Part 3

Media management in action

Chapter 13

Production

13.1 Summary

An audiovisual production project follows the classically understood model of any project; it has a beginning, a middle and an end. This defines and differentiates a project from a manufacturing process. Somewhat light-heartedly, people have referred to the Hollywood film and TV studios as factories, yet each programme or film within that factory still conforms to a project format.

Any activity defined as a project has the control process of quality (q), cost (c) and time (t) imposed upon it. The demands on the production manager are to keep the costs down, maintain the quality and deliver on time. In an ideal world these three elements would be independent variables, but they are interdependent.

This chapter explores the theoretical processes and models that a production manager has to consider in order to be effective in production management. It examines some of the issues in project and production preparation, and looks at some of the factors that impact on project management rules.

We introduce the concept of the production project cycle (PPC). This chapter establishes the theory of project management and should ideally be read before Chapter 14, where we examine production management in action. Chapter 8 provides a useful precursor to production management because it examines team membership and individual differences.

A comment is needed regarding names and definitions. We use the generic term 'project manager' to represent the individual who has overall

responsibility for the entire project. This is akin to a line producer in an audiovisual production project. The term 'production manager' used here refers to the individual who has prime responsibility for the project from the planning stage through to post-production and preparation for delivery. The word 'production' (and by extension 'production manager') has often been the overarching term for all stages of a programme made within the audiovisual sector. This is because historically the main focus has been on the creative elements of the project, and not on examining the production process as a whole from initiation through to completion. This is especially true where the subject is taught academically.

Workers in the media industry often wish to emphasise the creative elements of the work they do. Quite understandably, the mechanisms used to manage the process of bringing the programme to the audience are often overlooked.

We will examine details of project team structure and project membership, and how roles and responsibilities might be assigned, irrespective of the form of media production the project manager may be undertaking.

Many organisations are adopting a project-orientated approach to 'getting work done'. This methodology (however poorly achieved) has been implicitly applied in the audiovisual industry from its earliest days. The audiovisual industry may yet be able to teach other industries a few lessons in this area.

13.2 Objectives and key issues

This chapter is built on the assumption that any media production is a particular example of project management. We set out some of the processes and systems by which a media production project should be managed. The terms 'audiovisual production' and 'media production' are interchangeable, and are applied in turn to make the text easier to follow. (The term 'audiovisual' is applied by the European Union to describe any mono- or mixed media programme that has a time-based dependency. Media production is a less rigorous term applied to all forms of media; print, still image production, video, audio etc., but is widely used in the industry. Web and CD-ROM projects receive a wide range of labels, in most cases dependent on their source material.)

The key objective is to define what project management is and, more specifically, how a production project can be organised using the production project cycle (PPC). It is anticipated that the potential production manager

will be able to use this outline as a method of good production management for any form of media project. We intend to show that the PPC has clearly defined stages that embody standard project management methods. The model also segments the areas of responsibility into managerial themes, within which tasks in the project reside.

This chapter therefore sets out to explain:

- What a production project is
- Why it is worth using the PPC
- Who does what task and when (the where will depend on production strategies; see p. XXX).

Chapter 14 expands on the how of the PPC, with some suggested practical templates and guides.

3.3 Introduction

In different industries, project management definitions and terms have been used to describe essentially the same project process. In this chapter, we have applied terms familiar to the audiovisual programme-maker. The production project cycle (PPC) illustrated in Figure 13.1 is outlined in this
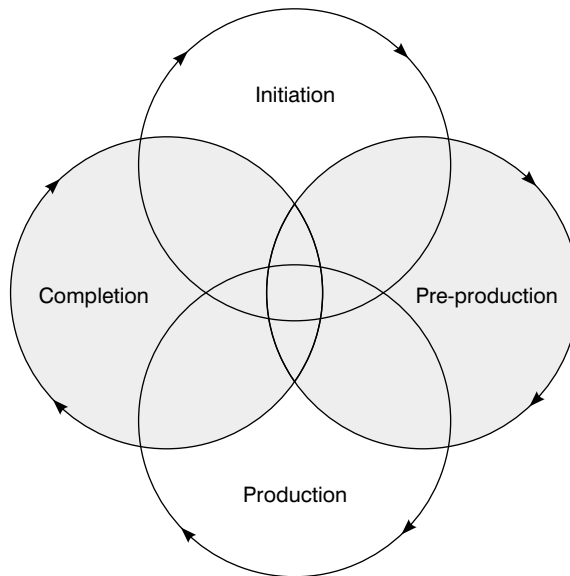

Figure 13.1 The production project cycle.

chapter, then studied in more detail in Chapter 14. The PPC has four stages of operation, and within each one there are two or three steps that need to be successfully completed for the project to proceed.

