OPENING CASE

Sue Johnson was the project manager for a consulting company contracted to provide a new online registration system at a local college. This system absolutely had to be operational by May 1st so students could use it to register for the fall semester. Her company's contract had a stiff penalty clause if the system was not ready by then, and Sue and her team would get nice bonuses for doing a good job on this project and meeting the schedule. Sue knew that it was her responsibility to meet the schedule and manage scope, cost, and quality expectations. She and her team developed a detailed schedule and network diagram to help organize the project.

Developing the schedule turned out to be the easy part; keeping the project on track was more difficult. Managing people issues and resolving schedule conflicts were two of the bigger challenges. Many of the customers' employees took unplanned vacations and missed or rescheduled project review meetings. These changes made it difficult for the project team to follow their planned schedule for the system because they had to have customer sign-off at various stages of the systems development life cycle. One senior programmer on her project team quit, and she knew it would take extra time for a new person to get up to speed. It was still early in the project, but Sue knew they were falling behind. What could she do to meet the operational date of May 1st?

CASE WRAP-UP

It was now March 15, just a month and a half before the new online registration system was supposed to go live. The project was in total chaos. Sue Johnson thought she could handle all of the conflicts that kept appearing on the project, and she was too proud to admit to her top management or the college president that things were not going well. She spent a lot of time preparing a detailed schedule for the

project, and she thought she was using their project management software well enough to keep up with project status. However, the five main programmers on the project all figured out a way to generate automatic updates for their tasks every week, saying that everything was completed as planned. They paid very little attention to the actual plan and hated filling out status information. Sue did not verify most of their work to check that it was actually completed. In addition, the head of the Registrar's Office was uninterested in the project and delegated sign-off responsibility to one of his clerks who really did not understand the entire registration process. When Sue and her team started testing the new system, she learned they were using last year's course data. Using last year's course data caused additional problems because the college was moving from quarters to semesters in the new semester. How could they have missed that requirement? Sue hung her head in shame as she walked into a meeting with her manager to ask for help. She learned the hard way how difficult it was to keep a project on track. She wished she had spent more time talking face-to-face with key project stakeholders, especially her programmers and the Registrar's Office representatives, to verify that the project was on schedule and that the schedule was updated accurately.