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fast tracking

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Fast-tracking and crashing can get your project back on schedule

Tom Mochal cover these two methods of fixing a project schedule.

By Tom Mochal | December 18, 2006, 12:00 AM PST

Project managers should evaluate their schedules on a weekly basis to ensure their project remains on track. If the project starts to drift, there are a number of techniques that can be used to get back on schedule. Most of these are not dramatic.

However, let's assume that your project starts to slip dramatically. It may not be possible to get back on track through the typical schedule management techniques. Let's further assume that the project deadline is fixed and can't change. In this case you may need to employ more dramatic means. Two techniques to consider are fast tracking and crashing.

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Fast tracking

Fast tracking means that you look at activities that are normally done in sequence and assign them instead partially in parallel. For instance, normally you would not start constructing a solution until the design was completed. However, if you were fast-tracking, you would start constructing the solution in areas where you felt the design was pretty solid without waiting for the entire design to be completed. Fast-tracking always involves risk that could lead to increased cost and some rework later. For instance, in the example of designing and constructing an application, it's possible that the design might change before it is finalized, and those final changes may result in having to redo some of the construct work already underway.

A good rule of thumb is that sequential activities can sometimes be fast-tracked by up to 33%. In other words, if you're fast-tracking, you can start the second of two sequential activities when the first activity is 66% complete. There is risk involved. However, this seems to be a level of fast-tracking risk that is normally acceptable.

Crashing

"Crashing" the schedule means to throw additional resources to the critical path without necessarily getting the highest level of efficiency. For instance, let's say one person was working on a ten-day activity on the critical path. If you were really desperate to shorten this timeframe, you might add a second resource to this activity. In fact, the resource may not have all the right skills and he might work five days just to reduce the overall time by two days.

On the surface, the prior tradeoff might not make sense. After all, why would you have a person work five days just to reduce an activity by two days? It's not efficient. However, can you imagine a project that was so important that you were willing to make this kind of tradeoff? Think about the YR2K projects. When the end of 1999 was rolling around, many companies were throwing resources onto projects; desperate to get them completed on time. They were fast-tracking.

Additional resources may come from within the project team, or they may be loaned temporarily from outside the team. One of the goals of crashing the schedule is to minimize the incremental cost. However, in exchange for completing some work ahead of schedule, crashing usually always leads to some additional incremental cost to the project. If you're willing and able to spend more to accelerate the schedule, fast-tracking may be a viable option for you.

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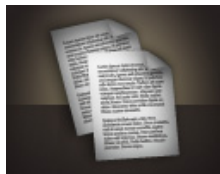
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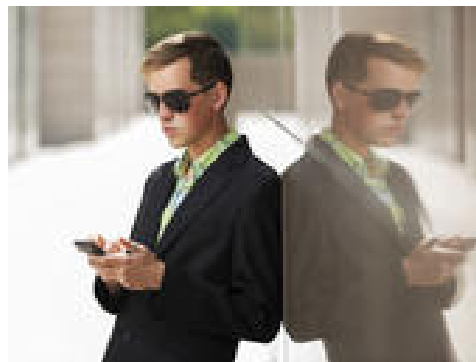SMARTER, FASTER PERFORMANCE ANALYTICS

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Fast-track construction

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Fast-track construction is construction industry jargon for a project delivery strategy to start construction before the design is complete. The purpose is to shorten the time to completion. Since it overlaps the processes, it might better be called telescoping—but "Fast-Track" carries a sense of action and movement and has become a popular term.[1]

Contents

Benefits of Fast-Track

Shorter schedules are desirable for reasons that vary with building owners. A shorter schedule may reduce a manufacturer's time-to-market, a school district's need to reduce overcrowding or simply provide a new home for a family sooner. Shorter schedules may also reduce the cost of construction financing and reduce overhead costs for the design and construction organizations. Shorter schedules may also reduce the impact of inflation during construction. The fast-tracking of the project is therefore achieved through the integration of design and construction phases.

But Fast-Track is more difficult to manage than the traditional Design-Bid-Build process. It requires detailed knowledge of the process, effective planning, integrity and close coordination among the organizations executing the work.

