



## White Paper 2022-04

### How the Essential Purpose of the Integrated Project Schedule is to Coordinate Project Contributors

*In projects, various schedules are being used: contractual schedule, strategic schedule, integrated project schedule, and more detailed schedules covering only part of the scope. The integrated project schedule, fully linked and covering the complete project scope, can effectively be used to coordinate all contributors which is actually its main objective.*

*In this White Paper we investigate how this function translates in terms of differences with other schedules and in terms of information needed in integrated project schedules.*

#### Introduction

Integrated project schedules are essential in projects. Those fully linked schedules cover the complete project scope and provide the main reference in terms of project execution and decision-making (refer to [White Paper 2015-14 'How to Build a Proper Project Schedule Hierarchy'](#) and [White Paper 2015-18 'How to Produce an Adequate Integrated Project Schedule'](#)). Unfortunately, they are often much too detailed which creates quality and accuracy issues (refer to [White Paper 2012-28 'How too much Detailed Planning often Kills Project Success'](#)).

#### Main purpose of the integrated project schedule

The main purpose of the integrated project schedule is to coordinate the various contributors of the project.

No other schedule can accomplish this:

- Higher level schedules (e.g. simplified schedule, strategic schedule, summary schedule etc) are either not fully linked, do not clearly represent each contributor scope or do not allow interfaces between contributors to be visualised with sufficient details,
- Lower-level schedules have more detail but represent only part of the scope (restrictions in terms of discipline or scope subcontracted) and therefore cannot represent the actual interfaces between all project contributors,

In addition, the integrated project schedule is set up and maintained to enable the right decisions to be taken in relation to this coordination between contributors. In a sense, this is the main purpose of the integrated project schedule.

#### Consequences of this purpose on the integrated project schedule setup and usage

This observation on its purpose implies a number of structural consequences on the integrated project schedule:

- Contributors in charge of each activity have to be clearly identified in the schedule (at least by main entities, departments or contracts),
  - Adequate coding of the schedule allows various filters and views adapted to each contributor,
- The integrated project schedule should focus on the interfaces between contributors rather than the detail of each contributor's work (which can generally be available in a lower-level schedule), and particularly the dependencies between the work of various contributors,
- It is absolutely essential that this schedule covers the entire project scope and thus all contributors to the project. This aspect is particularly important for owners as it needs to include contributions from the different contractors as well as from operational readiness, commissioning to maintenance transfer aspects, financing activities etc.

It has also implications in the way the schedule is updated and how updates are communicated:

- Contributors must be requested for data on actual progress and forecasts. This may not always be straightforward when contractual relationships limit access to actual data and may taint forecasts due to tactical contract management approaches,
  - This requires a proper schedule hierarchy to be in place so that progress data from detailed schedules flow into higher level schedules
  - Lower-level schedules must be updated with a consistent frequency, and a good understanding to be developed on their philosophy (challenging vs balanced) to translate their data into the integrated schedule data,
- Contributors must be systematically updated on the updated schedules to be able to plan their contribution adequately and in a properly coordinated manner with the rest

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of the project. Again, in the case of contractual relationships, the project, tactically, may not want to update fully contributors so as not to provide them with additional time for their task ('virtual float': refer to our [White Paper 2016-07 "How to Fight the Fallacy of Virtual Float"](#)).

Moreover, it reinforces the need for the integrated project schedule to reflect the latest actual knowledge of the project as a reference; and preclude any temptation to develop several parallel versions of such an important project piloting tool (in which case the risk becomes very


high not to know which one is the actual reference and thus take poor decisions for the project).

### Summary

The purpose of the integrated project schedule is to coordinate all project contributors. This purpose should not be overseen. As a consequence, it should focus on interfaces between such contributors without delving much into each contributor detailed activities. This is really the differentiator with any other schedule used in the project hierarchy. This is worth remembering when setting it up, because this purpose will inform how it is setup and coded.

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