

- [The Not so Swinging Sixties](#)
- [Flares of the Seventies](#)
- [Power Dressing for the Eighties](#)
- [The Nimble Nineties](#)
- [The 21st Century](#)

In this month's Newsletter we thought we'd give you an overview of some of the trends in project management thinking and practice over that last five decades and how this has shaped what it means to be a Project Manager today.

The Not so Swinging Sixties

The 60's was a quiet decade. Project management was the preserve of those in construction, engineering, aerospace, utilities and manufacturing. The IS project or the Business Change project was unheard of. The Project Manager was mostly expected to be an Engineer.

Flares of the Seventies

The 1970's showed a trend towards the development and use of project management software. Tools and techniques developed and emerged, most notably PERT and Critical Path and the use of the Work Breakdown Structure [WBS]. There was a *focus* on Cost and Schedule management. The idea of the project 'life-cycle' management emerged by the end of the 70s. Making an impression at the same time were leadership of projects and managing conflict on project teams.

The Project Manager was now expected to be a Technician and a Manager.

Power Dressing for the Eighties

Risk, Cost and Schedule control were the *hot topics* of the 80s and Earned Value made its entry into project management practice. Planning was *key* and the 80s also showed some initial reporting on Artificial Intelligence and Knowledge Based Systems. The application of Project Management was still mostly in evidence in the traditional construction and engineering fields but Information Systems projects began to emerge.

The Project Manager in this decade was expected to be a Planner and Controller.

The Nimble Nineties

The nineties presented a significant shift in areas where project management could be applied. The advent of the Business Change project in this decade meant that there was *increased* interest in the human aspects of project management: Team Building, Leadership development, Motivation and Communications.

Risk was still considered important and Quality Management emerged as a topic for *concern* and discussion.

The Project Manager of the nineties was expected to be a Business Manager!

The 21st Century

For the current decade understanding processes, tools, and techniques: the Science of project management and *knowing* when and how to apply them is only part of the answer.

A greater piece of the puzzle for *successful* project delivery is the Art of project management: the timeless principles of working within an organisation using the soft skills. Some might regard this as a soft option but beware, these skills are neither soft nor an option!

Soft skills help to define the business value, clarify the vision, determine requirements, provide direction, build teams, resolve issues, and mitigate risk.

The technical emphasis on preparing project managers may have worked well in the past. However, now we need more.

Today's project manager needs a *balance* of soft and hard skills to be able to operate in a customer driven global business environment where managers are leaders by example.

The 21st Century Project Manager must be both an Artist and Scientist: We must possess a mix of all the skills outlined above. We must know when and how to apply these skills. In short, we must be Engineer, Technician, Manager, Planner, Controller, Coach, Mentor and Business Leader all in one!!!!