Inherent risks

The final cost of the project is uncertain when construction begins because design is not complete.[2] With the traditional Design-Bid-Build process a complete set of construction documents and specifications describes what the builder agrees to build and serves as the heart of the contract. On Fast-Track projects, the design, construction documents and specifications are incomplete, so setting the final cost presents problems. To deal with this difficultly, owners typically use a cost-reimbursable contract with the builder (a construction manager or a general contractor). The contract may include a cost estimate with no guarantee or there may be a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP). However, even with a GMP, there can be argument over the scope of work covered by the GMP since the design was incomplete when the contract was executed.

There is also a risk that work built in an early phase of the project may not suit later design decisions. For instance, if the building shape changes after the foundations are built, there is increased cost and delay to modify the completed foundations. Or an item of equipment that is selected late in the process may require drains or water and power connections that were not anticipated early in the project. Furthermore, the interpretation of the design brief from the contractor may differ from the owner which can result in a conflict of interest.

If time is not crucial, owners may take a prudent approach to finish design and get a fixed lump-sum price before starting construction (the Design-Bid-Build process). However, if there is a reason to speed project delivery, Fast-Track can be used with any project delivery strategy, such as CM at Risk and Agency CM (see Construction Management), Design–build, Bridging and Integrated Project Delivery. Even the traditional Design-Bid-Build process can use Fast-Track concepts by bidding separate general construction contracts for phases of the work.

However, many owners choose experienced project teams and consider the rewards to be well worth the risks. One source states that Fast-Track is used on 40 percent of building projects.[3]

History of the process

For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the common project delivery process was Design-Bid-Build. An architect and/or engineer completed a design, made detailed construction drawings, wrote specifications and invited multiple contractors to submit proposals stipulating their price to execute the project.,[4][5]

Typically, government organizations were required to award construction work to the lowest qualified bidder. The political assumption was that the low bid demonstrated a prudent use of public money, and open competitive bidding demonstrated a fair selection of contractors. Since competitive lump-sum bidding required complete construction drawings and specifications, Fast-Track was unavailable to public owners.

However, most public procurement regulations allowed procurement of architectural, engineering and other services based on the qualifications of the service provider. (See the Brooks Act (http://www.nauticalcharts. noaa.gov/ocs/hsrp/archive/march2005/brooksAct_92-582.pdf) for the approach used by the federal government.)

In the 1960s, during the Vietnam War, students enrolled in higher education were deferred from the draft. Consequently, colleges and universities exploded. The crowding problems were acute because the delivery of design and construction for academic buildings usually took 4 to 6 years. Meanwhile, the high rate of inflation was eroding construction budgets.[6] A 4-5 year project schedule might see the buying power of appropriated funds for building projects reduced significantly.

In 1968, The New York State University Construction Fund (SUCF) (http://www.sucf.suny.edu/about/conta ct.cfm) retained Caudill Rowlett Scott (CRS) to study ways to shorten schedules.[7] The completed study hypothesized that the SUCF could save 25-45 percent of the time with phased construction. They could stay within their procurement regulations by selecting a company (a CM) for construction management services —who would provide no construction labor or materials—on the basis of qualifications.

The CM would do no actual construction work. The CM would have a professional responsibility to represent the owner's best interest as an agent, similar to that of an architect.

The CM would advise the architect and owner on cost and construction technology during the design phase and would estimate the total cost. The architect would complete the construction drawings and specifications in phases and the CM would take open, competitive bids for those phases of the work, overlapping the design and construction activities. For instance, the CM might take bids for site clearing and grading as soon as the basic building configuration was set and drawings and specifications for that phase of the work were complete. Companies that typically functioned as subcontractors would bid the work. The low bidder would have a direct contract with the owner, metamorphosing from subcontractor to prime contractor. The owner would have multiple prime contracts.

It was not an entirely original concept. There had been a few previous examples of similar processes —Tishman Construction (now part of AECOM) provided Construction Management services for the World Trade Center that was built with phased construction (construction begin in 1966, the building was destroyed September 11, 2001).

