



Capital Project Manager

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Project Management Institute / Montgomery, AL Chapter of PMI

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NEWSLETTER

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A New Start

Many of us begin the new year with a set of resolutions. They may range from losing weight (a perennial favorite) to mastering a new skill. They may be short term or long term. Some people may have many resolutions and others a few. A common result of the resolutions is that by spring they will have been forgotten.

The key to succeeding is to establish a credible goal and to pursue it to completion. If you try to accomplish too much you will be overwhelmed and will not do anything well. If you set too high a goal you may lose heart and simply give up. There are many reasons why people fail to succeed at their resolutions. Project managers may have similar results with projects.

Each project provides a new start. Even if the project is similar to a previous project, the project manager is given a new opportunity to get it right the first time. The project manager should establish credible goals. And if management gives them impossible deadlines, the project manager should still

determine credible timelines and inform management what they can do.

Often we try to meet the impossible. We struggle to get ten hours of labor out of eight hours of time. We press every team member to get their work done faster. We push to beat the schedule hoping the budget will be adequate. We know that management limited the funding to force us to manage the project for less than it was estimated to actually take. We've set our budget a little less to give a bit of a contingency fund.

Perhaps it is time to give management a realistic project structure. Some time ago I was given a project to develop a new product. It was similar to the last product development effort but because it used newer technologies it was in reality not the same. Management had completed their own budget analysis and established the project budget. When I received the project estimates, I began my own budget analysis to determine my project budget. As I did so I ensured all of the needed resources were account for in the budget. I completed the budget estimate and it was about one-third higher than the "management estimate."

Obviously that did not go over well. I was taken to task for the higher budget estimate and challenged to explain why my estimate was so much higher. I simply provided the complete budget analysis. The critical difference was I included all of the project effort and the "management budget" only included the technical development effort. If you short change the various departments that have a role to play in the project you are likely to have a failed project.

I'd like to say that the project had a happy ending. That management recognized their oversight and simply made the necessary changes to increase the budget to ensure a fully successful project start. I'd like to say management was fully behind me as the project manager and that we were able to keep the project expenses in line with the budget estimate. I'd like to say I had the full support of the management team.

Unfortunately, that project did not have a happy beginning or ending. A project that is under funded for whatever reason is going to have problems. Somewhere along the way the technical requirements or scope must be changed to match the lower budget level. Schedule issues are likely due to availability of funding. Tradeoffs become a way of life. Pressure increases to get more production out of less people.

We have the opportunity in 2010 to get back to the basics. Fundamental principles must be maintained. We all know that we should spend less than we make to keep our personal budgets in the black. The same thing goes with our projects. We must plan for and allocate resources such that we do not exceed what we have. And we must scope projects to fit within a credible goal. We each have a new start this year and can make a difference for our projects by following the basics of project management. Focus on fundamentals and keep pressing to be successful by leading your team to establish and meet credible goals.

Advancing Project Management in the Capital City

From the President...

Happy New Year, I hope everyone has a healthy and prosperous year in 2010.

Last year was a challenging year personally; I was laid off for the first time in my career. Fortunately, I was hired by another company, which values project management. Many of our chapter's members faced similar challenges during 2009. If you have not been fortunate enough to get rehired do not forget to use your network (PMI Montgomery Chapter members) or take advantage of PMI programs for unemployed PMI members (see PMI's Career Development: <http://www.pmi.org/CareerDevelopment/Pages/Default.aspx>).

Despite the economy our PMI Montgomery Chapter fared well. Our membership and monthly meeting attendance remained fairly constant throughout the year. We did have a drop in attendance for our professional development seminars, which I believe is a result of companies cutting back on funding for training; an understandable situation. Going into 2010 the chapter is in good shape with a sound membership base, steady attendance of monthly meeting and all Board positions are filled with the exception of President Elect. While being on the board does require some commitment of time, around 8-10 hours per month, the help of chapter volunteers can significantly reduce this time.

