

# White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



## Performing Your Roles on Multiple Stages

*What Kind Of Stage Suits You Best?* Life presents each of us with three stages on which we play our roles and demonstrate our value proposition. They are: The Leadership Stage, The Project Stage, and The Operational Stage. To a great extent, the stage impacts the roles you play. Your effectiveness is directly related to your ability to choose your primary stage and your flexibility in moving from one stage to the other as the need arises.

We all play different roles at differing times in our lives. Such roles require us to portray different characters and perform different tasks on a variety of stages. The stage on which you feel most fulfilled is the one that provides you with the ability to **BE** what you like to be and **DO** what you like to do. Very often it is on this stage that you are likely to deliver your highest value.

We suggest that we all operate on three stages at different times. Diagram 5 illustrates these three interdependent stages.

While we all must play on all three stages we are likely to be most comfortable with one specific stage. Ensuring that your primary role affords you the opportunity to be on such a stage is critical to your fulfillment and your success. At the same time, your effectiveness is highly related to your flexibility and your ability to move from one stage to the other when needed. Let us briefly examine the differing stages.

**The Leadership Stage:** The leadership stage is the place where you exercise leadership skills playing the role of coach, influencer, guide, visionary, and entrepreneur. On the leadership stage your value is most likely related to how the people around you perceive you and respond to you. On the leadership stage you call people to positive change that enhances their value contributions. On the leadership stage the primary beneficiaries of your role are those you lead. In the process you are likely to receive tangible and non-tangible rewards for your influence. We

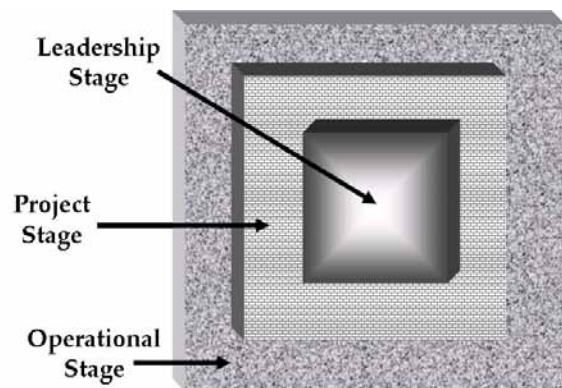


Diagram 5: Multiple Stages

### Note:

\* This whitepaper is extracted from our book *Overloaded? From overload to balanced living*. See inside the book at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

\* If this page was sent to you by a friend we invite you to subscribe to our e-letter "On The Road To Overcoming Overload." Please go to <http://www.nomoreoverload.com/request.asp>



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realize that, in one way or another, at least for some of the time, we are all called to be leaders. We lead people by our words but even more importantly, by our example.

**The Project Stage,** The project stage is the place where you leverage your changing world and the people around you. Some of the roles you play on the project stage include that of:

- A resource who contributes knowledge, competencies or experience to the project team
- An advisor who provides answers to critical questions
- A Project Authority who is able to arbitrate conflicting priorities and ensure the availability of needed funds and resources
- A champion who is able to rally for the support of, or to sell new ideas needed for project success
- A planner who has the skills needed to articulate realistic tasks and milestones
- A manager who ensures the proper execution of needed tasks at the appropriate time

Delivering maximum value on the project stage is directly impacted by your ability to negotiate the role that best suits you on a project team. The world around us is changing very fast. Projects by nature leverage and add value through managing change. Projects have a unique advantage of providing measurable progress towards an expected target.

In our consulting practice we often liken projects to having a baby. They have a beginning and an end. Projects require the participation of committed individuals with clearly defined roles. While some project tasks are painful, in the end there are visible positive changes and benefits that call for celebration.

Your ability to fulfill such a role on the project stage depends on the presence of what we call “the key project success factors”. Illustrated in Diagram 6 these factors include:

- **High project value:** Too many projects are started without clearly articulated benefit statements. A benefit statement responds to one simple question, “**Why should we do this?**” Benefit statements clearly define the expected changes and outcome of a project. Benefit statements reflect the tangible and non-tangible benefits that will result from investing efforts and resources in the stated project. Benefit statements serve to mobilize and recruit appropriate players and project participants.
- **Responsible Project Authority:** The Project Authority is the person who has the responsibility of funding the project.