The four stages and associated steps are:

1 Initiation – ideas, assessment and evaluation
2 Pre-production – definition and planning
3 Production – media production and post-production
4 Completion – delivery, distribution and wrap.

A production project is essentially a linear process with a start, a middle and an end. Complexity is introduced such that each of the four stages has steps that in themselves are iterative. They can require several revisions to refine the task in question by testing both concepts and technologies. Thematic pathways are defined to indicate areas of overall management responsibility and project focus throughout the project lifecycle (Table 13.1). In addition, steps overlap and feedback components will have an impact on the success of each stage and therefore on the final outcome of the project.

For example:

1 During the initiation stage, the evaluation of risks and rewards will have an impact on the outcome of the assessment process. This will then be fed back to influence and modify the initial ideas.
2 During pre-production, further assessment takes place as the project is scoped. As the project becomes more tightly defined, production budgets and contracts are devised; these too will impact and re-shape the initial ideas.
3 In production, the monitoring and control systems give the assurance of successful delivery by maintaining the feedback path. Completion will be influenced by the distribution deals and the requirements of the agent for, or owner of, the programme.
4 A website can all too easily be 'tinkered' with – the project never ends. The end of the project has to be defined by the scope and contract terms defined in the initiation and design stages.

Overall, a production project is governed by the rules of quality (q), cost (c) and time (t), as in any project These three factors have an impact at all stages of a production.

Consider the relationship: quality × time ~ cost. If the time increases, then costs go up unless quality goes down

Table 13.1

	Project stage	Initiation			Pre-production		Production		Completion		
	Step	**Ideas**	**Evaluation**	**Assessment**	**Definition**	**Planning**	**Media production**	**Post production**	**Delivery**	**Distribution**	**Wrap**
Management theme											
Organisation											
Client/Owner/Sponsor											
Investors – investment											
Global project issues											
Risk management											
Legal and finance											
Project processes (internal)											
Supplier relationships											
People											
Asset management											
Quality Assurance											
Technical											
Feedback											

Table 13.2 Production project cycle – the route map

Management responbility	Initiation ideas, evaluation and assessment			Pre-production definitions, design and planning		
Project path				PPC		
Organisation		value chain	commitment	marketing strategy		
Client/owner/sponsor	investment proposal		commitment	sign-off forms at each stage		
	Producer's guidelines (CH4, BBC etc)	Guide to project				
Global project issues	champion	director/writer	commitment	scope & objectives		
	initiator	decision models	first draft script or treatment	international project teams		
	producer	suitability check	content collation and management	communication systems		
Risk management		PEST	audit (int/ext)	content management tool (CMT)		
		SWOT	risk models	rights and rewards matrix		
Project processes						
Internal to project	brain storming	request for proposal (RFP)	initial project workplan	formal project workplan	project responsibility chart	
Internal to production company	consult with potential client and share with	project decision models	internal kick-off meeting – with supplier if working	micro design & storyboards	technical prototype specifications for	
				facilities bookings		screen tests and voice over artists/actors tests
Supplier relationships	suppliers' guide	tender boards	select key suppliers	select key suppliers (if not already done so)	content collation & scripts contracts	system flow charting and navigation
Legal & finance	confidentiality agreements	provisional budget model	IPR framework	legal checks	detailed budget	copyright clearances and licensing
General project events/actions	mind maps			production kick-off with workplan 'handover' to supplier	look & feel design with supplier	
Technical	scope of technical needs: 3D, VR studios, animation	macro template and design	advise IT of project start-up (if part of infrastructure)	draft technical framework established and 'tailoring' of	Tec Spec and Standards confirms with clarify any new elements, password	IT project manager
Technical testing (web/CD)	determine scope of multichannel offering			establish product database for errors, revisions and review		IT to raise any tech issues and concerns
Project management tools	budget models	project workplans		content management	risk management	
People	producer/director	production/project manager	relationship manager(s)	key team	mentors	
	production assistant	SME(s)	suppliers	shadow roles	coaching	
	content manager	external consultant(s)	client	team (F, N, S, P)	team meetings	test group assigned
	others	technical director	production designer	steering group		
	script writer(s) & editor	financial controller				
Feedback path		financial/budget tools	project status reports			
			refining plans			