As we move into 2010 I would like to encourage you to get involved with the chapter by volunteering to assist one of the board members. Like you, the board members have full time jobs and on occasion we can't make all of the meetings; so we count on each other and volunteers to manage the chapter's business. With your help I would like to plan out the year and reduce the workload on the board members for day to day execution of the chapter to allow more strategic planning.


First, I would like to improve our monthly meetings to provide some stability. Last year we held lunch-time meetings, which proved to be a considerable challenge. Problems locating a restaurant that had adequate space and willing to host our meetings lead to difficulty in obtaining speakers and late notices of the meeting. This year we will move back to having monthly dinner meetings at the Capital City Club and will focus on the theme of "Getting Back to the Basics" to address standard project management processes that apply across all industries.

Second, I would like to have the entire year of 2010 planned out by the end of March. With your help I believe this can be accomplished. If you are interested in being a speaker, please contact Matt Olson and you do earn PDUs for speaking.

I'm looking forward to serving the chapter this year. If you have concerns or ideas please send me an email at bart.ivy@evanhoe.com or call me at 334-233-2250.

Bart A. Ivy, PMP
President
PMI Montgomery



The challenge is simple. Just find somewhere in the newsletter the following milestone symbol  and send an email to: vpcommun@pmimontgomery.org with a specific description of its location. The first email received each issue will win the prize. The prize will be presented at a chapter monthly meeting. There are only so many pages so it should not be too hard to find but be warned it may be any direction, size, or color. So look carefully. The one included above does not count. And you are only permitted to win one during the year, but you can look each issue.

Upcoming Training & Events

PMP® Exam Preparation Course, March 24-26, 2010, 3 days, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Location: Auburn University Montgomery TechnaCenter Building, \$749 for PMI members, \$799 for others.

This course is designed to equip students to pass PMI's Project Management Professional (PMP®) certification exam. Participants receive a course manual that includes over 400 sample questions. The course provides 21 contact hours of training that apply toward the hours required to take the PMP or CAPM exam. Students should bring a copy of the *PMBOK Guide, 4th Edition* to the course. For more detail visit the Events page of www.pmimontgomery.org. For information or to register call 334-244-3080.

Successful Project Management-Introductory Level, March 3-5, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Auburn Montgomery TechnaCenter Building. \$749 for PMI members, \$799 for non-members.

This highly interactive three-day seminar provides an overview of project management concepts and principles using lecture, small group case studies and discussion. Course participants develop many of the project plan elements required to take a project from initiation through planning, executing, and closing. This course provides 21 hours of training that apply toward the hours required to take the PMP or CAPM exams. For more detail visit the Events page of www.pmimontgomery.org. For information or to register call 334-244-3080.

MS Project 2007 Introduction, March 15-17, 3 days, 8:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m., 18 PDUs, Auburn Montgomery TechnaCenter Building. \$549 for PMI members, \$599 for non-members.

In this hands-on course, you will learn to set up a project schedule; define task durations and relationships; add and assign resources; use calendars; assign costs; and work with the critical path. You will also learn how to exchange project plan data with other applications; update progress on tasks; manage project costs; create visual reports; create templates and custom views; create a master project; and share resources. This course is held in a hands-on computer lab. For more detail visit the Events page of www.pmimontgomery.org. For more information or to register call 334-244-3080.

PMI Montgomery Web Site

Visit pmimontgomery.org to learn more about the PMI Montgomery chapter. It has past newsletter, future events, and job announcements. You can find useful links. There is information about the 2010 Symposium. Speaker presentations can also be found on the site.

The chapter website is a tool we all can use. There is much information located on the web site. Visit today at:

<http://www.pmimontgomery.org>

Find the Milestone
Winner!

No one found the milestone in the last issue of the newsletter.

How to Build a Schedule

You may have been told that scheduling is an art. It is perhaps the least understood part of project management. Most of us think of a schedule as a calendar of events that are focused on the same effort. And most of us would be wrong.

A schedule is a resource loaded plan of actions which must be accomplished in a specific manner to accomplish the requirements of the effort or project. The part most of us miss is the resource loaded part.

