Becoming a Better Project Manager

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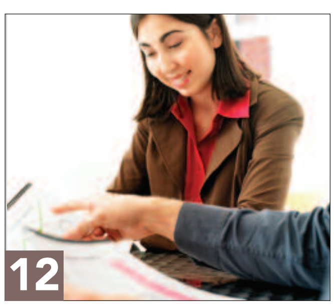
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This content was adapted from Internet.com's Project Manager Planet Web site. Contributors: Morris Panner, Michelle LaBrosse, Amy Zuckerman, Cynthia West, Will Kelly, and Jed Simms.

Five Steps to Becoming a Strategic Project Manager

By Morris Panner

The fate of the project manager is not all that different from that of IT — if we rewind the clock 10 or so years. It wasn't that long ago that upper management thought of IT as something akin to an auto repair shop: These people have talent, the logic went, and they get the job done, but we wouldn't consult with them for anything but repairs.

Fast-forward to the present: Today, it's hard to find a top organization that doesn't have a CIO in the boardroom. IT is not just a business tool, but a business driver and CIOs are every bit as valuable as other C-level executives.

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This trend has had a trickle-down effect. The middle managers in IT have more of a voice. They have the proper channels to communicate through, so the daily insights coming from people in the trenches regarding security, Web traffic, new applications for collaboration, and new trends like Web 2.0 make their way up the chain of command and influence the organizational at a global level.

The same can be true for project managers and the service professionals they lead. Bringing a project in on time and under budget is a mechanic's way of thinking. Investing in lead generation, employee satisfaction, customer loyalty, up-sell opportunities, branding, and other broader organizational goals is how a strategic project manager should examine each and every project (and how project managers will deliver bottom-line value to the organization, of course).

Five Steps for Change

The first step is to change how you think about projects. Project managers must stop thinking of projects in a transactional sense, and begin thinking like upper-level managers. They have to extend their core leadership skills and start building data communication skills. We all know great PMs create great teams. Their stock in trade is leadership. They bring people together to achieve great things.

These are critical skills, but to join upper-level management, these are table stakes. Organizational management involves something more. It requires that managers abstract the data needed to

"IT is not just a business tool, but a business driver and CIOs are every bit as valuable as other C-level executives."

drive executive decision making from the more basic tactical considerations. This is what IT did to break down the boardroom door. The first CIOs bridged the business-technology divide and convinced upper management to invest in them.

Tactical victories were translated into the language of strategic corporate governance. The first CIOs showed how IT tied into profit and loss. They showed how each technology project impacted the organization's bottom line. If you want to make an impact in the boardroom and influence the direction of your company, you'll need to follow a similar path.

The second step, then, is to invest the time in understanding organizational financials. This is more complex than simply subtracting payment received from time plus resources spent. There is no question that running a profitable project is a prerequisite to success. But there is more. The impact to the bottom line involves things like lead generation, client loyalty, up-sell opportunities, marketing, and branding, and more.

Step three is to go negative — but turn those negatives to your advantage. Each and every project manager has met the project "from hell." You probably have several of these under your belt. These are projects that seem beneficial because they generate revenue, but once you dig into the nitty-gritty details, they don't look so good.

A high-profile project is often a mirage. On the surface it looks like a profit center, due to the high-dollar revenue it generates, but are we blinded by dollar signs? If we dig into the metrics, looking at the time and resources we have to devote to the project, does it still looks so good? What about when you account for the opportunity cost of passing on other projects? The devil is in the details, and those details often turn the mirage of the high-profile project back to sand.

This may seem like basic accounting and business management, but since services are so notoriously difficult to measure, it's anything but basic. The organization needs to be made aware of this. Is there a pattern to these projects? Are there customers you just might need to walk away from? Is there a way to change the specifics of the under-performing project so it doesn't drag you under?

The fourth step is to make the role of project manager a go-to position in your organization. This was a critical step for getting IT managers out of the shop and into the boardroom. Every knowledge worker in the organization has to turn to IT for help at some time, and the reputation of IT benefits. Put simply: the organization can't live without IT.