Production			Completion			Notes	Management responsibility
media production and post production			delivery, distribution and wrap				
						highlighted sections show core activities for the period of the project	project path
							organisation
			final sign-off on the programme and project budget				client/owner/sponsor
							global project issues
						risk monitoring continues throughout the life of the project	risk management
time management and costings	shooting schedule	voice over schedule	pass to delivery managers	launch dates to global markets IT support aware	project review		process
production cycle	release of prototypes, alpha, beta and final		marketing launch			detailed media production methods are not included here	
content collation and scripting	costs	invoicing and logging	contracts review and sign-off			contracts can sometimes take the life of the project to complete. Co-productions and co-marketing deals	
					quality, cost time constraints achieved		
technical prototype and docs for IT ongoing tests by supplier and production teams IT Documents for	sign off on install, impact on Desktop and IT support feedback from IT to internal team and suppliers on	error log on alpha and beta versions sign off and action soak and stress tests data throughout	multi-channel offering external verification of product by second (or additional) feedback from IT	pilot roll-out if required	issue 1 pressing	revisions to product as scope demands and funds allow	
packaging design and pre press	risk management	content management					
call sheets	video production crew					the point at which to hire staff is always open to interpretation shadow or training roles (super-	people
performers secured						securing a key performer may be the most important factor	
technical and design testing & feedback	media production raw material	beta stage pilot testing	post-production pilot testing		recommended changes to the system		feedback path
	external testing agency feedback		technical testing		performance review		
	IT technical testing feedback		focus groups		monitoring of help line and e-mail to add to log		

If the quality (production values) increases, then costs must go up and time may also increase.

If the cost is capped or reduced, then either the time is reduced and the quality suffers, or the quality is reduced irrespective of the time left.

Sometimes, if the time decreases then the costs go up as overtime payments are made to meet deadlines whilst maintaining the quality.

In most audiovisual productions, time is the constraint that determines the other two components. The budget becomes the element debated by the production team, irrespective of its impact on the quality.

How do the key players view this situation?

- Producers and backers believe quality and value for money is paramount.
- Production companies are concerned with how to deliver on time to budget and still make a profit.
- Freelance and subcontractors are concerned with whether the work can be completed before their next contract – all their activities come at a cost to the programme-maker for the time slot allocated.

It is into this environment that the production manager steps. Within the PPC, the role of production project manager is to:

- establish primary planning tools for the rest of the PPC
- allocate tasks to team members
- monitor progress
- co-ordinate production meetings
- manage client, sponsor, producer, stakeholders or whoever else has appointed them as production project manager.

Traditional project management is a method or a technique used to 'get a job done'. It is a mechanistic system often presented graphically as a chart or, as it is sometimes called, a route map to guide you through the project management process (Table 13.2).

Every project is unique, and production projects have some special requirements that the PPC accommodates. It may seem a paradox that we apply such a mechanistic system to manage the development of what is often considered an artistic, creative endeavour. Consider; would Hitchcock or Scorsese have found this a useful process? Maybe not – but modern audiovisual projects are complex, and often have to operate across all media production processes and techniques.

If managing a media project is about managing creativity, then it is also about managing the people who embody that creative spirit. A particular style of project management is known as 'goal-directed project management' (GDPM)[1]. This approach to project management is meant to develop people's involvement and commitment to the project. It does so by making stronger reference to people, systems and organisation. Media projects are about the creative skills and talents of the people on the project; this approach, what the GDPM authors call 'a PSO way of thinking' (PSO stands for people, system and organisation), is devised to have improved outcomes not only for the project itself but also for those individuals involved in the project. The production project cycle uses some of the PSO techniques and incorporates them into the project management plan.