Why do we forget this critical part of scheduling? We make assumptions about resources without writing them down. For instance, we often assume that a single person will accomplish the work identified by the task and thus the resource is simply a one-to-one correlation. We may not know the exact individual who will complete the task and therefore we simply leave a resource unassigned.

Instead of making assumptions, the project manager should seek the necessary information to include resources in the schedule. Sometimes it may not be possible to assign a specific, by name resource, so we can add a "filler" resource. Using an organization name could work but if more than one person is expected to be assigned to the project it may be more helpful to assign a specific role instead.

When preparing your schedule you should have already completed a work breakdown structure with the tasks identified. For each of those tasks you should have identified the duration of the work and the resources required to accomplish the task. Did you know that facilities and test fixtures could be resources.

If you are planning to use a specific test facility for your test effort you should also identify the facility as a resource. This kind of resource may have a fixed cost or a per hour cost. The resource should still be included even if it is not a person.

Now that the tasks, duration, and resources are known you need to ensure you understand the relationship between tasks. There are dependencies which have to be known. Is there a specific sequence of tasks to accomplish your project? Are there any tasks which can be done

in parallel? This must be understood in order to prepare the schedule task sequence.

Tools such as Microsoft Project are helpful in building and managing a schedule. But you can also use other tools to manually prepare and manage a schedule. Of course you need to account for the effort required to manage a manual schedule since it will be more time consuming than the schedule tools.

As you prepare the schedule you should include each task, its duration, and the dependencies. In addition you will include the resources to accomplish the tasks. As you add resources to your schedule you need to account for resource availability.

For example, if you need a backhoe to dig a trench for your project you will need to ensure that tool will be available. If your company owns it then you would need to verify its availability. If there are any times when it would not be available then that must be accounted for in your resource data. When the backhoe is available there is another resource which must be included, the driver. Of course, the backhoe resource could be structured to include the driver. Either way you must include the complete resource in the schedule and account for down time.

As you work through the schedule you also need to consider the availability of your project personnel. During a normal week you may have individual resources a significant percentage of the time. But there may be other activities required of the resources such as training sessions, organizational meetings, and medical appointments. A thorough schedule will have resource availability included.

If your project will occur during holiday periods or vacation season you need to account for resource time off. If you need to have 100 percent coverage then you would need to work that out with the resource owner. For people that may also inject a measure of risk depending upon the type of task and whether or not someone else could fill in without any degradation in work performance.

The project manager has a lot to

consider when preparing the schedule. Another consideration is the competition of other company projects. While you need a specific resource whether a person or tool, other project managers may also need to use those same resources.

The challenges of scheduling never cease. One project I worked on required the use of a test lab. We typically used a specific lab partly because they were able to accommodate our special requirements and they were convenient to use due to proximity to the engineering office. We were busily preparing for the upcoming test cycle and fully expected to have use of the test facility. Unfortunately, at the exact time we needed the test facility they decided to complete a 100 percent calibration cycle on all of their test tools. Thus we could not use their facility.

This forced us to find another test facility for our testing unless we wanted to delay the project by weeks. The replacement test facility was able to accommodate the test requirements but with new facility personnel we had more trouble obtaining exactly what we needed. The location was farther away which meant our test engineering personnel had to drive about an hour away to conduct the testing. This schedule challenge also impacted the budget.

As you prepare your schedule you should realize the budget is directly tied to that schedule. The resources needed to accomplish the work help make up the project budget. When you have resource issues that can impact your budget. I'm not sure I have ever seen a schedule impact reduce a project budget. Therefore, we need to ensure the project schedule is fully resourced and as accurate as we can make it.

The good thing is that schedules are plans and plans should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain accurate. Your schedule will need constant attention and should be a centerpiece of your management effort.

Scheduling is an art. While most of us can draw pictures, it takes a master to make a proper schedule. The result will be extremely valuable.

"A schedule is a resource loaded plan of actions."

PMI Montgomery
Current Chapter Membership
139 Members
83 PMPs
2 CAPM

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