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Sommario/riassunto

Recurrent problems with project performance in the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in the 1990s raised questions in Congress about the practices and processes used by the department to manage projects. The 105th Committee of Conference on Energy and Water Resources directed DOE to investigate establishing a project review process. Many of the findings and recommendations in this series of reports identified the need for improved planning in the early project stages (front-end planning) to get the project off to the right start, and the continuous monitoring of projects by senior management to make sure the project stays on course. These reports also stressed the need for DOE to act as an owner, not a contractor, and to train its personnel to function not as traditional project managers but as knowledgeable owner's representatives in dealing with projects and contractors. The NRC Committee for Oversight and Assessment of Department of Energy Project Management determined that it would be helpful for DOE to sponsor a forum in which representatives from DOE and from leading corporations with large, successful construction programs would discuss how the owner's role is conducted in government and in industry. In so doing, the committee does not claim that all industrial firms are better at project management than the DOE. Far from it—the case studies represented at this forum were selected specifically because these firms were perceived by the committee to be exemplars of the very best practices in project management. Nor is it implied that reaching this level is easy; the industry speakers themselves show that excellence in project management is difficult to achieve and perhaps even more difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, they have been successful in doing so, through constant attention by senior management.
