



Managing Unique Assignments

A Team Approach to Projects and Programmes

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March 2000
404 pages
978-0-566-08279-5

234 x 156 mm
Hardback
\$144.95

In practice everything is unique but there are three specific concepts that are specifically linked to 'unique assignments' such as projects and programmes namely, the idea that they are one of a kind, temporary and a one-off.

These concepts can apply to the work itself, the outcome and those involved as well as the timeframe within which the assignment takes place. Because of their very nature and complexity, unique assignments cannot be undertaken by one single department in an organisation and cannot be carried out according to existing standard procedures or left to improvisation. People in organisations have to learn new ways of working - but how can this be done?

This book presents the core ideas of both project and programme management. These ideas have all been tried and tested by Twynstra Management Consultants and their experiences have been invaluable in our attempt to clearly describe what it means to work on unique assignments in practice and, more especially, what it means to manage them. Managing Unique Assignments can be read from cover to cover, but it can also be dipped into at will: throughout the book the use of boxed explanations enable the busy reader to quickly access the essentials of the approach. Anyone currently involved in a unique assignment - or expecting to be so - will find this book an invaluable aid to managing a complex situation.

Contents

Foreword. Why This Book?: The end of the 'traditional' organisation; Cultures vary, so do unique assignments; How is this book constructed?; For whom is this book intended?; What this book is not. Unique Assignments: Unique assignments in organisations; Working - between improvisation and routine; Building blocks for managing unique assignments; Projects and programmes; Multi-project management - dealing with many unique assignments simultaneously; How do you ensure that it remains enjoyable? The Project Approach: The starting situation - the context must be clear; Phasing - not just thinking, but doing; Planning and controlling result-oriented work; Decision making - the consequences of choosing results; Various approaches to project-based working; Never complete but always worthwhile. The Programme Approach: The programmes goals - formulating what is worth striving for; Programming - not just thinking but doing; Managing and progress control of goal-oriented efforts; Decision making - deciding on goals and all their consequences; The programme approach is really different. The Leading Players: The principal creates the conditions; The assignment leader ensures realisation of the outcome; The assignment team member does the work; Organising the workers; Different circumstances, different agreements. Environmental Factors and Players: A catalogue of relevant players; When you can influence the environment, do it; The power to select and contract; Care for the environment. Working Together: Working together as a team; The job of team leader; Communication skills; Communicating is more than just having meetings. Professionalisation: Who should professionalise?; Should it be done better or differently?; How deep should you go?; Striving for perfection is no easy task. Appendices: Primary activities for each project phase; Types of requirements that could be set for the project result; Cluster alternatives; Checklist of project management activities for each management aspect; Checklist of a project's decision documents; Programme plan; Checklist of programme management criteria; Questions that can help when analysing team performance; A tool to assist in team building; Team roles; Styles of leadership; How professional is your organisation in project-based working?; The project audit; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

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Gert Wijnen and Rudy Kor are consultants specialised in project and programme management. For some 20 years they have assisted in the start-up of unique assignments, trained project and programme managers, audited projects and programmes and helped people in organisations to professionalise their approach to carrying out unique assignments.

Both have acquired experience in industrial and service organisations in the public and private sectors. They have published some 60 articles on the subjects of organisation, management, project and programme-based working and leadership. They are author or co-author of 11 books in Dutch. A sister book, 50 Checklists for Project and Programme Management (also published by Gower) offers practical tools on this subject. Gert and Rudy are convinced that the project, as well as the programme approach, are applicable to big, multi-billion Euro assignments lasting several years. But the basic ideas of both approaches have also proven to be very useful in small, teamwork-oriented unique assignments lasting only a few weeks.

Gert and Rudy are senior partners at Twynstra Management Consultants, an international, independent, result-oriented and pragmatic consultancy firm with some 700 employees, where they carry out management consultancy and management tasks.

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