With this in mind, your sites should be set beyond the boardroom. PMs need to have a voice within the sales and marketing teams. Although the relationship between projects and sales is a column in and of itself, suffice it to say that there is ample reason and opportunity to work closely with sales to drive opportunity for the whole organization.

The strategic PM can also act as an early warning system for the product and service teams. As customer problems are addressed and solved, these experiences should influence future product releases and service delivery.

The final step is to make the board aware of you and your strategic importance. Just as IT managers had to convince organizations that they were more than tool jockeys and troubleshooters, you will need to communicate your strategic value.

Externally, each and every service project is linked to opportunities. Internally, the completion of every project and the reports it generates is an opportunity for you to highlight your strategic value. If upper management isn't aware of this and if complementary teams (such as sales and marketing) aren't brought in to close on those opportunities, the opportunities are wasted.

As an obvious example, think about the best form of marketing: word of mouth. Do you have a way to measure when existing clients refer you to new ones? Do you make upper management aware of how you've turned one-time customers into repeat ones? Have you offered insight into what types of small projects lead to repeat engagements?

When you have, you'll be well on your way to filling a strategic role in your organization. ■

Overcoming Project Jams

By Michelle LaBrosse

We all have a need for speed when it comes to hitting our deadlines. If you ever find yourself in a project jam wondering how to unclog it, you're not alone. While there is no magic formula, there are several ways that you can get your project moving again and regain any lost momentum.

The first step is to set up the project correctly so that it is built for speed and efficacy. This means getting the team aligned on what is required to do the project: setting up the project agreement and project plan together, and then agreeing on the overall project priorities.

Once a project is in motion, there are many things that can slow it down. Here are the most common project jams to watch for and tips for tips for dealing with them:


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Feature Creep

This is the monster that we all fight in every industry. We want to make things better, but instead the act of continuing down the road can make things worse.

There comes a time in every project when it's time to silence the engineer in your head and finish the project.

To make decisions about suggested feature changes, we use what is called a change impact matrix. We also freeze the design of the product or service, including the set of features, at a specified time in the project. The earlier this is done, the faster your project will move. Save your future feature ideas as upgrade possibilities for later versions of the product or service.

Changes and Detours

Let's face it, things happen. Customers change their minds about what they thought they wanted, market forces change, new threats and opportunities arise that make the goals of the project obsolete, and new priorities surface. All of these changes pull money and resources away from a project.

When a project is directed by the project agreement, project changes often mean a re-launch of the project.

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In my experience, it's better to spend half a day re-launching the project based on the new project agreement then to create a final deliverable that no one wants, or to attempt to complete a project with inadequate resources and lack of support from the project sponsor.

When you're developing a new project plan from the new project agreement, you may also be able to use the interim deliverables you've already created for the new project, ultimately shortening the project cycle time for the new project.

Dysfunctional Teams

An inability to work together toward a common goal comes from lack of commitment, lack of interaction, and a lack of interest in constructively resolving conflict. Many projects also lose and gain people during the execution of the project. When this happens, it is important that the team spend a half hour together developing their new team guidelines and meeting protocols.

With any new people joining the team, it becomes a new team. Re-developing your guidelines and protocols is done for the same reason it is done initially — to facilitate working relationships, to create a way to positively interact, and to prevent destructive conflict.

Lack of Focus

When team members have to work on multiple projects or multiple tasks within the same project, there is a tendency to multitask. People work quickly and efficiently when they work on one task to its completion, and don't juggle multiple tasks simultaneously. If people are working on multiple projects, it's best if they set aside blocks of time to focus on one task at a time.

Overzealous Time Management

Sure, people are capable of doing the occasional marathon week to complete a project. If this becomes routine, however, they will find ways to get out of work responsibilities during the workday. We all need to take care of our basic living needs, such as dentist appointments, grocery shopping, and so on. We also have a need for socialization, connection with family, and time to relax and unwind.

What Should You Expect from Your Project Leadership Team?

