Clear communication to and between team members and consultants also contributes to keeping the team working on task and to keeping consultants working with the team, because it fosters the discipline necessary for any complex project. Project managers can strengthen the cohesiveness exhibited by great teams if they establish clear lines of communication; clearly define roles and responsibilities of all team components; set unfaltering project objectives; and act as dependable, solid project leaders. Project teams generally embrace the discipline that a good project manager will impose on a project. Discipline gives everyone around the table a defined purpose and goal for which to strive. Occasionally, a team component will not respond at all, or will respond poorly to the discipline necessary to achieve the goals of the team. In a case such as this, the project manager must make every effort to impose the discipline required by framing his or her intentions in a manner that will motivate that particular consultant. It would be easy for the project manager to remove the uncooperative entity from the team, but a true manager will circumvent the discipline problem by communicating project objectives in a way so that everyone will respond. A by-product of this approach will be the increased respect of all of the other team members, who will recognize the manager as a flexible and capable leader.

THE OBSTACLE OF PERCEPTION

So far, we have discussed what a project manager must communicate about the project, its goals, and the expectations the project manager has for every team member, including consultants. In addition to these significant tasks, project managers must also be able to communicate about their role and their style. To ensure that consultants do their best, they must make it easy for consultants to perceive that they listen, and that they are inclusive of all members of the team. The largest obstacle for any project manager to overcome is perception. A project can be executed to technical perfection, but if a consultant or other team member is left out of an exchange of information leading to a key decision, that consultant will begin to perceive that the project manager has isolated him or her, or plays favorites, and these perceptions will affect the team dynamic. It has been proven in the design field that when

a consultant has a poor perception of the project manager, that consultant's productivity will be upset, and ultimately, so will be the team's. Unbeknown to the project manager, this perception can escalate to the crisis level with a single consultant, or among a group of consultants. Every manager who has led a project team has witnessed this theory of perception and its detrimental effect on the team, and knows as well that poor perception can also affect the project manager's firm: it has happened that a project is a success by all measures, yet a particular consultant denies a letter of reference. In essence, project managers must remember that for consultants who are on "the fringe" of the team, the power of perception will always overshadow any amount of effort expended.

Project managers must constantly extend themselves to all of the consultants on the team in a personal and individual manner, so that they can attempt to identify and resolve perception problems as they begin. If project managers initiate frequent, private conversations with individual team members, they can take important steps to identify and correct perception problems that can hinder a consultant's performance and future work.

Project managers can benefit from understanding what behaviors might cause consultants to form a negative impression, and how to manage themselves, as project managers, to allow consultants to perceive them positively. One aspect of project management that greatly affects consultants' perceptions is how the project manager handles the flow of information. Quite often, the project manager is privy to a large quantity of information provided by the client or user group surrounding a project. Some or all of that information needs to be disbursed to various team members to keep the team informed of the day-to-day decisions that will affect the project and the team. If the manager's judgment is wrong and too much or too little information is communicated, it could be detrimental to how the team and the consultants perceive the success of the project. Further, the project manager cannot assume that each person interprets disbursed information in the same manner. It is therefore of paramount importance that the project manager ensures that information is clear and its source is consistent (for instance, that it all comes from the PM as informer). It is just as important that the project manager follows up all written correspondence with personalized attention to ensure that all team members, including consultants, interpret it consistent with the project's needs.