Gantt charts

A Gantt chart is a project planning tool that can be used to represent the timing of tasks required to complete a project. Gantt charts are simple to understand and design.

Firstly, one needs to start with a list of tasks that are numbered sequentially and listed vertically. Each task takes up a row. Then one needs to run dates along the top of the chart in increments of days, weeks, and months, depending on the total length of the project.

The expected time for each task is represented by a horizontal bar, running parallel to the dates at the top of the chart. The left end of the bar represents the anticipated start of the task, while the right end represents the expected end of the task. Tasks may run sequentially, in parallel or overlapping.

As the project progresses, the chart is updated by filling in the bars to a length proportional to the fraction of work that has been accomplished on the task. This way, one can get a quick reading of project progress by drawing a vertical line through the chart at the current date. Completed tasks lie to the left of the line and are completely
Small Business Management Toolbox

Monitor and manage business operations

Gantt charts

Filled in. Current tasks cross the line and are behind schedule if their filled-in section is to the left of the line and ahead of schedule if the filled in section stops to the right of the line. Future tasks lie completely to the right of the line.

Often the project has important events which ought to appear on the project timeline, but which are not tasks. For example, one may wish to highlight when a prototype is complete or the date of a design review. These events would be entered on the chart as 'milestone' events and marked with a special symbol, often an upside down triangle.

Below are some of the symbols commonly used in Gantt charts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Gantt bars" /></td>
<td>Gantt bars indicate the duration of tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Milestone markers" /></td>
<td>Milestone markers signal a major turning point in the project such as an approval meeting or the release of a product. They can also mark the beginning and end of tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Link lines" /></td>
<td>Link lines show the relationship between two tasks, often indicating that a task can only begin when another ends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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