By Jed Simms

You're a team, working together to deliver the project's business outcomes. If you can't trust each other you won't succeed.

You need to be able to trust your team's competency, honesty, and loyalty. They'll do what they said they'd do, on time and to the required quality. Their word is their bond, and you can trust their reporting. Once a decision is made or a direction agreed, the debate is over and they'll overtly support it and not try to undermine it behind the scenes.

A prerequisite to expecting trustworthiness from your project leadership team is to be trustworthy yourself. (Those who don't trust others are usually untrustworthy.) But you need to set the ground rules with your team upfront.

Competency. Tell them, "You have a specific role to play and I won't second guess you as long as you perform. I'll be there to support you. But, if things start to go wrong and you don't put your hand up for help; I'll be down on you like a ton of bricks."

Make not asking for help a capital crime!

Honesty. Tell them: "I want to know the truth, warts and all. Not the cleaned up version or the almost right version. If you haven't finished a task, but expect to finish it tomorrow, then you haven't finished. Don't gloss over the edges, the minor problems, and the slight delays. We're all in this together, so let us all know how things really are. Projects go off-the-rails one degree at a time. We all need to know every degree or degree of a degree we're adrift."

Make dishonest reporting a capital crime!

Loyalty. You don't want "yes-men"(or women) around you; that's fatal. Equally, you must be honest and openly welcome debate and prepared to change your mind. So, when issues, challenges, options, and opportunities arise you want a full and sensible debate — no personalities, just professional argument. Then tell them:

continued

If people are too over-scheduled because of project work, they will create ways to take care of their responsibilities while they are doing their project work. The next thing that will happen is they will get further behind, necessitating more over-scheduling. The best way to prevent this from happening is letting the team members create a schedule that they can do in a normal workweek. If things get in a crunch, do not require people to work more than one extended workweek at a time. This keeps the project moving along. If extended hours do become necessary, it's better if team members take turns during the crunch.

Inefficient Business Processes

It's the job of the project sponsor to knock down barriers so that the project team can work fast and efficiently. If the team gets stuck mucking through the bureaucratic maze to complete their interim deliverables, it will slow down the project and cause frustration due to their wasted time and effort. When the project sponsor identifies bureaucratic time wasters and gets rid of them, the entire team will operate more effectively.

Chaotic Work Environments

How long does it take you to find the information you need to get your job done? Office clutter, on your desk and on your computer, slows down project work. It is also distracting and causes multi-tasking.

Are You "5-S" Compliant?

To keep your work productive it is a good idea to have a 5-S event with the team, both at the beginning of the project and as part of the project status reports. A 5-S event is a technique adopted from the Japanese quality movement and it has been used effectively around the world to increase productivity.

The 5-S approach stands for:

• **Sort:** Only have items in your work area that you use on a daily basis. Everything else gets put away in its place. Create filing systems for quick retrieval for both paper and electronic based information.

• **Straighten:** Have a designated place for all moveable items, such as desktop organizers. Everything is labeled in macro-work areas, and there is a logical workflow for shared office machines, such as copiers and printers.

• **Shine:** Everything in the area looks like new condition and operates perfectly. Recycle bins and waste baskets are emptied nightly.

• **Standardize:** This includes visual controls for common areas, such as how to use the copier, and wall planning calendars.

• **Sustain:** Have a daily and weekly system to keep up with the improvements that you have made.

Know Before You Go

Before you start your next project, take the time to create your project plan, so you know where you're going. Once the project is in motion, continue to do reality checks along the way to see if any project jams are slowing you down. When you're tuned in, you can fine tune along the way before you've lost too much time. When you unclog your project jams, you put your project pedal to the medal. ■

"But once we've agreed, that's it. Debate over. We are all agreed. It can be hard when the project leadership team takes decisions you fundamentally disagree with, but you're either on the team or not. You need to follow the party line and not make comments to your staff like, 'Of course, I think this is stupid.' You must support and work with the agreed decision.

"If you think the decision is fatally wrong we'll take it to the sponsor. If you're still concerned with the escalated decision, then maybe you should not be part of the team anymore."

