

Project Professional 2010 Features

Microsoft Project Professional 2010 - New Features Overview

In Microsoft Project Professional 2010 the biggest and most dramatic change is the "Ribbon" replacing the old menu and toolbar navigation. Whilst it represents a dramatic change to the look and feel of the tool it is intuitive and easy to get to grips with.

There is also now the "BackStage" area where a lot of the old file menu management actions on your project plans are conducted.

The backstage area features some enhancements, especially around the contentious area of printing.

My favourite feature at the moment has to be the "Timeline" view as it portrays key schedule information in a powerful and intuitive graphical manner. You decide which tasks are included in the timeline so it can be used to communicate specific schedule information to people who may not understand a Gantt Chart. By all accounts the Timeline view has gone "Viral" within Microsoft with people seeing it, "getting it" and then wanting it.

The Timeline view can be tweaked for clarity and can also be easily transposed into either an office document, be it Word, PowerPoint or Excel. It can also be easily copied and pasted into an email.

General integration and consistency with the Office family of products has been improved, copying and pasting retains hierarchic relationships whether copying from a word document into to a project plan or from a task list in Project to a Word or PowerPoint document. Text wrapping and Auto-Complete are also much more Office oriented and consistent than previous versions of the tool.

Another neat feature of the tool is the Team Planner view, this again is a powerful graphical way to depict the workload of your team and to then manipulate assignments to smooth the demand on your people – it is a bit like resource levelling but you retain control which is a big benefit.

Those of you familiar with the Resource Usage view may notice similarities, however the Team Planner view gives you the opportunity to re-schedule or re-allocate work by simply clicking and dragging bars to clear windows of time.

User controlled scheduling – this feature has drawn a lot of positive feedback from the user community although I must admit I am struggling to be as enthused as some of my colleagues. To me it looks likely to introduce a more casual and less focused approach to planning projects as it does not observe the rigour of a traditionally constructed schedule. On the other hand making it easier to use the tool will probably convert some people who would otherwise resist the discipline that Microsoft Project has traditionally required of project schedules.

Inactive Tasks on the other hand are a nice addition as it means that tasks can be put on hold, useful if you are weighing up your options or looking to revise the scope of your project. Inactive tasks can always be reactivated in the future should the need arise which is a lot better than deleting and then reinstating tasks.

Formatting of views has also been significantly enhanced. Whichever view you are in the "Ribbon" will display relevant formatting options automatically. Simply hovering over a ribbon item results in the display being changed to reflect how that option will look.

Improved Filtering functionality, this feature is again an example of how Project is more closely aligned and consistent with the Office suite of products. As a big fan of filtering already I can envisage numerous ways in which this improved feature will benefit users.

The Task Inspector – an improvement on the task driver feature of Project 2007 with a lot more contextual information presented to the user in an easily understood interface.

For organisations that are not yet ready to go to Project Server 2010 Microsoft Project 2010 can now share task information with SharePoint lists which represents a potential interim step for organisations whose Project Management maturity is improving in a slow but steady and realistic fashion. This feature offers the potential to collaborate more effectively.

* Please note; this article is based on a pre-beta release of Project Server 2010 which will not be available for sale until mid 2010. *