The overall purpose of the PPC is to provide a template by which the programme-maker can effectively manage all the resources needed to complete a project. A challenge often made to media producers is, 'Was the money on the screen?' To which, by using the PPC process, you as the audiovisual production project manager can say, 'Yes it is!'

13.4 Production strategies

Before considering detailed methodologies to manage an individual production project, we need to be aware of the management environments within which an audiovisual production might reside.

Within the media industry, there are many methods and systems by which a programme can be created and distributed to the target audience. If you have read earlier chapters in this book, you will be familiar with the production model established by the BBC. This vertically integrated model (now going through many changes due to producer choice) embodied all stages of the production process, from staff writers who presented the initial idea through production and broadcasting to print and distribution channels. This all embracing model is now complemented by the provision of the BBC Online services on the Worldwide Web.

At the other end of the scale we have the model of the traditional book or print publishers. They receive a completed manuscript from the author, which, assuming approval takes place, is edited, typeset and printed. The distribution channels of wholesaler to retail outlets ensure that the product reaches its potential readership. This approach was first applied in the UK television industry by Channel 4, and is known as the publisher–broadcaster model (embodied in the 1980 Broadcasting Act).

Producing media products has become a more complex process in the last few years. The distinctions between the fully integrated broadcast company and the traditional arm's length publisher have become blurred. This cross-media complexity has impacted on any media project that we might manage.

Given the complexities of processes and management models, a media or contracting company may chose any one of the following options to organise its business and therefore manage its projects:

1 *Full vertical integration*. The production broadcaster has complete in-house control of production methods, systems and processes; this would include script writers, content editors, subject matter experts, graphic designers, production tools and technologies in video, print and multimedia, and possibly web design, through to packaging and distribution capability ('a *la* old BBC).
2 *Partial vertical integration with opt-out capability*. This is in-house production management with production services available internally. These internal services are purchased across the business infrastructure. This is the current model applied by the BBC and known as 'producer choice'. All content is managed internally, with various degrees of subcontracting as required. The media industry in the UK, although called a 'cottage industry', has a wide range of specialist agency firms. Facility houses offer editing, filming, location finding, voiceover artists, specialist catering services (the honey wagon!) etc. Many are based around key media industry centres such as Soho in London, Manchester and Bristol. (See Michael Porter's work on fragmented industries[2] and on industrial clusters[3], and then Michael Storper's commentaries on flexible specialisation[4].
3 *Publisher–distributor*. Here, there is in-house capability mixed with a certain level of subcontracting; all content is managed internally, possibly programming, with various levels of subcontracting adopted as required – video production, audio production, graphics and computer programming. This model is prevalent in the new media arena, and is illustrated by companies such as Dorling Kindersley. Despite changes in the industrial landscape, it maintains an in-house multimedia capability. The company is well known as a publishing house of print materials; hence its capability of managing its own distribution network chain for new media products.
4 *In-house management and in-house prototyping*. This option requires external suppliers to carry out a very precise set of operations to a clearly defined set of objectives. The production is managed by the internal team who have set and scoped the project.

5 *Retained subcontractors.* In this case, a variable degree of control inside the business is maintained. Accredited companies are held on file as a competent selection of companies who can make the programme. These would include, for example:

- a video company
- a print production company
- several programming companies with web design, DVD design or CD ROM design capability as required in different market sectors, possibly focusing on marketing skills, communication background and education
- production and post-production facilities.

6 *The publisher–broadcaster.* Here, production is abdicated to the third party. At its most basic, a strategic view is taken. The supplier then scripts, designs and completes a project to those parameters. It is virtually a 'pay and expect delivery' type of programme. Many old-style corporate films and videos were made in this mode, before the days of the corporate communications managers who now manage such projects. Channel 4 illustrates this approach. The station maintains its public service broadcasting requirement through its commissioning editors, and they in turn contract independent production companies to make the pro-grammes by an invitation to a tender round process (See Channel 4 website for independent producers' guidelines).

