

Article for MPUG ezine – February 19, 2009
Ellen Lehnert, PMP, MCT, MCITP – LehnertCS, LLC
www.lehnertcs.com

Topic: MS Project and MS Project Server are like a game of chess.

Gary in Muscatine, IA, Cindy in Madison, WI and Pam of Silver Springs, MD asked: I took a class in MS Project 2007 (and/or MS Project Server 2007) and I am still not sure how to create and manage a schedule. There are so many MS Project Server 2007 options and features; I don't know where to start. How come I can't figure out how to make this work for me?

Answer: Because MS Project 2007 and MS Project Server 2007 are like a game of chess. If you were going to play chess you would learn that a pawn moves forward 1 or 2 spaces (or over one to bump) and you would learn that a bishop can move on the diagonal, etc. Just knowing these moves, can you play a game of chess? Do you need to know something more? What is missing? The answer is that you could play the game but not very well. You need the strategy to fill in the gaps of the knowledge.

MS Project 2007 and MS Project Server 2007 are the same concept. Attending classes will give you the moves and show you the features. Every company and organization will have their own strategy as to what do they want the software to help them with. Some of the hardest classes I teach are classes of mixed student types. In one class in Florida I taught I had IT, event planners, building maintenance, product engineers and accounting students. Each one of them had a different goal of what they hoped MS Project could do for them. Helping them find their strategy became my goal. It is your goal to find your objective which could be easier with some help.

So you need to ask yourself what I want the software to do for me. Why am I putting in the effort to work with MS Project? Asking who needs to know what when and how for each schedule will help you define your goals. It will also define what features of MS Project 2007 and MS Project Server 2007 will help you reach your goals. Once you have a goal you can focus your efforts toward reaching the target and understanding the benefit from the work you are doing to reach that objective. The keystrokes will follow the strategy and knowing how to perform the keystrokes correctly will make your job easier. When you are a student in a class don't get bogged down in the keystrokes, concentration of the capabilities of the software. Then if you know you need a feature, you can delve deeper into the how to's and best practices of that feature.

By the way, I would suggest using this analogy to help anyone understand that MS Project 2007 and MS Project Server 2007 are different than other software products. I have been asked by clients to configure MS Project Server and have it running in a week for hundreds of users. After I tell this analogy there is more understanding and the question changes to what can we accomplish in a short time. Another client I had thought just installing the software would solve their project management problems which they quickly found out was not the truth. Your goals might not also fit into the culture of your organization which is another piece of the game that needs to be considered.