

# **Herding Chickens: Innovative Techniques for Project Management**

*Dan Bradbary and  
David Garrett*

**SYBEX®**



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To our valued readers,

Harbor Light Press was created as an imprint of Sybex, Inc. to help business professionals acquire the practical skills and knowledge they need to meet today's most pressing business challenges.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Edde".

Neil Edde  
Publisher  
Harbor Light Press

*We'd like to offer this to all of you who became project managers whether you meant to or not. Do you remember the day when your boss said, "I've got a little project for you?" At precisely that moment, you became a member of the world's largest accidental profession.*

# Acknowledgments

Nothing's as bad as page of acknowledgments that runs on forever, thanking everyone from mom to Great Aunt Tilly and her dog, Squat. So in the interest of brevity, we'd each like to thank the other for his hard work, and, of course, we'd like to thank the gifted staff at Sybex for not slapping us silly at any point in the writing of this book.

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## Herding Chickens

Welcome to the fine art of herding chickens, the art of mastering project management in, shall we say, unconventional ways. It's the art of running projects from start to finish with nary a hiccup, and herding your team—your lawyers, doctors, engineers, computer hackers, planners, doers, thinkers, dreamers, presidents and vice-presidents, CEOs and CIOs, and fellow project managers—in the right direction at the right time.

(A brief diversion: You may have heard the term *herding cats* before, since cats are roughly as easy to herd as Komodo dragons. And indeed, for a time we thought of calling the book *Herding Cats*, to express how tough it is to get the many people on your team to move in the same direction at once, and to get things done with little fuss and fury. But cats, no matter how they refuse our attempts to herd them, always move with grace and dignity. They slink about the ground like they own it, and if perchance they should fall, they always land on their feet. Not so with your team and its members. In today's office, we fly around like chickens with our heads lopped off, and if something goes wrong—and something always goes wrong—then one of us (most often you, the project manager) will see his head on the chopping block. Thus *Herding Chickens* is an apt metaphor for the nearly impossible job of today's project manager and chicken-in-chief.)

*Herding Chickens* is all about project management, but not the kind of project management you're used to. If you're already a project manager and you've received your PMP, you're used to reading information like this:

*Among the central process groups, the links are iterated—planning provides executing with a document project plan early on, and then provides documented updates to the plan as the project progresses.... In addition, the project management process groups are not discrete, one-time events; they are overlapping activities that occur at varying levels of intensity through each phase of the project.*

Yikes. That's an excerpt from the famous PMBOK, *The Project Management Body of Knowledge* published by the Project Management Institute ([www.pmi.org](http://www.pmi.org)). And indeed, if you've got the slightest interest in project man-

agement at all, that's the place to go. The PMBOK is *the* authority on the field and an essential stopping place on the route to project management mastery.

But as fond as we are of the PMBOK, and as much as we believe in its value, *Herding Chickens* is different. It's a fun, funny, often irreverent look at some of the least-used (but most useful) notions in running projects. It's an oddball collection of tips and tricks for PMs, managers, and plain old workers who are willing to bend the rules to get things done. And we think it's highly effective.

## Glad To Meet Ya

Who is *we*? *We* is Dan Bradbary, a project manager with a resume 30 years in the making. As founder and owner of Project Management Services, Inc.—one of the nation's largest PM firms—he's worked for much of the Fortune 1000, and the budgets of his projects total more than five billion dollars. His expertise runs the gamut from biotech to healthcare, mergers and acquisitions, telecom, IT, and finance. He's also an MBA, a Registered Professional Engineer, and a Southern gentleman with a taste for yachting and long, winding runs on the beach.

*We* is also David Garrett, who last took a long, winding run on the beach when Carter was in office. (Dave thinks the right approach to exercise is to lie down until the urge to do it goes away.) Note: Dave is not a PM. He's a self-avowed egghead who plays with technology like kids play with toys, and an expert at using the Web, database systems, and all kinds of gadgets to improve corporate efficiency. As well he should be: In the eight years since he left college he's worked for everyone from mom-and-pop shops to the Fortune 100, building everything from websites to intranet to extranets with some of the best PMs in the business. And along the way, he's written a couple of hundred articles on business technology.

