

Planning a Project

Did you know that one of the most common causes of project delay, overspend and customer dissatisfaction is the lack of proper *project planning*?

The “Project Planning” phase is one of the most critical phases within a project. Within this phase, the people, resources, finances, suppliers and tasks must be correctly scheduled, in order for the Project Manager to be able to monitor and control the project delivery effectively. To help you to plan projects better than before, we’ve described here the 10 steps to planning a project.

If you want to plan projects quickly and efficiently, then take the following 10 steps:
A description of each step follows:

Step 1: Create a Project Plan

Firstly, you need to create a comprehensive Project Plan, which is critical to the success of the project. The Project Plan identifies the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) of the phases, activities and tasks to be undertaken. It defines the sequencing, duration and dependencies of each task, as well as the generic resources and financial expenditure required to complete your project.

Step 2: Create a Resource Plan

Following the creation of a Project Plan, a detailed assessment of the resources required to undertake the project should be made. The required labor, equipment and materials should be listed and the amount of each resource quantified. Finally, the resource consumption should be scheduled to provide the Project Manager with a complete view of the total amount of resource needed for each stage of the project.

Step 3: Create a Financial Plan

The Financial Plan describes the total quantity of financial resources required during each stage of the project. The total cost of each item of labor, equipment and materials is calculated, as well as the total cost of undertaking each activity within the Project Plan.

Step 4: Create a Quality Plan

To ensure that the project deliverables meet customer requirements, a Quality Plan is developed. This plan explicitly lists the quality targets to be achieved, and a suite of Quality Assurance and Quality Control activities are scheduled to ensure that the required level of quality is achieved throughout the project.

Step 5: Create a Risk Plan

Managing Project Risk is a critical process within the Project Lifecycle. To mitigate risk effectively, all foreseeable project risks are identified and rated in terms of their likelihood of occurrence and potential impact on the project. The risks are prioritized and a set of actions identified to reduce the likelihood of each risk and its impact on the project should it occur.

Step 6: Create an Acceptance Plan

The key to customer satisfaction is in gaining approval from the customer that the deliverables meet the quality criteria stated in the Quality Plan. To ensure that customer acceptance is sought for each deliverable produced by the project, an Acceptance Plan is created. The Acceptance Plan provides a schedule of Acceptance Reviews which are undertaken to gain customer acceptance for the completion of each deliverable within the project.

Step 7: Create an Communications Plan

A Communications Plan is a document which describes the information to be provided to project stakeholders to keep them informed of the progress of the project. Each stakeholder is listed and their requirements for information clearly identified. A schedule of communication events and activities are laid out to ensure that the right information is communicated to the right people at the right time.

Step 8: Create an Procurement Plan

Projects often need to acquire procurement items (such as products, services and specific results) from external suppliers. The Procurement Plan describes which items will be sourced from external suppliers and the timeframes and methods for delivery.

Step 9: Contract the Suppliers

With a clear view of the procurement items to be acquired, the project team will set out to select and contract one or a small number of preferred suppliers to the project.

Step 10: Perform Phase Review

With a detailed understanding of the activities, resources, finances and supplier relationships required to undertake the project, the team is ready to enter the Execution phase. A Phase Review is undertaken to ensure that all of the required Planning activities have been completed and to provide formal approval to proceed to the Project Execution phase.

There you have it. By completing these 10 steps, you will create a comprehensive suite of Project Plans which enable you to properly control people, resources, finances, suppliers and tasks throughout the entire Project Lifecycle.

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