

Using Project Management Skills in Your Grange

Including Sample Plans for Community Granges



Produced by the
National Action Grange Advisory Committee
April 2002

Introduction

So often Grange leaders say that they are willing to try things that are new, but are not sure how to make changes happen. What we believe they are saying is that they are willing but not sure how. Willing to do things that may make a difference, but unsure of the right way to approach a new project or change the old way of doing things.

We believe we can be helpful if we develop project management skills and give the leaders of our Community Granges a chance to try them on projects they can easily accomplish in their Grange.

We've selected one easy project, one somewhat difficult, and one in between for this month's Help Guide on project management. By doing this, there should be something for everyone.

Project management is a skill (or more correctly the application of a set of skills) that leaders or managers can learn that will help achieve stated goals.

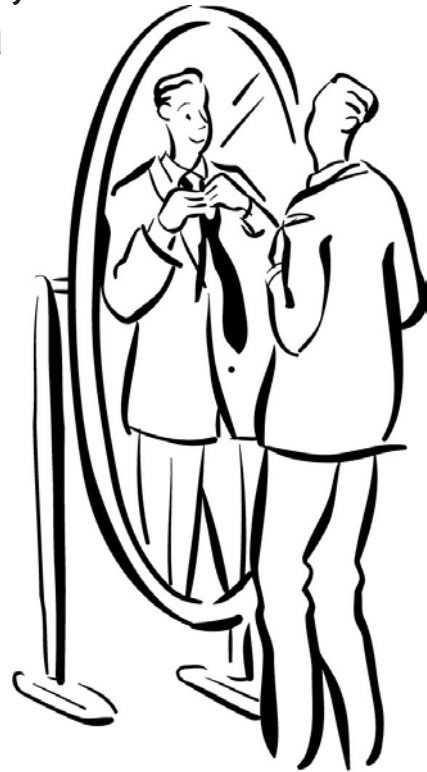
The very term "project management" implies that there are concrete objectives, deadlines, expectations and resources that need to be used efficiently and effectively, even in an all-volunteer organization like the Grange.

We recommend you form a team and try one or more of the following.

If you are successful, continue your success with more projects using this format. If things don't work out as planned, try again.

The three projects we have planned here include:

- **Planning and hosting an open house or friend's night**
- **Planning a first-class evening for the family**
- **Sponsoring an educator of the year award**



The basics of project management

Project management skills as a business or organizational discipline entered the manufacturing scene when manufacturing became more complex and the need for quality and workmanship more critical. Today, manufacturers can't live without these project management tools and skills.

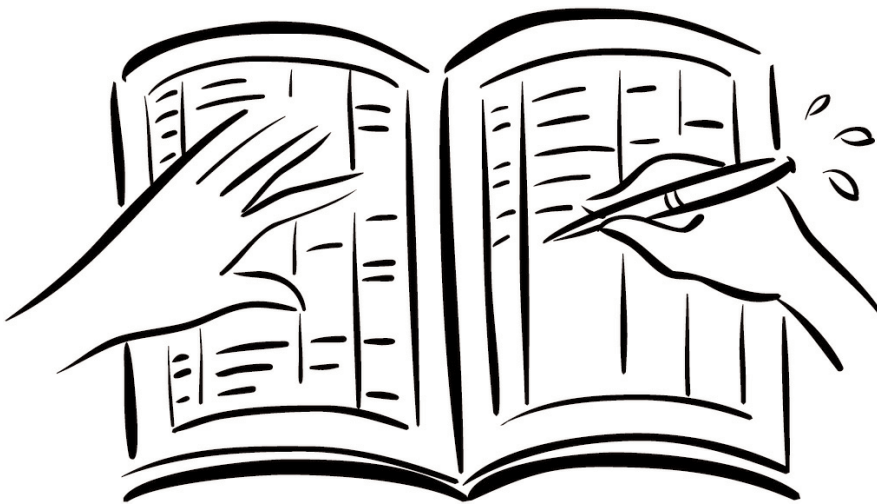
Gradually these skills were adopted by organizations because they provided a consistent discipline and order to project planning and implementation.

They are grounded in teamwork and team thinking. This is a different set of behaviors than committee work. Granges may want to stop and look at team building as a first-step in successful project management. If you want or need help, there is plenty available. Check the February Help Guide on **Team Building** and check the bibliography at the back of this guide. Check also the Internet where there are hundreds of listings and project management courses. We found the following helpful: <http://projectmentor.com/tnt.htm>

The basic components of project management are:

- Defining project scope and objectives
- Building the task list
- Determining roles and responsibilities
- Developing cost estimates
- Defining task dependencies and analyzing critical path
- Developing and negotiating realistic schedules
- Team building
- Project budgeting
- Risk analysis, risk management, and contingency planning
- Tracking and management - corrective actions and plan revisions
- Post-project reviews, and building on success

All of these may not be necessary for an open house or friend's night or for a community event or special award, but on projects that are more complex, these fundamentals will definitely be helpful.