SUCF accepted CRS's Fast-Track report and retained Smith, Hinchman & Grylls (now the SmithGroupJJR) to implement their first Fast-Track project at Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York. The Stony Brook project and CRS's later projects demonstrated that the projected time savings were conservative. Sometimes the use of Fast-Track and CM reduced time to a third or less of conventional schedules.,[8][9]

The report was titled "Fast-Track." Many copies were printed. The concept of a professional construction manager that could implement phased design and construction (Fast-Track) for public projects spread rapidly. The United States General Services Administration and many other institutional and government clients throughout the U.S. adopted the process.

However, despite the advantages of a shortened schedule, many owners didn't like the management responsibility for multiple prime construction contracts on a single project and were concerned about the lack of a guaranteed maximum price. In the late 1900s and early 2000s many government organizations changed their procurement regulations to allow the CM to hold the contracts and guarantee price and schedule. To differentiate between the original concept and an additional concept of CM services, the original was called Agency CM and the CM that held the contracts and provided guarantees was called CM at-Risk (see Construction management).

Fast-Track is now a common term throughout the construction industry.

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Further reading

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Fast-Track Lifecycle Series

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⚙ Part 1: The "Fast Track Concept" - Managing Project Conditions

(fast-track-project-analysis.html)

Welcome to our (8) part article series exploring the uses and benefits of strategic project fast tracking (a.k.a. fast track project management). Get started with Part (1) below, providing a quick introduction to the key principles of *strategic fast tracking*, and then continue on with the next segment (fast-track-project-analysis.html) to learn more.

Fast Tracking Provides a Management Standard

What is strategic project fast tracking? The quick answer is this - it's a way to select, plan and manage projects. The long answer - it's much more than that. Every management methodology is a "way to manage projects". So what makes strategic fast tracking different?

Strategic fast tracking is distinguished by its primary purpose as a "results-driven" management process, focusing heavily on the practical realities of *getting projects done* (and done properly) in the real world - where project "conditions" are so often complicated by a lack of time, resources, funding and unrealistic stakeholder expectations.

> **When you "fast track" strategically it means that you will be "streamlining" the *project management work effort* (in a standardized way) to compensate for "negative project conditions" and to deliver prioritized project results in less time, with the resources you have available. And, it's all accomplished with full stakeholder input, collaboration and acceptance.**

Did you know...? You can also download this entire (8) part article series in our free handbook "Fundamentals of Project Fast Tracking (fast-track-fundamentals.pdf)" (in PDF format).

Fast Tracking is a Time Saver

The primary objective of strategic fast tracking is to streamline the project management work effort, to save time and allow the project team to focus on results over process. It accomplishes this goal in four (4) primary ways:

1. It provides a *planning, governance and decision making roadmap* to guide the project team. This eliminates the need to "re-invent the wheel", provides benchmarks for timely actions and decision making, and as *fast tracking* is consistently applied, these capabilities will improve, further increasing efficiency and productivity.
2. It forces a focus on negotiated priorities to "re-size" the project work effort so that demands and capabilities are properly aligned.
3. It minimizes project management "overhead" by consolidating key management obligations into high priority, multi-purpose deliverables.
4. It promotes stakeholder engagement, cooperation and collaboration to ensure shared expectations and informed consent.

Fast Tracking Overcomes Obstacles and Avoids Pitfalls

Projects are a challenge by their very nature - even without all the obstacles and pitfalls that can get in the way of successful results. In fact, obstacles and pitfalls are an inevitable part of the *project management process*. That's why strategic fast tracking takes a proactive approach, to overcome and avoid the kind of unwanted circumstances that can get in the way of productive work (limiting what your team is able to deliver). Specifically, strategic fast tracking focuses on the following types of obstacle/pitfall conditions:

1. Undefined vision, goals, scope and work effort.
2. Unrealistic stakeholder expectations.
3. Insufficient stakeholder buy-in and acceptance.
4. Disengaged, disinterested stakeholders.
5. Lack of tangible, measureable sponsor support and guidance.
6. Constantly changing demands.
7. Misaligned scope (inconsistent or not reflective of actual business needs).
8. Weak and/or insufficiently visible sponsorship.
9. Misplaced focus on project "process" over project "benefits".
10. Misplaced and/or undefined project and customer priorities.
11. Insufficient oversight to quickly identify potential problems and conflicts.
12. Unneccessary management overhead (not tied to a need, benefit or result).
13. Unexplored alternatives and consequences (if the project does not turn out as planned).
14. Failure to anticipate and address stakeholder resistance and objections.
15. Failure to properly balance *project demands* and *performing organization capabilities*.

