



# Sharpening Your Management Skills

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I recently attended a project management workshop. Prior to attending this workshop, I would not have considered myself a manager. But as I listened to several days of lectures, it became clear that we are all managers. We manage budgets, contracts, projects, programs, processes, software, time, risk, stress, change, money, our children, and ourselves.

Whether at home or work, whether we manage people or things, there are some fundamental management techniques to keep in mind. Communicating, listening, motivating, planning, organizing, evaluating, coaching, problem solving, and decision making are a few of the skills we need in our tool kits [1].

Also, we tend to learn skills from observing others. What traits does your current or former manager have that you admire or dislike? Perhaps fairness, honesty, credibility, timeliness, trustworthiness, and professionalism might be on your list of desirable traits. What do you expect from your manager? Chances are these are the same things that your employees or co-workers expect from you.

Take a minute and think about which of these basic management skills you effectively utilize on a day-to-day basis and which you struggle to use. Pick a few techniques you can practice and sharpen. By focusing on a few each day or week, you can increase your management performance and professional growth.

In this month's issue, Quentin Fleming and Joel Koppelman (see page 10) present a project management storybook tale. Although a tale, it presents real-life management challenges and shows the importance of basic management techniques, such as planning and earned value. As the article shows, earned value performance measurement is a tool to help managers evaluate schedule and budget, and it can be especially useful in the early phases (15-20 percent project completion) of a project's life cycle.

Standards and models also are good methods to help us improve our management skills. The article by Jeremiah Smedra (see page 15) will introduce you to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) model. This model is recognized widely as the commercially proven and accepted standard for project management. The PMBOK model gives a manager a proven framework for project success.

As managers, we need to find the time to improve our skill set. The better our basic management skills, the better managers we will be. We can get the results needed for our projects and organizations to succeed. I wish you luck in developing and sharpening your management skills. ♦

## Reference

1. Johnson, J., "Basic Management Techniques Workshop," April 23, 1999, Technical Management Services™.



## Letter to the Editor

### Software Development Outsourcing Research Survey

I'm an active duty officer and full-time software engineering doctoral student at Arizona State University. With your assistance, I hope to identify software outsourcing strategies, motivations, benefits, drawbacks, and factors that influence the success of outsourcing relationships. This information will help us understand why outsourcing efforts succeed or often fail to meet goals, and which of these strategies are most appropriate for specific projects and goals. Using this knowledge, I will produce a decision support tool to aid software development project managers and consultants in making software outsourcing strategy decisions for specific projects.

You can help by answering a brief survey if you have participated in a software development project where any portion of the product development or effort has been contracted to an outside vendor. All participants will receive survey results and free copies of the decision support tool. The survey is available at my Web site and can be completed online, electronically using MS-Word, or in paper format.

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software outsourcing Web site: <http://www.eas.asu.edu/~outsrc/>