Irrespective of the overall strategy applied to manage production projects, the stages and tasks in the process remain the same. What does change is the location and environment of the individual or firm managing or executing the specific task. The theory of project management will now be looked at in more detail.

13.5 The characteristics of a project

It has been proposed that all projects have a number of common characteristics:

1 Projects have a beginning, a middle and an end. Production projects usually have defined start and finish dates. The official start is often determined by the day the commissioning editor, sponsor, producer or studio releases the initial tranche of cash. The finish date is usually set by the day of transmission or agreed screening or commercial release for the programme. Media production projects are almost always constrained by time.

2 Projects are unique. Although any film, musical event, multimedia programme or website will have many shared characteristics with other films, musical projects or websites etc., many aspects of the production will differ.

3 Projects are team events. Production projects pull together a wide range of skills and expertise across the audiovisual industry. A director or producer will often request a particular camera operator, sound recordist or lighting camera operator etc. This is true both within the framework of a large organisation, such as the BBC, and where a producer selects key personnel from a pool of freelance staff. A continuing concern of the media industry is that the new shared knowledge, skills and expertise are often lost once the production is complete. Somehow this experience needs to be transferred to new joiners and the wider media community. There are few formal opportunities to share this knowledge. It is usually restricted to celebrity sessions at the NFT, or master classes held by trade associations or conferences attached to exhibitions.

4 Projects are driven by quality, cost and time. This is a well-known homily to those who have been involved in project management, but is nonetheless true. It doesn't matters whether it is £200 million plus spent on *Titanic* (1999), or (the alleged) fraction of that spent on the *Blair Witch Project* in the same year. The producers and directors of both had set out to produce a style of film in a certain time with a defined outcome, but at a very different cost and quality of production. What these projects share is the unpredictable outcome in the form of financial rewards to those who backed the films. The money made as an outcome of the film sometimes bears little relation to the money spent in the first place. Hollywood, being risk-averse, looks to the formula film (*Lethal Weapon 2, 3* etc. or, for example, a film starring Meg Ryan and written by Nora Ephron, such as *When Harry met Sally, Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've got Mail*). Read *My Indecision is Final – The Rise and Fall of Goldcrest Films*[5] for an insight into risks and rewards in the film industry. The multimedia industry has suffered from some very bad business economics that have led to some very public company disasters (e.g. First Information Group and many others).

The Association of Project Managers defines a project as '… a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service'. By now you might be thinking, well, what isn't a project? The other question often asked is, does it help to define things as a project in the first place? As we go through this chapter, these questions will be addressed and answered.

13.5.1 When is a project not a project?

If you were to undertake to design and build a house, it would be defined as a project. Once you were living in the house, it would no longer be a project; it would become routine. Within an industrial setting, the process of setting up a production line to build vehicles would be a project. Once the production line was running and cars were rolling off the production line, this would no longer be a project. A production line, once functioning, is a manufacturing process and can no longer be defined as a project. If we were to apply the Fordist industrial metaphor to the Hollywood means of production, it could be suggested that the studio complexes are a manufacturing process. The individual film is but one programme or product coming off that production line. In its own right, each film is a project.

The many texts that have been written on project management suggest that projects can be grouped into the following categories:

1 Engineering and construction projects, often defined by location and large amounts of capital
2 Manufacturing projects, in which some piece of equipment or hardware is produced
3 Management projects, which requires the management and co-ordination of some set of activities of which the end result is not a construction or a piece of machinery.

From these groupings and definitions, we suggest that a fourth category emerges. A production project is an amalgamation of a management and manufacturing project. This is because the project management involved in film or media production is in the main the management of human resources. The outcome, one anticipates, is a finished product of some form, viewed or used by an audience whether as mass media or a as more narrow cast presentation.

13.5.2 The zero-value media project

A unique aspect of a media production project is the value, or lack of value, that a media project (whether film, music or multimedia) has until it is viewed by an audience or paid for by the client. Even after the main photography has been completed, and possibly even after the first edit, the project is still a high-risk enterprise – unless the programme is accepted by the producer or sponsors of the programme, it could be cancelled. In this aspect, media productions squarely fit within the definition of a project. Many media projects have been wound up because they could not meet the

objectives of the programme-makers. If each one wasn't a project and unique, it would be possible to adopt a new set of objectives and continue the work.

