PART ONE
PLANNING AND DELIVERING YOUR PROJECT IDEA...

1. EXPLORING YOUR INITIAL IDEA
2. DEVELOPING THE IDEA INTO A PROJECT
3. DEVELOPING THE DETAILS OF THE PROJECT
4. SYSTEMS FOR DELIVERING THE PROJECT SUCCESSFULLY
5. COMPLETING AND FOLLOWING UP THE PROJECT
The process of developing and completing a project can be broken down into these five essential steps. On paper they appear to follow a nice neat order. We’ve organised these steps as the most logical way to go about planning and delivering a project. In reality though, you’ll find that the stages will blur together a bit. New ideas for later stages might pop up in the process of putting your first ideas together and sometimes you’ll think of parts of the specific details of the project before you even decide on the overall aims of what you are doing. That’s okay too. Just make sure you consider and work through the project aspects and considerations given in each and every step during the planning of your project.

Step 1: Exploring your initial idea
- What do people think of your idea?
- Has it been done before?
- Who is going to make up your audience?
- Who is going to make up your competition?
- Write a project summary

Step 2: Developing the idea into a project
- Who are you doing it with?
- What resources do you need for the project to occur?
- Where should you work from?
- Timelines
- Raising money
- What are your publicity tactics?
- Develop a basic budget
- Develop a detailed project plan

Step 3: Developing the details of the project
- Financial control
- Record keeping: financial records
- Considering accounting software
- Record keeping: non-financial records
- Communicating and making decisions
- Keeping track of it all: information systems for managing projects
- Systems for sharing information across project teams
- Once you’ve got a system, stick to it!
- Taking full advantage of the resources available
- Environmental issues

Step 4: Systems for delivering the project successfully
- Thank yous
There’s no tried and true formula for distinguishing good ideas from those that aren’t worth pursuing. Chances are, if you do have a hunch that your idea is valuable or exciting, and is not too far-fetched, you might just be able to pull it off. Good ideas and inspirations don’t necessarily have much to do with the genius or talent of the person who comes up with them—they have more to do with how much work goes into pursuing them.

Start getting all of your thoughts down on paper. It sounds kind of basic and maybe a bit boring, but write down everything you can. What it is, who it is for and what it aims to achieve. Try to write as much stuff about it as possible—even if it’s just scrawled haphazardly across a notebook. This is also information that you can come back to afterwards to help you with the further development of the idea.

Now, is it starting to look like one idea or is it more likely to be many interconnecting ones? A local theatre festival, for example, might incorporate many different elements and aspects—performances and workshops, discussions and talks, across various stages and venues—all of which will require their own development and inspiration. If you are running a gallery, the idea is not merely to start the gallery, but to also have ideas for different exhibitions, events, themes and approaches which might be necessary to keep what you do fresh and interesting throughout the project’s lifetime.

You might think that some people are prone to having better ideas than others. Maybe that’s true sometimes. But it’s more often true that the more ideas people have, the more likely they are to have a good one. Don’t be afraid to throw up lots of ideas and discard them—some may be set aside and picked up at another point. What might seem like an embarrassing idea now may look like a piece of inspired genius later—so keep a record of them all.
STEP TWO: DEVELOPING THE IDEA INTO A PROJECT

The early stages of a project are going to be really valuable in the long run, so try not to skip too quickly through them. If you end up deciding you want to apply for funding or sponsorship, many of the results of the tasks below will most likely make up and enrich your applications. Even if you don’t seek funding or sponsorship, going through this process now will flesh out your project idea and help you decide if you are going to get to the later stages at all.

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF YOUR IDEA?

Once you have the bare bones of the idea in place, talk to as many people as possible. Maybe you don’t want to discuss all the fine details, but it certainly won’t hurt to casually bounce your idea around with friends, family or someone with relevant experience or expertise. If your project involves working with a specific community of people talk and consult with a wide range of representatives from that community. It shouldn’t be assumed that just because you think the Volunteer Firefighting Service would love your model fire truck fundraising exhibition, or your project would benefit them, that this is necessarily the case.

You can learn a lot about a project just from the questions people ask you. It’s easy to get too involved with an idea and be unable to see it from anyone else’s point of view. You might be assuming a lot of people will be interested in your particular idea, only to find out that the people you thought would be keen for it to happen aren’t all that excited. That’s not to say you shouldn’t do it, but maybe you are going to have to shift your focus a bit, or scale it down, or think about a different audience and how you might find it.

