

## Working Up!

"I used to crush rocks in Louisiana. That's how I paid for college. I was a laborer for the Louisiana Paving Company. . . . Laborers at the asphalt plant did just what the job title implies: They labor at every little, bothersome, and unskilled job that happened along, including picking up trash, shoveling materials, finding parts, running errands, and, of course, crushing rocks. . . .

"Rocks are heavy and dirty. Shoveling rocks is hot, dirty, and back-straining work. What was best about my experience at the asphalt plant came from being around the people who worked there. I was the college kid, and people knew I was there between semesters. They understood that when I would one day graduate, I most likely would take a different path in life. . . .

"In retrospect, I believe that working at the plant taught me as much about projects and management as did pursuing an engineering degree. It certainly prepared me better for my career in project management. . . . In this book, I attempt to pass along life-lessons I learned from working at the asphalt plant. If you remember little else from this book, I hope it will be the following chief lessons:

1. *I can learn something anywhere.*
2. *I can learn something from anyone."*

—from the Introduction

## About the Author



Now a Senior Principal Systems Engineer at ITT in Herndon, Virginia, Dwayne Phillips worked as a software and systems engineer with the United States government for nearly 30 years. He has had the privilege of working with some of the finest engineers and scientists in the country, both in and out of government. He has a Ph.D. in electrical

and computer engineering from Louisiana State University. Residing in Reston, Virginia, with his wife, Karen, their three sons, their daughter-in-law, and grandson, he enjoys playing jazz and blues guitar, and is proud to claim Sweetwater, Louisiana, as his place of origin (don't look, you won't find it).

## Partial Contents

### Introduction

#### Chapter 1: Tools

- The Flat-Point Shovel
- The Cheater Pipe
- Tools? What Tools? Making Tools Visible

#### Chapter 2: Raw Materials

- Growing People
- Using Hot Rocks
- "Good Enough" Tools

#### Chapter 3: Integrity

- Honoring People
- Fear and Respect—and Choice

#### Chapter 4: Language

- Signing With an X
- Riding the Dinosaurs

#### Chapter 5: Culture

- Sandwich Surprises
- Seeing the World on a Dollar a Day

#### Chapter 6: Risk and Opportunity

- Bending Metal
- Risk Management

#### Chapter 7: Practice

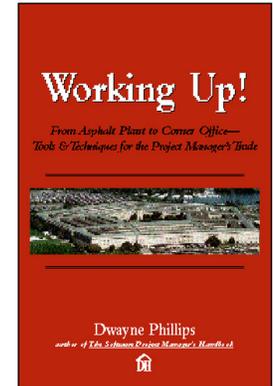
- Working With Learners
- Ignoring the Stripes
- Wet Rocks and Hot Days

### Index

# Working Up!

From Asphalt Plant to Corner Office—  
Tools & Techniques for the  
Project Manager's Trade

by Dwayne Phillips



ISBN: 978-0-932633-66-8  
©2010 (forth.) 212 pages softcover  
\$37.95 (includes \$6 UPS in US)

## Tools for the Project Manager's Trade

To do a job well, you need the right tools for the job, as any skilled tradesperson will tell you. Project managers, however, do not have a standard set of tools. In fact, sometimes they have to make their own.

In *Working Up to Project Management*, Dwayne Phillips describes the tools and techniques he first encountered as a laborer at an asphalt plant, working summers during college. These lessons guided him as he went on to a successful career as a systems developer, IT manager, consultant, and author.

From a unique synthesis of two work environments—an asphalt plant and a white-collar office building—Phillips helps managers develop tools from their environments and construct a management approach

that works. Topics include: matching tools to environments • learning through experience • working with and through people • chance—and risk—at work • and much more.

" . . . I learned more about physics and physical tools in my four years working part-time at the plant than I have learned during the ensuing years. The physical tools at the plant helped me learn about other types of tools and how to use them in other places and ways.

"The life-lessons I learned with and about tools are

*When the environment is changed, the tool may need to change.*

*The simplest things can multiply effectiveness*

*You don't always realize the worth of the tools you use."*

—from Chapter 1

Read more about this book at  
[www.dorsethouse.com/books/wup.html](http://www.dorsethouse.com/books/wup.html)