

Lehnert Computer Services

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Question: What are some of the best practices of using MS Project 2003?

Answer: To answer that question could take a book but I could give you some key elements that you could focus on to help ensure success. Hope this helps.

1. Create a good Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) – this is the foundation to the project schedule. Would you build a building without a good base?
2. Decide what you want the schedule to do for you. The more detail will be needed for more exacting data. If you are looking for a high level tracking tool, write the WBS to meet that objective.
3. Don't put so much detail in the WBS that the project schedule becomes the project. Remember, the schedule is supposed to help you manage your projects – not become the project.
4. Decide the tracking method to be used before you start your project. It is part of knowing what the project schedule should accomplish for you.
5. Think about the reports you are hoping to get from the schedule and design the custom elements in to get those reports during the planning stage.
6. If you are looking to obtain resource allocations from MS Project, be prepared to enter number of hours worked per person per day per task. This is the only way you will know how much work has been done and how much work is left to be accomplished on a task. You also must be adjusting remaining work when it changes. This can be time consuming but made easier through the use of MS Project Server.
7. If you are going to track your project schedule, make sure that all tasks have a predecessor and a successor. When work is accomplished, the relationships will be able to reassign uncompleted work to a new time frame easily. Without the relationships, this reassignment is less accurate as well as the critical path calculation.
8. Make sure that your options are set and project calendar is in place **BEFORE** you enter the first task.

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9. Baseline your schedule. This may be done in phases if it would be easier for you. There is a lot of information generated just by setting the baseline.

10. If you are not using costs, enter \$1 into the Standard Rate field of the Resource Sheet. Number of dollars will equal number of hours used on a task.