



## ViewPoints

Projectability's monthly newsletter

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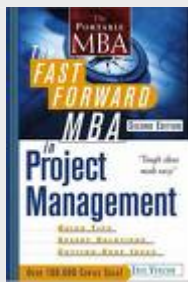
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### Project Reading



#### [The Fast Forward MBA in Project Management](#)

I saw this book in an airport bookshop and purchased it to add to my library.

If you are new to Project Management it can serve as a very handy primer.

Logically structured and refreshingly clear or jargon for jargons sake this book can get you up to speed and confident to tackle the challenges that your role as a newly appointed Project Manager may present you with.

Reading for Pleasure - 1984

### Dear Reader,

Welcome once more,

One of the great things about writing this newsletter is hearing from those who read it. I know this may sound a bit like 1984 but the service I use for sending this newsletter out allows me to monitor how many people open it and any links they click on.



The good news is that the take up rate amongst ViewPoints recipients is a lot higher than the average so I must be doing something right!

I received an email this morning from a reader in Sydney, Australia telling me how much they enjoyed the content of the newsletters and how well it compared with the many other newsletters they receive. Apart from putting a big smile on my face it also reminded me of the importance of observing the input and efforts of the team members engaged in our projects. A few well chosen words can go a long way in lifting the morale and confidence of our team members. I guess it is a discipline we should all practise more often.

In this months main article I am focusing on the importance of monitoring your schedule on a regular basis.

Happy Planning - Dominic

### Monitoring your Schedule

I guess you will all have seen a Gantt Chart in your role as a project manager or team member, it is a well established device for communicating how a project will be tackled. It was devised by [Henry Laurence Gantt](#) in the early 20th Century and was regarded as a radical and highly innovative concept at the time.

In its simplest form the Gantt Chart can be regarded as a dynamic list. It displays tasks showing their duration and sequence against a timeline. One of the key benefits of computer based scheduling tools is their ability to sort a task list into start date order so that the Gantt Chart can represent a flow or progression from the start to the finish of the schedule in a neat and orderly fashion. Another benefit is the



### [George Orwell's 1984](#)

Having mentioned this title in the introduction it is only fair to plug the book that I am re-reading at the moment.

Like a lot of modern classics this book has a certain resonance with the times we live in, almost as if the author had a foretaste of how our society would evolve. Whilst we are not constantly surveyed by the awful Telescreens the ubiquity of CCTV is not that dissimilar a threat to our liberty.

1984 may have come and gone but Orwells vision of a future dystopia provides a powerful and chilling read. If you have not read it for a while it is well worth revisiting and if you have never read it be prepared to be drawn into a world of Orwells making that will leave you thankful for the freedoms we enjoy.

### Are you Linked In?



Are you a member of **Linked In**? If you are I would welcome the chance to **Link Up**.

### Project Conference



The [Microsoft Project Conference](#) takes place in Phoenix Arizona on 14th - 17th September and having plugged it for the last couple of issues I have decided to

facility to accommodate change and to present a revised plan instantly. When I first started working as a project scheduler in the construction industry I had to produce my plans by hand which was a challenge especially as I am left handed!

A common request I receive from those attending our Essentials level training on Microsoft Project is that the attendee wants to use Microsoft Project to create a schedule to sell the project, producing an impressive looking diagram that it is hoped will persuade decision makers as to the merits of the proposed project. This may serve a purpose but I always think they are missing a trick here.

I describe a project plan as being like a map, we know where we are and we know where we want to get to. The plan marks out the route and allows us to consider factors that could impact upon our plans and things that we have to work around as they are non-negotiable.

Producing a map is all well and good but you then need to embark upon the journey. In this regard the project plan can act as a useful reference to help you gauge how the journey is going. It is amazing how many people put in the effort to produce the plan but then do not bother to record how their journey compares to the plan.