See More:

Fast Track Toolkit Slide Show (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/fast-tracking-toolkit.html?id=bottom)

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- Continue to Part 2: The Fast Track Analysis (fast-track-project-analysis.html).
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Quick Facts: The Basics of Strategic Fast Tracking

🎭 Strategic fast tracking is a project management methodology.

🎭 It provides a modified lifecycle approach, which can be applied on its own or in conjuction with other management methodologies.

🎭 It uses a series of streamlined steps and techniques to minimize obstacles and optimize existing capabilities.

🎭 It's structured into (5) phases for project selection, definition, governance, oversight and review.

🎭 It relies on multiple, strategic tactics to deliver on time results, including scope alignment, stakeholder engagement, "sized" governance, and continuous improvement.

🎭 It takes a results-driven approach to "managing", focusing on the "priorities" to save time and minimize project overhead.

Get an illustrated view of the fast tracking process in our informative infographic "Step-by-Step to a Fast Tracked Project" (fast-track-project-management-toolkit.html?id=well).

Fast Tracking Article Series

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7. The Charter (prepare-fast-track-charter.html)
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Fast Track Construction

A method of project delivery in which the sequencing of construction activities enables some portions of the project to begin before the design is completed on other portions of the project.

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FAST-TRACKING VERSUS CRASHING (PMP CONCEPT 19)

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FAST-TRACKING VERSUS CRASHING (PMP CONCEPT 19)

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This is our nineteenth post in our **PMP Concepts Learning Series (/blog/announcement-ppm-launching-pmp-concept-learning-series)**

Each post within this series will present a comparison of common concepts that appear on the PMP and CAPM exams.

FAST-TRACKING VERSUS CRASHING

You've done all your analysis, collected the duration estimates from your team, and developed a beautiful project schedule. You provide it to your sponsor or customer and they say? "Get it done faster", of course.

There are two techniques that can be used to shorten the project duration while maintaining the project scope: fast-tracking and crashing.

FAST-TRACKING

Fast-tracking is a technique in which phases or activities that normally would be done sequentially are performed in parallel. Fast-tracking does not result in increased cost but it does increase the risk, as activities that were originally intended to be performed sequentially are now performed in parallel.

The ability to fast-track implies that the finish-to-start relationship between the activities was discretionary.

CRASHING

Crashing is used if fast-tracking did not save enough time on the schedule. Crashing is a technique in which cost and schedule tradeoffs are analyzed to determine how to obtain the greatest amount of compression for the least incremental cost.

Crashing analyzes critical activities based on the lowest crash cost per time unit allowing the team to identify those candidate activities that would produce the greatest value at the least incremental cost.

The results of a crashing analysis can be plotted in a crash graph, where activities with the flattest slope would be considered first, meaning that they gain the most time savings but have a smaller increase in cost (rise).

EXAMPLE - FAST-TRACKING:

The current project schedule will not meet the timelines required for the project. You determine that you could fast-track the training material development. The training material development would begin as soon as the screen shots are produced versus waiting for the system to receive final sign-off.

This will allow the schedule to be shortened without incurring additional costs. However, if the screen shots prove to be inaccurate, there could be some rework required for the training material.

EXAMPLE - CRASHING:

If the fast-tracking did not accelerate the schedule enough, the project team will consider adding resources to the project's critical activities. As PM, you will want to consider what resources have the lowest associated costs and start with the lowest incremental cost resource pool first.

SUMMARY

The reality of project management is that there is usually a need to compress the project schedule and deliver the project's product, service, or result sooner than estimated.

Fast-tracking is always considered first as there are no increased costs. However, there is increased risk. Crashing would be the next option. Crashing analyzes the incremental crash costs of activities to determine and prioritize the candidates for crashing.

