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A project timeline is a visual list of tasks or activities placed in chronological order, which lets project managers view the entirety of the project plan in one place. A project timeline typically takes the form of a horizontal bar chart, where each task is given a name and a corresponding start and end date. A project timeline provides an in-depth overview of the entire project from start to finish. You can see when a task starts and when it's due—and importantly, whether or not it's dependent on another task. A project timeline can be priceless for a project team, but they can be challenging to make by hand or even in Excel. Fortunately, project planning software can create an interactive timeline in just a few clicks. With ProjectManager, all you have to do is add your tasks and due dates. Want more detail? Add subtasks, milestones, dependencies, cost estimations and more. As your team executes their tasks, your timeline updates instantly, turning it into a powerful tracking device. Try it for yourself with a free 30-day trial. With ProjectManager, you can make a timeline in a matter of minutes—Learn more. Why Is It Important to Create a Project Timeline? Project timelines provide a simple, high-level overview of relevant dates and key milestones in a project. As the name suggests, a project timeline usually focuses on specific points in time in the project such as start and end dates in addition to milestones, or major project events. A timeline outlines task start and finish dates to better inform resource allocation and team workload distribution. As a pivotal facet of project management, project timelines act as a communication tool with stakeholders. They can help ensure the project is completed on time while using the agreed-upon budget and meeting key objectives. Get your free Project Timeline Template Use this free Project Timeline Template for Excel to manage your projects better. When to Create a Project Timeline While in some cases, the project timeline is created during the initiation phase, it's standard for the timeline to be created during the planning phase of the project. Unlike the initiation phase, the planning phase typically has more details available such as the timeframe, key deliverables, milestones, resource allocation and detailed scheduling. As the project scope, objectives and resources are established by this point, the planning phase is the ideal time to create a project timeline. Project Timeline Uses Project timelines give project managers an opportunity to: Organize their tasks Show when in the project the tasks start View task deadlines Link dependent tasks Break the project into phases Identify team members assigned to a task Project Timeline Video for Beginners Watch this tutorial video by Jennifer Bridges, PMP, who walks you through how to make an effective timeline. Determine if you're making a linear or comparative timeline. Then follow her steps to better organize your work. Once you've grasped the basics, continue reading our guide below. How To Create a Project Timeline Project management timelines can take many different forms with varying levels of efficacy. They can be drawn by hand, or on a whiteboard, but this method is inflexible and large changes to your project might require scrapping the entire timeline. Using a spreadsheet loaded up with macros can make for very capable, if time consuming to create. A project timeline excel template can save you the effort and time it takes to create your own spreadsheet. However, such macro-heavy Excel sheets can prove difficult to maintain for larger products. To run projects effectively and efficiently, project managers prefer project timeline software that integrates their tasks with an interactive, feature-rich Gantt chart that can schedule, assign tasks, monitor progress and report on performance. Project timeline software is more versatile than project timeline templates because it allows project managers to easily update the timeline and keep track of tasks with dashboards and reports. To make a thorough project timeline with a Gantt chart, follow these steps: Write a project scope statement: A scope statement outlines the tasks, milestones and deliverables for the project. It's an essential part of the project management plan and it has all the information you need for your project plan timeline Make a work breakdown structure (WBS): Use this graphic tool to break down the project scope into smaller work packages. The WBS allows you to visualize and organize the project's tasks, milestones and deliverables by hierarchy to establish a chronological order Identify task dependencies: Now that you've identified every task required for the project, find out which of those activities are dependent on other tasks to start or end Estimate task duration: Make a reasonable time estimate for each task. This is a critical step to create your project management timeline, and determine the time required to complete the project Define deadlines: Determine how much time your team can spend on each task Set milestones: Milestones are important dates that mark the end of one phase and the beginning of the next, which makes them an important component of a project management timeline. Milestones are reached by completing task sequences and deliverables Project Timeline Examples Let's look at two examples of project timelines to get a better idea of what it's used to accomplish. We'll start with a generic timeline for an implementation plan. Generic Project Timeline Example On the left-hand side of the timeline is a list of your tasks and subtasks. These tasks can be further broken down by phases, and given different colors to distinguish one from another. It is, for all intents and purposes, a regular spreadsheet; it has columns for tasks, costs, etc., and rows signifying each task or subtask. But it's on the right side where the timeline comes to life. Every task listed on the right is represented on a Gantt chart. Each task is represented by two points in time, the start and end dates. Between those two points is the duration bar. Those diamond symbols indicate milestones. When you see a dotted line connecting two tasks, that tells you that the tasks are dependent on each other to start or finish before the other can start or finish. Construction Project Timeline Example Now, let's get industry specific. Below is a project timeline