

Project Management and a "Healthy" Project

The success of your project will be largely determined by how well your team works together and how well it is managed between now and the end of spring semester.

The Project Manager keeps track of his/her team and project. Is it on schedule? Will the goals be met? Is everything running smoothly?

In a "healthy" project:

- The whole team understands the big picture, knows their individual roles, anticipates what needs to be done, and is working harmoniously in that direction. Individuals react positively to constructive feedback.
- Work is done efficiently in parallel paths by multiple subgroups.
- Team members are happy and engaged. They feel a sense of ownership, responsibility, and pride.
- Obstacles, as they are encountered, are proactively dealt with. (Just do it.)

What should the project manager be doing? Basically, he/she is responsible for delegating work, keeping things running smoothly, and making sure that the project is completed successfully, on time, and within budget. Your faculty advisor has probably discussed the following items, but it may be helpful to summarize them:

Things that an effective Project Manager does:

- Takes a leadership role and sets an example (doesn't just manage).
- Anticipates, motivates, communicates, "stays on top of things"
- Develops, modifies, and tracks schedule
- Knows the "big picture" and tracks project details
- Knows team weaknesses, takes advantage of individual strengths
- Understands team dynamics and keeps things going smoothly
- Anticipates what's next and obtains needed resources
- Utilizes all available resources, special individual skills, etc.
- Assists in project as much as possible (leads by example)
- Makes sure that all documentation is being done and properly filed:
 - Meeting minutes, progress reports
 - Time cards, budget reports
 - Design archives, lab notes, e-mails
 - Project final report
- Delegates tasks and follows up:
 - Suggests/negotiates clearly defined deliverables
 - Suggests/negotiates specific date, time, and place to deliver
 - Goes over the results - then either approves or returns for extra iteration