Understanding the terms

Here's a short course in the important project management terms. It's only one page and there's no memorization required. Besides, they're pretty self-explanatory.

Defining project scope and objectives

Begin by defining how big the project is, where it fits into the overall goals for the Grange and come to agreement on specific goals and objectives.

Building the task list

The objectives are met by the accomplishment of tasks in a certain order. Determining the tasks and order are strategic.

Determining roles & responsibilities

A team member or members are assigned tasks based upon their skills and experience. No room here for politics.

Developing cost estimates

Individual objectives when fully developed have costs for accomplishment. Consolidated, they become the budget for the project.

Defining task dependencies and analyzing critical path

Sounds awesome. Means only that when one task relates to another in a critical way, pay attention. Getting a head count for a dinner must come before purchasing the food. A critical path defines the minimum accomplishments.

Developing and negotiating realistic schedules

Members may be busy people with different schedules. Negotiate and compromise until agreement is reached. Once this is done, stick to your agreements.

Team building

Teamwork is different from committees. Your team skills from your softball days help you to understand why the shortstop always backs up second base and why the pitcher covers home. See also the bibliography.

Project budgeting

Bringing all of the individual task costs together equals a project budget. Keep careful records so you won't have to do this the second time you run this project. Review your Planning Forms and the January Help Guide for help.

Risk analysis, risk management, and contingency planning

This is important if you're building a new fighter for the Navy. And if you mess up on an open house you'll probably hear about it afterwards. The important thing is to know that if it can go wrong it will and to have alternative plans available.

Tracking and management, corrective actions and plan revisions

Most projects have critical, drop-dead dates after which no further action can proceed. Again, it's foolish to try to keep a failed plan or project working. If this happens, go back and review your scope and your objectives.

Post-project reviews, and building on success

Always, always debrief your project by revisiting each step. Outline, in writing your suggestions for the next time this project comes up for review.

How project management works

Here's an analogy you may find useful. It's called control tower, and it demonstrates the importance of the controller in managing aircraft in the skies. It has many of the same concepts as the project management tasks you may be pursuing.

The concept is simple. No one person could keep all of the aircraft in the sky safe today without some type of discipline. This applies to every aircraft and has been the backbone of our successful commercial aviation system.

Every pilot is responsible for the plane and crew, passengers and aircraft, schedules, rules, destinations and resources. Consider these as TASKS. But every aircraft operates within a system that enables each pilot to meet these goals with the assistance provided by a controller. The controller's job is to allow the pilots to meet individual goals within the context of overall safety, schedule, weather, and a host of other factors. Neither the pilot nor the controller can do their jobs without the help of the other.

In your Grange, the team leader of a project is the controller. As such, he or she may or may not have individual tasks, but will have a critical role giving directions to keep the entire project working effectively.

Team members, realizing the importance of the overall plan and the role of the team leader, agree to meet their individual goals and schedules so the project stays on schedule, on budget and meets agreed upon objectives or goals.

Let's keep in mind, however, we are not trying to build a 747, only trying to have a successful friend's night. Still, if this is a new skill for you, and learning it helps you and your Grange, or helps you in your job, so much the better.

Ready to give this a try? Let's go.



Getting Started

Here's a typical situation. Your Grange has decided to have an open house and the president (master) has asked you to put it together – you know, make a plan and have the event in October – more correctly the third Wednesday in October.

As a rule, you shy away from these types of responsibilities, but there are a few younger families in your Grange who you know might help, so you decide to give it a try. Having become familiar with the project management skills in this guide, you call a meeting of your “team.” Here's how it is likely to go.

“We've got to have a friend's night in October. That is two months away and that should be enough time. Does any one have any ideas on what we can do or how we should do this event?”

No really good ideas come forth, so you make assignments based upon your best guess of who can do what. Some people do their jobs, others do not. You have a plan that gets nit picked to death in the next Grange meeting. Frustrated, you throw in the towel and the project goes away.

