

Lehnert Computer Services

1482 Gone Away Ct.
Wheaton, IL 60187
(630)260-4770

E-Mail: ellen@lehnertcs.com

Ask the Teacher – July 2005

Ellen Lehnert, PMP
Lehnert Computer Services

- Update concerning “New Window”.
- Question regarding misuse of Constraints

UPDATE: In the April edition of Ask the Teacher, I discussed taking open projects and creating a “New Window” so information may be viewed over the multiple projects in one temporary file. A student wrote to me and mentioned that she had a custom field in one of the projects and the custom field was missing in the “New Window”.

The solution is an easy one – in the project with the custom field, copy the field in the Organizer to the Global.mpt file (right to left). This will allow the field to be seen in all projects on your computer including the “New Window”.

Question: During class you suggested that we use as few constraints as possible. Why?

Answer: Even though constraints can be helpful, they can also distort the critical path calculation of your project. An easy, quick check on a project schedule is to insert the column “Total Slack” (in the Gantt Chart, right click on a column heading in any table and insert the column “Total Slack”). If there are any negative numbers, you have a problem. The problem is two fold: 1. You will miss your target by the number of negative days and 2. Any related tasks after the task with the negative slack number will also be short of its target dates. Constraints will also inhibit the scheduling engine and will result in MS Project not being able to do what you want it to do.

Solution:

1. Use constraints only when absolutely necessary.
2. To remove a constraint, double click on the task, advanced tab, reset constraint to “As soon as possible”.
3. Do not enter dates in the “Start” and “Finish” fields – this will create automatic constraints.
4. If you have negative slack try to shorten the critical path by deleting tasks, adding resources, adding lead time or changing relationships (SS or FF). the best solution is to remove the constraint causing the negative slack.
5. Try to replace a constraint with the use of deadlines. Deadlines will still create negative slack but will not stop tasks from reacting to dates.