

Re: how can I force MSP to respect the dates I want

Source: <http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Project/microsoft.public.project/2007-12/msg00043.html>

- *From:* "Steve House" <sjhouse at hotmail dot com>
 - *Date:* Mon, 3 Dec 2007 18:29:31 -0500
-

Well, with few exceptions you really CAN'T tell project dates things will happen and you really shouldn't try. You don't tell it your schedule, it tells you. That's why it exists – to do otherwise is sort of like using Excel but not wanting it to do any calculations – what would be the point? For instance, you may think you're entering a finish date for a task but in reality you aren't – you're actually entering a Finish No Earlier Than constraint which is a totally different kettle of fish.

If you enter tasks and it shows them finishing on other than the dates they actually need to finish, you need to manipulate the driving factors to bring them into compliance. For instance, I have a task that requires 80 man-hours of work to complete. I could start it today (Monday). IF I put one person on it, Project will tell me it will end a week from this coming Friday. But the client insists we must deliver it THIS Friday. So I increase the resource assignment from 100% to 200% and Project will shorten the task so we deliver on time. OR I can take the resource that I've assigned 100% and assign him overtime equal to 40 man-hours and that too will shorten the task so it completes when the client requires it to. The thing is, YOU have to experiment with the assignment units or add the overtime hours in order to achieve that. Project doesn't assign resources or work hours, project managers do. Only you can know if a resource assignment is realistic and do-able – only you know what's possible and what isn't. You make the decisions about resource allocations and it tells you the results those decisions will obtain for you if you go with that plan. But it's only software, a glorified adding machine, and it won't make the decisions for you or suggest a strategy to you – that's your job.

By the way, it's not MS Project's approach – it is the approach that is inherent in most formal project management methodologies even when using paper and pencil calculations. Project was written to comply with generally accepted critical path scheduling methods.

—
Steve House [Project MVP]
MS Project Trainer & Consultant
Visit <http://project.mvps.org/faqs.htm> for the FAQs

"Jeff" <Jeff@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
<news:8B47BD92-3474-4603-9FA0-28E1D5504F23@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>

Hi Steve,

Thanks very much for the input, it helps me understand the Project approach. My problem still remains, though – I have been asked to use Project to produce our project plans by a client. we have a tight timeline that will no doubt require us to do a fair amount of overtime. What I would ideally like

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to do is to tell Project when certain tasks must happen and how many hours of work are required by each of our team members to complete each task. I would then like Project to respect the timelines and hours, and simply show me where I am dramatically in the red in terms of overtime required. I would then bring in additional resources or plan to sleep at the office. My problem is, when I try to do this. Project often overrides my imposed timelines and dramatically extends them. This gives me a project plan that I can't show to my clients, and doesn't give me the overtime reality check that I want. Is there really no way for Project to be used this way? I know it isn't ideal, but it suits my needs in the short term.

Thanks again,

Jeff

"Steve House" wrote:

Look at it this way. All projects have required dates that must be met. But you don't need software to document those requirements – you already know what they are. Your problem is figuring out exactly what you have to do to make it happen the way you need it to and that's where the software comes in. It's a calculator intended to help you figure out how to organize the workflow and to utilize the resources so that those requirements are met by predicting the results you'd obtain IF you go with a given plan of attack. So you input your tasks, their dependencies, and the resource assignments you envision and let Project freely calculate the dates and suppose it shows your requirements are being missed ... what does that mean?

What it means is that it has given you a reality check – IF you try to do the work according to your first ideas regarding how to organize it, you're not going to be successful at meeting your objectives. What can you do to fix it? You can't just somehow force Project to show you the dates you want you have to actually materially change the workflow and/or the resource assignments in order to make real, physical changes in the forces that drive those dates. If you have a building to paint and it's going to take 2 weeks for the one painter you have to do it yet your client requires it be delivered in 1 week, you can't just override Project's calculations, your only real options are to have your one guy work overtime or to go out and hire some more painters so the work goes faster. You can't just specify dates out of the blue – you have to do something concrete to make it happen that way by changing the real world forces that drive the schedule and as you experiment with various workflows, Project will tell you which ones will work and which ones won't. Now to record those required dates in the schedule is another story – simply entering a deadline on the delivery milestones will display them and red-flag those that are going over.

HTH

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"Jeff" <Jeff@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:1FB08AB8-DD0E-4830-82D8-6082C5964937@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
>
> Hi John,
>
> Thanks for the advice, it does sound like the solution long term, and
> thanks
> for the tutorial links. Believe me, I have been thinking about > returning
> to
> Excel! Maybe I should rephrase my question though –
> I would like to let project create a dynamic schedule and take > advantage
> of
> its capabilities. At the same time, I have certain tasks that have to
> occur
> on specific dates (required by clients), and other tasks that have to
> occur
> over specific periods of time. How can I tell Project that these tasks
> have
> to be limited in this way, and then let it be flexible and dynamic with
> the
> rest of the tasks? when I try to do this, Project frequently changes > the
> dates afterwards, leaving me with one-day meetings that are spread out
> over 2
> weeks, etc.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Jeff
>
>
> "John" wrote:
>
>> In article
>> <3328903B-1072-493C-8A55-4781CB20EC2E@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>,
>> Jeff <Jeff@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:
>>
>>> Hi again, and thanks for any help you can give. I want project to
>>> respect
>>> the dates and the hours of work I assign to a task, even if this >>>
>>> makes
>>> for
>>> herculean efforts on the part of the resources involved; half the >>>
>>> time
>>> that I
>>> assign dates, it ignores them. Is there any solution?
>>>

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>> > Thanks
>> > Jeff
>>
>> Jeff,
>> The title of your post pretty much says it all – you are trying to >> make
>> Project fit your thinking instead of letting it do what it was >> designed
>> to do – that is to create and calculate a dynamic schedule plan based >>
>> on
>> user inputs of task name, estimated duration, task dependencies, and
>> resource assignments. If you insist on setting the dates for tasks >> then
>> you would be much better off using Excel.
>>
>> I'm sorry to be blunt, but the solution you seek is for you to learn >> how
>> to create a dynamic working schedule with Project. You do NOT do that
>> by
>> inputting dates. I suggest you take an interactive class on project
>> management using Project. You could also make use of fellow MVP,
Mike
>> Glen's tutorials on Project. They can be found on Mike's link at,
>> <http://www.mvps.org/project/links.htm>. If you need an excellent book >>
>> on
>> Microsoft Project, try The Ultimate Learning Guide to Microsoft Office
>> Project 2007 from Project Experts. You can find out more at,
>> <http://msprojectexperts.com>.
>>
>> John
>> Project MVP
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