



Project Tracking and Managing Project Time Delay

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Project tracking is essential to monitor project progress and identify any project slippage or time delay. Treat effective time tracking as an early warning system.

Effective project tracking allows the project manager to see emerging problems and deal with them before they become big problems or impact the project schedule. Given the high [project failure](#) rate it is important to ensure that a method exists to relate the project plan - schedule, tasks and named resources - to time tracking of that project schedule and its tasks.

Effective Project Tracking

For project managers the key elements of performing effective project tracking are:

- Clear project tasks with a named resource for ensuring its completion to schedule

- Commitment of named resource to complete task according to schedule

- Regular project team meetings to discuss and update on progress and identify any dependencies and potential risks

- Regular verbal updates of progress with all named resources and identification of any dependencies and risks, especially competing project tasks or worse external factors such as competing projects. These are additional to project team meetings and designed to ensure that the project manager is very closely in touch with project progress

- Accurate and regular project reporting of progress and % complete of tasks based on team and individual updates

Recording Time Tracking

Projects involving more than a few people quickly develop a long list of tasks and dependencies and these must be held in some dedicated software as opposed to some manual paper-based method or a spreadsheet. This is because it becomes very complex very quickly to keep a project plan up to date. Project time tracking is primarily about recording the time taken by individuals to complete their tasks. Ideally timesheets for recording time are linked into the same software that records the project tasks so that updating the timesheet automatically updates the % complete of the assigned tasks. If not, then the project manager must update the project plan with project progress.

Managing Time Delay

The real value to effective project tracking and especially time tracking is to see any time delays really early. This gives the project manager more options for dealing with the time delay without impacting the project schedule. Every time delay matters but not every time delay requires corrective action, a simple rule of thumb is:

- One time delay to an important task triggers an offer of help and if refused the project manager maintains a watching brief and special attention on that task's completion

- A second time delay to the same task triggers immediate project manager action help to solve the issue and to mitigate any further risk of a time delay that impacts the project schedule

- A third time delay to an important task is significant enough to consider re-planning and the project manager should convene a project team meeting of the experts and key stakeholders to consider the options

All of these project tracking and time tracking activities will ensure that the project manager is in touch with progress and able to react to deviations from the project plan very quickly. Reacting to a time delay is critical to a [successful project](#) and effective project monitoring is an important part of [project risk management](#).