

Schedule quality webinar, 7 February 2017

Webinar Question	Webinar Response
<p>Do you believe Earned value is overshadowing the quality of the schedules used to support Earned Value?</p>	<p>I believe that the quality of a Schedule is a pre-requisite for a successful implementation of EV. EV requires that a Baseline is established, as a term of reference of the project performance, and that a Current version of the Schedule is regularly updated. Measuring something against something wrong produces misleading indicators</p>
<p>Can Microsoft Project be used for Schedule Quality?</p>	<p>MS Project is one of the planning tools on the market. It is not a SQ measurement tool. Many metrics can be analysed in MS Project and Excel. However many of analysis that can be performed with tools like Fuse cannot be performed with MS Project. Either low or high quality Schedules can be produced with any planning tool.</p>

<p>Do you think getting the schedule density correct will have a direct effect on SQ. 2.What are your definitions of level 1, 2 &3 ?</p>	<p>Schedule density is very similar to the "rolling wave" planning approach according to which not all the activities are fully detailed when the schedule is developed.</p> <p>Because of the need to continuously break down long duration activities into smaller ones, the frequency of SQ check will have to be "synchronized" with the ongoing breakdown, which obviously implies also adding new dependencies.</p> <p>The definition of "schedule level 1,2 &3", which obviously should not be confused with WBS levels 1,2 etc., has been and is still being debated.</p> <p>The intent is to associate the smallest level number (e.g. 1) to the lowest degree of detail (long duration activities).</p> <p>There is no official definition of what a Level 1, 2 & 3 schedule should look like (to my knowledge).</p> <p>Level 1 Schedule is sometime referred to as "Schedule on a page".</p> <p>Some planners may use lags and-or leads in Level 1 schedules and also relationships different from FS; I believe that the reliability of a Critical Path of a high level schedule is low.</p>
<p>How can these principles be best applied in smaller organisations where a 'just get on with it' attitude can be prevalent?</p>	<p>I believe that ALL schedules should meet a minimum-agreed level of quality. It is the result of a cultural change based on a clear understanding of how important SQ is. Those that keep saying "just get on with it" should be made aware of how also small projects-schedules of poor quality may lead to poor performance.</p>
<p>How do you get project managers across the business to buy into these concepts consistently?</p>	<p>By proving the SQ concept is not a nice-to-have, in some way.</p> <p>A key responsibility lies with top management that must recognise the value of SQ and demand that it is achieved.</p> <p>For example one argument that may be convincing is that losing sight of the "real" critical path, which can only derive from a correct application of dependencies, diverts the PM's attention to a "fake" critical path. This in turn will consume PM energy in the wrong direction. I could offer many other examples, if needed.</p>

<p>How do you handle the Change requests (which are very common e.g. in IT projects) ?</p>	<p>Changes, in particular their impact, must be analysed BEFORE they are implemented. Therefore, the analysis of the potential impact of a change should be made on a "what if" copy of the schedule. AFTER the change is approved, it should be obviously incorporated in the Current and in the revised Baseline.</p>
<p>How do you manage a quality programme where you are not directly managing the projects within the programme?</p>	<p>This a major problem as I said in my presentation. One aspect of the Programme Quality is that it is affected by the quality of the individual Projects. One major aspect that determines the Quality of the Programme is a sound management system of the interfaces-interdependencies.</p>
<p>Schedule quality does not seem to consider the intended rules of credit to manage the plan. For instance , a planner may use duration percentage instead of physical percentage. This I think will tell if the plan would produce value for control. I think quality should consider not just the plan but the maintainance which may not be available as at the plan stage.</p>	<p>The choice of duration percentage, rather than physical one, is determined, for example, on how much the organisation believes in Earned Value. The human element of SQ assessment that I mentioned in my presentation should take care also of the aspects that SQ tools do not consider. For example the strategic choice of adopting (or not) EV.</p>
<p>What do you see is an accetable % of a schedule ran through Acuemen Fuse?</p>	<p>A rather "popular" agreed number is 75%. The DCMA 14-point method is being adopted by an increasing number of organisation. I am not aware of a consistent adoption of a minimum threshold (e.g. 80%).</p> <p>I personally do not understand why, once the defects have been identified, which is one of the time consuming tasks that tools like Fuse can do extremely fast, they should not be fixed. A baseline should not have any defects, unless some of them are justified.</p> <p>Obviously the Current Schedule requires continuous monitoring of its quality.</p>
<p>Which assessment method is most widely used in the UK?</p>	<p>I do not have enough statistics to offer a reliable answer. In my experience The Acumen Fuse index is probably the most widely accepted one. Also the DCMA 14 point method is becoming more and more widely used.</p>

<p>Work has the tendency to fill the time available, how can the target time be presented to users rather than the time available?</p>	<p>C Northcote Parkinson first framed this "law" in a whimsical essay for managers ("work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion". It should therefore be considered in the "management" context rather than SQ. There are however several ways in which your question could be reframed and an SQ related answer provided. Would you care to be more explicit? I will be happy to try to answer if you wish to contact me</p>
<p>Do you have any links to websites that inform us about Schedule Quality Standards?</p>	<p>There are thousands of websites that address, somehow, this topic. I suggest to look for DCMA 14 point, the Deltek site itself etc.</p>
<p>Do you believe the lack of interest from top managers / people in charge is mainly due to lack of understanding on what it takes to execute a project.</p>	<p>In my opinion top managers believe that the real knowledge of activities duration, relationships, resource and cost loading, which is basically what Planning is about, is really in the hands of the people with practical experience. What top management often misses is the importance to "capture" the high value experience, accumulated by the experts, in a high quality Schedule. The education process really needs to encompass senior management too.</p>
<p>Further to poor support from Senior Managers is there a problem with SM wanting the schedule to bring 'good news' rather than accurate reporting?</p>	<p>Absolutely yes. As I mentioned in my presentation, very often middle management misinform top management because they (middle management) are afraid of making top management "unhappy" with accurate reporting, which may reveal bad news.</p>
<p>You talked about reports on project failures. Are we sufficiently analysing successful projects and the reasons for their success? We have examples of very successful projects from the past where there was no digitisation or sophisticated tools.</p>	<p>I believe that more research should be conducted on this topic. There are books on reasons for project failures. Bent Flyvbjerg says, amongst other things, that there are insufficient successful mega projects to facilitate meaningful analysis. A joint work, academia-Construction Industry, would cast more light on the reasons for projects failure and success. There are still several organisations that do not collect "lessons learnt" data in a systematic and structured manner and, if they do it, they do not analyse the collected data in an effective manner.</p>