

# Lehnert Computer Services

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**Topic:** Are you ready for Project Server??

**Question:** We installed the software for MS Project Server. I not sure my users are ready to use it yet. What are my next steps?

**Answer:** This question could take volumes to answer but I'd like to give you some high level points to consider before moving forward. Most people think that the software is just like Excel or Word and you install it and start using it. This couldn't be further from the truth. MS Project and MS Project Server is automation of a process which is designed for your organization based on how you want to perform projects. It is based on the project management principles that projects must adhere to be successful. So here is my top 10 points to ask yourself if your organization is ready to use MS Project Server.

1. Why are you going to install this system? What do you hope it will do for you? You should have clear goals to set expectations or you will be disappointed. Lay out a clear path of how you are going to get from where you are now to where you want to be. Establish the relationship of the project management processes to other business processes.
2. Culture, culture, culture. What is the Project Management maturity within your organization? Do you do fly by the seat of your pants Project Management now. How will your people feel about being structured? You will need to move them forward to your process slowly or there will be push back. This system depends on human behavior. If someone doesn't play nice in the sandbox, you might not get the results you are looking to achieve.
3. Who will be the enforcer? Someone has to be watching and making sure that people are complying with the rules or the data will become increasing meaningless in the server. Most organizations are giving this responsibility to a PMO organization. In a much smaller organization, I have seen it be one or two people but someone must have the responsibility.
4. Do you have a process of project management you are using now? If not, MS Project Server will move your organization toward a process. This will result in an increase the success of your projects at the same time that you are setting up standards that your project managers and other users must function within. Templates should be created and contain standard fields, tables, reports, codes, reports, etc. that will help the consistency of your process and feed information into MS Project Server.
5. Do your Project Managers create project schedules and manage projects the schedules now? If they do not, it is a big leap from Excel spreadsheet and post-it note project management to working with MS Project Server. Your users will need training, time to adjust to the culture change and small steps to achieve your organizational goals.

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6. Training: once a process has been established and documented, the users at all levels must be trained to use MS Project Server the way you have designed to use it. To ensure success, minimum training must occur in the following areas:

Project Management theory:

- The basic principles of project management and terminology
- Understand moving a statement of work to a Work Breakdown Structure
- Principles behind sequencing and critical path
- Estimating task durations vs. work
- Manage projects to a schedule, baselining and track progress

MS Project client: Are your Project Managers using MS Project now? Were they self-taught? (This might not be a good thing). All PM's should be at the same level of expertise when they are on the client product. They should be able to use the PM theory stated above in the software.

Administrator training: Technical expertise to install and maintain the server  
MS Project Web Access and MS Project Server Administrative

Make sure your training plan includes re-training, training of new users after rollout, and on-going support.

7. Make sure that PM's understand task typing, effort-driven scheduling and creating assignments correctly. If you are looking for resource allocations or resource requirement forecasting, this is an essential skill requirement. Don't expect that MS Project Server is the silver bullet and will give you exact allocation numbers. It only understands what humans are telling it. How much work do you want to do for the results you get back?
8. Establish who should see what information. There is a big culture shift when there have been private schedules and now they are public schedules. Be prepared for some concerns in this area. I have seen some installations not progress because they were not prepared for the impact of this shift.
9. Users must see value in the work they are doing to increase user level support and compliance. If the team members and the project managers are not seeing that their extra work is driving the success of their projects and, therefore, the organization, there will be compliance issues. Many overworked people will look at project management is just more paper work and don't understand the result of the work.
10. And last but the most important is Management Support. Plan and simple – installations will fail with it. Management must be involved from the start, stay involved and be a driving force to ensure success.

In this short article I could not address everything that an organization would have to attend to insure that an MS Project Server installation could be a success. This was an attempt of scratching the surface and putting in front of you questions you will need to ask yourself before moving forward. I have not addressed the technical requirements and knowledge needed to support the Sharepoint, SQL, servers, etc. and many other topics.

In closing I would like to suggest that you don't try this alone. Get the experts or people with experience to help you. I would also like to encourage you to send me more lessons learned concerning MS Project Server and I will try to print them in future articles. As always I also encourage you to send me your best tips and tricks for future publication as well.