Together, Dan and Dave have developed a unique and (some would say) iconoclastic way of getting things done in the corporate space. Dan has decades of project management tricks up his sleeve, most of which he learned the hard way—by doing. That's what happens when you're asked to re-tool the network of a major airline on a budget that's less than half of

what you need, or to oversee a dozen projects in a startup where Nobel laureates, Ph.D.s, and world-class researchers are as common as secretaries. Dave, on the other hand, has used and abused every kind of technology since the wheel, from the smallest PDA to the biggest network, and learned how to wring every last drop of goodness from them for running projects. When you put their two heads together, you get:

- One uber-project manager who's seen it all and has the war stories—and good advice—to prove it
- One uppity technogeek who knows how to merge project management and bleeding-edge technology
- One unique way of running projects as a result

## Is This Book For You?

We call it *herding chickens*, a reference to how tough it is to get a project team, so often composed of everyone under the sun from every discipline in the world, to move in the same direction at once. In a nutshell, that's the project manager's job, and good project managers—good chicken herders—know how to do it with flair.

After all, at base, projects are delivered by people. Sure, projects are all about tasks and deadlines and products and schedules and memos and e-mails and all the other things that go into making them. But none of those things exist without *people* to dream them up and make them happen. People are your single most important asset on any project you run, from the smallest to the largest, and knowing how to manage them—how to herd them—is the difference between a spectacular project and a total dud.

Of course, you may already be a chicken herder without knowing it. Take this quiz to find out.

### **1. When you have project updates or announcements to share with your team, do you**

- A) Type them up on an IBM Selectric, make photocopies, and attach them to carrier pigeons for distribution?

B) Send them out by e-mail?

C) Post them to a project intranet customized for your project team?

**2. When you need to get your team to communicate better, do you**

A) Bribe them with gifts, like free tickets to Uzbekistan?

B) Bring in cutting-edge tools like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the MTR-i?

C) Have (yet another) meeting to hash it out?

**3. When you're ahead of time and under budget with your project, do you**

A) Sacrifice a goat to thank the gods, after dancing an unseemly dance of joy on the conference room table?

B) Analyze the ripple effects of your schedule, with special care for the time cost of money?

C) Keep pushing to finish early and under budget?

**4. At the start of each project, do you**

A) Perform a SWOT analysis with your team?

B) Leave advanced risk planning to yourself and others trained in the field?

C) Give a dollar to each of your team members and tell them, "Do what I say, and there's more where that came from"?

**5. When you have a complex problem to untangle, do you**

A) Break out the markers and make notes on a whiteboard?

B) Pray?

C) Build a mind map that mimics the structure of neurons?

**6. When you need to budget a project and you're not sure of the cost of certain items (and can't be sure, due to market conditions or other factors), do you**

- A) Make a wild-assed guess (a WAG)?
- B) Make a swinging wild-assed guess (a SWAG)?
- C) Write up a range estimate?

**7. When you need to speak before groups (or merely with a team member), do you**

- A) Pay special attention to sociolects?
- B) Picture your group wearing nothing but their underwear?
- C) Picture your group wearing nothing but *your* underwear?

**8. When dealing with multiple clients with multiple projects, do you**

- A) Use CRM to track calls, letters, e-mail, and meetings?
- B) Update them daily by phone?
- C) Promise what you can't deliver, then, when they remind you of what you promised, tell them it was just the medication talking?

Want the best answers?

- 1 - C      5 - C
- 2 - B      6 - C
- 3 - B      7 - A
- 4 - A      8 - A

If you got any of these right—even one—then you're well on your way to herding chickens. If you got more than one right, then you're a promising chicken herder already, and you can read this book to expand your already growing skills. If you got them all right, well, buy this book anyway.