Both fast-tracking and crashing should be used on critical activities (those on the critical path) in order to have an effect on the actual project schedule. If used on non-critical activities, you have just given yourself more float.

See all posts in our **PMP Concepts Learning Series (/blog/announcement-ppm-launching-pmp-concept-learning-series)**

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Fast Tracking

Fast tracking is a technique that is often implemented in crisis and/or crunch times so to speak as it involves in taking a specific schedule activity and/or work breakdown event that has been previously scheduled and/or is underway and expediting it in some way or another. Fast tracking is referred to as a project schedule compression technique of sorts in that its intent is to take an entire schedule of a project and attempting to compress it into a smaller period of time by conducting some events either quicker or by doing some events that were intended to be done in a more spaced out manner but rather doing some of them simultaneously. The network logic has essentially been changed allowing for some items that would otherwise have been done in a sequence are instead overlapped as such. For more information please see the more general umbrella term of schedule compression and or crashing.

This term is defined in the 3rd and the 4th edition of the PMBOK.

Related Posts and Services:

- **Schedule Compression** Over the course of a given project, often times, it is up to the project management team and or the…

- **Crashing** Crashing refers to a particular variety of project schedule compression which is performed for the purposes of decreasing total period…

- **Schedule Compression Methodology** In project management, there are tradeoffs between meeting an earlier deadline through schedule compression and keeping costs down.…

- **Time-Scaled Schedule Network Diagram** A time-scaled schedule network diagram is essentially a diagram that is used in project management whenever you are scheduling an…

- **Network Logic** The term network logic would appear to be defined by the simplest of concepts. The logic that goes into the…

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Fast Track Project Planning

by **Dick Billows, PMP** on December 15, 2015 in **Project Plan**

Fast Track Project Planning is a technique project managers can use when the sponsor pressures them to start work quickly. Sponsors often voice these complaints about planning:

- "I don't want you to waste a lot of time on meetings and paperwork. Let's start work!
- "We can plan this project as we go. So start work now!"
- "We need to be flexible and able to change the plan at a moment's notice. So start working on it!"

[Project Planning Main Page](#)

Obviously, you need a way to respond to these demands because many hyperactive sponsors won't listen to arguments about the value of thorough planning. There are two possible responses.

Fast Track Project Planning Situation #1: "Fast-food Drive-Thru"

Dick Billows, PMP
CEO 4pm.com

First, you can adopt a "Fast-food Drive-thru" project planning approach. Here's how it goes: the PM is working at the drive-thru window of a burger joint. The sponsor pulls up to the window and says, "I'm hungry." Instantly, the PM and team slap burgers, chicken and fish on the grill and toss fries and chicken nuggets into the frying vat. They certainly do start work fast! However, we will waste a lot of that food because it isn't what the sponsor wants. The same is true on a project we start this way. There is a lot of wasted time and resources. It will also take longer to deliver the project's scope because the PM doesn't find out what that is until the work almost done. PMs use this fast food approach all the time because it allows them to satisfy the sponsor's demand to start work quickly. That creates a happy sponsor…in the beginning.

The main benefit of the Fast-food Drive-thru project planning is that the project manager and team can start work quickly. They sometimes can begin within just hours of the executive having the idea for the project. The project manager may think this technique makes them responsive to the needs of senior management. Nevertheless, the time to judge the level of sponsor satisfaction is at the end of the

project, not the beginning.

Some executives also feel that project planning is a waste of time and that starting work quickly is admirable. In truth, projects started this way waste money and usually finish late. They also produce deliverables of questionable quality. Executives who favor this "start fast" approach also usually have abysmal records of accomplishment in terms of the success of the projects they sponsor.

