

# Introduction to Project Management for Instructional Design

## Definition of Project Management

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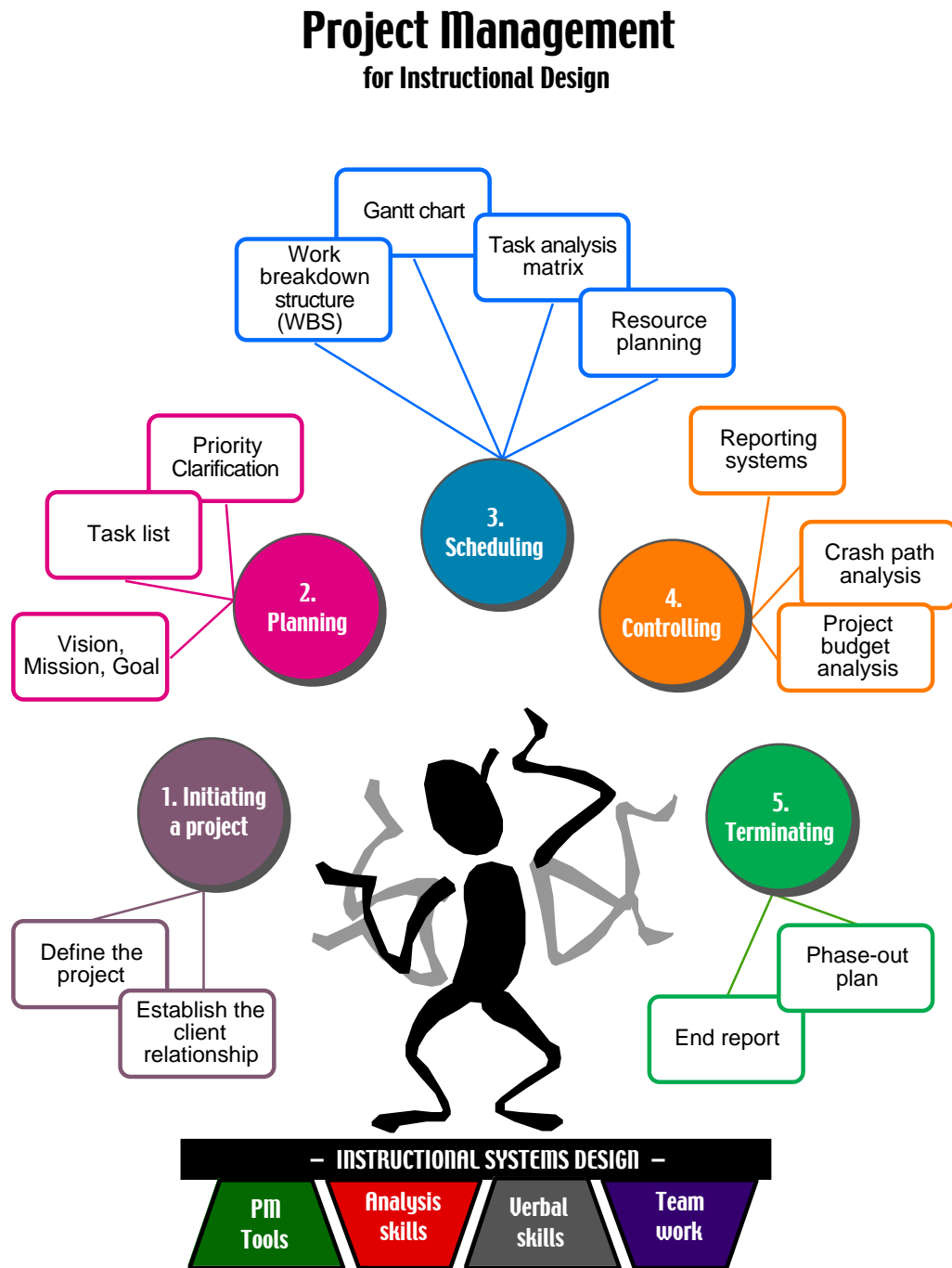
Project management is a term that is frequently used and at times, misunderstood. By definition, project management is the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of resources for a finite period of time to complete specific goals and objectives. Larry Johnson (1990) succinctly defines project management as, "...coordinating, facilitating and taking responsibility for the successful completion of a project."