Talking to people during the development of the idea will help you discover who is most interested and who may be a reliable source of good advice along the way. Consider asking people you wouldn’t normally ask; people who aren’t in your usual circle of acquaintances.

If you have Internet access spend a couple of days searching the web for potential people, organisations or groups that you can go to for advice or assistance. Creative people and project workers from all walks of life and geographical areas have set up heaps of resource sites, mailing lists, message boards and discussion groups you would be able to find by doing a simple search on a search engine. For example, if you wanted to know if there was an independent record label discussion list or mailing list in Australia, you could type the
search “independent record label” and “mailing list” and “Australia” into Google www.google.com, Yahoo www.yahoo.com.au or Alta Vista www.altavista.com. If you don’t know how to use the Internet, your local library probably runs free introductory lessons.

(See Part Five: Where to go for help, advice, resources and opportunities—Online)

Mailing lists are a particularly helpful tool on the Net. You can send a single email to a single list address and it gets delivered to the whole network of people signed up to that list. Many of these people may have helpful feedback or be able to point you towards more useful information because they are all in some way involved in the same area of activity as you. If there aren’t any mailing lists in existence that link people with similar projects or areas of interests to yours, maybe after or during the life of your own project you might want to start one up.

Many people aren’t aware that there are non-profit companies, philanthropic organisations, and various local, state and federal government departments that have been specifically set up to give financial assistance (grants) to individuals and, more commonly, to groups wanting to organise creative projects (events, performances, artworks, exhibitions and tours—practically everything you can think of). If you are interested in seeing whether your project could be eligible for this kind of funding you should definitely check out what is on offer.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—Managing a budget and finding money for it: fundraising, sponsorship and government funding)

HAS IT BEEN DONE BEFORE?

Find out if something similar has been done before—and if so where and by whom. How did they do it, how did it go and what kind of budget did they have compared to yours? By comparing your idea to others you may work out what exactly you need to do. Sometimes other examples are excellent for working out exactly what you don’t want to do! It will also help you identify avenues for funding and support for your project (checking out the sponsor logos on the bottom of their posters never hurts). You may even be able to get involved with a similar project to see how it works and build your experience.

If you do uncover similar projects, you might need to think of ways to differentiate yours. Distinguishing your idea will be very important for media coverage and if you are hoping to get funding from a government or

“...In my own experience I’ve found it’s been beneficial to take risks and use my initiative to create my own opportunities for success rather than relying on others.”

—Tara Mokhtari; The Nineteenth Hole Theatre Company
non-government organisation. It might help to look at what your “competition” is doing in determining where your idea fits in and how you will have to market it. Identify whose audiences you are competing for and what is original about your idea that will make them want to be involved in yours over others. “Unique” is a buzzword that can go a long way.

A philosophy of competition, however, is not always the best or most appropriate angle to take. If your project is an event or product intended to cater for a particular community or group of artists in your local area and you discover a successful project happening somewhere else that is similar to your idea, you could ask the organisers if they would be open to you picking their brains about what they do. After all, sharing skills is a lot easier than starting from scratch. If you are upfront about your intentions they might be happy to help and may even be flattered that you recognise the value of their work. The more people bringing great projects to life the better!

(See Part Three: Specific information for specific kinds of projects—Organising an event)

**WHO IS GOING TO MAKE UP YOUR AUDIENCE?**

Know your audience. How much can your audience afford to pay? Are they from a particular income bracket (low or high incomes) or are they spread across the spectrum? Is there a large enough market in your area to meet your aims? Consider the kinds of people who make up your audience demographic, as well as the promotional materials and sponsors that would appeal most to their current tastes and sense of ethics.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—Managing a budget and finding money for it: fundraising, sponsorship and government funding.)

**WHO IS GOING TO MAKE UP YOUR COMPETITION?**

Is your audience already being targeted? If so, by whom? “Competition” might be in the form of similar projects, but it also might just be stuff happening at the same time. If you find you are competing with a similar event it might be possible, and worthwhile, to consult each other about the dates of your events well before they happen—so you don’t clash with each other or compete for the same audience. Cross-promoting your events on each other’s publicity materials might be an alternative way of maximising the success of clashing events. Think too about whether it might even be a good idea to bring your individual projects together under the one umbrella event and have the advantage of combining your resources and audiences. Make sure that it is in your own project’s interests to do so.