Fast Track Project Planning Situation #2: (Design/Build)

This Fast Track Project Planning approach is a better way to deal with impatient sponsor demands or to handle projects that you must launch in the midst of a crisis. You develop a partial project plan and then begin work on the first of the major deliverables. You plan the remaining major deliverables as you work on the first. The key to this technique is having hard-edged definitions of the acceptance criteria for the all of the major deliverables. Working from the top down, you tightly define the project scope and 4 – 7 major deliverables. You have to know with great precision the path that you're going to take from where you are now to the end result the sponsor wants. Having crystal-clear, quantified acceptance criteria is the key to avoiding work that you must scrap. This technique lets you compress the time for the project planning process and start work more quickly because you aren't waiting to complete the detailed planning on the major deliverables that you'll will work on later. This approach is very different from not doing planning at all. The sponsor has to commit significant time to doing the high level planning.

This technique is widely used in the construction industry and it substantially reduces the duration of projects. It also carries some risks for the project manager and sponsor. As you detail the plan for the first of the major deliverables, you are depending on the accuracy of the deliverable descriptions for the remaining major deliverables and the project as a whole. If those change or are inaccurate, we will waste a lot of the work on the first major deliverable.

The sponsor and stakeholders need to understand the risk inherent in this FastTrack planning. You will start work on the first major deliverable earlier than with a classic planning approach. However, the risk of major cost and duration overruns is very real if the definitions of the later major deliverables are not reliable. Executives are always interested in starting work fast but they need to sign off on the risks inherent in this FastTrack approach. They also need to understand that it is their job to define those major deliverables.

Fast Track Project Planning: Details

When you start describing this approach to the project sponsor and stakeholders, you need to make a couple of points clear. The project duration reduction is not free. It comes at the cost of less precise data in the beginning and a higher risk of cost and duration overruns. Because you aren't developing a detailed plan for the entire project, your duration and budget data will be less precise when you start work. You shouldn't use this Fast Track approach if you need great precision on either of those

metrics.

The Fast Track Project Planning approach also requires an accurate definition of the deliverables. Stakeholders who are accustomed to a shoddy project planning process and many change orders will be surprised at the commitments they must make about what they want. It is much more expensive to change in midstream with the FastTrack approach than with a traditional project planning approach where you have completed plan for the whole project before you start work.

The way to reduce the risk inherent in the Fast Track Project Planning approach is to complete the detailed planning on the remaining deliverables immediately after you start work on the first major deliverable. Stakeholders often want to walk away from the project planning effort after they plan that first major deliverable and work has started. You need to be very clear that this is not the time to delay the planning or delegate it to subordinates. The further work progresses on the first major deliverable the more expensive changes become. That's because you have more work you may have to scrap if there are major changes in the remainder of the project.

In summary, Fast Track Project Planning approach is a valuable technique for project managers to master because it often meets the needs of the organization and executives for rapid project planning.

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About Dick Billows, PMP

Has 25 years of experience as a project & program manager and as a portfolio executive. He was a partner in the 4th largest professional firm and as a VP in a Fortune 200 Company. He has managed projects in the US, Panama, Saudi Arabia and Europe and trained 1000's of project managers. He has also assisted over 300 organizations in improving their project processes and results. Dick is the author of 14 books, over 300 articles and written/directed 36 "Project Manager in Action" videos used for situational training. His project case studies and techniques form the foundation for the project manager training programs at 4PM.com where he is CEO.

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ITtoolkit Article Collection

🗋 How to Fast Track the Project Schedule to Save Time and Effort

When it comes to managing the project schedule, *fast tracking* is an established technique, used to shorten the time it would otherwise take to complete a given project. In the simplest sense, a *fast tracked* project schedule necessitates "doing many things at once". This article examines all the risks and benefits, showing you how to make the most out of every "fast tracking" opportunity. Read on for more.

