**Project Management Skills - What is a Project?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Everyone is involved in all sorts of projects throughout our lives, but unless you’re a project management professional, we don’t often think about what makes a project a project. All around us are things to be done, tasks to accomplish, decisions to make, skills to learn, problems to solve, results to achieve. For example:

•Families decide what to buy at the food market, purchase the items, and make meals.

•Farmers plant, cultivate, and harvest crops that are then sold in markets.

•New houses are planned, designed, constructed, sold, and then families move in.

•Teachers plan their lessons, engage students in activities, and evaluate the results.

•Students receive assignments, do research, and write up and present their findings.

•Communities develop recycling plans, implement them, and measure the impact.

•Businesses plan new products, develop and test them, then sell them to consumers.

What makes these diverse activities, from small to large, all projects?

There are two key qualities of projects:

1. Projects are temporary efforts with a clear start and finish – they are not ongoing.
2. Projects have an end result – something created or completed that is often unique.

In the examples above, the end results are: eating meals, food sold in a grocery stores, families moving into new homes, lessons taught, research papers handed in, recycling program impact reports presented, and new products sold in stores and online.

Listening to the daily weather and stock market reports, answering your phone, brushing your teeth each night – these activities are not usually considered projects, because they are brief ongoing activities, and though there are some short-term results, there isn’t much of an end result in mind. These simple actions just keep recurring regularly and they don’t really require an intentional plan or produce a result that’s complex, different, new, or unique.

The measure of success in most business-oriented projects is to reach the end of the project cycle “on time, on budget, and on scope.” What’s most important to business is meeting the project deadline without spending more money than has been allocated for the project, without adding extra features (and costs), or without fulfilling all of the project requirements (being “out of scope” of the desired result).