What no one likes, of course, is an overdue and over-budget project, which is precisely what this book will teach you to avoid. And it will show you how to help your team—the essential building block of projects—work together better. So read it, enjoy it, and be sure to send us feedback at our website at <http://www.HerdingChickens.com>, where you can also download the forms and templates mentioned in the text and find other goodies for your use. (To download the templates, just click the Templates button on the homepage and follow the directions you see on screen. You can also download templates from the Sybex website at <http://www.Sybex.com>. Just type “herding chickens” in the search box and follow the directions you see on the next page.)

We’d love to hear what you think. We’d love to get to know you. And we’d love to help you run your projects better.



# Chapter 1



## Building the Killer Project Team

Have you heard one of these gems?

- “There’s no I in TEAMWORK.”
- “Teamwork, simply stated, is less me and more we.”
- “TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves More”
- “A job worth doing is worth doing together.”
- “A successful team beats with one heart.”

God, they make us want to hurl. This is business, not a Hallmark card, and to get to the top in business—to get to the top in any field—you not only have to accept reality but master it. As far as teams go, that means dealing with egos and cliques and factions and squabbles and squalls. After all, as a project manager (PM) and chicken herder, it’s your job to iron out a team’s problems and nudge it in the right direction. Teams are simply vital to projects.

But it also means dealing with moments of gorgeous inspiration, times of friendship and collaboration that are nothing less than exquisite. There is, after all, one teamwork quote that we like: “None of us is as smart as all of us.” (Thanks to management/leadership author and guru Ken Blanchard for that thought.)

So, in the pages that follow, we’ve gathered some of the best advice on teamwork for the intelligent PM that we’ve found in more than four decades of dealing with teams of every stripe, from the highly dysfunctional to the high fliers. We trust you’ll enjoy it. But we also urge you to remember the simplest truth of building your project team: Projects are delivered by people, so choose them both—projects and people—wisely.

## The Four Types of Teams

Teams are a bit like animals: They come in species, and they're immensely hard to tame, which is why it pays to know what kind of team you have so you'll know how to get the most from it. By and large, we like to break teams down into four types, depending on how team members communicate with one another:

**Dysfunctional** A dysfunctional team is just what it sounds like: a mess. Team members don't know one another very well, don't talk to one another very well, and certainly don't listen to one another very well. They work as independent agents with little or no coordination between them, barely toeing the leader's line. What's more, this species of team brings projects in over budget and behind schedule (or quite often, not at all), and rarely earns the trust or admiration of other teams in the enterprise. (In fact, sometimes they're scorned.) You'd think this species of team would be well on its way to extinction (they perform so badly that, over time, they degenerate or get disbanded), but in truth they're as common as flies in the forest. It's simply the nature of the beast. When a team first forms, it's burdened by the problems of its members—egos, insecurities, and so on—and they hinder the team's efficiency.

**Competitive** In the food chain, competitive teams are a step up from their dysfunctional cousins. Team players know each other and know the tasks at hand, and they function with a modicum of coordination. But, like animals that roam in packs, team members are given to competing with one another and trying to establish dominance. Fights for the leader's position are common as alpha males and females assert their territories. Needless to say, this hinders the project's progress and keeps the team, which may be composed of talented people, from coming into its own.

**Communicative** A communicative team is more evolved. Its members know how to talk to each other and more importantly, they know how to listen. They function with a reasonable degree of cohesion and

often have a track record of finished, successful projects. There's a clear and defined leader who runs the pack, and no one bothers to challenge his (or her) supremacy. What's more, buzz about these teams quickly spreads throughout the enterprise, as senior managers and executives sit up and take note of their performance.

**Intuitive** Think of a school of fish or a flock of birds turning—they do so without effort, perfectly timed, moving and thinking and breathing as one. This is the intuitive team, the highest species of team in the jungle. Its members not only know one another's strengths and foibles like the back of their hand, they know to respect them. With a tried-and-true leader, this team has the universal respect (and sometimes the awe) of other teams in the enterprise, and functions on loyalty and a level of self-knowledge so highly refined that little communication is needed to carry out tasks. These teams make things happen; these teams get things done.