(See Part Three: Specific information for specific projects—Organising an event)
**WRITE A PROJECT SUMMARY**

Project summaries are fantastic for clarifying what you are really trying to achieve. Look back at your original idea notes and flesh them out a bit more. Write down your expectations, aims, objectives and what you wish to achieve. Now take a second look. Your objectives might reveal an even bigger picture. Perhaps it is just the first in a long line of events or interrelated projects that will continue and grow over years and become a much grander idea down the track. Write it all down. You can build a project summary up very easily from the collected notes you’ve made so far.

The project summary should include:

- a brief description of your idea or project
- a list of objectives—what you want the project to achieve
- a list of key people and groups involved in the project (commonly called “stakeholders”), with a description of their roles and responsibilities. For example, creative people, production and professional collaborators, funding bodies, sponsors, advisors, mentors, etc.
- project outcomes—how the project will achieve its objectives
- critical success factors—things that are absolutely essential for achieving the success of the project
- risks and issues—things that could damage the project’s success (for example, not being able to work with your preferred team or not getting the preferred venue)
- basic budget (try to write down the costs of everything you think you might need to pay for and ideas about where you might get the money to pay for it)
- basic timeline
- the general approach you’d like yourself (and the group) to have towards the project.

A project summary is a really handy document to have on you at all times. You never know when you’ll be talking to someone and you’ll want or need to show them a document of your plans and intentions. You can use it to get appropriate team members, venues or organisations on board; as a basis for gaining support from external sources; as a basis for grant applications or funding proposals; and as a way of keeping on track if things don’t go to plan.

The project summary makes for a good quick reference guide and overview of the project and lays the foundation for how you are going to organise and manage things. Funding or sponsorship applications might copy or borrow from this document, so it’s a good idea to have it as polished as possible. If you can keep re-using it you cut back on time spent writing funding applications. It will change throughout the life of the project, but try to keep things running as closely as possible to the original vision. When you do deviate from it, keep note, as it will help you evaluate the project when it is all over.
STEP THREE:
DEVELOPING THE DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

Now you’ve got a project summary, this makes it easier for you to notice where you are missing things, where your ideas are fuzzy or poorly thought through, and which areas you’ll need to further develop.

WHO ARE YOU DOING IT WITH?

Are there skills needed for the project that you don’t possess? You might want to think about learning them. If not, think of all the people you know who have them and all the places you might look to make up the rest. It’s ideal that you will have raised or secured enough money to pay everyone involved. But if you can’t, think of what other rewards you can offer for working on your project. How can you make your project worth their while? Students at high school, TAFE and university are often keen to gain work experience and sometimes this can be approved as credit towards their course. Courses such as public relations (PR), arts administration, accounting, event management, creative industries, information technology (IT), stage production and communications design might be good places to seek recruits.

No matter the size of your budget, you will probably require the services of a professional or certificated tradesperson along the way. Be sure to factor in their costs. If you don’t have contacts in the areas you need them, ask around at organisations and venues that cater to the discipline or industry you require services from. The contacts in the back of this book might help you with finding the people you need and the rates you might be expected to pay. If you know of groups who have undertaken similar projects to yours, and if you are in a position to do so, speak to the organisers and see who they employed and the issues they faced.

If your project is going to operate in conjunction with a particular community make sure you document correspondence with community representatives. It is good to have your own views about the importance of your project backed up by the people you will be working with.
WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU NEED FOR THE PROJECT TO OCCUR?

The resources you need might include: equipment, materials, venues, labour, cash, stationery, truck hire, STD phone calls, spray paint, portaloos, chair hire, printing and wages. Be pedantic. If possible, read your list out to some of your friends to see if any of them can tell if you have forgotten something. Be sure to consider and budget for those resources that are legally required for the kind of project you are organising (permits, copyright permissions and all the different kinds of insurance).

(See Part Four: More legal issues in creative projects)

Try and double-check your own listing of resources against those used by similar projects. If you are wanting to set up a performance on a local sporting oval, ask organisers of similar events about the prices and quantities of portaloos, temporary fencing, security guards, qualified bar staff, insurance, alcohol licences, etc. Ask who supplied these services and whether they were happy with the service and price. Adjust your own list of resources accordingly.