example that outlines an apartment complex construction project. On the left-hand side, you'll see six different project phases, starting with design and planning and finishing with HVAC. Under each phase are the tasks that make up each phase. In the design and planning phase, the tasks include architectural designs, structural engineering plan and final review. If one task takes longer than expected or exceeds the planned budget, simply change the data in the spreadsheet accordingly. The planned start and finish dates are also listed as well as the planned cost for each. All of this data is represented by a Gantt chart on the right-hand portion of the project management timeline example. This is a visual representation of the project that can show project managers at a glance how the project is progressing. On June 25th, for example, there is a diamond icon that represents a project milestone. Free Project Timeline Template Need help building a project timeline? Try ProjectManager's free project timeline template and practice adding tasks, dependencies, phases, milestones and more on a dynamic timeline. On the left-hand side the data grid, where the various phases of the project are outlined. Under each color-coded phase are the tasks associated with it, including WBS, assignees, due dates and other resources needed to execute the scheduled tasks. The project timeline on the right is where things get interesting. You can see the whole project in one place, dependent tasks can be linked and milestones added. Put your project timeline knowledge to the test and build one today. Get started for free. What Is Project Timeline Software? As stated, software is commonly used by project managers to create their project plan timelines. Project timeline software is an integral part of the planning process and often includes additional features that help to monitor progress when executing the project. Using project timeline software is generally regarded as a necessity for keeping a modern project on schedule. It allows managers and teams to see the status of their tasks; that is, whether they're in progress, overdue or done. Related: Best Project Timeline Software (Free + Paid) At its most basic, project timeline software creates a graphic representation of the project on a timeline with tasks and milestones plotted across. Tasks can be assigned start and end dates, and display a duration bar that indicates the planned amount of time to complete the tasks. More powerful software offerings can also include further options to manage each task. Microsoft Project is one of the most commonly used project management software, but it has major drawbacks that make ProjectManager a great alternative. Benefits of Online Project Timeline Software In ye olden days, project timelines were charted on paper—or a chalkboard, if ye olde project manager was lucky. While it did get the job done, these early solutions were extremely limited. Having to make changes required creating a whole new timeline, which takes time. As project management has emerged from the caves and embraced digital technology, the humble project timeline grew dramatically in power. Online project timeline software offers a centralized data repository in which everyone involved in the project can access the project timeline and other critical project documents and data. This means that managers and teams can access the project timeline when they need to, even if they're working different shifts and located in different timezones. Using an Online Project Management Timeline Every project is impacted by the triple constraint of time, cost and scope. To start controlling the time and scope part of that important triangle, you need to create a project timeline during the planning stage. The project timeline helps everyone on the project team by giving them a roadmap of where they are, and where they should be, at every point in the project. Timelines and schedules are essential to execute the project plan. Tasks are given start and end dates and show on the timeline as a line connecting to points in time. If some of those tasks are dependent on another to start or finish, these task dependencies can be indicated on the project timeline as well. This assists a manager by keeping those dependencies visible and preventing possible bottlenecks that could block the time during the execution of the tasks. Trying to manage multiple projects successfully is difficult without the right project management structures in place. You have to ensure all tasks align with the project's goals and are assigned to the right team members. Keeping everyone on your project team on the same page throughout the project management life cycle is hard work. While a project plan or project charter can help you stay organized, you can not truly achieve a successful project without a project management timeline. A project timeline helps you schedule tasks and provide an overall picture of your project from start to finish. Without one, your project will easily derail from the initial plan and become disorganized. As simple as project timeline templates look, it can prove difficult to effectively break down the project into an effective timeline. In this article, you will learn everything you need to know about a project timeline including the 8 simple steps to build an effective project timeline. A project timeline is an overview of a project's tasks, deliverables, and sub-tasks arranged in chronological order. This is the ticking piece of the project process. It is usually structured in a visual format to give project stakeholders a more expressive outlook at a glance. This visual format helps to visualize the project key stages, including project milestones, dependencies, tasks, and delivery dates. A project timeline gives project managers the luxury of having an overview of the entirety of the project process at just a glance. This details the beginning and ending process of a project process while also detailing due dates and tasks dependent on other tasks. Although the project timeline value is measurable to a project's team, it is often difficult to construct with the use of simple spreadsheet packages. Project timelines are the best fit as they create an effective timeline within the shortest possible time frame. Source: Vertex42 The project timeline is an integral part of the project process that helps to ensure an easy flow-free project