As defined earlier in the chapter, this feature of a project is controlled by the three variables of quality, cost and time. Time is often fixed, usually by the end of the assessment and evaluation stage (as defined in the production project cycle). This may be determined by, say, the programme's transmission date, or by the presentation date at a shareholders' meeting. Therefore, any audiovisual production will have its scope defined by the transmission or viewing date. Programmes can be delayed, but these delays will increase the costs of the production and may result in those who have invested in the project withdrawing their funds.

Costs are the truly dependent variable, and are determined by the time taken on the project and the quality required. Close monitoring and control are vital in good project management. Quality will also be determined by how much time you have and the funds you have to spend in that time. It will also be determined by the skills and creativity of the team involved in the project.

Whether the project is a feature film for Hollywood or an industrial training video, the quality of the narrative will set the agenda for the rest of the project. No wonder scripts are called 'the property'! The three factors of quality, cost and time have been called the eternal triangle of project management. A truly efficient and effective project manager keeps the project to time and controls costs, but keeps the quality at its highest possible level. The production project cycle (PPC) incorporates these project characteristics.

13.6 The production project cycle

The production project management method presented in this book is aimed primarily at the new entrant to media management. We have applied terms that will be familiar to people who have studied and applied traditional project management techniques. For those who come from the background of media, we have also incorporated terms such as pre-production, production and post-production into the processes and terms applied by the wider project management community. Hence we have come up with the production project cycle (PPC). In doing so, we have slightly bent the rules by including elements that some would say fall out of

the strict definitions of the project management process. Within this model, each step has a set of activities to be completed and each stage has some defined sign-off points. For example, during the commitment stage a risk management analysis will have taken place. At the end of this stage, business commitment and supplier contracts will have been agreed and signed off. What follows is a more detailed explanation of the route or pathway through the four stages of the model.

13.6.1 Initiation: ideas, assessment and evaluation

There has to be a concept, a requirement, some form of inspiration to start the need for a production. It could be that a potential film-maker decides that a book, an idea or a storyline is something he or she wants to try out and exploit, to turn into a film. It could be that the BBC, Channel 4 or any other publisher–broadcaster has decided offer a tender to independent production companies, of which you are one. A corporate media group may have distributed, through their known supply channels, a request for proposals from potential supply companies for a training video or a corporate communication piece of work. Companies seek contractors for any project that requires a media element requiring skills and techniques outside those available in their own particular organisation. In this initiation of project stage, the idea(s) thus produced have to be assessed and the viability of the project evaluated. These three activities form the steps within this stage. The optimum outcome of this stage of the project is commitment and funding.

13.6.2 Pre-production: definition and planning

This stage has two steps; definition and planning.

Definition sets out the project's scope and objectives, some initial assessment of cost, and who will actually carry this work out. Although a project has a start, a middle and an end, it is an iterative process. Therefore, several cycles of events take place within the project. There is a refining and redefining that takes place throughout the life of each phase of the project. This can have an impact on the earlier steps and stages of the project. Good project management should allow each step (the sub-sections of one of the four stages) to be sufficiently clear to minimise the risk of redefining earlier elements of the project plan. It is important that later steps don't create a ripple effect back through the project. This is also the step at which some of the key contracts are set in place between the pre-production staff and crew and the contracting companies.

Production projects can often be determined by availability of the key players, and not by the content of the material itself. Establishing detailed time lines that are dependent on their availability can be difficult.

At the planning step, more detailed planning and design work takes place. This is also where, in the terms of traditional project management, 'chunking' takes place. Chunking describes the process of breaking the project down into manageable elements and assigning responsibilities to each person. It defines what work needs to be done and the resources that will be allocated to the task, and provides a more detailed analysis of time-scales and budget. It is at this time that most of the project tools used in production planning are initiated. It is also probably the most labour-intensive element for the production manager. This is where the overall plans that will determine the ultimate success or failure of the project are made.

