From What to How

When Mary accepts the full-time position with Medical Multimedia as the person in charge of managing its intellectual assets, she doesn't fully appreciate the magnitude and nature of the task before her. Dealing with the images and sounds produced by the company is straightforward enough. It's clear to virtually everyone why it's important to better manage the company's visible, tangible assets, since they are created, repackaged, and eventually sold at a profit. Thanks to Mary's organizational, process optimization, and communications skills, she is able to understand and then improve on the ad hoc system of multimedia management.

Since everyone in the organization has clear roles regarding their relationship to the production and handling of multimedia assets, no one feels personally threatened by explaining to Mary *what* they do to add value to sound and graphics assets that are incorporated into products sold by the company. For example, before Mary's initiative, each group within the company dealt separately with how to best label and file multimedia assets so that they can be used and located without ambiguity. The programmers are concerned with the physical location of the files and the name of the associated project; artists are concerned with version and creation tool information; while those in the legal department are concerned with license restrictions and expiration dates. Prior to Mary's intervention, each group used its own ad hoc system based on different technology and a unique process. Artists used a database package that ships with their Macintosh computers; the programmers use a proprietary database of their own design on PCs; and the legal group uses a spreadsheet running on a PC; and so on.

When Mary introduces a shrink-wrapped database product and defines a structure that reflects the needs of everyone in the company, there is some resistance to change because it means everyone will have to learn a new system. However, virtually everyone acknowledges the