"Same Project, Shorter Schedule"

That sounds so appealing, but it's not really that simple, and it's certainly not without risk. Fast tracking of the project schedule is appropriate and even essential under a number of key conditions and circumstances. But, in the real world, fast tracking is a nuanced process. As a schedule is fast tracked, previously *sequential tasks* (one finishes, the next begins) are re-arranged to allow for concurrent execution (when dependencies allow), thereby shortening the overall project timeline. This concept is illustrated in the simple example below:
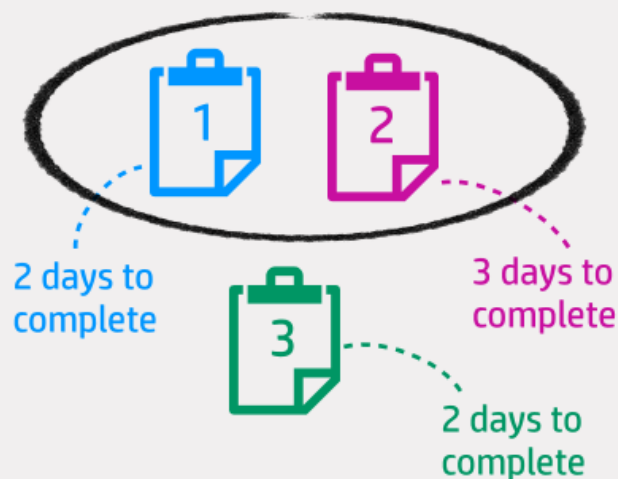
1. Start with a series of tasks.

2 days to complete

3 days to complete

2 days to complete

2. Arrange the tasks into a sequential timebound schedule.

Day 1	1	Start
Day 2	1	Finish
Day 3	2	Start
Day 4	2	Continue
Day 5	2	Finish
Day 6	3	Start
Day 7	3	Finish

3. Find the task dependencies.

2 days to complete

3 days to complete

2 days to complete

1 & 2 are dependent. Task 2 cannot begin until Task 1 is complete.

Task 3 is independent.

4. Reconfigure the schedule to allow for concurrent task execution.

Day 1	1	3	Start | Start
Day 2	1	3	Finish | Finish
Day 3	2		Start
Day 4	2		Continue
Day 5	2		Finish

A (7) day schedule is now a (5) day schedule....

What's the catch?

You need sufficient capabilities and resources for concurrent work.

Fast Tracking Risks and Rewards

There is no doubt that the *fast tracked* schedule is harder to manage (in light of all the concurrent activity). And, *fast tracked* schedules may also experience problems of greater intensity. In addition, if concurrent work is to be properly executed, it must be carried out without sacrificing quality, scope and budget. In other words, *fast tracked scheduling* is a powerful, albeit risky, tool that must be used carefully and with discretion. Decision making begins with one key question --- **when will "fast tracking" be most appropriate? The list below summarizes the usual circumstances:**

- To realize maximized productivity for project scheduling and resource utilization.
- To complete the project within the shortest time possible to meet specific priorities.

- To complete the project sooner than expected due to changing circumstances.
- To make up for lost time and/or other deficiencies.

When appropriately applied, the fast tracked schedule can solve many problems and offer multiple benefits. But, it has to be approached carefully, and with a lot of planning. Otherwise, the risks can greatly outweigh the rewards.

Want to learn more about fast tracking? Download our free handbook Fundamentals of Project Fast Tracking (../templates/fast-track-fundamentals.pdf) (in PDF format).

How to Fast Track for the Best Results

When faced with the need to fast track a project schedule, the first instinct may be to add resources, or even more likely, to put in more work hours. But these options are not always productive or viable. The use of additional staff resources, even when it is a possibility, is often not a solution. Under some project circumstances, certain tasks can only be completed by a finite number of resources, in a finite period of time. In these cases, extra resources will only add cost, cause confusion, and in fact, may even impede, rather that promote progress. Overtime is also a tricky proposition. While additional work hours may shorten an otherwise lagging schedule, excessive overtime may backfire if *burn-out* sets in. As with most management techniques, it's all about striking the right balance between needs and capabilities.

Fast tracked scheduling begins with an examination of five (5) key assumptions, and continues with the seven (7) step planning process:

1. Do you have realistic schedule, with all tasks and activities properly identified?
2. Are you sufficiently aware of all task dependencies (tasks that must end before others begin)?
3. Do you have a solid grasp on project requirements, objectives and priorities?
4. Do you have a good working relationship with your project stakeholders?
5. Do you have established, tested practices for governance, oversight and problem management?