Let's start this same project again another way. Having accepted the assignment you are prepared to make it a success. As the team leader—at least at this point—you decide to do some background planning. You are determined to speak to other Grange leaders who have had successful friend's nights to determine:

- What made their event successful
- How well the participants performed against their goals
- Listen to the things they say you should avoid
- Ask members of the Grange how “big” they want this to be
- List some preliminary goals
- Come prepared to run a successful first meeting

Altogether, you spend about two hours getting ready, a lot of it thinking about your team members. You can only select from your Grange and there are not a lot of volunteers available. Before going through your membership, active and inactive, you decide you need to locate the following types of “volunteers”:

- A member who has been active in bringing in new members
- A member who can plan a menu and carry it out
- A good speaker and emcee type
- A member who has good computer skills or knows where to find help
- A member who has some sales or marketing experience
- A young member with an active spouse interested in the Grange



The first team meeting

The initial meeting of the team went pretty well because the leader was prepared and had his or her agenda in front of each member. The goal for the meeting was to complete the project management checklist and get everyone started on their first phase assignments. The project leader was determined to get them together again in two weeks and expected significant progress reported at that time. Here's how it went:

Team members were introduced and the leader indicated why each had been asked to join. Everyone learned something about the other member they did not already know.

As the meeting progressed, team members began to see the logic behind why each of them had been invited. No need for the team leader to tell them, they got the idea by listening to the good ideas of people with special skills or experience.

The team leader presented the goal for the team that was to host a friend's night at the Grange in October and asked if everyone understood the goal and then stood back.

During the awkward silence, one of the members asked, "Do you want a great friend's night or would a mediocre one be all right." Each member was asked what kind of event they envisioned and the team-process was off to the races.

The more they discussed the event, the clearer the ideas became. The event did not expand in size or scope simply because of the discussion. The reality of what was possible was stretched as team members kept pressing for an event worthy of their time.

The time the team leader had spent before the meeting saved time in the initial meeting. By encouraging freethinking on the part of all team members most of the leader's ideas surfaced anyway.

The team leader finally brought them back to reality by presenting the project planning worksheet and asking them to work as a team and develop a plan for this project.

Here's what they developed. See which of the project management initiatives they developed could be helpful if your Grange were to put a team like this together.

Use the forms on page 10 and examine the entries made by the team. Then use the next two blank forms to develop a plan for a friend's night for your Grange.



Project scope and objectives

The team has decided to recommend that the Grange support a series of Friend's Nights or Grange Open Houses. By doing so, the Grange can reach and convince men, women and families in their community that Grangers are serious about their member's knowledge and understanding of the Grange. All members agree that only by having a series of these events can we convince our members that we are committed to the future and that we need their help in this initiative.

As a result, the team is recommending a series of four Friend's Nights or Open Houses during the next twelve months, each with a different theme and each building upon the success of the prior event. The team hopes that participants at the first Friend's Night return on another occasion and that we can convince them to become members active in our Grange. The concept of a friend inviting a friend is where the project title, Friend's Night comes from.

The success of the event will be measured by accomplishing the following objectives:

- A minimum of 30 people who are not members attend and remain throughout the evening
- Evaluations from participants indicate they judge the time spent as good to excellent in quality
- Grange members give the event good to very good grades
- The event is produced on or near budget
- The Grange receives three to five applications after each meeting
- Everyone has a good time
- Team members have a good time

Building the task list

The lists of tasks required of a successful event are quite long. The team identified the following as among the most important groups of tasks.

- Determining whom to invite
- Deciding which members would help from the Grange
- Deciding the perfect program for the meeting
- Identifying the communications required
- Identifying how we would follow up after the night
- Deciding what we should say to the Grange
- Determining what money we need and where to find it.

Determining roles & responsibilities

Team members looked at the long list with some trepidation. How would they get all of this done? They decided that if they were responsible for a series of tasks within the plan, they should be able to get other members to volunteer to help them. When they decided to do this, their role on the team changed forever.

Developing costs

The team determined they couldn't estimate total costs until the tasks had been better defined, but because the President asked them for a budget, they decided to estimate total costs. If members would all pay their own way, they decided to spend another \$10 dollars of Grange funds per guest. Since they wanted 30 guests, their preliminary budget showed they would need \$300 for guests. If each member also contributed \$10 and if 30 members participated, the total working budget would be \$600, which seemed adequate.

Defining task dependencies and analyzing critical path

Defining task dependencies was more difficult. It was pretty clear that the team member responsible for food needed to have a head-count by a certain date. Timing for invitations, selection of entertainment and printing invitations were all time related. They decided to build a coordinated calendar and task/events list by the next time they met.

Developing and negotiating realistic schedules

The team realized there would be a time to negotiate actual schedules as soon as individual task schedules and dates were developed.