Having the escalation process to the sponsor allows critical issues to be aired thoroughly and to avoid "group think." However, if a team leader is seeking weekly escalations, they probably don't fit on the team. (Just be sure they're not right!)

Make disloyalty a capital crime.

If you give and receive full competency, honesty and loyalty you are a long way towards a successful and well-run project. Even if you get a little too much honesty at times, at least you'll know where you stand. ■

Using ISO 9000 as a Project Management Tool

By Amy Zuckerman

Back in the early 1990s you couldn't attend a trade show or open a business publication without encountering the term "ISO 9000" blaring at you in gold emblazoned letters.

American companies talked about this international quality standard, which was being pushed hard in Europe, with a combination of fear and loathing. For those early birds who had mastered the process and could hang ISO 9000 on their building, the process was touted as almost holy; something not to be questioned.

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In reality, ISO 9000 never lived up to its early hype as the pathway to uniting a global economy. Companies with ISO 9000 certification were supposed to be able to provide an imprimatur of quality, and therefore be considered reliable candidates for business from Bangladesh to Turkey.

Early on, many quality experts from Tom Peters to the head of quality for Motorola Corp. (not to mention Scott Adams, the author of the "Dilbert" comic strip) rejected ISO 9000 as a mere benchmarking tool that would recognize cement life preservers as long as they were built consistently. The U.S. auto industry was so wary of foreign registrars that it created its own standard, QS 9000, and its own certification/registration rules.

The revised versions of ISO 9000 (1994 and 2000) changed the focus from passing a number of elements to continuous improvement and customer satisfaction. Process was supposed to become king. Companies organized their employees to properly gather the documentation, which would lead to building what's called a quality management system (QMS), and started to experiment with using these tools for other purposes.

For example, Cliff Weeks of the former head of Quality at Sunstrand Corp., found that ISO 9000 was a great way of organizing employees from the bottom up, and could be applied to gathering all sorts of useful infor-

“The revised versions of ISO 9000 (1994 and 2000) changed the focus from passing a number of elements to continuous improvement and customer satisfaction. Process was supposed to become king.”

mation from the shop floor to accounting. Besides which, it could provide a framework for managing any number of projects that required large-scale employee input and involvement such as technology deployments.

Making It Better

This year, the standard — actually a suite of standards to be applied to different types of enterprises — is heading for revision again. Roger Frost, head of public relations for the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in Geneva, Switzerland, the standard's publisher, said the updates of ISO 9000 to be published in August 2008 and later in the fall should include "explicit requirements for achieving customer satisfaction and continual improvement; more logical structure; an approach based on managing organizational processes, and is easier to use for service sector and small businesses…"

In general, those who work the ISO 9000 turf believe the standard is evolving in ways that make it very useful for a variety of purposes. Project managers don't have to be interested in actually earning ISO 9000 certification for them to glean use from the process.

For example, Reg Blake, vice president for corporate development and regulatory affairs at BSI Management Systems, America in Herndon, Va. — the U.S. arm of one of the biggest ISO 9000 global registrars — has long decried those who ignore the standard's "focus on continuous improvement." Yes, he's in the business of luring companies to pass the ISO 9000 test, yet has long wanted to see customers derive more from the experience than a sign on their building.

Blake cites the ISO 9000 "Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDAC)" cycle as particularly useful as a tool for measuring not only the ISO 9000 process, but any project a company wants to tackle. PDAC provides a means of measuring the process. Without this step "you won't know the heck what's going on," he said.

"Throughout the process there are lots of inputs and outputs; lots of opportunities and chances to check the processes and see if it is functioning and measuring it correctly. A process is just a subset. Any stage offers a chance for testing and benchmarking."

The Truth About ISO 9000

Blake argues that ISO 9000 isn't just about outlining a number of steps that correlate with activities and then following a checklist. "Structure, ownership (from the shop floor to senior management), and commitment are things it brings as part of the process." ISO 9000 provides a structure to ensure a company has the right resources in place to support whatever it chooses to accomplish.