Once you have made a list of everything, decide which items will be essential and which might be useful, but not integral. You might be able to slightly readjust your initial idea to cut back on your list of required resources. The performance on the oval mentioned above may be able to do away with security, toilets, fencing and probably insurance if it was held in an existing venue that had these things already. Alternatively, you could save money on insurance, wages and security if you kept the oval as your venue, served soft drinks instead of alcohol and used volunteers to work the drink stand. But then, would it be a mistake to cancel out your alcohol revenue? This is a simple example perhaps but it illustrates how important it is to be flexible in your approach to resources.

Now mark the things you can borrow, those you’ll have to hire and what you’ll need to buy. If you think your project might be receiving funding, keep in mind that many grants exclude the possibility of buying equipment with that money. Check the fine print.
It is possible to target commercial and non-commercial suppliers of goods or services as sources of in-kind sponsorship. Who’s going to take care of this? This is a question you might have to ask yourself about many facets of the project: do you have the time to be chasing up equipment or will you be better off getting someone in who knows more about the particular area? Think also about whether you know the terminology of what you need. If you need particular lighting for a stage production do you know exactly what to ask for? Are they hard to find? Can you afford them?

WHERE SHOULD YOU WORK FROM?

Organising things from your bedroom is cheap and quite common on first-time projects; but if you want to make your project team feel a bit more “professional” and confident about the project’s organisation you might want to consider getting a studio or office, conducting your meetings at a local cafe or bar, or finding a friendly community organisation or developing business to let you use some of their office space. These sorts of arrangements are actually quite common—especially when just starting out.

(See Part Three: Specific information for specific kinds of projects—Projects requiring venues and work spaces)

TIMELINES

Of all the resources that there are to manage for creative projects, it is often time—not money—that makes the difference between what you can and can’t do. Just about any other deficiency—money, materials, quality of the program, lack of venues, lack of publicity—can be made up for if you can find the time to think of a solution. Organising your timeline (deciding in what order the activities are going to be undertaken) will help break your project down into achievable, bite-sized tasks; and will help differentiate essential tasks from tasks that can be left until last—or cast aside if time runs out.

One-off projects—if your project or event takes place on a single date or over a number of days, you can’t afford to be lax about the timeline. You’ll need to decide upon the staging dates as soon as possible and make a timeline that works back from these final dates.

If you’re working with others, creating a written schedule that outlines when and where everyone’s contribution will occur makes things easier for all involved and will be good for checking how you are progressing. Account for each individual’s external commitments—particularly if people are working full-time at other jobs. Try and balance external demands with the key dates and working periods of the project. Maybe ask people to organise their holiday leave for the dates when their creative project work will be most demanding. Similarly, are there a lot of students involved in the project factor in exam time. Consider, too, that people might be away during holiday periods.
How long will each stage of the project take? Be sure to allow time for planning, funding, writing, program development, publicity, rehearsals, physical set up, the event (of course), and don’t forget the all important clean up and finalising. The project isn’t over until you have finished all the thank yous, balanced the books, cleaned up the last of the mess and paid everyone.

If you’re applying for funding, check the application deadlines. Remember that it can take anywhere from a few days to six months after the submission deadline to be notified of you success or failure. Most funding bodies advertise the date of notification for each grant category, so make sure there is enough time between this and your event, or the time when you want to pay most of your actual bills, because you’ll need an alternative funding and project plan if the grant doesn’t come through.

Ongoing projects—if your project doesn’t need to happen by a particular time—for example, if you are setting up a gallery, label or publishing company of some sort—then you can take some time to gather the resources you need. You might want to wait until you have been notified of successful funding for your project (or saved up the money yourself) before you set up shop.

For these sorts of projects you need to plan your time around the set up and the ongoing cycles of the business or organisation you are establishing. What are the key dates throughout the year—funding cycles, peak seasons (Christmas), university semester times, accounting and taxation requirements—and what are the things you are going to need to do every day, week and month to keep the project happening and exciting?

RAISING MONEY

There are many different ways to raise money:

- fundraising (raffles, gigs and trivia nights)
- grants (arts funding bodies, philanthropic trusts, universities, TAFEs, schools and student organisations)
- sponsorship (cash and in-kind)
- taking from your own savings.

For arts and cultural projects there are federal, state and territory government funding bodies, hundreds of regional arts bodies, non-profit community organisations and local councils that offer funding for arts and cultural projects. There’s no reason why yours couldn’t be one of them. This process takes a bit of research and proposal writing (a lot of which you will have already done in preparing a project plan). Also, the guidelines for these different funding opportunities vary significantly both across and even within organisations. Read the guidelines, think clearly about what you want to achieve and then listen carefully to the advice each funding body gives you. Speak to them personally, don’t email them; it is their job to help.
anyone interested in applying for funding—that’s what they do. If you don’t perfectly fit any of their categories, they might suggest how you could emphasise parts of your project in order that you might be applicable.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—Managing a budget and finding money for it: fundraising, sponsorship and government funding)

WHAT ARE YOUR PUBLICITY TACTICS?

