

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

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## Introduction

Project management is one of the high-responsibility tasks in modern organizations. Project management is used in many types of projects ranging from software development to developing the next generation fighter aircrafts.

In order to execute a project successfully, the project manager or the project management team should be supported by a set of tools.

These tools can be specifically designed tools or regular productivity tools that can be adopted for project management work.

The use of such tools usually makes the project managers work easy as well as it standardizes the work and the routine of a project manager.

Following are some of those tools used by project managers in all domains:

## Project Plan

All the projects that should be managed by a project manager should have a project plan. The project plan details many aspects of the project to be executed.

First of all, it details out the project scope. Then, it describes the approach or strategy used for addressing the project scope and project objectives.

The strategy is the core of the project plan. The strategy could vary depending on the project purpose and specific project requirements.

The resource allocation and delivery schedule are other two main components of the project plan. These detail each activity involved in the project as well as the information such as who executes them and when.

This is important information for the project manager as well as all the other stakeholders of the project.

## Milestone Checklist

This is one of the best tools the project manager can use to determine whether he or she is on track in terms of the project progress.

The project manager does not have to use expensive software to track this. The project manager can use a simple Excel template to do this job.

The milestone checklist should be a live document that should be updated once or twice a week.

## Gantt Chart

Gantt chart illustrates the project schedule and shows the project manager the interdependencies of each activity. Gantt charts are universally used for any type of project from construction to software development.

Although deriving a Gantt chart looks quite easy, it is one of the most complex tasks when the project is involved in hundreds of activities.

There are many ways you can create a Gantt chart. If the project is small and simple in nature, you can create your own Gantt chart in Excel or download an Excel template from the Internet.

If the project has a high financial value or high-risk exposure, then the project manager can use software tools such as MS Project.

## Project Management Softwares

With the introduction of computer technology, there have been a number of software tools specifically developed for project management purpose. MS Project is one such tool that has won the hearts of project managers all over the world.

MS Project can be used as a standalone tool for tracking project progress or it can be used for tracking complex projects distributed in many geographical areas and managed by a number of project managers.

There are many other software packages for project management in addition to MS Project. Most of these new additions are online portals for project management activities where the project members have access to project details and progress from anywhere.

## **Project Reviews**

A comprehensive project review mechanism is a great tool for project management. More mature companies tend to have more strict and comprehensive project reviews as opposed to basic ones done by smaller organizations.

In project reviews, the project progress and the adherence to the process standards are mainly considered. Usually, project reviews are accompanied by project audits by a 3rd party *internal* or *external*.

The non-compliances and action items are then tracked in order to complete them.

## **Delivery Reviews**

Delivery reviews make sure that the deliveries made by the project team meet the customer requirements and adhere to the general guidelines of quality.

Usually, a 3rd party team or supervisors *internal* conduct the delivery review and the main stakeholders of the project delivery do participate for this event.

The delivery review may decide to reject the delivery due to the quality standards and non-compliances.

## **Score Cards**

When it comes to performance of the project team, a scorecard is the way of tracking it. Every project manager is responsible of accessing the performance of the team members and reporting it to the upper management and HR.

This information is then used for promotion purposes as well as human resource development. A comprehensive score card and performance assessment can place the team member in the correct position.

## **Conclusion**

A project manager cannot execute his/her job without a proper set of tools. These tools do not have to be renowned software or something, but it can pretty well be simple and proven techniques to manage project work.

Having a solid set of project management tools always makes project managers' work pleasurable and productive.

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