Gathering progress reports and then updating the plan can be a bind, however if you do not exercise this discipline you may have no empirical way of knowing how you are doing and at completion you will not have the means to conduct any meaningful review as there will not be the data to perform any useful analysis.

Ideally your team will be happy to provide you with progress updates, this needs to be done on a regular basis. Typically a weekly update process will suit the natural rhythm of your organisation and will not require a large amount of effort on the part of your team members.

The accuracy of updates received is critical, this requires your team to provide objective assessments as to how they are progressing. % complete reporting is notoriously unreliable so a better bet is to capture what has been done, what is left to be done and perhaps most importantly of all any issues that could impact upon achieving targets.

You will be relying on your team to report accurately to you. This can sometimes require you to be sceptical or challenging. You will have delegated responsibility down to individuals but as the project manager you will be accountable if your project veers off track. The watchwords here are "**inspect what you expect**" - on occasion and where appropriate check that what is being reported to you is true. You want to avoid checking everyone all the time as this will undermine the benefits of delegating work to your team but to keep people on their toes random checks are useful. You may well have certain candidates in mind for this, some members of your team may be more experienced, reliable and conscientious than others.

Recording progress, estimating to completion and updating

attend myself, I will let you know all about it in the next issue.

### Words of Wisdom

*"You cannot solve a problem with the same kind of thinking that created it."*

**Albert Einstein**

### Downloads



There are numerous documents available to download **free of charge** on our Website - please feel free to take a look!

your plan accordingly will provide you with an indication as to how things are going in your project. Hopefully they will be going to plan and your targets will still be on track.

I was working with a senior manager in a high profile company a few years ago and he was very happy with how project management techniques could help him. He explained to me that seeing a project plan with ticks denoting completed tasks gave him great comfort, he could see that he was making progress towards his targets rather than being overwhelmed by them. This comment reminded me of the wisdom imparted by [Dr Nick Baylis](#) - **"it seems to be a law of human nature that for progress to be made it needs to be measured"**. I don't know about you but I do feel a sense of comfort when I know I am "getting there".

If however your updates suggest that your schedule is veering off track you will need to take immediate corrective action to get back on target, the longer you leave this corrective action the more frantic, stressful and costly your corrective actions will have to be.

The watchwords in this case are **"to solve something easily catch it early"** - in the next newsletter I will explore some of the tactics we can employ to recover lost ground and still achieve our targets.

### MPUG



MPUG membership is well worth considering if you are a regular user of the Microsoft Project Scheduling tool, not only do you receive regular fortnightly emails with useful hints and tips membership also offers insight into new developments with the worlds best selling project scheduling tool. Local chapter events also provide you with the opportunity to learn more at first hand and to exchange experiences with fellow users.

## CTRL+ - Handy Microsoft Project Keyboard Shortcuts



Keyboard shortcuts are a useful way to improve your efficiency in using Microsoft Project. Each month we highlight one of the shortcuts available and the benefits of using it.

This month's shortcut is one you might find familiar. **CTRL+S**, this will save your project and avoids having to visit the file menu or to click the save button. When running training sessions it is amazing to see how many people do not make use of this and other common windows shortcuts.

I was running a course recently and over the day introduced the group to several shortcuts they were unaware of. The senior person on the course suggested I develop a course to help people improve their effectiveness, rather than develop a course I am working on a document that will be made available in the downloads section before too long.

A document with all the [Keyboard shortcuts in Microsoft Project](#) is available to download **free of charge** from our website.

## Ask the Expert - Time is Money, how can we show that?



If you have a question you would like answering and are happy for others to benefit from the answer provided send an email to [ask the expert](#).

This month's question is quite interesting as it can be used to argue against prevarication. "How can I illustrate the cost of delay to my project?"

There is a saying that time is money, Microsoft Project can be used to illustrate this quite powerfully. A lot of projects will have an "opportunity cost" or there will be an awareness that being late has cost implications. If you are aware as to what these financial measures may be create a Work Resource to model them. In this example we will model a delay cost of £1000.00 per day with maximum units being 100%. Create the resource and define its A cost tab rate as being £1000.00/day.