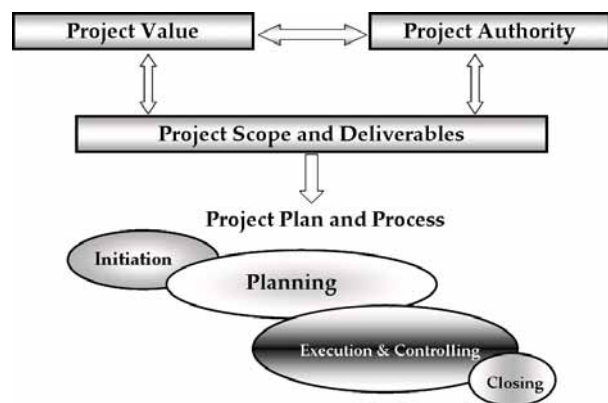


Diagram 6: Project Success Factors

Very often it is the person who has the vision to see the high level benefits of the project or who is most likely to receive most of the project benefits.

- **Project Scope and Deliverables:** Regretfully, far too often we see clients starting a project without a clear definition or agreement on scope. A clearly articulated scope should highlight what is included and what is excluded from the project considerations. A list of key deliverables must be documented and have the approval of the Project Authority. Any changes to the project scope must be well controlled.
- **Reasonable project plan:** A project plan is a clear list of projected tasks. Such a plan defines the interrelationship between the project players. It provides reasonable estimates of costs and efforts that can be measured against the expected benefits. It sets the stage for rational expectations and timelines. It helps in avoiding disappointments and frustrations. The project plan has multiple, often overlaying, phases that include initiation, planning, execution/controlling and closing/celebration.

High value, well-structured projects help you welcome the inevitable uncertainty of this changing world. The identification of your comfortable roles on the project stage is critical in helping you to add significant value to our ever-changing world.

**The Operational Stage:** Unlike the project stage, which leverages change, the operational stage leverages consistency and predictability. It is on this stage that we expect smooth operational production. Here you come to expect maximum output for minimum time and energy investment. It is like keeping the engine oiled or the gas tank filled. The operational stage is the place where risks are minimized through predictable outcomes. On the operational stage you play the role of an operator, a controller, an administrator or a watchdog...

Regretfully, as a result of the changing world the operational serenity is often invaded by problems or challenges. Just as we likened the project stage to having babies, allow us to suggest that the operational stage is like raising children. Some of us are better suited for this stage than others but all of us have some elements of involvement at some point in our lives.

Some episodes on the operational stage are stressful or unpleasant. Some of us on the operational stage feel that our primary role is fighting fires, fixing mistakes or what we often call “changing diapers”. Yes, that is correct; changing a baby’s diapers is not a pleasant phase of parenthood. Sometimes in our business world we spend far too much time “changing diapers”.



Let us give you a simple analogy. When our children were little I considered diaper changing tasks to be the most unpleasant. If it were not for the flexibility and wisdom of a good mother, our children would have been in diapers for a very long time. Moving these operational problems of “diaper changes” into a “toilet training project” required leadership, foresight, and commitment. The toilet training project adhered to specific disciplines and required ongoing support. During the project you saw incremental progress. In the end there was a major celebration for all project participants. Ultimately the benefits definitely outweighed the investments and the

non-tangible costs.

Remember this analogy if your operational world is filled with “diaper changing” episodes. Take time to exercise leadership. Move the issues to the project stage. Define the value, define the scope, ensure the availability of a credible Project Authority, document a rational toilet training plan, execute your plan with the support of a good team, and celebrate the resulting benefits!

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### **Summary**

- ✓ We all play roles on three differing yet often interrelated stages. They are: the leadership stage, the project stage, and the operational stage.
- ✓ Each of these three stages offers different values and is suitable for different individuals and roles.
- ✓ We each have a primary stage on which we feel most comfortable and fulfilled. At all times we need to exercise wisdom and flexibility to play on stages other than our primary stage in response to our changing world.
- ✓ If problems persist on the operational stage it is time to exercise leadership by initiating appropriate projects to fix the problem.