Before you join that 'cool' project

You've just been offered to work on a project with another department. You may be excited for the opportunity to do something new—and showcase your talents elsewhere—but just make sure that it doesn't end up being a big waste of your time and energy. Follow these tips:

Determine how your work will be evaluated. If you will be reporting to another team leader or manager, how will he or she assess your performance? Will that be relayed back to your supervisor? Will your work on the project be acknowledged in your annual performance review?

Learn how your skills will be used. Find out specifically how you will be involved. You don't want to spend a bunch of time sitting in meetings without really contributing. Nor do you want your name to be attached to something in which you contributed very little. You may need to work on the project above and beyond your existing workload. Make sure that it will be worth your time.

Establish expectations. Talk with your supervisor and the lead on the project to find out answers to these questions: How many hours will you need to contribute to the project on a daily or weekly basis? Does the project take priority over your other tasks? How should you manage conflicting deadlines and priorities? It's important to ensure that you can be an asset to the project team—without sacrificing the quality of work on your regular duties.