



Project Management for Successful Product Innovation

Edited by Alan Webb,
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Project Management for Successful Product Innovation is, by the author's own admission, not a book specifically about managing for innovation in the pharmaceutical industry. There are scientists and managers of scientific projects who would suggest, therefore, that much of its content is of limited use because the discovery and development of drugs is a unique process, and early research cannot be categorized as a series of projects. There is also the belief that, because biological systems are inherently unpredictable, much project management is of little use. Allied to this is a basic misunderstanding that defining a process and implementing project-management techniques in discovery projects will stifle innovation by proscribing the approach. These sentiments reinforce the need for this book to be widely read beyond project management departments, and the disciplines and approaches described in it to be adapted appropriately for the pharmaceutical industry and to become standard practice in the management of discovery and development projects.

The author has a wealth of experience as a professional project manager on large-capital projects in the aerospace industry, and the discipline and rigorous methodology of the engineering environment are evident throughout the book. It is well organized and easy to read, and the basic text is supported with real life examples and detailed case studies from the author's own experience on several projects, which

the reader will find interesting from an historical as well as a content perspective. There are examples throughout of industrial projects with similarities to the pharmaceutical industry in terms of multinational, research-driven, capital-intensive, high-risk projects with long lead-times.

The author describes the methodologies applied and developed from years of experience in these industries across the whole project life-cycle. The belief that the pharmaceutical industry is unique has, in many cases, prevented it from learning from other industries and resulted in it re-addressing problems that have already been solved. As parts of the discovery and development process become more industrialized, there will be an increasing need for project planning, quality assurance and control processes within and between functions, developing fit-for-purpose products and reagents and the use of specialist software for managing the supply chain. There are chapters on these aspects that could be applied to, for example, the development of an assay all the way through to the end of HTS. The disciplines described for managing material flow and project planning in this inherently unpredictable and complex process would undoubtedly help individual managers deliver their projects. However, large pharmaceutical companies are setting increasingly ambitious targets for the development pipeline, such as screening 100 targets against 1.2-million-compound library sets. On a nine-month cycle (a conservative estimate) from approval of target to the end of HTS, these companies will need to manage 75 independent projects at some stage of the life cycle at any time in just this part of the process, with multiple inputs from multiple departments. It seems unlikely that these companies will achieve these targets unless they can bring some order to the portfolio by effective planning

and management. As the author notes 'hardware demands derived simply from the needs of (a project) are not enough. The suppliers' leads times and capacity limitations have to be considered. Failure to recognize this point is to ensure trouble from the start'.

The book also has interesting sections on the human side of building a project team that address the various roles and requirements of the team members and the need to capture learning from projects to support process improvement.

Given the breadth of this book, it is not surprising that there are some areas and methodologies that are less applicable to the pharmaceutical industry. However, this is an excellent book that scientific project managers in discovery and development should read, and then adapt and apply its methodologies intelligently and appropriately to the pharmaceutical industry. As the author notes, the strength of these approaches is that they impose discipline and logic on the project from the start. These are virtues that any scientist should recognize as an important part of the scientific process.

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