

Lehnert Computer Services

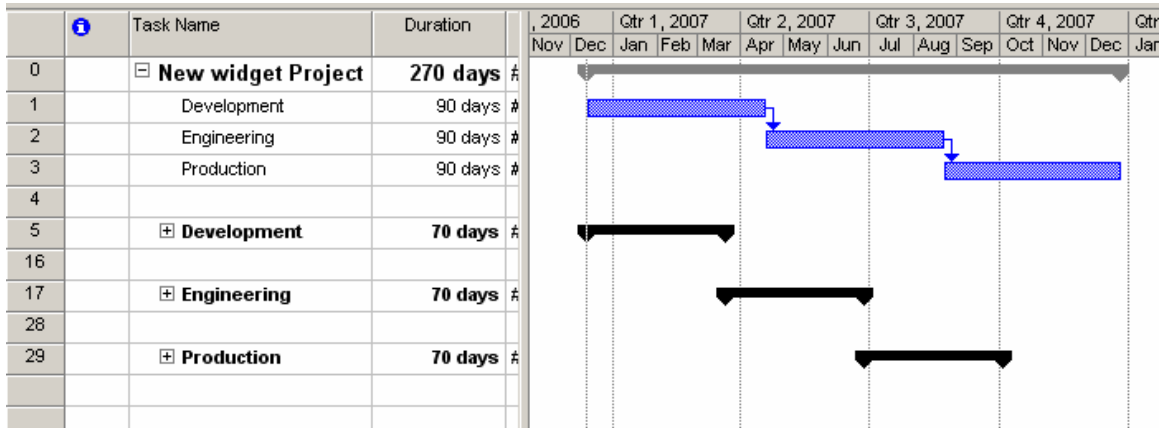
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RE: Measuring against a timeframe without using a baseline.

Question: I would like to use MS Project to manage my R & D projects. I can't set a baseline because my project changes so much during all phases of the project. However, I have a limited amount of time to accomplish each phase. Is there a way to monitor the project schedule for this type of situation?

Answer: MS Project is flexible enough to allow for creativity for unique situations. When you know the steps but are unsure about the details of the steps yet you have a restricted timeframe, you will need a standard to measure against. Please see the example below:



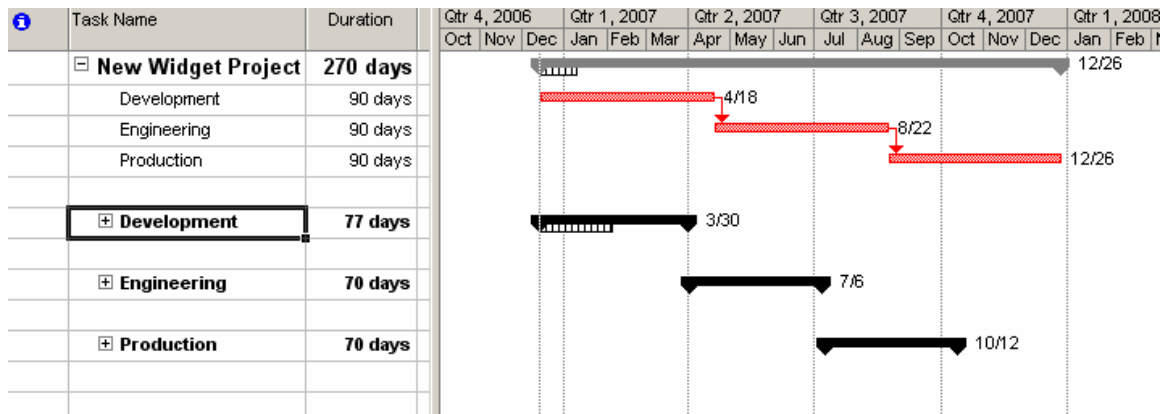
Tasks 1-3 become the length of time allowed for each phase of the project and are fixed. No resources are assigned and no tracking will be done to these tasks. Detail tasks within each summary task make up the work of the project. Tracking (Using Tracking Gantt and update tasks form or duration table) will be accomplished as percent complete along with start and finish dates for each task entered for the detail tasks. When the summary task Development reaches the ending date of the task 1 Development, that phase has exceeded the time allowed for the development of the new product. At this point, either more time is allowed or the development is terminated for the product.

The view shown (Gantt Chart) above will also serve as a high level report for management to get a snapshot of the progress of the project. Changing the Tracking Gantt to show finish dates for the tasks and summary bars allows for monitoring of remaining time per phase. This may be used as a high level report also. See example below:

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The steps to make the Tracking Gantt chart changes are as follows:

1. View → Tracking Gantt
2. Right click in the Gantt Chart area → select the Bar styles option (or Format → Bar styles)
3. In the top section select the red critical task line
4. In the bottom section click on Text
5. Select the line called "right" clicking on the words "% complete". The pull down values will appear, scroll down to the field called "finish" and have it appear in the line.
6. On top scroll down to summary and click on it.
7. In the bottom: Select the line called right clicking on the words "% complete". The pull down values will appear.
8. Click "OK" to lock in the changes.

The view shown above was also created using the "Outline level 1" selected from the "Show" button on the formatting toolbar. I also recommend placing a milestone during a phase and at the end of each phase to obtain short term goal reports.

This project template was designed based on the needs of a user. I would like to treat this template as an example of increased utility when the final outcome is designed into the schedule.