Let's look at how we can organize, progress, report, and integrate tasks within the broader project. I will draw upon my experience as a professional cook to explore important facets of knowledge work. This shows there are deeply imbedded principles in managing complexity in work processes, regardless of the end product.

Mise en place

"Mise en place" is a French culinary phrase meaning **"everything in its place."** In professional kitchens, it refers to the careful preparation, organization, and arrangement of all necessary ingredients (information), utensils (work methods), and *instructions* before cooking begins. Each item is measured, chopped, prepared, and placed conveniently within reach, ensuring the cook can execute tasks smoothly and efficiently during service.

Effective **mise en place** ensures:

• **Efficiency:** Everything is precisely where and how it's needed, minimizing wasted movement or time.

• **Consistency:** Ingredients are prepped uniformly, ensuring consistent outcomes.

• **Clarity:** With everything clearly organized, the chef focuses entirely on execution, quality, and timing.

The **9 Domains of Task Management** framework I will explore below acts as the project's **mise en place**, ensuring that all tasks—like ingredients in a kitchen—are clearly defined, thoroughly prepared, and systematically organized, enabling smooth project execution and consistent success. And if all tasks are executed flawlessly, then the project as a whole will benefit significantly.

The 9 Domains

I look at all tasks through 9 domains. These are the categories created by looking at What, How, and Why, according to Data, Information, and Knowledge. For instance, a "know + why" = a decision. And if we look at the "Know" column and go down to the "Why" row, we see that's where decision is found.

	Data :	Information :	Knowledge :
What :	Action Item	Assign	Prioritize
How :	Documentation	Work Methods	PLAN!
Why :	Approval	Check	Decide

Rows of "What", "How" and "Why" across columns of "Data", "Information" and "Knowledge"

These 9 Domains serve as containers for different aspects of the task, just like ingredients of a dish are prepared ahead of time and put into containers for the cook to make effective use of. Knowledge work doesn't progress in straight lines. It follows a logical sequence, but the path along that sequence looks more like a bee's flight path rather than a straight line. Sure the start and end are the same, but we are going through iterations and loops of work more often than straight lines. That's why I present tasks as a matrix in which we are reminded of the need to attend to these areas.

How to traverse this table

Look at the black squares, they are the labels for the respective rows and columns. If we follow any row we will understand what we are doing, how we are doing it, and why we are doing it. If we go down any column we will have comprehensive understanding of how to manage critical pieces of data, information, and knowledge.

By attending to these areas it keeps us integrated with the project needs and scope development and can allow for delegation of tasks in well thought out workflows. The worker does the work, following the work methods.

Work methods

1. Data Sheet or Template

2. Standard Procedure or Go-by

3. Guidance Document for context and to explain the procedure

4. Reference Information Catalogue

Work Flows

A well-structured workflow has the worker following the work methods. Then a task coordinator fulfills the obligations of the other 8 squares: moving responsibility between worker and checker, applying status updates, seeking approvals and logging decisions that change scope or schedule and communicating these updates for integrated planning. This expanded matrix looks at how the 9 Domains of Task Management integrate with Project Controls:

Integration of task management with project controls:

	Active Deliverables	Resources	Integrated Project Schedule	
Action Item Log	Action Item	Assign	Prioritize	Package 6-week lookahead
Master Deliverables List	Documentation	Work	Plan	Now, Next, Later (To Do)
Issued Deliverables	Approve	Check	Decide	Decision Log
	Change Log	Resource Utilization	Performance Report	

When we have well defined work flows that regularly maintain the project controls through accurate and timely information, we have effective control over the inner squares of the tasks. Work gets done effectively when we plan the work and work the plan. Plans break down because ingredients are available at the right time or in the right quantity, or else we're missing cooks from the cooking line (to use the metaphor). When HOLDs are removed, decisions made, changes approved and accounted for, when versions are managed and deliverables are well defined and mapped to responsibilities, then there will be sufficient communication, timely status updates, and adequately document decisions to allow work to proceed according to plan. But when steps are missed and plans do not updated to reflect actual conditions and there are not effective controls in the project then people stall frequently to ask:

1. What are my priorities?

2. Where do I get the right information / version?

3. What did we decide to do about this thing again?

When you get your time back from not having to constantly be attending to those three questions, you can then be assured that your project controls will integrate with your project governance.

Integration of project controls with project governance:

Project Scope	Active Packages	Resources	Integrated Project Schedule	Project Execution Plan
Action Item Log	Action Item	Assign	Prioritize	Package 6-week lookahead
Master Deliverables List	Documentation	Work	Plan	Now, Next, Later (To Do)
Issued Deliverables	Approve	Check	Decide	Decision Log
Project Archive	Change Log	Resource Utilization	Performance Report	Lessons Learned

The corners are where everything is integrated, still with a relationship to the row and column

This is a sufficient set of categories for effective delivery of many kinds and scales of knowledge work projects. Projects can scale rather effectively with the nested task hierarchy I propose (see also "12 Rules for Project Management"):

- **Packages**: Strategic grouping of related deliverables. Priorities are delegated from this level.

- **Deliverables**: Defined outputs of project scope, providing measurable progress metrics.

- **Documents**: Specific tangible artifacts that fulfill deliverable requirements.

- **Tasks**: Individual actions undertaken to produce documents, following structured processes.

Small projects can have a compact structure and minimal reporting, while the addition of packages, deliverables, tasks, and reporting tools can grow with well structured workflows that follow the rows and columns above.

With project governance and project controls defined according to the project needs, this framework is scalable, flexible, and sufficiently capable of addressing the needs of complexity in project delivery.

The Kitchen

When you enter the kitchen, before you set out to complete your dish, set your mise en place – put everything you will need in its proper place – and your dish will be a breeze. But if you aren't set up well to complete your task and you don't follow your work methods, then things can be very hard because you don't have what you need and you can't progress when you must.