



8 Strategies to Improve your Project Plan

Frédéric Dufour

Overview

The following are 8 strategies that can make your project more successful and provide additional benefits.

1. Place resources at the centre of your planning process

Reduce costs by optimizing the workforce

- Recruiting, training, motivating and rewarding your staff are certainly key processes of your management.
- Qualify and quantify the optimal workforce in light of the project portfolio;
- Compare this optimum with the existing workforce (both internal and external);
- Imagine and test scenarios that match task requirements and resource offers through simple HR techniques: recruitment, dismissal, training, use of contractors and temporary workers;
- Set the optimal cost based on estimated realistic productivity and adapt the salary package accordingly.

2. Concentrate on the most profitable projects

Give more importance to the marginal effect of a project

Planning is a concurrent process: new projects compete with existing ones for the use of (limited) resources. As a consequence, a particular project doesn't necessarily have a positive effect on the entire portfolio, even if its expected income seems very attractive. That's why we give more importance to the 'marginal effect' of a project than to its income or its theoretical profit.

So, before adding a new project to an existing project portfolio, we use the following methodology that helps us answer this crucial question:

'Is the real added-value of this additional project positive?'

- Calculate the expected cash-flows (CF) generated by our existing project portfolio. Imagine and test several planning simulations incorporating this additional project
- Compare the CF forecasts of each of these simulations to the initial CF forecasts
- Reject this project if, at the end of the project, the cumulated CF has not been increased

As a result, we concentrate solely on the most profitable projects.

3. Anticipate the incidence of recurring problems

Limit risks and produce reliable plans

Anticipate the incidence of recurring problems by using the concept of risk coefficients. Indeed, risks, such as illnesses, days off, unplanned tasks, longer tasks, changes, and interruptions are frequent throughout the life of the plan. These events are so frequent that we often have statistics on their occurrence. That's why we will model their occurrence and incorporate their effect into our plans.

By doing so, we'll improve the reliability of the delivery dates, and certainly the cohesion of the team, the quality of the work and therefore the profits. Use the concept of risk coefficient. Imagine the scenarios or contingency plans, be they positive or negative.

4. Win the TTM (Time to Market) battle

Technology Leaders know how crucial mastering time to market (TTM) is to succeed in a volatile and competitive environment. However, improving TTM is often linked to compromising quality and thus losing credibility and market share. That's why preparation and anticipation are the key words in this battle in which we can assist you.

- **Preparation.** Preparation is about using tools to achieve the best plan. Tools and features such as WBS, task requirements, competences, efficiencies, risks, retro-planning, goals, priorities, resource levelling, concurrent planning, simulations, KPIs, scorecards, etc.
- **Anticipation.** Anticipation means imagining the scenarios or contingency plans, be they positive or negative, which might modify the course of the initial plan.

This will help you prepare to face the possibility that one of these scenarios has to be played out. Your flexibility will become the best insurance for winning the TTM battle.

5. Save time to concentrate on your strategic tasks

Because your time is precious, quick responses from your planning tool are priceless.

- **Scalability:** manage dozens or thousands of tasks and resources with the same ease
- **Scheduling:** build an optimized schedule in seconds from short to long-term
- **Re-planning:** take account of progress and changes and re-plan on the spot
- **Reports :** generate and read intelligent reports as clear summaries, not novels
- **Project creation:** use project and task group templates
- **Encodings:** ergonomic interfaces to speed up your encodings
- **Navigation:** find, sort, read or edit any data in just one or two clicks
- **Exports:** save any kind of data in a click and use it in other programs

6. Better understand your organization and its environment

Keep track of history

The final state of a plan is the result of events throughout its life:

- The initial construction of the plan
- The scenarios you assessed
- The simulations you tested
- The successive progress statuses
- The events that forced you to change course

All these different stages are a piece of the history you need to keep to help you better understand your organization and its environment and feed your learning curve. This material is priceless when you have to share your planning expertise or when you re-visit a specific moment of the plan and test the relevancy of alternative working configurations. Feed your learning curve.

7. Retain and disseminate the best practices

Encourage 'Project Darwinism'

Among the reasons that explain why so many projects fail, one of the most important is certainly the lack of memory and/or transmission of previous experience. Don't consider projects in isolation from others, but calculate their marginal effect

8. Profit from the information your plan holds

Increase your turnover and your profits

Planning is much more than allocating resources to tasks or predicting project ending dates. Actually, planning can be seen as one of the most powerful methodologies for performing SWOT analyses. From such SWOT analyses, you can start elaborating and implementing strategies not just to reduce costs, but also to increase your turnover and your profits. What you learn from your planning system will thus help you set up a large variety of strategies:

- Increase turnover (or activity)
- Create or find buffer activities
- Use buffer resources
- Anticipate and counter declines in activity
- Anticipate and counter disruptions

Increase profits

- Specialize your activities
- Specialize your resources
- Adapt your pricing dynamically
- Adapt third-party agreements

The Author

CEO and founding shareholder of ISC, Frédéric Dufour is a successful entrepreneur whose life is devoted to conceiving and developing methodologies and software programs that constantly improve modern management.

About Intelligent Software Company

Intelligent Software Company has been developing planning solutions for more than 10 years. They are proud to offer PlanningForce Solutions.

<http://www.planningforce.com> – For big companies and technology leaders

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About Project Perfect

Project Perfect is a project management software consulting and training organisation based in Sydney Australia. Their focus is to provide organisations with the project infrastructure they need to successfully manage projects.

Project Perfect sell “Project Administrator” software, which is a tool to assist organisations better manage project risks, issues, budgets, scope, documentation planning and scheduling. They also created a technique for gathering requirements called “Method H”™, and sell software to support the technique. For more information on Project tools or Project Management visit www.projectperfect.com.au