



Craven Raven Publishing presents. . .

# The Total Freakin' **Moron's** Guide to

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# Project Management



by Bob Shepherd

Blue-Footed Booby



# 1 A Note from the Publisher

You've seen the Dummies and Idiots books. What a concept! Who would have thought that the way to build a brand was to insult your customers' intelligence? But, since success breeds imitation, as anyone who watches television or goes to movies knows, we at Craven Raven Publishing, being ourselves too dull to come up with a novel concept, have settled on giving the public more of what it has shown itself to love. Our new series, *The Total Freakin' Moron's Guides*, in addition to being written in large, block letters in orange crayon, will assume that you, the reader, are not a dummy, not an idiot, but a **TOTAL FREAKIN' MORON**, a clueless cretin with, of course, a taste for self-abasement. To market this series, we have, in fact, decided to take out ads on the backs of cereal boxes because we assume that anyone who would actually purchase one of these things is too stupid to get in a car and actually find a bookstore.

The new series will address weighty practical matters in finance, personal hygiene, fine arts, practical arts, and, of course, business (See *The Complete Freakin' Moron's Guide to Searching for Coins under the Sofa Cushions of Friends and Family*). As you can well imagine, the planning of this series presented our editorial team with a philosophical problem similar to that presented by Aristotle and Aquinas's Prime Mover Argument for the existence of God. I refer, of course, to the problem of infinite regress. As you will recall, the Prime Mover Argument goes something like this: You can't assume that everything has a cause because, if

you do, then you'll be stuck looking for antecedent causes forever. Eventually, out of boredom if nothing else, you will find yourself postulating an uncaused Prime Mover, aka God. Among the many problems with this argument, of course, are that a) it is not necessarily the case that everything is caused, b) there's no reason to believe that the regress isn't actually infinite, and c) nothing whatsoever that we would want to know of God (other than that HE is a Prime Mover) follows from this supposed proof of His existence. Similarly, the author of a book for dummies/idiots/morons has the problem of figuring out just how stupid, misinformed, and lacking in experience his or her readership is. As the note you are reading demonstrates, one can always back up and explain something that is antecedent to explaining whatever it is that you are currently explaining. To avoid being sucked into this editorial and philosophical quicksand, our team has settled on a policy of assuming that our readers have at least the level of cognitive functioning of a rutabaga.

In keeping with current trends in the publishing industry, the new series will be **LOADED** with pictures, special features, and call-out quotations because we assume that our customers will be incapable of reading a page with more than twenty-five words on it. (We expect our readers to have the attention span of a methamphetamine addict.) Special features in the new series include

1. periodic disaffirmations ("God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot

change—that is, everything of any importance to my present or future happiness”),

2. incomprehensible but lovely charts and graphs that you can use to snow the audience for your next PowerPoint presentation, and,
3. gratuitously racy photographs on every third page of the text, which we have created because, according to our research, the predominantly male would-be project managers who might buy this book think about sex approximately every ten minutes and because it will take the average reader approximately five minutes to read one of those twenty-five word pages (The principle will be familiar to readers of the

British tabloids published by the new owner of the *Wall Street Journal*, Rupert Murdoch).

Finally, in a stroke of marketing genius, we shall be concluding each book with a multiple-choice test entirely unrelated to the preceding content followed by a feature entitled “Still Confused?” that will point you to other fine titles in the Freakin’ Morons series. Our expectation, of course, is that you will continue buying these books as long as we can find hacks to churn them out. Now that’s an infinite regress that our stockholders can get behind! And now, with no further ado, your PMP (pronounced “pimp”) primer.

# 2 Deconstructing Project Management

Back in your grandfather's day, business was simple. For the first few hours of each work day, you drank coffee, smoked cigarettes at your desk, and harassed your secretary. Then you went out for lunch, had a few martinis with your colleagues, and spent the rest of the afternoon stoned out of your gourd. But what worked for The Greatest Generation, who gave us telemarketing, superfund sites, and the exploding Pinto gas tank, won't work in today's complex, challenging e-business environment, with its discontinuities and Black Swans.