That's what Karen Miklic, senior vice president at Packard Transport, a trucking and logistics provider based in Channahon, Ill., has been learning. Certified to ISO 9000 since 1998 because of customer demand, she's finding that ISO 9000 is a great tool for managing all sorts of projects. These range from transferring voluminous amount of data companywide to a database for analysis to creation of an internal auditing team that not only tracks the sort of corrective actions required to earn ISO 9000 certification, but also focus on making improvements outside the realm of the company's quality system.

Packard doesn't have employees who wear the title project manager, but Miklic said those who drive project work at Packard have adopted ISO 9000 auditing practices as a tool for analyzing and adjusting their approaches to project work.

"It's led to leveraging all types of IT solutions that have emerged from our exploring our processes during the ISO 9000 process," she said. "So, for example, alerts have been built into software to help dispatchers and billing people with data accuracy."

Dan Nelson, an ISO 9000 consultant based in Denver, agrees that although ISO 9000 was not intended as a tool for general project management, it could be used that way depending on how a company's "quality management system is structured and defined." ■

Building Reusable Project Templates

By Cynthia West

As we all know, the Project Management Institute (PMI) definition of a project is a "[t]emporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result." By definition a project is unique, meaning that no two are exactly alike. However, most organizations have projects that they repeat on a monthly, quarterly, or even more frequent basis. For these efforts, it makes sense to create a project template.

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To create a good project template, get your team together in a meeting room or virtual conference call, and encourage participation. The purpose of this meeting is to gather all of the tasks or work that the project requires. Each participant may have valuable information to add, which is why you want all team players involved. Plus, if you build a project schedule with everyone's input, you will earn more "buy-in."

Activities or Tasks

Write down all of the individual tasks on sticky notes and place them on a white board or wall. Initially, do not worry about the task order just get all of the required steps down. Once the team is satisfied they have listed all the activities or tasks that will comprise your project, you can create the order or work breakdown structure (WBS). Do this by putting the sticky notes in outline format on the white board. It is helpful to use a work breakdown structure (WBS) format, which is like an outline format for your project tasks. For example:

- 1.0
- 2.0
- 3.0
  - 3.1
    - 3.1.1
    - 3.1.2
  - 3.2
  - 3.3

Group your tasks under appropriate umbrella or summary tasks. Once you have ordered your tasks and the team agrees to the order and structure, you should then ask to what level do we want to manage the work? Some teams outline every miniscule task but then decide they do not want to manage at that level of detail. This seems particularly true of fast-paced

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environments. The faster the pace, the higher level the team should manage the work. Otherwise, the team will rapidly get bogged down in updating tasks, rather than performing work.

Once the above is complete, you can build the tasks into a formal schedule, using either Microsoft Project desktop or enterprise project management solution.

Resource Types or Skill Sets

The next step is to associate the appropriate skill set or resource type with each task or activity in your WBS. Because you may vary the actual resources you end up assigning to tasks, a good template is built with resource types in them so you can make assignments at the last minute.

If you do not have a standard list of skill sets required for your projects, you would first need to build consensus on what that list should contain. Once the list of skill sets is agreed upon, then you may associate each task with a skill set. The value of associating tasks with skill sets is when you turn to forecast your resource needs, you will know what types of resources you require prior to making assignments.

Duration and Work

The next step is to decide how much time in days each task should take. This is called duration, or the total timeframe given from start to finish. This is distinguished from the work or effort of a task. For example, a task might take eight hours to complete, but a resource may be given five working days to complete the work.

Once approximate duration is given to each task, then move to adding in the amount of work or effort each activity requires. It is always a good idea to pad the estimates a bit, but not too much, so you build a buffer into your template. Adjustments may be made later depending on the seniority of the ultimate resource assigned and the like.

Dependencies

Your template will require task dependencies as well. Project tasks are best managed as a network of interdependent tasks requiring accurate duration estimates as the basis for project planning. Dates should be calcu-

Managing Information Overload

By Michelle LaBrosse

We researched and developed a number of different techniques to help our project management students speed up assimilation and retention of information as they prepare to pass the PMP exam. After the exam, many students e-mailed us to say these techniques also help them at work and at home to manage projects and the information overload in their lives.

