

MITIGATE RISK – ENSURE YOUR PROJECT PLAN FOLLOWS THESE SIMPLE BEST PRACTICES



By Patrick d’Astous, Ph.D., PMP

Project audits are a necessary evil for project managers and project management offices alike. Project audits are used to answer two questions:

- **Is the project delivering the expected result?** Evaluation of the project's health (cost, time, scope, risks) and must be performed at every milestone occurrences.
- **Are project management best practices being followed to mitigate risks?** Issues related to the project organization, management and the process used. It should occur as often as possible.

About the Author: Patrick d’Astous is chief scientist at Smartbox Software. He holds a Ph.D. in Software Engineering and he is a member of the Project Management Institute and PMP certified.

Process slips are the most common project management mistakes. Inadequate use of best practices increases the risk project planning details will fall through the cracks and that projects will have to be re-planned.

What are best practices?

A best practice is a technique believed to be more effective at delivering a particular outcome when applied to a particular condition or circumstance. The Project Management Institute (PMI) proposes to use “best practices” as a mean to correct any deficiencies to reduce cost of quality and an increase in sponsor and customer acceptance of the project’s product.

Scheduling best practices

Project schedules always change and get reprioritised according to new situations. What makes a project schedule better? I believe it is the repeated use of best practices: a well thought project plan, built on generally accepted practices, should reflect more precisely the project manager's plan and therefore reduce project management process related risks. Here is a non exhaustive list of SIMPLE scheduling practices:

- **Activity code / WBS**

Your planning must derive from some analysis of the work to be performed during the project. In order to structure these activities, you should use a numerical or alphanumeric value to categorize them.

	WBS	Duration	Start	Finish	02 Jan '08
ed skills	1.1.1	2 days	Mon 03-01-00	Tue 04-01-00	
ices	1.1.2	2 days	Wed 05-01-00	Thu 06-01-00	
to resources	1.1.4	2 days	Fri 07-01-00	Mon 10-01-00	
	1.1.5	0 days	Mon 10-01-00	Mon 10-01-00	
	2	44 days	Tue 11-01-00	Fri 10-02-00	
y business re	2.1	20 days	Tue 11-01-00	Fri 10-02-00	
1	2.2	1 day	Tue 11-01-00	Tue 11-01-00	
Structure	2.3	9 days	Tue 11-01-00	Fri 12-01-00	
tracking proc	2.3.1	5 days	Tue 11-01-00	Mon 17-01-00	
m resolution m	2.3.2	4 days	Tue 11-01-00	Fri 14-01-00	

- **Milestones**

A milestone is an event in time to indicate an important decision or the completion of a key project phase. It therefore has no duration and no resource assigned to it. It goes without saying that the project start and finish dates are important events. They should appear as milestones in your schedule.

Milestone	Duration	Start	Finish	Jan '00	2
1P	No	4 days	Tue 11-01-00	Fri 14-01-00	ram Management
ce	No	3 days	Tue 11-01-00	Thu 13-01-00	ment(25%)>pting
oc	No	4 days	Fri 14-01-00	Wed 19-01-00	Testing
1 s	No	2 days	Thu 20-01-00	Fri 21-01-00	
ne	Yes	0 days	Fri 21-01-00	Fri 21-01-00	
su	No	25 days	Tue 11-01-00	Mon 14-02-00	
in	No	2 days	Tue 11-01-00	Wed 12-01-00	agementProgram
	No	10 days	Thu 13-01-00	Wed 26-01-00	

- **Relationships**

All scheduling elements (i.e. activities and milestones), except the project start and finish milestones, must have relationships with at least one predecessor and one successor tasks/milestones.

Predecessors	Successors	Duration	Start	Jan '00	23 Jan '00	36
ner 19	21	2 days	Tue 11-01-00	Tue 11-01-00		
ner 19	21,23	19 days	Thu 13-01-00	Thu 13-01-00		
ner 20	23	5 days	Thu 27-01-00	Thu 27-01-00		
ner 21	24,25	1 day	Thu 03-02-00	Thu 03-02-00		
ner 21	24,25	8 days	Thu 27-01-00	Thu 27-01-00		
ner 23,23	25	1 day	Tue 16-02-00	Tue 16-02-00		
ner 24,22		19 days	Tue 15-02-00	Tue 15-02-00		
ner 24,22	27	2 days	Tue 15-02-00	Tue 15-02-00		

- **Constraints**

Scheduling constraints (FNL, FNET, Fon, etc.) identify project fixed dates. Use scheduling constraints sparingly as they reduce scheduling options and optimization opportunities.

Duration	Constraint Type	Start	Finish	Predecessors	5	2
ry user in	2 days As Possible	Tue 11-01-00	Wed 12-01-00			
nanos	10 days As Possible	Thu 13-01-00	Wed 26-01-00	19		
ry user pr	5 days As Possible	Thu 27-01-00	Wed 02-02-00	20		
ry vision i	1 day As Possible	Thu 03-02-00	Thu 03-02-00	21		
joak	8 days As Possible	Thu 27-01-00	Mon 07-02-00	20		
ry solution	5 days As Possible	Tue 05-02-00	Mon 14-02-00	23,22		
ry Project	19 days As Possible	Tue 15-02-00	Fri 16-03-00	24,22		
ices fact	2 days As Possible	Tue 15-02-00	Wed 16-02-00			
etrics	1 day As Possible	Thu 17-02-00	Thu 17-02-00	26		
erates (3 days As Possible	Fri 16-02-00	Tue 22-02-00	27		
z	3 days As Possible	Wed 23-02-00	Fri 25-02-00	28		
ope	2 days As Possible	Mon 28-02-00	Tue 29-02-00	29		
oe	3 days As Possible	Wed 01-03-00	Fri 03-03-00	30		

- **Project scheduling vs activity scheduling**

Make sure you use the same type of scheduling for project and activities or there may be a conflict. If you schedule the project from its start date, make sure activities are set to start as soon as possible. If you schedule the project from its finish date, make sure activities are set to start as late as possible.

How to Reach Us: If you want to contact Patrick d’Astous directly, he can be reached at (888)872-5980 or via email at pdastous@smartbox-software.com.

The Last Word

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