13.6.3 Production: media production and post-production

This stage of the PPC incorporates the key production areas of media production and post-production. By now final scripts, if they haven't been done, are being completed. Principal photography takes place. The graphics are being developed and music written. This is when production managers discover whether all their efforts in co-ordinating, say, a location shoot have paid off. Now many aspects of the project come to life, and the monitoring process is at its most critical. It is at this stage that the vision of the director, sponsor and/or client will become a tangible resource. The shared vision that has to date been only talked about may now come to life.

13.6.4 Completion: delivery, distribution and wrap

Completion is where the project comes to a close. In 'production only' projects, the work is completed at the delivery of the edit master. If a commissioned project, whether industrial, commercial or broadcast, the obligations of the production project manager will end. There may be a requirement that the programme itself must be tested before the final handover. This could be through:

- market testing – even though screenings have taken place a several stages in a production (rough cut etc.)
- focus groups – before the release of the programme

- checking that it functions technically – even though the content is good for a multimedia programme
- acceptance tests by the owner of the product.

If distribution management is required, then the project manager may have to negotiate with various distribution channels – managers of cinema chains, commissioning editors for broadcast television programmes, or even owners of record stores – especailly if they are on the Web. Supervision of print materials, packaging and shipping could also be required prior to project closure. As with the other phases of the project, all these tasks need specialists on the project management team.

Completion would not be effective without analysing what has taken place. The wrap stage examines not just whether the product has fulfilled all its needs as a piece of work but also how well the project was managed. So, apart from the post-production party, some other thoughts worth considering are:

- Was it successful – did it meet its objectives?
- What went well?
- What went badly?
- Should it be done differently next time?

There are always things to be learned from a production project, for the project team, the organisation who set it up and the individual who has been working on the project. A difficulty with many media projects is that many productions are short engagements, typically 2–12 weeks in length. The crews come together, do their job, walk away with a sigh of relief that they have been paid, and look for the next production. It is important to establish how the knowledge gained from a particular project can be encapsulated and retained for others to use in the future. This is a major challenge to a fragmented industry, and to the workforce. Time should be found to pass on this knowledge.

13.7 Why bother with planning?

If you have been reading this text in a reasonably diligently manner, by now you might be thinking, 'This is ridiculous for a simple video production – all this planning, all this organising – it'll probably take longer than running the project itself'. This is a view shared by many, including, at one time, the author of this chapter. Yet experience over many years of running
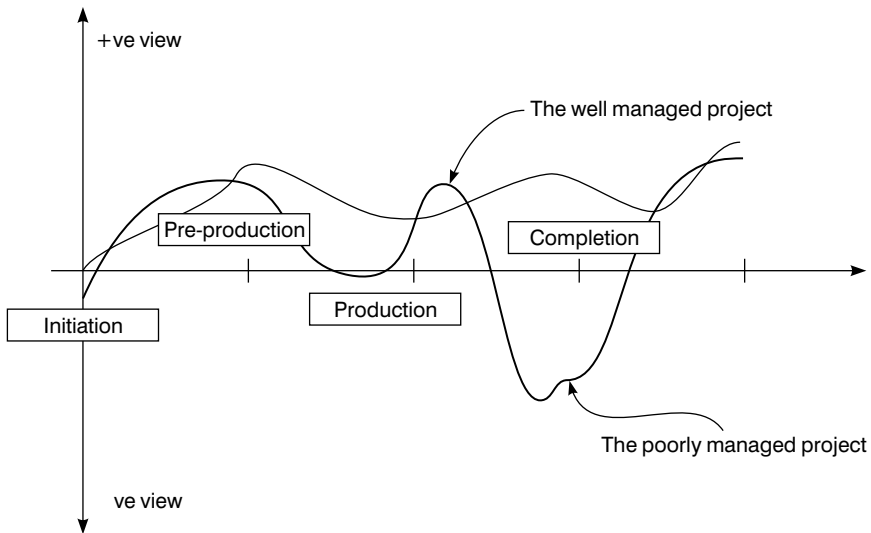
Figure 13.2 Project fatigue.

productions has shown that the 'let's get through, muddle through, everybody will pull together' approach just doesn't work.