You can experiment with these techniques to speed up the way you do your projects or even to reduce stress due to information. The six key techniques for fast retrieval of information are (in no particular order):

1. Color, Size and Shape coding
2. Keyword identification
3. Mind mapping
4. Timed reading in short bursts
5. Storytelling
6. Repetitive practice

Color, Size and Shape Coding

When you color code various elements of a project plan, it makes it very quick and easy to see who has to do what, when. You can also use size and shape coding for even further differentiation. The visual display and sharing of information between the project team members improves communication and shared understanding of the project work, project progress and project dependencies.

The Power of Keywords

Keywords trigger your instant recall. When you're reading any kind of written material, look for the keywords to help you remember key ideas or concepts. Similarly, when you're writing material for others to read, make sure you have embedded keywords that capture what you want people to take away from your communication.

Mind Mapping

Use mind mapping to help you remember key ideas or concepts by using a visual diagram like the one below. Mind maps can also help you to organize your project work and the key deliverables.

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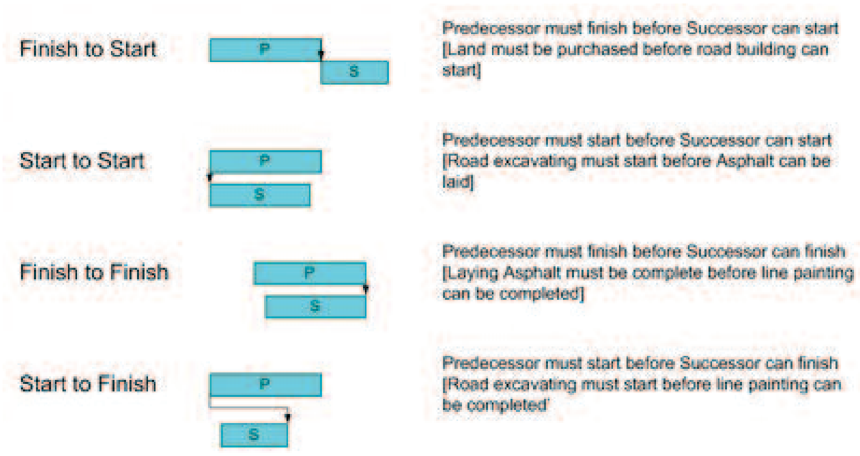

lated based on the relationships of the tasks and the duration of the tasks that must be completed for the successful completion of the project as a whole.

The following are the basic task types:

- Finish-to-start
- Start-to-start
- Finish-to-finish
- Start-to-finish

Once these dependencies are defined in the project schedule, they may be displayed in a GANTT chart.

Budgets

If you are planning to track labor costs and/or fixed costs, you will need to input a general budget into your template as well. Stay as generic as possible with your figures so that you may copy over as many budgeted tasks as possible. Naturally, you will need to review all data in your template upon launching an actual project.

Conclusion

After completing all these steps, you should have a decent project template that you and your project team can re-use for similar projects or efforts. If you take the time to create a complete template, this will save you a lot of time moving forward when launching projects of a similar nature. Remember to include all team participants in the planning stages and to have fun.

Timed Reading

From e-mails and reports to trade publications and how-to manuals, we are reading and learning all day long. If you're like most knowledge workers, you often have a lot of material to review in a short period of time. Give yourself a specific amount of time to read the material you have to read and create uninterrupted space and time for 15 to 20 minute increments. This will increase your ability to concentrate on that material and remember it better.
Storytelling

People not only like stories, but stories are powerful memory tools. Write stories that evoke visual imagery and give people visual cues that will key them into the points you want them to understand.

Repetition

Repetition improves memory. In advertising, the maxim is that people need to see an ad eight times before they will remember it. For the key points you want to convey to people on your project times, find at least three different ways to convey them, and describe those three ways at least three times.

