 14, is about working with people, including a discussion of the project manager, communicating with people, people making decisions, and rewarding people. Part 5, Chapters 15 through 17, is about when people do not pull together the way we wish, including digging yourself into a hole, not reviewing products created by others,

and not providing adequate supervision. Part 6, Chapters 18 and 19, is about misusing others and ourselves. Chapter 18 discusses having more confidence than experience, and Chapter 19 discusses assuming what talents people bring to a project. Part 7, Chapters 20 through 22, is about big issues such as using the right people, using the right approach, and doing the right thing. These include discussions of hiring a large corporation for a small project, outsourcing, and building the wrong product. Part 8, Chapters 23 through 25, closes the book with the subject of fooling ourselves. This includes the topics of knowing what we know, not breathing properly, and thinking we are out of the woods before the project is completed.

We hope you enjoy reading this book. We further hope that you can avoid many of the problems we have experienced. Sometimes, we like to have a difficult situation because it teaches us things and gives us a nice story to tell. We would rather have not lived through many of the stories we tell in this book. They took a terrible toll on the lives of people on projects and their loved ones at home.

This book does not contain "the most important things we have ever learned about people working on projects." It is more like a collection of some of the things we have seen. We suppose there is much more we could tell, but we had to stop writing sometime. Maybe we will write more another day.

We appreciate our families for their love and support while we were writing this book. Families comprise wonderful people, and our lives with our families are the greatest project we ever undertake. Dwayne thanks Karen, his wife since a hot July day in Louisiana in 1983. Dwayne also thanks his three sons Seth, Nathan, and Adam. Roy thanks Lynda, his wife since the hottest day in Seattle in July 1962. Roy also thanks his family; Kim, Fred, and grandson of two months Joshua; Stacey and Kevin; Ty and new daughter Tyra, honeymooning in Ireland.

A special thanks to Kim for making a quick pass through the manuscript between feedings to catch any major grammatical blunders before we sent the book to the publisher.

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