In this class we looked at different organization methods for teams, and how management styles might match better with certain types of projects. We first considered what common problems occur in projects, and I showed survey data from a set of professionals:

- 59% communication issues
- 47% resource issues
- 39% scheduling issues
- 25% execution issues
- 64% issues with other departments
- 61% client issues
- 14% other

It’s interesting to note that 64% identified problems with other departments, which presumably means that they were outside of their direct control. Personally, I wonder whether the problems with other departments are any different than the items above it on the list. My guess is not.

Of these problems, the smallest is errors in execution, but we need to be careful with this one. Professionals don’t take on tasks that are beyond their capabilities – or at least not very frequently. Even so, from the practice session last Wednesday one of the key principles that emerged was that we need to invest in the understanding of the problem. If we do this successfully then we will have fewer “surprises” in execution. The trick is that we ultimately have to budget for the time we spend on any given phase of our projects. When have we invested enough?

Some of the detailed comments people make about project problems include the following:

- Failing to ask questions
- Too many changes – too late
- Poor organization and formal communication
- Matrix issues
- Poor structure / consistency
- Lack of standards
- Information flow is inconsistent
- Employee issues

One of the essential ways to think about group projects is to consider the group as an individual. Sure, an individual with many heads, but still, in order to complete a project a certain number of tasks must be completed. When you only have one person only one task can be worked on at a time – with multiple people you can work on more than one task concurrently. Still, importantly, you need to identify tasks that need to be completed.
in order to finish the project. With a group we need to spend effort (sometimes significant) on coordinating ourselves. This coordination is something that needs to be budgeted in our project calculus.

As an individual on a group project you will need to determine where you stand. Consider the following questions that you might very well want to answer:

- What is my role in the group?
- What do I expect from the group?
- How do I behave?
- What do I have to offer?
- What do other people expect?
- Who else is part of the group?
- Can I fail? What support is there?
- Who is in charge?
- Will I be respected?
- Will I influence things?
- Will I be respected and/or liked?
- Will I be ignored?
- Will I be trusted?
- How much freedom will I have?
- Am I a good fit for the group?

If you are having a problem on your project team you can expect that I will ask you some of these questions.

Coordinating group activities is a task in and of itself. You need to budget time, and make sure someone is actually doing the coordination. We discussed in class several different schemes:

- Simple (direct supervision)
- Machine (standardized work processes)
- Divisionalized (standardized work outputs)
- Professional (Standardized worker skill)
- Adhoc (Mutual adjustment)

I am not sure exactly which of these makes most sense for our class projects, but I lean towards the divisionalized approach. This requires upfront planning on the the part of everyone to know what must be delivered, but then allows an individual to complete the task without direct oversight.

Different team structures were discussed, including hierarchical, democratic and specialist structures. You might choose a hybrid, or derive your own, but you will need to be able to identify the structure you are using.

The last part of the class was devoted to individual motivations.