As a PM and team leader, your goal is to build an intuitive team from the ground up. How? The tips in this chapter will help. But even beyond them, remember to use some common sense and follow some basic rules for being a good leader:

**Be positive.** It's infectious. Your attitude will go a long way with your team. And besides, nobody likes a sourpuss.

**Don't micromanage.** There's nothing that people hate more than being watched constantly. Give your team members the space they need to do their job and prove their competence.

**Never carp.** Instead, give sparing, constructive criticism. And couch it in careful terms—no one likes to be told he's wrong.

**Value your group's ideas.** Chances are they're better than yours. Having ten heads to put on a problem is better than having one.

It's also important to be patient: Becoming an intuitive team takes time and occurs like any other evolution: slowly. As it does, you'll evolve from a dysfunctional team to the other team types until you arrive at the

apex. And keep in mind that you don't have much of a choice: The corporate office is like the jungle, and "survival of the fittest" is the word of the day. Either your team evolves to the intuitive level or, in time, you become another part of the fossil record.

---

## Writing with Cheap Pens

(Here's an example of a dysfunctional team in action, *with names and dates changed to protect the litigious and innocent.*)


Thank God for management, without whom we'd have no recourse to Bufferin (or hari-kiri). Just months ago a good friend and fine project manager—and cellist extraordinaire—told us a tale of a project team that devolved from intuitive to dysfunctional in a matter of days, thanks to management's lack of communication.

It happened like this: The management at a fine pen company in New York convened a project team to analyze which of their lines of pens had failed in the last five years and why. (An aside, for color: These were exceptional pens, made of silver, platinum, and rhodium, and costing, on the upper end, more than \$1000 each. These were the kinds of pens that presidents and prime ministers used to sign bills into law in gilded rooms with senators beside them and cameras before them.) But despite their beauty, not all of these pens sold well. The team was charged with finding a set of financial metrics to define a pen's failure and mapping out ways to avoid such failures in the future.

Like most teams, this one started with all the verve it needed to tackle the problem. In two months they'd evolved to the intuitive level, with team members implicitly knowing each others' needs and working as one towards the project goal. They met for an hour a week for three more months, and at the end of their fifth month, they met with management to present their findings. Little did they know their effective communication with each other did not extend to their communications with management.

The brass, it turned out, was not looking for an objective review of past failures, but a way to scapegoat certain projects for the firm's financial problems. They rejected the team's findings as a whole and sent them packing, back to the drawing board with little or no direction on how to deliver their work.

As a result, the team was so demoralized that its members began to bail, drifting off towards other projects and skipping team meetings. Not only did they not understand their new directives (what there was of them, anyway), they were utterly confused as to why their first piece of work was rejected. The team quickly regressed to the dysfunctional state, and in the end, they never produced another report to give to management.

They did, however, get their revenge, if subtly. For the next year they refused to write anything, even a Post-It note to their boss, with anything but a cheap ballpoint pen. 

.....

## Calling Dr. Phil: Using Myers–Briggs Evaluations

Excuse us. Are you an ENTJ, an ESFP, an INTJ, an ESFJ, an INTP, an ENFP, an ISTJ, or an ESTP? Not sure? Not even sure what those acronyms mean?

No problem; we'll educate you. Those bizarre little series of letters are scores on the Myers-Briggs personality test. It's a simple model of personality based on four questions:

- Where do you direct your energy?
- How do you prefer to process information?
- How do you prefer to make decisions?
- How do you prefer to organize your life?

As you can guess, these questions are vital to knowing how a person reacts towards her team members, and how those team members approach a task.

