Chapter 14

Managing Projects

We've talked about how to design and build information system projects. That was the easy part! It's much more difficult to manage an entire information system project to make sure a company realizes the intended benefits from its investment and that the system solves problems for the organization rather than create more.

Chapter 14 Learning Objectives

1. What are the objectives of project management and why is it so essential in developing information systems?
2. What methods can be used for selecting and evaluating information systems projects and aligning them with the firm's business goals?
3. How can firms assess the business value of information systems projects?
4. What are the principal risk factors in information systems projects and how can they be managed?

The opening case, "Intuit Counts on Project Management," illustrates how important it is to involve users in designing, building, and implementing system changes. Intuit didn't have problems gathering and storing data but it did face hurdles deriving useful insights from all of its data.

In the past, Intuit had many data teams and multiple data silos maintained in isolation of each other. Despite many positive outcomes the arrangement produced within the enterprise or within the infrastructures for the individual products, Intuit was unable to utilize its data effectively for the entire organization or for all its customers. Management wanted a more holistic approach so the company could better use data to serve its customers and to provide data more easily to the customers so they could have better experiences from the data and better insight about themselves.

The Intuit IAC project required cooperation across the entire company because it incorporated all of the company's enterprise data, its product data, and third-party data into a single platform. IAC project leaders moved a number of functional teams from the data engineering group to production work for the project. The project team was very sensitive to deadlines and the project budget. One of the key steps was breaking down the project into

easy-to-handle pieces. Organizing a large project into "bite-sized" pieces makes it possible to deliver demonstrable results as the project progresses.

The IAC project was a multiyear endeavor, and a "big bang" approach wasn't operationally or politically feasible. Creating a series of smaller deliverables rather than a single huge end product made the project more manageable for the project teams.

This case study shows the upside of correctly managing projects and how successful they can be when done right. Unfortunately, too many organizations fail to correctly assess the business value of projects or fail to manage the organizational change brought on by new projects.