

Strawberry Shortcake for 25,000 People

[from A Kick in the Seat if the Pants, by von Oech, Roger,
(author of A Whack on the Side of the Head, Warner Books)]

Ever wonder why large projects usually run into unforeseen problems, delays, and headaches? Here's one explanation. Let's suppose that you have a recipe for strawberry shortcake that serves four people. One day you invite over seven friends to eat this dessert. To make it, you simply double the recipe's proportions. On another occasion, you invite over one friend for this dessert. To make it, all you have to do is halve the proportions in the recipe.

Now, let's suppose that you invite 25,000 of your closest friends over for strawberry shortcake. Now, the most difficult parts of the problem are no longer given in the recipe. These things include doing futures buying of strawberries on the commodities market; making deals with the Teamsters to deliver enough cream; large scale renting of bowls, spoons, tables, and chairs; and traffic flow coordination. The same thing happens in large projects: things come up that weren't even thought about in the original plans.

---Jack Grimes, Philosopher
(adapted from Bob Barton, Computer Architect)