

# What Do Managers Manage?

Daniel Knapp

**W**ould those answers satisfy an 8-year-old? How about a 28-year-old? Do they satisfy you?

So what *do* managers manage? Programs? People? Money? Time? All or none of the above?

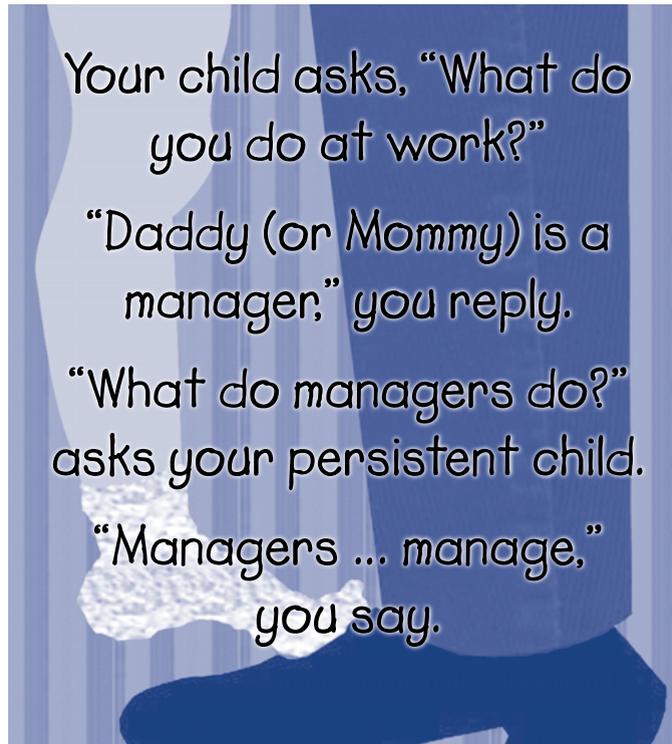
## Managing the Forest as Well as the Trees

This article proposes that managers manage change. To be sure, change involves programs, people, money, and time, but if we think only in those terms—the trees—we miss the forest. Managers manage by initiating change or reacting to change. Managers employ several simple models to identify objective and subjective metrics they may use to track program management progress. Keep in mind that the metrics are naught but tools. The objective remains the management of change.

As a practicing manager, you have two overriding concerns: Where are we now? Where do we want to go from here? Many times a manager may not give deep thought to either end of the spectrum. It's so easy to get wrapped up in the day-to-day program operations that we sometimes assume the desired end state is shared by all participants. Yet if pressed, each team member may have a different end state in mind.

Many times we look at metrics for a program and find that we're keeping them for someone else's use. The program manager's commitment to the metric may be less than the effort required to keep the metric.

Using the models developed from the answers to the following groups of questions, you may construct a working model of a program that will serve your own personal needs and ends. (The question base is available at < [www.danknapp.com/list.htm](http://www.danknapp.com/list.htm) > .)



**Schedule Model**—Similar to your acquisition baseline with a slightly different twist. Think delta analysis. How close are your dates for major milestones to critical path dates for funding and fielding decisions? Program delays of, say, 30 days might push you beyond a funding decision point that ultimately may cost a full year to recoup. A 60-day slip in fielding may cost users a training or deployment window. The best laid plan fails if it does not mesh with outside interfaces. The acquisition baseline begins the schedule model; add delta analysis in the interfaces with user and fund-

ing schedules to identify risk areas.

**Financial Model**—Similar to the schedule model. Will you have the right mix of funding, research and development (R&D), production, and operations at the right times? Again, this is a delta analysis model. How much of a change in funding or timing of funding would it take to affect your program? If your program depends on second-year obligation for R&D or third-year obligation for production, you likely will experience a timing challenge should testing reveal development delays or should your Milestone C decision date slip.

**Functional Model**—System basics: move, shoot, communicate. Objective/threshold: how many of the above are at risk given the current state of technology? What decisions are you postponing based on emerging technology? What effect might a delay in this emerging technology impose on the schedule or financial model?

Sure, cost, schedule, technical—nothing really new here, except some of the questions. Ask yourself how many underlying assumptions you accept in the “big three” of

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cost, schedule and technical. Identify these assumptions and the model takes on a new value to you.

Possible assumptions:

- Commercial hardware will meet the needs of your program.
- You'll re-use 40 percent of the software code from another program.
- Users will continue a stable requirements basis.
- You may schedule system initial operational test & evaluation (IOT&E) close to the completion of scheduled development testing.

These first three models looked at relatively objective elements of your program. Now let's move into the murky world of subjective elements.

#### **Organizational Model**—

Most acquisition organizations staff programs using some form of matrix-style personnel assignments. That's a given. Within your program, do you operate

as a matrix, or do you revert to stovepipe thinking? What team-building exercises do you employ to encourage cross-functional information flow? How satisfied are you with the teaming within the program? What changes would help?

#### **Decision-making Model**—

What decision-making structure do you employ on your program? What level decisions are made at what levels within the team? Does your team agree with your assessment? And once you know the answers, is this the way you want decisions made on your program? Would you prefer that program decisions be made at a lower or higher level? What stands in your way? In a perfect world, how would you overcome this obstacle?

#### **Testing Model**—

The testing model will provide an accurate sense of the status of the program. If testing slips, the program slips—you need more money, and the technology is at risk. Early involvement of some form of testing will provide an objective insight available through no other channel. Will you meet the test entrance criteria? Will you conduct testing as scheduled? How many and what severity of trouble reports? Did you end on time? What is your plan for development and operational testing? Will you use block, spiral, or final acceptance testing? Are you comfortable with that answer? What non-

program players will you need for testing? How sure are you of their availability? What would be the effect on funding should the testing slip several months?