Smart publicity tactics are possibly the key features of successful creative projects. It’s no good putting a crazy amount of work into a worthwhile project if nobody finds out about its existence. There are all kinds of effective publicity strategies you can use to spread the word about your work, even if your publicity budget is next to nothing. Marketing is so easy to do well, but so often neglected. Before developing a detailed marketing plan read through the relevant sections in this guide.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—Establishing your credibility and using the media)

DEVELOP A BASIC BUDGET

Budgets are often the most daunting aspect of project work for creative people just starting out. It is true that financial control and financial awareness within your project team is very important, but this is not too hard to achieve. There is nothing incredibly tricky or mystical about the way project budgets work.

In the beginning figure out which items you will seek as in-kind sponsorship and which items you will buy or hire. It might be too early to know the amount of money you will receive through grant support, but by comprehensively listing the resources needed and their costs, these early drafts of your expenditure will help you determine the full extent of what you’ll need to spend money on and how much money you’ll need.

A good tactic when budgeting is to write out a full list of everything that you think that you might need to buy or spend money on and then go through them one by one and think about where you might be able to beg or borrow them from instead.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—Managing a budget and finding money for it: fundraising, sponsorship and government funding)
DEVELOP A DETAILED PROJECT PLAN

At this point you have a good idea about how much the project will cost, where the money is coming from (grants, sponsorship, your own savings) and how much you wish to earn — now you can confirm all the elements you need for the project to come together. The project plan includes:

- project summary
- project team: artists and creators, production and technical assistance, administration (marketing, financial, legal) assistance
- production sources: spaces, materials and equipment, freight
- marketing plan that fits the budget: promotion, advertising, media
- administration: who will make phone calls, draw up schedules, negotiate space, personnel and hiring agreements and so on.

By now you know how much you can offer to pay team members and how much you have to spend on items that need to be purchased. Remember the more resources you can get for free (in-kind sponsorship), the more cash you will have to spend on wages.

The more specific this information becomes, the more detail you can add to your project summary. Regardless, you will need to update your project summary and budget, review assumptions and aims as new information becomes available, and re-think your ideas about the project as it develops.

“...So we had a business plan and budget forecasts, spreadsheets... whatever — and all of those corporate videos were supposedly going to make quite a large proportion of our income ... but we still haven’t made a single one of them. We didn’t need to in the end.”

- Sean Gilligan and Sarah Woulahan; Squareyed Films
Making your project a success has a lot to do with constantly balancing many different aspects, taking full advantage of the infrastructure you have scoped, keeping an eye on your finances, nurturing good communication skills and setting thorough documentation methods in place. Chances are you are going to need to learn about things like finance, accounting, administration, marketing, technical production and insurance. On top of that, you’ll need to keep a team together, keep everyone motivated and resolve problems.

There will be unforeseen obstacles that cause you to revisit some of your ideas, goals and objectives; reassess your assumptions; take some (calculated) risks; and skip whole steps on your timeline. This is quite normal when running a project. Through it all you are going to need to manage your own time and stress levels so that you don’t go insane, implode or burn out before the end.

(See Part Three: Specific information for specific kinds of projects)

FINANCIAL CONTROL

The most effective way to control the money is for everyone in your core team to agree to a detailed budget (at least at the start), for everyone to understand the basics of how a budget works and for them to agree on the priorities involved in spending the money. Once the budget and priorities are agreed upon delegate the responsibility of tracking the budget to one person. This person’s role is to report back to the group on the ongoing state of the budget—including spending and income generation. Obviously they have to be reliable and not likely to leave the project halfway through. It’s also helpful if they are a good communicator and can explain budgeting issues to the other project members in meaningful ways. This way minor problems people might have with perceived over-expenditure or under-expenditure will be more easily resolved during group decision-making. The more open and visible the management of the budget is, the more opportunities there will be to critically fine-tune expenditure and the efficiency of the project as a whole.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—Managing a budget and finding money for it: fundraising, sponsorship and government funding)
RECORD KEEPING: FINANCIAL RECORDS

Accurate financial record keeping is essential. Always keep an ordered filing system, get written quotes for all items you want to purchase, match the quote to the invoice when it arrives and don’t pay any money without getting a legal invoice. Make all your payments through one cheque book (noting the invoice number and payment date on each cheque butt) and get monthly bank statements. (If using petty cash keep all receipts so money used equals the receipt total.) Bank any income earned and other cash received as soon as possible, so there isn’t a lot of money sitting around unattended.

