

PROJECT MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Critical Path Method (CPM) is a magical tool and should be the foundation of all professional project management (PM). Unfortunately, in our attempts to broaden project management's appeal to the masses, we often appear to have forgotten this foundation and what set us apart from functional management in the first place.

New tools such as Microsoft Project® have improved dramatically in recent years. Attempting project management without them is like trying to play tennis without a racquet; granted you have to learn the ground strokes too.

We realize that some of you have real jobs as well as responsibility for project management and that some companies are skeptical about the benefits of project management. Sometimes, earlier and often half-hearted attempts at project management were unsuccessful or threatened senior people who were good at functional management.

John Vu and others have demonstrated the overwhelming correlation between success and the application of professional project management in IT and other industries. Mr. Vu argued in the late 1980's that many IT jobs would move overseas unless we dramatically increased successful application of project management principles on IT projects. It is difficult to believe now that it was such a revolutionary idea back then.

We need project management as never before to face unprecedented challenges and to successfully manage "make or break" projects globally. Ideally, professional project management also will help us maintain cutting-edge jobs as manufacturing and many functional white-collar jobs are outsourced at an ever-increasing pace.

The Project Management Institute (PMI)® provides great PM resources. See <http://www.pmi.org>. Their *Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)* is particularly useful and has become the global standard. The Glossary contains common project management acronyms and definitions. The *PMBOK® Guide* can save you a lot of unnecessary iteration; you don't need to reinvent the wheel. PMI's Project Management Professional (PMP)® certification also is recommended highly. PMI has introduced other certification programs for Scheduling and Planning, Risk Management, etc.

PMI's Scheduling Community of Practice, formerly the College of Scheduling, is another great resource at <http://scheduling.vc.pmi.org/Public/Home.aspx>.

Unfortunately, while the software has become less expensive and as more industries get on the bandwagon and more people pay lip service to project management, we often see standards slipping. The schedules that we see from new clients now are often not as professional as the ones we saw five or ten years ago. The critical path is not well-defined, the schedules are not properly resource loaded or leveled and generally imply unrealistic resource demands, logic is sketchy at best, schedules are not updated properly relative to the Status date, and Earned Value (EV) is not being used to manage-by-exception just the activities that are going wrong.

These problems are exacerbated when companies play with portfolio management and combine 200 lousy schedules into a master file then wonder why the results are not meaningful. They are sometimes tempted to consider project management just another fad after giving it a less-than-fair trial.

Microsoft Project is much more powerful than most people realize. It takes several days with an instructor experienced in both project management and Microsoft Project to learn the basics well. It takes a lot of mentoring and practice to master it. In fairness, though, it's a lot easier to learn than some of its predecessors. It should be customized specifically for your industry and your company by changing defaults, setting up standard WBS, reports, and templates to maximize its benefits.

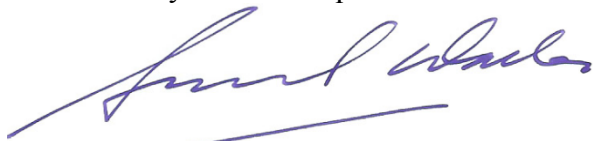
Project management and Microsoft Project can be the ultimate goal-setting and achievement tools - Covey's "Seven Habits" on steroids. Why would you resource-level yourself one day at a time in a diary when you can set long-term goals, break them into short-term goals, see where you are overloaded, use the float to resource-level yourself, and change your priorities accordingly? If you use the tool to help you concentrate on what is important rather than on what is urgent, you often can find low-cost tasks that will help you achieve important multiple goals in your personal as well as professional life. It also helps you to negotiate for commonsense goals; more time, less scope, more and better resources, full time and protects you from idiots.

It is important to do things in the correct order. Too many companies waste a lot of time and money by doing things that don't add value or by doing the right things in the wrong order and then blaming either project management or the tools. Follow the order given in the *PMBOK® Guide* and TWG checklist. Make sure that you are running your projects on schedule **before** you spend too much time collecting detailed costs at the activity level on projects that are running late. Ensure that you are running single projects well before attempting portfolio management, otherwise you will get "garbage in, garbage out."

We can help you avoid a lot of the pain that we went through and dramatically increase the benefits to you and your company. If you apply these new tools and techniques well, you will increase project success, productivity, profits, protection, poise, and pleasure dramatically while decreasing risk and burn out. You may even save your job while other jobs move overseas.

Please call us for great three-day "Project Management using Microsoft Project" Classes worth 22.5 contact hours or PDUs, five-day "PMP® Certification Prep Course Plus" Classes worth 37.5 contact hours or PDUs, customized classes in Primavera, Claims Avoidance, etc.

We also analyze and critique clients' schedules each week. The first one is free.



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