There are three versions of the personality test to help you understand how you and your team members react to each other and how they might tackle project assignments. The first is the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)*, invented by Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine C. Briggs. It requires a qualified administrator, called an MBTI Qualified Practitioner, who's almost always a shrink of one shade or another. (Check out [www.myersbriggs.org](http://www.myersbriggs.org) to find out how to become qualified and certified to administer the MBTI.) The MBTI, as it's known, reports your personality using codes like the ones you saw above.

The second test is the *Keirsey Temperament Sorter*, which you can find in a small but popular book named *Please Understand Me* by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates. It hews closely to the Myers-Briggs questionnaire and can be purchased at most online bookstores. (You can find more information about it at [www.keirsey.com](http://www.keirsey.com).)

The third test is the *Management Team Role-indicator (MTR-i) questionnaire*, which, like the MBTI, must be administered by a good psychologist. It's published by The Test Agency and was developed in an Internet study using more than 20,000 respondents. It reports your work persona or team

role, such as Coach, Curator, Explorer, Innovator, Sculptor, or Conductor. As you can guess, it's tailored to your work context and how you interact in teams. You can find more information about the MTR-i at [www.16type-suniversity.com/mtri.html](http://www.16type-suniversity.com/mtri.html).

Now, a note in deference to you skeptics: As with all questionnaires, these are reductive typologies that can clearly be “wrong.” There's no way to reduce the complex subtleties of the human psyche to a simple code that tells you all you need to know about how a person reacts in groups. In fact, it's ludicrous to think it can be done. But that's not the value of Myers-Briggs or any of its offshoots.

The true value is what these tests reveal to you about yourself, and what they reveal to your team about how to interact with you. They're *not* a communications nostrum; they're simply a way to find out who's more expressive than others, who prefers hard facts to intuition or gut feelings, who needs a structured work environment, who has an entrepreneur's talent for thriving on chaos, and so on. They're an invaluable tool to see what your team members are made of, and how they'll work together and with you as their leader. Applied at the start of a project, the MBTI, which can be run in an hour as part of your project kickoff meeting, can give you precious insight into your team members' way of doing business.

Now, that said, it's not our goal to turn you into a Ph.D. overnight. And the truth is, we can't. We're no experts in the rarefied realms of psychological testing. But we *can* explain a thing or two about the Myers-Briggs test and what you'll need to know to get the most out of it for your team. (We'll stick with the MBTI, rather than the Keirsey or MTR-i, because MBTI is the oldest of the three and far and away the one most commonly used.)

Let's start with those four questions we mentioned before:

- Where do you direct your energy?
- How do you prefer to process information?
- How do you prefer to make decisions?
- How do you prefer to organize your life?

**Where do you direct your energy?** This one's easy. If you direct the bulk of your energy to the outer realm of people, activity, and words, you're an Extrovert, or an E. If, on the other hand, you put your mental faculties into the inner realms of ideas, thoughts, and information, shying away from the outer, more social world, then you're an Introvert, or an I. Get the picture?

By and large—and again, we're not trying to encapsulate the whole of the human psyche in a pill-sized paragraph, merely to make a few astute, if general, observations—extroverts are social, expressive, expansive, and tend to put action before thought. Compare them to introverts, who by definition are private, quiet, contemplative, and put thought before action. Introverts may also feel exhausted after intense interactions with other people, the kind you're likely to see in a team on a tight deadline.

Which are you?

**How do you prefer to process information?** Do you prefer known facts and familiar terms, or do you prefer to explore new patterns and meanings in data? If it's the former, it's called *Sensing*, or S in the Myers-Briggs scheme. If it's the latter, it's called *Intuition*, or N. (Why not I? To avoid confusion with Introvert, of course.)

Let's explain this in more depth. The Sensing mode is focused on the present, on tangible reality, on seeing what is and not what might come to pass. On the contrary, the Intuition preference puts greater weight on insight and the future, on what could be and not on what is. At its extreme, sensing can focus so much on the here and now that it fails to see the realm of possibility. Intuition, by contrast, can focus so much on possibility that it fails to see the reality of the present.

