

# Oxford Projects



**AUTUMN / WINTER 2008**

## Steve Kendall

Many of you will know Steve from his work as a consultant, trainer and coach with Oxford Projects. Steve and Ron have been working together since back in 1987 – Bananarama and tight perms were in vogue - neither had the latter!!...



Steve's hobby is making guitars. As a result he has had the privilege of working with lots of interesting and talented musicians, and many now play a 'Steve Kendall' guitar.

[steve@oxfordprojects.co.uk](mailto:steve@oxfordprojects.co.uk)



Welcome to our second newsletter of 2008. For many years Oxford Projects has promoted the value of individual and organisational creativity as a major tool in improving business performance. We have just published a white paper which summarises our philosophy. You can find a link to it on the home page of our website ([www.oxfordprojects.co.uk](http://www.oxfordprojects.co.uk)).

We are also designing a Technology Management programme in conjunction with both academic and commercial organisations. This 4-day programme is aimed at providing appropriate skills and tools for research scientists who have been given responsibility for both technology and people. If you are interested in such a programme please contact me.

*Managing Director* [ron.ford@oxfordprojects.co.uk](mailto:ron.ford@oxfordprojects.co.uk)

## RECENT ASSIGNMENTS

### Strategy workshops

We have been working with one of the UK's top research laboratories helping them to become self sufficient in their strategic planning process. This has involved each director in assessing their capabilities and contribution to the board meetings, compared to a template that we have produced. In parallel we have helped the team to design a process that they can own and drive internally.

### GP Practice Managers

The Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) approached us earlier this year and asked if we could help their GP Practice Managers to deal with the large number of government led initiatives that impact on GP practices. Roger Long, who has substantial experience of the GP practice environment, has developed a unique and successful workshop for managing small projects. This includes a booklet setting out the key principles and tools. The programme has now been expanded to cover NHS professionals, and other PCTs in the southwest are expressing interest. For more information contact [roger@oxfordprojects.co.uk](mailto:roger@oxfordprojects.co.uk)

### Coaching for directors

There is a growing demand for business and personal performance coaching. We have recently delivered executive coaching to a managing director, personal development coaching to a board of directors and mentoring to project sponsors.

For more information contact [steve@oxfordprojects.co.uk](mailto:steve@oxfordprojects.co.uk)



**We will be running our highly successful public courses again in 2008/09 in conjunction with the CIPD.**

APM Introductory Certificate 4-5 Dec, 23-24 Feb, 31-1 Apr

Leading a Project Team 12-13 Nov

For full details call 01865 201815 or visit [www.oxfordprojects.co.uk](http://www.oxfordprojects.co.uk)



## How long will it take? How to avoid 5 common estimating pitfalls

**One of the hardest jobs for any project manager is putting together an achievable project plan. Good estimating is fundamental to good planning. Here are some tips:**

- 1. Don't forget the preparation and follow-up.** These are essential parts of just about any job. Remember that little DIY job that you thought would only take half an hour? Exactly...You had to locate the tools and get the materials before you could start the 'real' work. Not only that, there's the mess to clear up afterwards. Ask yourself: what are the things we need to start this work, and what exactly marks the end point of the work?
- 2. Don't confuse 'time' with 'work'.** When someone says 'it's a five-day job' – do they mean it will be finished in a weeks' time, or that there's five days' work to do, spread over a month? Ask some questions and be clear.
- 3. Check you aren't being 'fobbed off'.** When that person said it would be 'ready by the end of next week', was it simply the first thing that came into their mind? Or was it a well thought out, accurate estimate? It's easy for people to say what they think you want to hear. Often such estimates will be wildly optimistic and not helpful. So, ask some probing questions to check how much thought has gone into the estimate.
- 4. Don't think that you know best.** It's good practice to get estimates from the person who will be doing the work. There are at least two reasons: one, in most cases it will be the most accurate estimate, as they are closest to the work; and two, it gets their buy-in. I'll be more committed to delivering on an estimate that I've generated than one which is imposed from elsewhere. Don't be afraid to ask – it's not a sign of lack of knowledge, and will help to build the team.
- 5. Don't believe that your estimates will ever be 100% accurate.** Of course they never will be. But that's not a good reason to avoid planning. The project schedule should be a 'living' document – referred to often, and updated regularly, it is as useful as a map when you get lost. Don't make the mistake of thinking that the plan is only useful at the 'planning' stage. Many people seem to think that once the planning is out of the way, they can concentrate on 'the real work'. When things go awry – and they will – having thought through the work beforehand will help you steer a path to success on your project.

Steve Kendall • September 2008



## FULCRUM PHARMA

### Competitive advantage through excellence in project management

Fulcrum Pharma is a professional services company providing clients with expert solutions for the development of therapeutic products.

Tom Heywood has designed and led a year-long programme of workshops, expert seminars and training courses for the new team of directors and project managers. This has enabled them to deliver world class service and project management to their customers.

For information on how we can help you call **01865 201815** or visit **www.oxfordprojects.co.uk**

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## FEATURED CONSULTANTS

### Wendy McKenzie

Wendy has over 20 years experience as a financial trainer. She creates and delivers tailored financial training for individual clients which measurably improves their financial performance. Wendy also works with financial organisations in the city, developing their



staff skills in analysing financial statements and company evaluations. She has written several books on the subject, including 'The Financial Times Guide to Using and Interpreting Company Accounts'. Wendy has been involved in delivering a number of specialist workshops for directors, which has enabled them to understand their own business and that of their competitors better.

### Naomi Stanford

Naomi is an expert in organisational design and a human capital consultant. Her current work is leading



large scale organisation design and change programmes in Government and commerce. Naomi is the author of two books on organisation design:

'Organization Design: The Collaborative Approach', and 'The Economist Guide to Organization Design'. She has a PhD focused on growing leadership capability and two Master's degrees. Naomi has developed a one day workshop for one of our clients around organisational design (strategy, people, processes, etc). This will enable them to align all the elements of their organisation in a way that will achieve the organisation's strategic goals.

**“ This programme has enabled the team to deliver significant efficiency improvements this year, and our project staff have gained valuable qualifications. ”**

Dr Sarah Arbe-Barnes -  
General Manager,  
Fulcrum Pharma

