

Project "Schedule Is Different" Why? and What Should Be Done About It?

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Abstract

The portion of projects in the industrial activity is growing. One major cause are the rapid changes of product and models which force more frequent conduct of development projects. In the short history of project management as a self stand discipline, it is well known that many projects fail to wholly meet their planned objectives. A major reason to this reality is that projects last time. Often, very long time. This results in knowledge deficiencies and high levels of uncertainties. To improve projects' performances, substantial efforts are invested in project control, which is aimed at assuring that the project meets its planned objectives within budget and no later than a specified deadline. Accordingly, schedule is a prime concern in project control. It had been observed, however, that 'schedule is different' in the sense that it is known that schedule (performance) indicators of methods for project control fail to provide good information. Here it is proposed that the cause for this shortcoming is the fundamental difference between costs and duration in projects. The duration of the project is determined by only a subset of its activities as oppose to the project's cost, which is the sum of the costs of its components. This is the notion of criticality: the critical path, or critical chain – project's duration is determined by its critical activities. A direct consequence of this distinction is that the analysis and evaluation of control data at the project level can be misleading. This issue is discussed and demonstrated. Moreover, schedule and schedule control provide foremost input to the coordination of the project's operation – the synchronization between the various resources which are required for each activity. Hence, in this aspect, too, the relevant information should be developed and provided at the activity level. In response, it is argued that project control data should be processed, analyzed and evaluated at the activity level. A framework to implement this approach is proposed and its benefits are discussed.

Keywords (12 font)

Project control; Earned value; Earned duration; Estimate at completion.

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