Team building

No one thought they needed additional team building skills. There were ways for each to learn more about team building, but these ideas were not presented.

Project risk analysis, risk management, and contingency planning

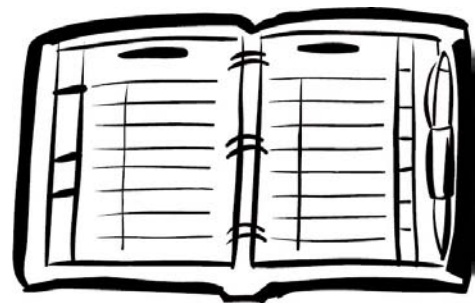
When the team considered this portion of project management, they laughed a bit. What could possibly be at risk when it came to their Friend's Night? After a brief discussion, members agreed that the credibility of the Grange and its reputation in the community could be negatively effected if the event were not first class, and their community presence would be enhanced if it were.

Tracking and management - corrective actions and plan revisions

The team decided to use a simple GANTT chart to schedule and track actions and developed the model that appears at the end of this Help Guide. Or, enter Gantt Chart into your Internet search engine to see many helpful examples and forms.

Post-project reviews, and building on success

The team determined they would review the project after the event based upon having met the six core objectives outlined in the project's Scope and Objectives. They scheduled a team meeting for the first week after the scheduled event.



Estimated budget or costs

Item

Projected Cost

Realistic schedules

Task

Start

Complete

Team building activities

Final project budgeting

Risk analysis, risk management, and contingency planning (if required)

Tracking and management - corrective actions and plan revisions

Post-project review criteria

Using Project Management Techniques

Now that you have seen a project planned and have used the forms for a Friend's Night, try planning either a community event or a project recognizing an educator in your community or something to do with the school, or any project you have in mind for your Grange. The techniques you have just discovered will serve you well.

Here are 7 keys to successful project management.

1. **Be realistic.** But don't think too small. A project that has too narrow a scope and unchallenging objectives may lack the quality factor your team members really want or your members deserve. Failure is seldom the problem. Low aim is often the problem. A project should be worth doing. Granges that accomplish projects that make a difference grow.
2. **Build projects around people** As a team leader, your toughest task may be matching the task to the member or the member to the task. We've learned a long time ago that if you give members work to do that they like, they'll do it. Develop tasks that do not match member interests and skills and your projects will head down hill.
3. **Think strategically** No sense doing a project that isn't right for your Grange. Some projects are not worth the effort. Projects that involve the Grange in pointless activity are a waste of time. Granges that involve the Grange with children or with the schools are more powerfully enabled.
4. **Act like a team** You may be surprised how hard this is. If you are struggling, ask yourself and your team: Why are we a team? What do we expect from the team leader? What do we expect of each other?
5. **Build in consequences** Incentives for doing the job well are motivators. So plan a party for the team and praise good work often. Similarly, if the team member falters make sure there are consequences, which are necessary and can be unpleasant.
6. **Make progress** So often we mistake activity for progress. Measure where you are against your objectives all the time. Don't be like the processionary caterpillars who, when placed around the rim of a Mason jar filled with honey, walked and walked until they starved to death with the honey so near because they mistook activity for progress.
7. **Have fun** No project will be a real success unless the people working on it have fun. Remember that this is not life and death. As the team leader, make sure that there is time for laughter and good times. Then you will find volunteers anxious to do the project again.



Community Event Project Form

Event name

Recommended date

Define the project's scope and objectives

Build the task list

Identify team member roles & responsibilities

Specific task dependencies and critical path

Estimated budget or costs

Item

Projected Cost

Realistic schedules

Task

Start

Complete

Team building activities

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Task

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Bibliography

There are many books and materials available to the Grange leader and their teams. We have developed a selective list of materials and identified the source where possible. Most books are available in the Internet at Buy.com or Amazon.com

Materials for Grange projects or events:

75+ Ways to Attract and Retain Members

Answers to most of your membership development questions. Contact your State Master or purchase from the National Grange \$ 15.00

Team Building

William Dyer, Addison Wesley Publisher

Help Guide: Team Building

National Action Grange Advisory Committee

Books to help with the change process:

Who Moved My Cheese

Spencer Johnson

A wonderful book about how to deal with change **

Teaching the Elephant To Dance

James Belasco, Plume Book Publisher

Books that Grange Leaders need to know:

Bowling Alone

Robert Putnam

Leadership is an Art

Max DePree

Leading Without Power

Max DePree

Win the Value Revolution

Robert Tucker

Leaders

Warren Bennis

On Becoming a Leader

Warren Bennis

** Video available through the National Grange