The facilitation, responsibility, and control of a project are usually handled by a designated project manager and a project team. The difference between a project and other activities within an organization is that they are temporary. As soon as the project objectives are met, it is dissolved.

Project management is comprised of many models with varying methodologies. It is conceivable that each organization that uses project management implements the process in differently. The instructional design project manager needs to use a model that reflects the dual purpose of their roles. Since project management is, at the core, a problem-solving process, it is natural that an ID project manager must be a skilled in problem solving.

The project manager for instructional design projects must be adept at the art and mastery of juggling multiple responsibilities. (See Figure 2, *Project Management for Instructional Design*). The foundation of the project managers skills support and influence their effort to effectively lead the project team through the process, in effect, keeping the balls in the air at the same time.

Figure 2. Concept map for project management for instructional design



## Benefits of Project Management

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In brief, the goal and ultimate benefit of project management is to effectively bring a project to successful completion. The summary of key points below makes the benefits of project management clear and tangible for the project manager and team.

Four C's of an effective project management plan

- **Clarifies objectives**  
—everyone on the project teams knows where to go and assists in getting there
- **Codifies requirements**  
—everyone on the project team knows what is required of them
- **Contingencies**  
—the project plan and therefore the success of the project, are secured with a backup plan in case of emergencies
- **Commit to paper**  
—the project plan, once committed to paper, becomes the verifiable baseline for marking progress towards to the goal

Six reasons to plan

- Increases probability of achieving goal
- Avoids false starts
- Enables multiple activities to be linked
- Provides a means for project team to share the vision
- Forces consideration of all aspects of the project
- Provides a map of the project

## The challenges of project management in higher education

Initiating project management techniques in higher education is often perceived by both sides of issue as mixing the proverbial oil and water. Initiating instructional design in higher education is similarly perceived. When the two processes are combined and introduced in the higher education culture, challenges to a smooth relationship quickly become very evident. The issues emanate from the clash of two cultures.

Project management is primarily a tool for fiscal responsibility. Higher education is a typically a bastion of freedom to pursue knowledge through scholarly research. Adding fiscal constraints or project control to a process that wants the freedom is challenging for both participants on both sides. Generally, the culture of higher education wants to minimize the exacting fiscal and performance accountability standards that business organizations follow.

Instructional design, by its nature, seeks innovative approaches to improving learning outcomes. Faculty in higher education, who have served long tenures as respected teachers are often hesitant to change their approach to instruction for the benefit of trying a new instructional model.

The ISD consultant in higher education must deftly find the balance of introducing innovative instructional models with respect for faculty expertise in teaching. The two are not incongruous. However, both sides may perceive the same objective with completely different vocabulary and methodology. Similarly, the project manager in higher education must seek balance of fiscal and project control while balancing the faculty's need for academic freedom and desire to "do things the way they have always worked."

## Generalized Project Management Process

There are a few key project management processes and models used in this report. To begin, the project manager must answer a key questions in order to initiate and define a project. A critical part of getting a project off the ground is building the project team. The team's first task is to develop a good project plan, which becomes the foundation for a successful outcome. An extensive process for planning is outlined in the report along with specific techniques for project planning. Change is an inevitable factor that will alter every project plan. There are some typical changes to expect in project baseline schedules, resource allocation, and budgets. Effectively handling change requires the efficient use of project control methods. There is a five-step model for controlling the project. Throughout the process, it is very important to communicate about the project status through reports and reviews. Finally, the project must come to an end.

In summary, the project management process:

- 1. Initiating a Project**
- 2. Building the Project Team**
- 3. Project Planning**
- 4. Project Control**
- 5. Project Termination**

### **Laws of Project Management**

No major project is ever installed on time, within budget, and with the same staff that started it. Yours will not be the first.

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