Next create two Milestones called "Planned Finish" and "Scheduled Finish" and indent them beneath a Summary Task called "Project Delay". Link the two milestones to the milestone that marks the end of your schedule, for example "Project Complete" (I always recommend that you mark the end of each stage/phase/summary task with a Milestone). In this example "Planned Finish" and "Scheduled Finish" will both have the same predecessor "Project Complete". When you have done this the Summary Task "Project Delay" will have a duration of "0" days reflecting the two milestones within it.

Assign the resource called "Delay" to the Summary Task "Project Delay" using the Assign button from the Assign Resource Dialogue Box - it will show as being assigned 100%. By default resource names are not displayed against Summary bars in the Gantt Chart view.

At the moment your Delay Resource is costing your project £0 - you can check this in the Cost column displayed in the Assign Resource Dialogue Box, but only in the 2007 version, sorry!

Next set a Finish no Later Than (FNL) constraint date on the planned finish milestone to reflect the target completion date for your project. If you have set the correct "Hard Constraint" at this point and have followed the steps as described you might get a message from the planning wizard, if you do get this message elect to continue using the Finish no Later than constraint. You should now see a Red Calendar icon in the indicator column denoting that a "Hard Constraint" has been set. In this example I have a project scheduled to finish on 9th September and a FNL constraint date set for 11th September.

If a task is delayed in your project and the target end date is breached the planning wizard will

warn you of a "Scheduling Conflict" - elect to continue and allow the scheduling conflict. Your Project Delay summary task will now reflect the number of working days delay your project has suffered and crucially the cost to your project.

I have put together a Project plan that illustrates this approach, if you would like a copy send an email to [ask the expert](#) and I will send you a copy.

### Inspirations - David Bowie master of change



He has never himself on the times he to others and to



You might think that having a rock star as an inspiration is a peculiar thing for someone so immersed in Project Management however you could regard David Bowie as a great exponent of Project Management.

been afraid of change, in fact he has reinvented many occasions to suit or even pre-empt the mood of was living in. He has also always been willing to listen experiment rather than stick with the tried and tested.

He is also a man of many talents. First and foremost he is a musician and composer then he is a producer as well as being an artist and an actor so he has made great use of his talents.

I was drawn to David Bowie as a teenager as he was so different from most other rock stars of the time. His willingness to change and to experiment were exciting to me as were his diverse influences and interests. Hearing of people such as William Burroughs and Egon Schiele from Bowie made me want to find out more about these people and their creative outputs. His Berlin period was in full swing as I neared the end of my school days and I can still remember getting on the schoolbus to go home one evening and having "Beauty and the Beast" playing at full volume on the bus radio - I loved the chaotic and strident energy of that song and still do 30 years later.

I have been lucky enough to see David Bowie in concert on 4 occasions and each time it has been an amazing experience as he has entertained the audience with the breadth of his creative catalogue but always with a twist so as to present the familiar in a new and interesting way.

A few years ago Bowie was interviewed by [Michael Parkinson](#) on the TV. He seemed to be totally at ease with himself and where he was in his life. He also had to my mind a lot more star quality than most famous people have these days in part because he has lived an interesting life but also because he found so much in life to be interested by.

You could say he is responsible for the perfect anthem for a project manager, ch ch ch changes!!

### Next Months Issue

I am looking forward to writing the next edition, I hope you will be looking forward to receiving it. It would be great if you were to take the time to pass it on to a friend or colleague.

In the next newsletter we will be focusing upon controlling your project when it is veering off track.

### [Dominic Moss](#)

Principal Consultant- Projectability

Projectability have been helping people and organisations achieve more through effective Project Management and the use of the Microsoft Project scheduling tool since 1996. Our full

range of offerings can be viewed on our [Website](#).

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