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**Topic:** Getting buy-in from the users of MS Project & MS Project Server is important

**Julie C. of Boston, MA asks:** I have completed installing MS Project Server but am having trouble getting the users to really work with the new system. We have been through the training classes but the project managers are reluctant to use the new system. What can I do to encourage the project managers to be more involved in using MS Project Server?

**Answer:** You have run into the cultural impact of using MS Project Server. You can put the tools out there but if the users don't pick them up and use them, they are not very helpful. Here are a few tips that will help you increase the user buy-in that you will need to have the new installation be a success.

1. **Language.** For many users it is their first experience using project management concepts. Don't take it for granted that the users understand the language. WBS, baseline, tracking, Gantt Chart, duration, work, resources, earned value, etc. are words that are the language of project management. Don't hesitate to define these words in basic language to create a comfort zone for the new user.
2. **Managing schedules:** I see a high frequency of project managers that are not used to managing to a schedule being asked to use Project Server. Urging the users to use the software doesn't create this skill. Frequency of use does. I suggest starting slow in this area. Creating and managing schedules outside of the server environment is very helpful. Having a solid understanding of MS Project Professional before working with MS Project Server is preferable. Encourage people to try creating and managing a schedule that is simple (create a WBS -plan a meeting, plan a vacation, plan a party or a weekend) using MS Project. You could make this part of an MS Project Professional class or a separate training experience. This is a great training activity as a group also. Have the users track the activities to get the feel for managing to a schedule. Then move forward to simple project schedules.
3. **Training:** People feel a sense of comfort when they understand what is expected of them. A consulting client I have started by teaching everything to the users and said "use it". As a result, no one did and the Project Server was considered too hard to use. I created a keystroke level operations guide and taught the usage to the project managers. The response was "this is what we should have done the first time around". This user is now expanding functionality because the project managers are requesting it.
4. **Comfort zone:** In installation of any new software system takes many people out of their comfort zone. Starting small and working toward a larger goal is the best philosophy for your approach. To increase comfort zone, the users must see ease of use to derive value. Start with publishing projects and allowing users to inquire on the projects. Create some custom views that give them value for their time. Many of my users start with percentage complete tracking at first and work up to team members entering time in the second iteration of the installation.

5. **Value for the work done:** All too often I see users going through the motions and not feeling that there is value in the work they are doing. Allow your users to see that keeping project schedules up to date benefits the organization. It will create more information to make better decisions in project and resource management. The more correct the information is, the more value to the data. MS Project Server will not manage your projects for you but is a tool that will help you manage your projects.
  
6. **Management support:** If the project managers see that management is using and expecting to use the information derived from MS Project Server, accountability will be the result. The project managers will know that the work they are doing on the project schedules is part of what is needed to get the job done. Many PMO's try to push the process and management is looking the other way. Keeping management informed will increase their support which will result in overall impact on your installation.

User buy-in is essential to the success of an Enterprise Project Management system. Do not hesitate to get input and feedback from the users as to problems and suggestions as to how to make it easier on the users. Then try to act on that information to help make the system a better environment for the users.