With good planning:

- thousands of pounds can be saved
- the right people, the right tools and the right equipment will all turn up at the right location with everything ready for the shoot
- the crew and the performers will feel confident that you know what you are doing
- the backers, sponsors, financiers will be impressed by the level of detail you are giving them, and that you are keeping them informed about what is going on
- everybody's confidence is maintained.

For simple shoots it is a simple plan, but it is a plan nonetheless. Any system, once understood and applied, can become second nature to the user and also becomes an effective tool.

By getting the project definition step sorted out clearly and unambiguously, you are establishing clear boundaries for the project. Then, in partnership with the planning step, roles and responsibilities for those involved can be assigned. The production team can then proceed confidently to the production stage, clear about the main production goals.

13.8 Project fatigue

At the beginning of a project there is a high degree of enthusiasm and optimism. Figure 13.2 shows how, as the project proceeds, this enthusiasm wanes as the reality of the challenge becomes clear. The task of the project manager is to minimise this by good planning and process control.

However meticulously and carefully you have planned your production project, production project fatigue can creep in. There are a number of reasons why this may happen:

1   *Creative challenges*. Despite the project manager's best endeavours to control stakeholders (the interested parties), they continually change their minds about what is required. This can have an enormous impact on the morale of the people doing the graphics, programming or filming, even though they may be paid to continue the work. There is a level of team spirit within media projects that requires a certain respect for the creative flair of those involved. Even if a team is being completely reimbursed for all the effort and energies required to change a project, enthusiasm will fail. As far as we know there is no empirical evidence for this, but it is an observed phenomenon within the creative industries. It occurs because the creative personnel take personal ownership of the element of the project for which they are responsible, and it is often quite hard for them to cope with their creativity being challenged. There appears to be two reasons for this; creative disfunction (i.e. good ideas wrongly applied) and external disruptive factors (seemingly arbitrary budget or content changes, stakeholder reviews that change programme focus). Budgetary concerns are a secondary issue at this stage. It is important for a project manager to recognise the signs of project fatigue, and look for ways to give energy back to the team and to the project itself.
2   *Poor communication*. This happens because there are not enough team meetings, or because there are too many team meetings. The need is for an appropriate level of coaching and mentoring of team members. It is important to keep the number of meetings to a minimum yet maintain team communication. At times of pressure it is especially important to find a balance between talking and doing. Collective experience has shown that in media projects the first tangible product, such as the first rough cut edit, print proofs or alpha CD, will suddenly change any sense of despondency within the team. Look for small successes, or just take everyone out for a meal!

3 *People management* – inter- and intra-relationships. Look at the dynamics of the team and get an independent view. Trust and partnership are vital. Don't belittle even in jest; tease with care; support your team and encourage them; let them take the credit. If you do need a particular solution let the team find it with you or, better still for you, even if you already have the answer, the 'straw-man' approach offers a potential solution for the rest to demolish, and from this can come an agreed outcome.

The traditional roles of media pre-production and post-production have changed. The audiovisual industry has moved from a mono-media domain into a multiple cross-media process. Media productions are never finished, and web-based multimedia projects can always be modified. We know that 90 per cent of a solution is obtained in 50 per cent of the time available, and the final 10 per cent of the solution in other 50 per cent. It is always a mixture of pragmatism, quality, cost and time that will determine that the project can be completed and delivered. In media and audiovisual projects we know we have been successful in completion of the project when the programme is transmitted, the brochure is distributed or the CD is in the shops. The next chapter looks at the tools and techniques to use as part of the PPC approach to media project management.

13.9 References

1. Andersen, E. S., Grude, K. V. and Haug, T. (1995). *Goal-Directed Project Management.* Kogan Page.
2. Porter, M. E. (1998). *Competitive Strategies: Techniques for Analysing Industries and Competitors*, pp, 191–214. Free Press.
3. Porter, M. E. (1998). *Competitive Advantage of Nations.* Macmillan Press.
4. Storper, M. (1985). *The Changing Organisation and Location of the Motion Picture Industry – A Research Report.* UCLA Publishing.
5. Eberts, J. and Ilott, T. (1992). *My Indecision is Final: The Rise and Fall of Goldcrest Films.* Faber and Faber.