If the project received cash funding (especially from a substantial grant body and any government funding source) you will eventually be required to show how you spent the money. It is imperative that you have a paper trail that shows everyone involved where the money went and provides you with all the details you need to acquit the grant at the end of the project. If you are unsure about your record keeping skills, the short courses offered at TAFEs in financial accounting or business administration are highly recommended.

CONSIDERING ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE

There can be nothing more valuable for solid bookkeeping practice than a good piece of accounting software. Although software packages such as MYOB and QuickBooks may seem intimidating and expensive at first, the benefits they bring to the management of larger projects are incalculable.

By spending time messing with Excel spreadsheets, creating formulae to make things “sort-of” balance, adding tables for various items spent and received, and searching for missing dollars, you detract from your project. The disciplined use of “double entry” bookkeeping packages almost necessarily results in impeccable financial records and books which are, at the very least, balanced.

With well-kept books and decent software, all of the information you could ever need about cash flow, budget performance, gaping holes in your income and of course “magical missing money”, is hardly more than
a mouse-click away. If you are running an ongoing project or organisation, it also makes it much easier to keep track of all of those people who think you will forget about your invoice if only they leave it long enough.

Other than the software, all it takes is an “entered” stamp, a “paid” stamp, a ring binder and a chequebook. With these tools, budget acquittals, GST and Business Activity Statements (BAS) become less daunting because all the information you need is at your fingertips—you’re prepared.

These packages won’t find you extra money to spend, but will give you the time and information you need to spend the money you do have wisely.

**RECORD KEEPING: NON-FINANCIAL RECORDS**

No matter how successful your project turns out to be, if you don’t have documentation to prove your event even occurred, let alone the fact that it was fantastic, you are going to be greatly disadvantaged. Slides, videos, photographs, audio recordings, copies of media promotions, reviews and other types of documentation will be all you have left of your success when the project is over—so make sure you put people in charge of gathering this before it’s too late. These materials are crucial for acquitting your project to the people who funded and supported it; for building a reputation for future projects, showing others your past achievements; and serving as an historical account of your own development. You will want to have this stuff on hand for the media if you can arrange lead-up stories about your next project before it happens.

*(See Part Two: Common project issues—Establishing your credibility and using the media)*

Documenting the process you followed to successfully complete your project will also help you to draw on your experiences and get yourself there again next time much more easily. Keep copies of all of your communication between team members, including meeting notes; all initial and revised project summaries and budgets; letters sent to people; communication from businesses or organisations contacted; the contact details of all people and groups involved; letters of support and recommendation; copies of funding applications and sponsorship letters; any contracts and agreements you have organised; copies of the project’s insurance policies; bank statements and account details; copies of media releases; news articles about the project; and accurate records of the items you borrow from people, right down to connectors, cables and power boards. This will make sure there are no discrepancies or disagreements in the final clean up stages.

You might also want to keep a personal project diary to record your thoughts on how you are coping, issues faced, successes and ideas for the distant future. When evaluating the project, this will make it easier to recall
your path, identify the problems you faced in getting there and seeing when they occurred. If you found the project mentally or emotionally taxing in certain stages, you might be able to prepare yourself better for next time, so you can handle the process—and your health—a bit better in those tougher stages.

COMMUNICATING AND MAKING DECISIONS

Managing the flow of information and determining the different levels of information needed by everyone involved will be a central role of those managing the project. To realise your project everyone involved will want and need to have clear responsibilities. If everyone knows what everyone else is in charge of, it is easier to know what is being done and what is not. You’ll need to put in place a communication system—to allocate and follow up people’s responsibilities and to ensure the flow of information within the project team. The key is to make sure everyone has access to the information they need to do their own project work successfully. There’s a fine balance here between information sharing and information overload.

If you are working on a larger project, regular team meetings of some form will be essential. Consider keeping a formal record of issues that can be distributed to every member of the project team as photocopies or email attachments. The types of information you might record could include a brief description of the issue, who raised it, who is going to be responsible for it, when the issue needs to be resolved and how critical it is to the project’s success.