People who rely on sensing tend to like facts, evidence, practicality, and realism. The intuitives among us, on the other hand, are into possibilities, novelties, aspirations, change, and idealism.

**How do you prefer to make decisions?** Do you make decisions on the basis of logic or objective considerations, or do you decide an issue based on your personal values? If it's the first, it's called *Thinking* in the Myers-Briggs scheme and denoted by T; if it's the second, it's called *Feeling*, denoted by—guess what?—an F.

This one's rather easy to define. Thinkers are objective analysts. They're often logical—sometimes coldly so—and they decide on principle and take the long-term view. By contrast, feelers are more subjective and empathic, more personal, have a greater appreciation for the views of other participants, and take an immediate view of the situation.

**How do you like to organize your life?** Do you prefer to live in a structured way, with a preference for making strong decisions, or do you prefer to live in a bit of flux, keeping your options open?

If you like the structured life, you're said to have *Judgment*, or J, in the Myers-Briggs typology. If, on the other hand, you like a more flexible life, open to pleasures as you find them, you're said to have *Perception*, or P.

Someone whose preference is Judgment likes to decide things, often ahead of time—what to do, where to go, what to say, and so forth. As a result, they appear organized or, taken to the extreme, even rigid. They like structure, firmness, planning, control. Those with a preference for Perception like to learn or experience new things. They're more comfortable when they keep their options open and their ear to the ground. As a result, they can appear flexible to their friends and colleagues. Inquisitive, they like to explore and excite; they like spontaneity.

Extrovert-Introvert. Sensing-Intuition. Thinking-Feeling. Judgment-Perception. In all there are sixteen combinations...which are you?

**ESTJ (Extrovert, Sensing, Thinking, Judgment): The Supervisor**  
The ESTJ is an extrovert, so he draws his energy from those around

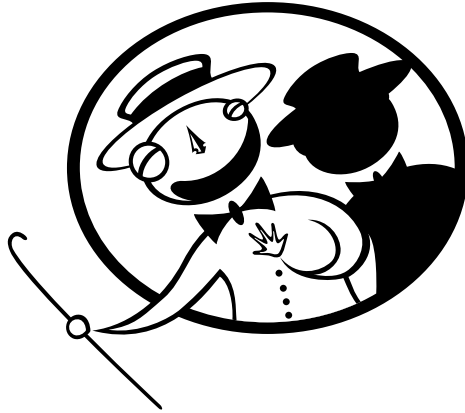
him, from the outside world of people and actions. He also prefers to use logic to deal with facts and the present, and keeps his life organized in a logical way. Practical and pragmatic, the ESTJ is likely to try known and trusted solutions for problems, which he'll attack in a fairly impersonal manner. And he's a detail man, preferring to hone in on the specifics of a project rather than spend time on strategy.



**INFP (Introvert, Intuition, Feeling, Perception): The Healer** An introvert, the INFP looks to the future, to possibilities, and decides on personal values. She leads a flexible life, quiet and adaptable, but only up to a point. The INFP can surprise people with a sudden rigidity when her values are violated. With a bent for creativity, she has a hidden warmth for people and a desire to see others grow.

**ESFP (Extrovert, Sensing, Feeling, Perception): The Performer** The ESFP is an extrovert—he takes his energy from the outside world of people and actions. Given to sensing, not intuition, he prefers to deal with facts. He also deals in the present and likes friendships. (In fact,

he tends to make new friends easily.) Flexible, he takes life as it comes, nearly to the point of impulsivity. He also has a taste for the urgent problem and its solution. The ESFP is a known firefighter, and a damn good one at that.



**INTJ (Introvert, Intuition, Thinking, Judgment): The Mastermind**

This introvert tends to decide things on the basis of impersonal analysis. He's a rather organized strategist who contemplates life's long-term goals; in fact, his life may be organized to meet them. He's skeptical and often critical, both of self and others, and has a nose for deficiencies in quality and competence alike. INTJs often have big brains and can apply them to details relevant to larger strategies.

