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Project Scheduling – the Central Piece of a Project Management Software [by](#)  
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Project scheduling should be considered the central piece of any project management software. Without the possibility to easily schedule all the tasks of a project there would be little expectation regarding the efficiency of controlling complex projects. However a project scheduling software should simplify a project managers work and not complicate it.

### The project schedule

The project schedule is the central part of the project plan and it is used to connect the tasks to be done with the resources that will accomplish them. It consists of a list of deliverables with intended start and finish dates. Deliverables are the lowest level elements in a schedule, which are not further subdivided.

In addition, the schedule provides project teams with a map for project execution and offers a baseline for tracking progress and managing changes. It can be used as a checklist to make sure that all necessary tasks are performed. If a task is on the schedule, the team is committed to doing it. In other words, the project schedule gives the means by which the project manager brings the team and the project under control.

The visual representation of a schedule is a timeline chart. It is created such that it depicts the tasks of the projects, the duration and the sequencing of them, and the major milestones of the project. The Gantt chart is the most popular timeline chart.

Prior to creating the project schedule the project manager must have a work breakdown structure (WBS), an effort estimate for each task, and a list of resources with availability for each resource. Once these data are established a project scheduling tool can automatically do much of the tedious work of calculating the schedule. However, before a project manager can use such tools, he should have an understanding over concepts like WBS, dependencies, resource allocation, critical paths etc. These are the real keys to planning a successful project.

When establishing the project schedule a few important steps must be performed:

Establish dependencies – The first step in building the project schedule is to establish the order in which tasks are going to be performed. The WBS structure will be used as input. A dependency will be created between two tasks if one depends on the other. There are four types of dependencies: Finish to Start, Finish to Finish, Start to Start and Start to Finish.

Assign resources to tasks – The next step is to identify the resources required to perform the work. A resource is any person, item, tool, or service that is needed by the project. Based on its availability the schedule might get adjusted in time.

Create the schedule – Once the dependencies are established and the resources are assigned the project manager must enter the work effort or the duration for each task. With this information in place a project scheduling software should be able to automatically arrange the tasks and calculate a final date for the project.

Project scheduling solutions

Over the years managers used spreadsheets for scheduling and resource management, with columns to track planned and actual start and finish dates. Initially these were the only solutions. After that it was still used because of the low price for such systems. Although this approach is not used or recommended by the pros, it is sometimes the practical and affordable solution for small projects in small organizations. However this has the limitation that it can not do all the things that a dedicated project management software can do, especially in terms of graphics displays and data flexibility.

Work schedules are used to manage resources and the work required to complete the project. It presents the distribution of work in time. Once established during the initial phase it is difficult to be managed in case changes occur. However using a project management tool things get simpler and you can see how the changes on the working time are reflected in the schedule. Managers will have the possibility to detect the overallocation or overtime periods for resources and perform work leveling operations.

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A [project scheduling software](#) will never do the job for you and people will still be the ones to execute the tasks. However what it can do to help you is to make all the necessary computations to lay down the schedule.

Article Keywords:

Project Management Software, project scheduling, project scheduling software. project scheduling tool

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