Each member of your project team is going to need easy and unlimited access to specific information in order to do their jobs properly. Bear in mind that granting your team members access to information only on a “need to know” basis is rarely the most effective way to manage a project. This is because the more information people have about a project’s aims, goals, background and organisation, the more appropriate their work and involvement will be.

You can use face-to-face meetings, group email lists, or a combination of both, to keep an accurate log of arising issues, share updates on your delegated tasks, discuss the state of your budget and tackle issues that have arisen since the last communication. An email list is free, easy to set up, can work extremely well in keeping decision-making transparent and open (most lists also have an automatic archiving function), and is particularly useful for groups that have trouble arranging suitable times and places to meet. For this method to work everyone must be comfortable with the technology and must check their email regularly. Occasionally someone will need to pick up the phone and hassle someone if they disappear out of the loop for a while. Regular team meetings or email communications will also ensure any sensitive issues or building tensions that arise within your team can be addressed immediately and systematically. By nipping issues in the bud, many potential disasters can be averted.

(See Part Two: Common project issues—People, personalities and organisations)
KEEPING TRACK OF IT ALL: INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR MANAGING PROJECTS

Beyond recording meetings and email correspondence, you’re going to need a safe and efficient system for keeping, storing, accessing and sharing all of the important information, documentation and contacts relating to your project.

Writing all your project work, phone numbers, thoughts and ideas into one book keeps it all together, but transferring all of this into a computer at the end of the day is even better. If you have Internet access, email is the simplest and easiest way to manage and maintain records of all of this stuff. Email all your major project documents, notes from meetings, budgets, timelines, proposals and grant applications to your core project team. Or if you are working by yourself, email them to yourself. And make back-ups! Just in case your computer crashes or dies. Save it to your hard drive, keep it in a folder in your inbox, save it to disk and make more than one paper copy. After the project, transfer this information to a disk or CD and you have an archive of the whole process for future reference. Essentially, what is important is that you use safe, simple and accessible “information systems” for storing and disseminating essential information.

Of course for more complex projects the particular system you use to store and to share information becomes increasingly important. The system that works for a one-person project would hardly work for a team of 30. Each person archiving on their home computers just won’t be good enough.

Equally important is the simple fact that systems for sharing information across projects only work if people actually use them. You can have the most sophisticated computer database, or beautifully arranged filing cabinet or hard drive, but if no one bothers to enter the relevant information it’s going to be completely useless.

SYSTEMS FOR SHARING INFORMATION ACROSS PROJECT TEAMS

Photocopied pages—involves a clipboard containing a bunch of photocopies that you give out to everyone. Note that if this information needs to be regularly updated you will have to either issue new clipboards or ring everyone to tell them all of the updates that need to be made to their paperwork. This could be time-consuming, and give way to multiple errors and omissions in people’s individual understanding of what is going on.
Noticeboard—involves putting a central noticeboard somewhere and making sure everyone knows they have to check it regularly for information updates.

Websites—can be used in exactly the same way as noticeboards. Make special allowances for the fact that some don’t have Net access.

Spreadsheets—can be typed up and emailed between all the members of your project team. They are probably the most common and effective way to organise and store your project’s important information. Your project could have several core spreadsheets covering team member contact details; detailed budgets, including typed-in records of all invoices and receipts; media contacts; equipment hiring; etc. If you are running an event when multiple activities or tasks need to happen at the same time you can use Excel to organise this, with the advantage of being able to look at everything that needs to happen at the same time on a single spreadsheet.

Computer databases—a fourth strategy is to tailor a computer database to the information needs of your project and set it up through your organisation’s website—sharing all information online. Project organisers could access and edit all the stored information about the project anywhere there is Internet access (meaning that core team members with passwords are able to edit information into the database). Unfortunately, it is quite expensive to pay a company or IT specialist to build one of these. If you don’t have the many thousands of dollars in you budget for this, you might (if you’re very lucky) be able to find a graduate or third-year IT student to design you one in a volunteer or work-experience capacity in exchange for a good reference. Make sure that they are benefiting as much as possible from the arrangement as this is a big job to do in a volunteer capacity.

ONCE YOU’VE GOT A SYSTEM, STICK TO IT!