When you're having one of those days when you feel overwhelmed by all the information flying out you, try one of these six techniques and bring your blood pressure down and your memory retention up.

Reading GANTT Charts for Fun and Profit

By Will Kelly

Let's face it, brevity isn't one of the GANTT chart's strong suits and one of the format's chief limitations is the sheer size it requires to communicate project information. It's not uncommon for the GANTT chart behind the schedule of a multiple month long project to cover tens of 8 ½" x 11" pages sometimes spanning the average cubicle or office wall. Controlling the page count of a GANTT chart can leave you with a hardcopy print out with such miniscule type you can't read it.

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This article offers up some advice how you can best read GANTT charts and some measures your organization can put into place to make your GANTT charts more readable to all audiences that may be tracking a project throughout its lifecycle.

Many usability pundits have attacked the GANTT format decrying that its use can lead to a communications breakdown, so you need to leverage Microsoft Project as an application that best communicates project status to your project team, stake holders, and executive sponsors.

You shouldn't dismiss the visual aspects of GANTT charts because there are people who get a lot from such a representation of a project schedule. However, it's easy to find yourself on a team where this is far from the case, which means you need to know the views and limitations of Microsoft Project, Primavera, or any other project management application you have in place to track your project.

Breaking Down a GANTT

My best advice for reading a GANTT chart is to first break it down and not try to read the whole thing. In the case of Microsoft Project 2003 and Project 2007, you should first focus on the left side of the GANTT chart. The most important columns that encapsulate the current state of the project are as follows:

• Task Name, which lists the name of the task
• Duration, which tracks the duration of a given task in hours or days
• Start, listing the start date of the given task.

> My best advice for reading a GANTT chart is to first break it down and not try to read the whole thing.

• Finish, listing the finish date of the given task.
• Predecessors, documenting the predecessor to the given task
• Resource Names, listing the resource name(s) for the given task

You can run an entire project schedule review session from just these columns without ever having to venture into the GANTT chart itself. In fact, I've gotten a lot of mileage in the past with clients and project teams without ever having to resort to the GANTT chart itself by working only with the columns mentioned above.

Delving into the GANTT chart itself is like reading a bar chart — just one that stretches out for pages upon pages. Here are some graphical elements you need to know when perusing a GANTT chart to get the current status on a project:

• Project tasks are a common element in all GANTT charts and are the basic building blocks of any project schedule.

• Project Subtasks are a best practice when creating a GANTT chart so you can flesh out any large tasks into subtasks by entering the overall task and then entering subtasks.

• Task links illustrate interrelationships between tasks.

• Summaries appear when you mouse over a task or subtask and provide a text summary of the project task or subtask.

• Milestones document important project milestones like release dates.

Other Views

Many users of Microsoft Project and other leading project management applications never realize the full potential of the reporting capabilities. These enable you to create hardcopy or electronic reports in multiple formats you can send to stakeholders or post on an internal Web site. In particular, Microsoft Office Project 2003 and Microsoft Office Project 2007 enable you to change up views so you can forgo the GANTT chart entirely.

Both versions of Project include the following views available from the View menu:

• The Calendar View is a traditional calendar view of project tasks and probably the most palatable Microsoft Project views.

• The Network Diagram view might actually be more daunting and confusing than the GANTT chart view, however it does a show the interrelationships between project tasks.

• The Task Usage view displays the hours appointed to each task in the project schedule.

• The Tracking GANTT chart can be just as confusing as the GANTT chart to begin with so skip it.

Project 2003 does include other views but they delve more into resource management versus overall project tasks. The good news is the tips in this article are also going to apply to other leading project management applications like Primavera P6 and OmniGroup OmniPlan.

While the GANTT chart might be the standard format for project managers and PMOs (Project Management Offices) they may not be the ideal communications medium for project information to project team members, stakeholders, and even executive sponsors. Thus it's important that all GANTT chart readers know how to break down a GANTT to retrieve critical information. You also need to know how you can best exercise views in your project management application to communicate the status of the projects in your project portfolio. ■

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