

# Re: Updating via timesheet

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*Source:* <http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Project/microsoft.public.project/2006-05/msg00610.html>

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- *From:* "Mike Glen" <glenATmvps.org>
  - *Date:* Thu, 18 May 2006 23:20:26 +0100
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Well...

As I said in <http://project.mvps.org/networkanalysis.htm> , I believe in taking tasks down to using the doing words: painting, cutting, programming, printing, writing, etc. Getting down to the nitty gritty is absolutely essential. How far do you go? Well, you have to take the expertise of the resource into account. If you want an electrical socket placed on a wall, I would assume a qualified electrician would do the job. In which case the task would be to fit socket at point x. If you get to the stage of writing tasks that start "pick up screwdriver...", then you've gone too far! Equally, a task that says "Fit sockets to walls" is far too vague or high level. Getting the balance right is important, and requires the application of skill and experience. No project planners can have all the experience to know it all, so one has to ask the expert to break the task down to its elements. If anything, it is better to plan to too much detail than too little, as you can always amalgamate or delete tasks, but it is much more difficult to add tasks and will almost certainly result in delays and missed deadlines.

However these are rules of thumb. If you're setting up an experiment in a lab that last a few minutes, getting the sequence right is just as important as it is in enumerating the tasks nessary to build an aircraft. The scale is differet – the principles are the same. Hence one cannot be too dogmatic on length of tasks or how many – you need just enough, which only life and experience can tell you. However, for beginners, I would use as a rule of thumb for a 3 month project, to have tasks no longer than 10 days and no shorter than 1 day. I would call for weekly reports to begin with and ask for more or less frequent reports as experience then dicatates. I would expect local management to make up for lost time, delays , etc, by working overtime, bringing in extra resources or whatever, reporting to you only when in trouble from which they can't see a solution. I would see a reschedule and a new plan to be issued after the first month and again after the second, then run out the plan making last minute ad hoc changes to get the job finished, all the while with crossed fingers!

I'm an avocate of one resource per task if at all possible. Detailed planning is essential. However, be aware of the level of management needed. Over-management of the detail can be just as destructive as under-management. Always consider what level of interfenence you need to

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apply to manage the situation – can local management cope or do you need to interject?

Enough of my ramblings this time of night – I must retire to bed now.:)

Mike Glen  
Project MVP