

Perspectives in Program and Project Management

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NASA's Program/Project Management Initiative was pleased to sponsor this conference. The timing for this conference in many ways could not have been better. NASA has taken off on a course that is leading to major changes in our programs and in the very way we manage our projects. From redesigning the Space Station to inquiry into how projects are to be managed, we are witnessing a time of tremendous change in project management.

In the last year alone, we have seen the genesis of numerous studies and activities to help define the future of NASA. The NASA strategic planning committee has been looking to define the future missions as well as the roles and responsibilities within the Agency. In separate but related activity, much scrutiny is being given to better defining project management at NASA and establishing a new NMI. Several activities have led to recommendations, aimed at reducing the costs and time in our programs, which will have far-reaching effects on project management. In addition, much has taken place over the last year in the areas of systems engineering, program control and procurement that will influence how projects are managed, and how we will be training future members of the project team.

The rapidity of change that we see today is likely to be just as rapid tomorrow. Peter Vaill has used the metaphor of white water rafting to describe what managers must be prepared to handle; his term seems to aptly capture the challenges of project management today. It was hoped that this conference would better enable us to deal with some of the changes and challenges that we face today. During the three days in Hagerstown, many of the key issues in project management were discussed. We tried to put together a conference where members of the NASA family, other agencies and industry could freely discuss these issues.

The individuals who agreed to serve as speakers and panel members are an impressive array of people. I am sure that you will find many of the ideas expressed to be quite stimulating and even provocative.

I read where Einstein would try "thought experiments," visualizing himself in a circumstance which was improbable in order to generate practical ideas. This conference summary is also intended to lead to your own "thought experiments" pertaining to NASA and project management.

I am sure many of the ideas and presentations will reinforce your own views. I am also sure that many of the ideas will force you outside the boundaries of what you consider sensible, based upon your own experience. It is hoped that this document will reinforce some of the knowledge you have as well as provide you the opportunity to form new ideas about project management.

This document is, by no means, a complete transcript of the three-day conference in April 1993. Rather, this is a representative sampling of some of the newest ideas in NASA on program and project management. Every effort has been made to avoid duplicate ideas and comments, and so not all speakers and panelists are included. What remains is for your enjoyment and edification.



Dr. Edward J. Hoffman is the NASA Program/Project Management Initiative Program Manager. In this role he is responsible for training and development programs, consulting services for project management teams, lessons learned, knowledge capture, and research and special studies on program and project management.