Today, if you want to get ahead, and this applies in all areas of business, not just in Project Management, you must master Strategic Alignment—that is, alignment of your activities with the overall strategic goals of the firm. To find out what these strategic goals are, you might consult your C-level managers, except, of course, that they are not in the office. They are at the Los Cabos Golf Resort, where they are engaged in the essential task of continually redefining your company's mission statement (an activity altogether similar to John Maynard Keynes's suggestion that the British government pay some people to bury banknotes and other people to dig them up).

Fortunately, you don't need a crystal ball or an invitation to Los Cabos to figure out what goal is motivating your C-level managers, because you are about to be told. This goal is so important, so far-reaching that the present author calls it THE PRIME DIRECTIVE:

The primary strategic goal of a C-level manager is to leave the company in three years with a large exit package.

To accomplish this strategic goal, Chief Executive Officers and their colleagues in the adminisphere do what they can to make the company as bloated and unproductive as possible so that it will be an easy target for an equity buy-out firm. Why, you might ask (because you know very little about business—otherwise, why would you have purchased this book?), would anyone want to do that? The answer can be stated in two words: Stock Options. If the company becomes fat and lazy enough, a consortium of equity firms will gather round it like vultures around roadkill, and once the buy-out deal is announced, the C-level managers will cash in their stock options and buy several islands in the Mediterranean.

So, what does this have to do with you, the aspiring Project Management Professional? Pay careful attention here, for you are about to learn the KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PROJECT MANAGEMENT. To ensure that your work is aligned strategically with the PRIME DIRECTIVE, all you need to do is to recognize that the purpose of project management is to appear as busy as possible without actually accomplishing anything. That's why they call it **busi-ness!** Fortunately for you, an entire science of project management has been designed to accomplish exactly that. Walk into corporate offices anywhere in America today, and you will

find thousands of people busily holding planning and scheduling meetings; writing project charters, statements of work, and communications plans; considering alternatives for financing; securing stakeholder buy-in; defining goals and requirements; assigning responsibilities and resources; defining work breakdown structures; estimating; doing and redoing budgets; creating PERT charts, GANTT charts, organizational matrices, and process flow diagrams; performing team-building activities; taking management training classes; gathering benchmarks and baselines; defining key performance indicators; analyzing risks; gathering the voice of the customer and the voice of the business; creating change management plans; and much, much else.

The point of all this activity, of course, is that **NONE OF IT IS ACTUALLY DOING THE PROJECT.** That's the beauty of it. One can spend all one's time in face-to-face meetings, on conference calls, preparing reports, sending emails, and so on, all the while appearing to be very, very busy moving a project forward while **NEVER ACTUALLY DOING ANY OF THE WORK THAT THE PROJECT ENVISIONS.** By the time the actual work is set to begin, the company will have been bought by an equity firm, and all the management team will have been replaced, and you

can start all over again from scratch! Lots and lots of line workers will lose their jobs, of course, but as a certified Project Management Professional, you will be needed more than ever to create the plans of the new ownership, which will be too busy at their retreats in Los Cabos to do this themselves. How's that for job security! Which brings us to the **FIRST PRINCIPLE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT:**

Fill all the time available for the project with project planning and management activities. This will ensure that nothing, in the end, is done and that you will, therefore, be in perfect alignment with the **PRIME DIRECTIVE.**

Got it? If you answered yes, forget it. You haven't the right stuff to become a successful project manager. If you answered, "I'm not sure, but let's hold a meeting on the second Thursday of next month and try to come to some consensus on this issue," you're well on your way to becoming a Project Management Sensei. As George W. Bush, the first MBA president, has said about project management in his administration: "If you plan your work and work your plan, then uh, if you plan, uh, this work stuff is, you know, like, it's planned, then you can fool most of the people most of the time and, uh, mission accomplished."