No matter the strategy, and while every system has its drawbacks, you need a system of some sort. You also need to stick to it. This can’t be emphasised enough. Often times you will in fact be forced to stick to it because it will be too hard or too expensive to change mid-project. This means it’s much, much better to come up with a good system in the first place. Of course systems have their flaws, mostly because of quite foreseeable accidents of human nature: people can be very busy, a little disorganised and sometimes a bit slack. Your system for sharing information should take this into account and make it as easy as possible for everyone in your project to use. (Hint: people hate filling out forms!)
TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE

A production manager or someone who understands the technical side of the project is a very important part of the team and will be a vital to the success of the project. Depending on the kind of project you are putting together, your important technical persons might be production managers for your live events, sound or lighting technicians, IT specialists, riggers for aerialists, and so on.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

There are a wealth of ways in which you can make your project more environmentally friendly. Apart from taking on this responsibility as something that is important to your team, there is the added bonus that audiences and stakeholders will be appreciative of your efforts too; thereby influencing the perceived integrity of your project. It’s a win-win situation really, especially now that such measures are competitively priced and commonly less expensive. For daily administration tasks, publicity materials and printing, ask about recycled papers and environmentally friendly inks. Also consider environmentally friendly packaging. Environmental considerations also come into play if you consider the effect of your project on the local environment, particularly when contracting things like portaloo companies or equipment that uses heaps of electricity or other resources. If you are managing a space and must deal with the power, your local power company may offer sustainable or renewable energy alternatives at a slight premium cost.
A project isn’t over when the lights go out and the last glass of closing night champagne (or orange juice) is finished. Plan well for the immediate cleaning up and wrapping up stages and make sure everyone is aware of who is organising all of these post-project tasks. Return any borrowed or hired equipment promptly and in good working order. (There is nothing worse than trying to find where someone’s missing cables have ended up six weeks after an event is over.) Conclude all of your financial activities, pay all your bills and do a final budget that shows exactly where the money was spent. Compile the last pieces of supportive documentation together as it emerges, including news clippings, programs, press coverage and feedback from participants.

You will learn a lot by comparing your final budget to what you planned when you were doing your initial budgets. Assuming that you have come out ahead financially, you will need to work out what you are planning to do with any surplus monies—this could include paying some of your volunteers, holding a social after-party for everyone involved, or sensibly putting it aside for the next project. If you have made a loss, you will need to come up with a plan to ensure that you pay your debts and that everyone ends up with what they expected. If you don’t, at best you cannot expect a lot of support for your next project, at worse you might end up in the courts.

At this stage, no matter how nice it might feel to relax—you have the larger parts of your project behind you after all—make sure you finally evaluate the project’s successes and failures. Use all of the earlier project summaries, budgets and revisions that you have archived for this—and be as honest as possible. As confronting as this can be, honesty will make your evaluations most useful by helping to identify problem areas that you can improve on for the next time. Some aspects to evaluate might be:

- did you carry out the project as you expected?
- did it satisfy the creative, community or personal needs of the people involved?
- did you make new friends and partnerships?
- did your creative risks pay off?
- did you receive peer or public support and acknowledgement?
- did it reach your attendance numbers, target or income markets?
- did you create an income source for yourself and others?
- are there follow on opportunities from this project?

“It is difficult negotiating the sexy/fun volunteer positions (programming etc.) with the behind-the-scenes grunt work of setting up venues, lugging gear, scheduling accommodation and cleaning up. This is an age-old problem and sometimes promises of beer can solve it, but not always.

- Anna Poletti; This Is Not Art Festival
If you have received a grant you will be required to finalise the project in the form of a formal acquittal. This is a report given to the funding body to explain what you achieved, how you spent their money, and that you did what you said you would do. When acquitting a project emphasise the positive aspects, but don’t lie. If you are just starting out no one expects you to do everything perfectly; if you learnt something along the way from something you didn’t do so well, don’t be afraid to say so. If you have any questions about what you should and shouldn’t include in the acquittal, don’t be afraid to call up the people who have funded you and ask them.

**THANK YOURS**

Always remember to thank the people that have helped along the way. Depending on the type of project, you might want to do this in some formal way such as a thank you letter, a certificate, some flowers or a bottle of wine. If that’s not your style, what about a phone call, a thank you email or even throwing a really good party so everyone can finally get together and let their hair down after all the hard work they’ve done! Taking time out to acknowledge all the people who contributed to the project is important. Thank all those who helped out with advice, time, information or funding; technical issues; sponsorship; and especially thank family and friends for their support. Don’t forget that the end of a project can be a really good time to get to know your family and friends again.

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