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Goals of Project Management

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Design professionals see themselves as good managers. To succeed, designers must manage time, staff, their needs, and clients' expectations; they must allocate resources, motivate, guide, communicate, and learn. When designers are accomplished at managing a business, a professional life, and the complex bases of knowledge they must master, "project management" may seem to be business as usual, but on a larger scale. Yet this approach discounts the complexities of project management, and may lead design professionals to involve themselves in responsibilities that will ask too much of them if they are not prepared. Project management is the act of leading a group of people through a process to achieve a goal. Successful project management requires that the design professional employ leadership skills, management skills, professional and industry knowledge, and practical experience. It is also critical that the designer who acts as a project manager understand people and what motivates them. The project manager role is based on good communication and listening skills and good people skills, including respect, trust, and patience.

Project management is also a discipline that requires a special and broad skill set. Design professionals can benefit from understanding project management as a set of interrelated responsibilities. This chapter will first identify the key components of the project management task, then go on to detail the responsibilities that the project manager must undertake and the factors that contribute to (and detract from) successful project management.