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Gantt Charts

When managing projects, large number of activities are to be controlled and completed on time. If you miss a deadline, the costs may increase considerably and you may even be penalized. A **Gantt Chart** is a visual representation that provides an instant overview of the status of a project. It outlines all activities involved in a project against a timescale. A basic Gantt chart simply lists what needs to be done and when. It is often used by any industry that requires project management such as: construction, telecommunications, information technology and management consulting.
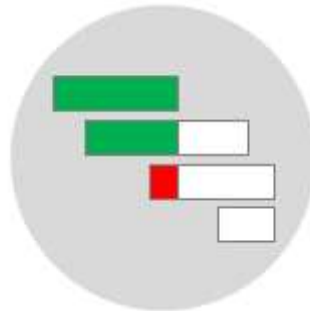
Gantt charts are great ways to manage project schedule very simply and easily. They are used to plan, track and report the progress of any project. They are used early in the project to identify and plan activities and their expected durations. They are used throughout the project to monitor and track the progress, and to identify issues that can delay the project. They also serve as communication tools by showing the team

the progress they are making and keeping management updated on project progress. A Gantt chart can also be used to plan your personal projects and track your own targets.

A Gantt chart is a simple way to schedule your activities. It allows to see how your project is performing at a glance. It allows to focus your efforts and reacting quickly to unexpected situations to help bring the project back on track. It serves as a reporting tool and allows to communicate the progress and status to any stakeholder. Its graphical nature and simplicity helps keep your team and sponsors informed of the progress and issues as they arise. A Gantt chart is also helpful when assigning resources and estimating costs of activities.

A Gantt chart is a type of bar chart that shows the start and end dates of the activities required to complete your project.
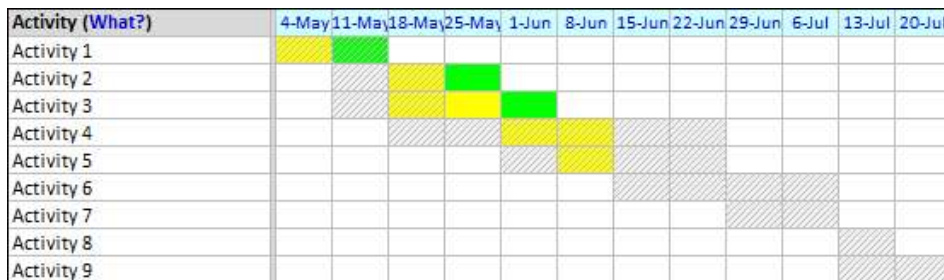

You can see in a Gantt chart the activities and their durations, the order in which they will be accomplished, and the responsible person or team for completing each of them. Other information can also be shown such as: the needed resources and cost estimates, key project milestones, dependencies between activities, critical paths, and the progress and status of activities and the project as a whole. A detailed Gantt chart can answer the following questions:

- What are the activities that must be accomplished?
- In what order?
- How long should they take?
- Which activities are on time and which are behind schedule?
- Who should do them?
- What are the needed resources?

- What are the key stages and milestones?
- What are the relationships between the various activities (sequential or simultaneous)?
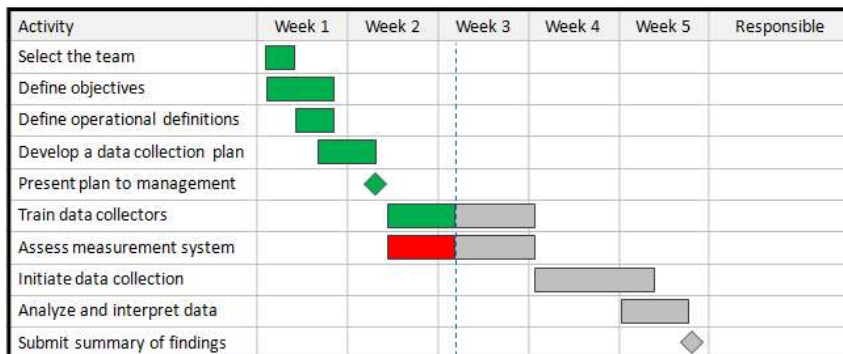- What is the percentage of completion?

A Gantt chart is created by drawing horizontal bars to represent time duration of activities. By looking at the chart, you can easily understand the sequence of the activities, how long each activity takes, and compare the planned and actual duration of the activities. Gantt charts can be drawn by hand or by using spreadsheet applications. If you need more elaborated features, you might want to go for a project management software.

Activity (What?)	4-May	11-May	18-May	25-May	1-Jun	8-Jun	15-Jun	22-Jun	29-Jun	6-Jul	13-Jul	20-Jul
Activity 1												
Activity 2												
Activity 3												
Activity 4												
Activity 5												
Activity 6												
Activity 7												
Activity 8												
Activity 9												

A spreadsheet application can be used to create Gantt charts

Example:

This is an example of a Gantt chart that outlines all the activities to be performed in a project. The milestones here are represented as diamond shapes. Note the vertical today line (dashed) which shows where the todays date is.

Activity	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Responsible
Select the team						
Define objectives						
Define operational definitions						
Develop a data collection plan						
Present plan to management						
Train data collectors						
Assess measurement system						
Initiate data collection						
Analyze and interpret data						
Submit summary of findings						

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)

It may be helpful to create a **Work Breakdown Structure** (WBS) before you create your Gantt chart to establish what the activities are. A WBS is a hierarchical deliverable-oriented breakdown of the work to be performed. It represents the entire scope of the project and helps dividing the overall project into smaller more manageable categories of work. This reduces the project scope and complexity, provides a structured vision of what is to be delivered, provides the basis for schedule development and control, and provides a framework for resource planning and cost estimating.

A WBS is one of the fundamental project management tools that precedes detailed activity planning. Each descending level of the WBS represents more details of the project work. The work activities are contained within the lowest level in the form of work products or deliverables (which are often called work packages). By describing deliverables and not activities, the project team has more freedom for planning work activities.

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