

Demonstration of Autonomous Rendezvous Technology (DART)

Case Study Transcript

Chris Calfee

Other Constraints

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I had had some experience in project management for several years leading up to DART, but DART was the first program that I had managed. I did feel that I was able to bring in other people that did have experience in the critical areas like software, like guidance & navigation, and in engineering. So those were—if you look at DART and what were its challenges, it was software, it was guidance & [navigation]. I felt we had some of the best people at Marshall Space Flight Center in those roles, and if I had a do-over I'd go after the same people. So there was inexperience, but [you've] got to ask yourself, 'What better program, what better environment, to train project managers than a flight demonstration?'

For me, one of the key lessons learned as a young project manager was maybe to push back a little bit more early-on. I was told, or directed, that I was to have a fixed amount of project office personal, and it was four. I had planned to have a lot more, but was told I'd already exceeded my manpower allocations. So obviously I saluted, and I said, 'Sure we can do the job with that.' As time grew, part-time jobs became full-time jobs, additional tasks were added, no people were added. If I had an opportunity to do that over, I would go back and fight more for additional resources.

Wouldn't mean I would necessarily get it, but at least I would have made my management aware that, "Look, we're doing the best we can. We'll do this job with what we are allotted. But it would certainly be nice if I could add an additional software person, an additional G&N person, get me some additional time and a schedule to do some systems level tests that we felt would really reduce our risk and other things." Those were the key

items, so a lesson learned for me is, personally, is push back for what you think you need as far as resources go.