If you can answer "yes" to these questions, then you are ready to "fast track" your schedule (in whole or part) and it's time to move on to the *seven (7) steps of fast track* scheduling:

- **#1 Determine Your "Fast Tracking" Goals and Capabilities**

- **#2 Examine the Project Schedule to Identify Dependencies**

- **#3 Find "Fast Track" Opportunities in the Project Timeline**

- **#4 Identify all the Viable Alternatives to Make Schedule Adjustments**

- **#5 Make Informed Decisions (Based on Identified Alternatives)**

- **#6 Seek Consensus for all Fast Tracking Decisions**

- **#7 Monitor Progress and Track Problems**

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productivity packages", combining "education and execution" - with time-saving concepts, steps and templates packaged in digital downloads. Our current Toolkit offerings include the **Fast Track Project Toolkit (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/index.html)** and **IT Service Strategy Toolkit (../../index.html)**.

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Fast Tracking is a Must-Have Project Management Skill

And it's a skill that will come in handy whenever you need a sure fire way to keep "project problems" from becoming "project disasters". Learn more in our multi-part article series:

Part 1: What is Strategic Fast Tracking? (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/fast-track-concepts.html?id=well)

Part 2: Evaluating Projects for Fast-Track-Ability (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/fast-track-project-analysis.html?id=well)

Part 3: Project Problems, Tradeoffs and Priorities (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/focus-on-project-priorities.html?id=well)

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Part 8: Finding Lessons Learned in Fast Tracked Projects (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/fast-track-lessons.html?id=well)

For a illustrated view, take a look at our "Step-by-Step to a Fast Tracked Project" (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com/fast-track-project-management-toolkit.html?id=well) infographic.

(http://www.fasttrackmanage.com?id=well)

If you're ready to make "fast tracking" part of your project management skill set, there's no easier way than the Fast Track Project Toolkit (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com?id=welltext). Available for download at our companion web site fasttrackmanage.com (http://www.fasttrackmanage.com?id=well).

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"Fast-tracking" defined

January 7, 2014 / by John Borwick / In IT management, IT project and portfolio (PPM) management / 0 Comments

When I first heard the term "fast-track," I thought: why does that term exist? wouldn't everyone want things "fast-tracked?"

Then I learned the definition and found out how helpful the term can be. In short:

> Fast-tracking is when you proceed with subsequent tasks/phases before the dependent tasks have been completed. Notably, fast-tracking includes proceeding with work while waiting for approvals/reviews.
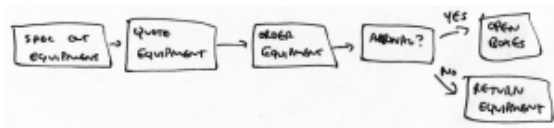
Here's an example:
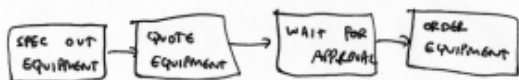
Steps in a typical procurement process, not using fast tracking. Identify (spec out) the equipment,

Let's say you needed to order some equipment for a project. Typically you would figure out what you need, get a quote, send it forward for approval, and then order the equipment.

quote the equipment, wait for approval, then order the equipment.

The good news about this approach is you don't spend money before the approval is secured. The bad news is that approvals can take a long time, and it may then take an even longer time to order the equipment and wait for it to arrive.

To speed up the project, equipment is ordered BEFORE approval is received. If the approver says no, then the equipment will be returned (perhaps at the cost of shipping plus a restocking fee).

OR, with the magic of fast-tracking you go ahead and order the equipment while waiting for the approval.

If the approval comes back "yes," you're good and you've saved time by parallelizing the ordering with approvals.

On the other hand, if the approval comes back "no," you've got to pay the shipping costs (and probably a restocking fee) to send the equipment back. The approving authority may also get angry. But maybe you've got the budget to cover returning the equipment, or it's a worse risk to be late than it is to spend money.

Similarly:

- Starting design of a product before the prototype has been reviewed (and therefore assuming there will not be fundamental changes)
- Planning projects before governance reviews have approved the projects
- Scheduling a project close-out review before the project review meeting has occurred

So use the term "fast-tracking" and introduce others to it. I've found fast-tracking is a useful concept for talking about risk, schedule, and often budget.

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