INTRODUCTION

As organizations continue to move toward "project-based" management to get more done with less resources, and as the demand for effective project managers continues to grow, more and more individuals find themselves with the "opportunity" to manage projects for the first time.

In an ideal world, every new project manager candidate would complete certified project management training programs and serve as an apprentice before starting their first project manager opportunity, but…this is the real world. In many cases, a quicker, more accessible, and more economical alternative is needed to guide this audience in managing projects successfully the first time.

The *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Project Management* is intended to provide this alternative with a helpful, fun, and informative style.

About This Book

Let's take a quick review of the objectives and approach of this book.

Objectives

The objectives of this book include the following:

- To be an easy-to-use tutorial and reference resource for any person managing their first project(s)
- To teach the key concepts and fundamentals behind the project management techniques

    If these are understood, they can be applied effectively independent of toolset, environment, or industry

- To reduce the "on-the-job" learning curve by sharing the traits of successful projects and "lessons learned" from less-than-successful projects
- To balance the breadth of topics covered with adequate depth in specific areas to best prepare a new project manager
- To review the skills and qualities of effective project managers

    Emphasize the importance of project "leadership" versus just project "management"

Approach

Consistent with the *Absolute Beginner's Guide* series, this book will use a teaching style to review the essential techniques and skills needed to successfully manage a project. By "teaching" style, we intend the following:

- A mentoring, coaching style.
- Assumes that the reader does not have previous hands-on experience with project management.
- Teaches the material as if an instructor were physically present.
- Task-oriented, logically ordered, self-contained lessons (chapters) that can be read and comprehended in a short period of time (15–30 min).
- Emphasis on understanding the principle behind the technique or practice.
- Teaches the material independent of specific tools and methodologies.
- Teaches the material with the assumption that the reader does not have access to organizational templates or methodologies.
- Provides a summary map of the main ideas covered at the end of each chapter. Research has shown that this type of "mind-map" approach can drive better memory recollection when compared to traditional linear summary approaches.

OUT-OF-SCOPE

The scope of this book is clearly outlined in the table of contents, but as we will cover later, it is always good to review what is out of scope to ensure understanding of the scope boundaries. Since the field of project management is extremely broad, and we needed to draw the line somewhere, this book focuses on the proper management of a single project. As a result, the following advanced project management subjects are not covered in this book:

- Program management
- Enterprise portfolio management
- Enterprise resource management
- Advanced project risk management topics
- Advanced project quality management topics
- Advanced project procurement management topics

Who Should Read This Book?

The *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Project Management* is recommended for any person who fits into one or more of the following categories:

- Individuals unsatisfied with other introductory project management books
- Individuals new to project management, such as

    Technologists

    Knowledge workers

    Students

    Functional managers

- Professionals taking first project management assignment, such as

    Team leaders

    Project coordinators

    Project administrators

    Project support

    Functional managers

- Experienced project managers needing a refresher course
- Experienced project managers with limited formal project management education

How This Book Is Organized

This book has been divided into four parts:

- Part I, "Project Management Jumpstart," sets up the general framework for our project management discussion and accelerates your project management learning curve, including an insightful review of successful projects and project managers.
- Part II, "Project Planning," reviews the processes that establish the foundation for your project.
- Part III, "Project Control," reviews the processes that allow you to effectively monitor, track, correct, and protect your project's performance.
- Part IV, "Project Execution," reviews the key leadership and people-focused skills that you need to meet today's business demands.

Conventions Used in This Book

■ At the beginning of each chapter, you'll find a quick view of the major topics that will be expounded upon as you read through the material that follows.

■ The end of each chapter provides a list of key points along with a visual summary map.

■ You will also find several special sidebars used throughout this book:

note

These boxes highlight specific learning points or provide supporting information to the current topic.

tip

These boxes highlight specific techniques or recommendations that could be helpful to most project managers.

caution

These boxes highlight specific warnings that the project manager should be aware of.