**Supportability Model**—How will you support the system post-fielding? Is the materiel fielding plan (MFP) up to date? What levels of maintenance, operational, intermediate, and depot will you use? Why? What training and documentation will you need at each level of maintenance? Do you think training and documentation will really be available for concurrency with first unit fielding?

How dependent are you on a specific contractor for spares? How do you maintain configuration management?

#### **Marketing Model**—

For a government program? Yes, indeed. Who are the major stakeholders in your program? Look at users, users' representatives, proponents of interfacing systems. You probably have a representative of each major stakeholder assigned to your program; however, that in no way takes the place of contin-

ually marketing the program to the stakeholder. The *true* stakeholder is more likely than the representative to change during the program. When a true stakeholder changes, you start from scratch with your marketing effort. The true stakeholders make excellent supporters when the program hits a serious bump in the road. Properly groomed, they will rush to your support. But remember: it could well be that your program isn't the original idea of the current stakeholder but of his or her predecessor.

#### **Change Model**—

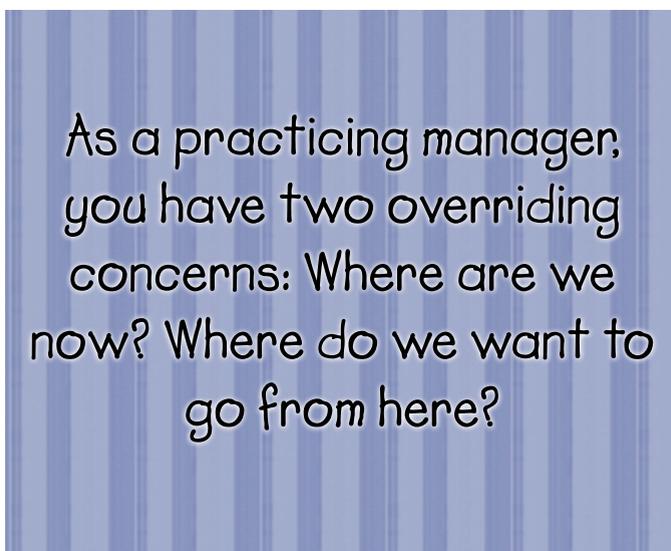
Management means managing change. What's your plan for managing change in team personnel, external policy, financial adjustments, environmental law? Where will you find your next big change?

#### **Contractor Model**—

What contractor, subcontractor, and vendor model is in place? What rights do you have when you don't have privity of contract with a subcontractor or vendor? Are you sure?

#### **Quality Management Model**—

Think ahead to the ultimate delivery date. Looking back at your program from there, what program changes will you wish you had made? You designed the program in the past with an eye to the future. What do you need to change now, in the light of new information? What key points could make a differ-



ence if you adjust them? What emphasis do you place on value engineering?

**Risk Model**—What do you consider the top 10 greatest risks to the program? How do these risks tie back into your metrics? What is your plan for assumption, transfer, sharing of risks. What risks do you “wish away”? Do you need a better strategy?

**Dependence Model**—What special skills, subject matter experts, consultants, testers, or other specialists will you need for short periods at some time in the program? Where will you get them?

### Putting it Together

You’ve answered the questions. What do you think now? How does your program shape up? Is the program where

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you want it to be? At least now you know. What will you change? How will you know that your changes are successful? Your analysis of your program becomes a snapshot in time. To have value, follow-on analysis shows changes from the baseline. For those items you want to change, monitor closely

until the change works as you desire. Where you are happy, great—look again next quarter.

What other models do you see as you look at the abstractness of this article and the reality of your program? Share them!

**Editor’s note:** The author welcomes questions and comments. He can be reached at [dan.knapp@peostri.army.mil](mailto:dan.knapp@peostri.army.mil).

## Air Force and Navy Join in Joint Tactical Radio Merger

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE NEWS  
RELEASE  
Nov. 21, 2003**

The Air Force and Navy service acquisition executives (SAEs) have jointly decided to merge their respective Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS Cluster 3 and Cluster 4) acquisition programs. Both Department of the Air Force and Department of Navy anticipate this merged acquisition will yield development and production efficiencies as well as interoperability advantages for the Department of Defense.

"The merger of the JTRS Cluster 3 and Cluster 4 programs will yield large dividends for the Navy, the Air Force and DoD in general. Joint interoperability is a cornerstone to the way we fight now and in the future. Combining our program efforts will ensure that a truly joint radio system is efficiently developed for our aerospace and maritime forces," said Marvin Sambur, assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition.

The Air Force and Navy SAEs have established a joint management and oversight structure between the two Services for the combined program, similar to other joint acquisition efforts.

"The Air Force and the Navy are taking a major step towards the goals of the JTRS program by merging Clusters 3 and 4. We can assure interoperability, reduce development costs, and lower acquisition costs by joining our efforts. More importantly, we can be certain that our warfighters will be able to easily communicate in the joint warfighting environment that Secretary Rumsfeld is creating," said John J. Young Jr., assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition.

Program leadership will rotate between Air Force and Navy at appropriate times during the acquisition cycle, with the Air Force initially taking the lead for the combined program. This balanced management approach has been structured to ensure a truly joint management team and resulting product. A combined request for proposal for the pre-system development and demonstration phase is being developed

For more information please call the Air Force press desk at (703) 695-0640.