process. It offers a lot of benefits to the project process. Points Out a Clear Project Plan: The project timeline helps shows the overview of the project plan and allows project managers to have a clear view by just a glance. Helps Maintain the Overall Project: This helps visualize the end from the beginning and vice versa. The project timeline ensures the focus is on the big picture. Everyone in the project team can see the tasks they have to do and when. Ensures Unity in Goals among Project Stakeholders: The project timeline helps put the entire project stakeholders on the same page as it details their various rules in ensuring the success of the project. Acts as a Tracker to the Project Process: Project managers use project timelines to keep tabs on the project process as it shows what is expected and when due. This helps project stakeholders keep regular tabs on the progress of the project. Prevents Project Hindering Factors: With an effective project timeline, you can easily spot potential bottlenecks and ensure the project process does not derail from its set objectives. Offers Ease in Making Project Changes: The process of making changes during the project process is considerably easier with the aid of the project timeline. Source: Smartsheet There are three types of project timelines based on their unique structures. Choosing the best type of project timeline to use is dependent on the project type and process it involves. This is one the popular types of a project timeline. The Gantt project timeline allows project managers a thorough view of the end date, key milestones, and dependencies of the project. Gantt project timelines show the specific task specifications and to whom they are assigned. They come in handy to the project managers as they offer up-to-date interactive functions with ease in making project changes. Source: Venngage This type of project timeline lists out the tasks involved in chronological order, usually from left to right or top to bottom. It marks out key historical dates from a specific time frame. Source: Template Office Vertical chart project timelines are suitable for projects involving raw data or financial operations that involve tracking. They point out the gains to be expected over a specific time frame. An example of a project that involves the use of a vertical chart project timeline is the project of how much website traffic is generated each month on a company website. Source: Vertex42 In building an efficient and appropriate project timeline, the necessary methods and processes need to be put in place to ensure the project ends up successful. A project scope statement is an integral part of the project management process as it eventually positively affects the project timeline. The deliverables to be produced at the end of the project process are also highlighted in your scope of work document. Prior knowledge of your project scope is essential in helping project stakeholders clearly distinguish each set of tasks, the time needed for each task, the team of stakeholders involved in specific tasks, as well as the overall timeline needed for the project completion. This knowledge helps to provide a clear and definite picture of the entirety of the project process to stakeholders. It is advisable to begin your project timeline management phase by detailing the project scope statement. This should include all the deliverables needed during the entirety of the project process, as well as the resources required to achieve the set deliverables. Doing this helps in the overall management of the project planning process. The aim of any efficiently drawn-up project timeline management plan is to ensure the project makes it to the last stage of the project process at the predetermined set time standard. This is the dilemma of every project manager and the project scope statement is the first of many steps. A faulty detailed project scope statement can derail the entire project process as there is no clear organization on the project timeline. Project managers often have little or no contribution to make if the project scope statement is adequately detailed with all the necessary parameters as it has already cut out their job for them. Project Plan: How to Build a Garden Project Scope Document: To produce a 100 sq. ft vegetable garden that produces tomatoes, peppers, and onions from their respective seeds and buds after a period of 6 months. From the project document above, the deliverables are tomatoes, peppers, and onions. The resources are the seeds and buds of the proposed vegetables as well as the 100 sq. ft land while the timeline is 6 months. Source: TemplateLab A work breakdown structure involves using graphical tools to break down the project scope into smaller sub-work tasks. This aims at ensuring extensive coverage of all the details entailed in the project scope. The work breakdown structure helps to simplify the project scope statement into the smallest bits possible. These grants project stakeholders ample opportunity to visualize and organize project processes. Project tasks, milestones, and deliverables are arranged in the best possible order in a work breakdown structure. This is done to establish a chronological order of the project process. When drawing up your work breakdown structure (WBS), begin with your project scope statement. Then further breakdown your deliverable into smaller pieces to aid ease of completion. These smaller pieces of deliverables or sub-deliverables are called work packages. All the major steps of the project process are highlighted in the work breakdown chart. Project managers use project management software to map out and execute this type of structure. Source: Wrike A well-constructed work breakdown structure helps in providing scheduling, budgeting, risk management, task management, and stakeholder management processes. Your work breakdown structure acts as a guide through various complicated project structures. By doing so, WBS helps to prevent a lot of the bottlenecks associated with project processes, such as failure to meet deadlines, scope creep, and overstretching of resources. Work breakdown structure (WBS) is divided into two: Source: ProjectManager Source: Smartsheet Before you break each work package into tasks, you first need to find out which of the tasks are dependent on other tasks. This stage is important to the project timeline structuring. It not only identifies all tasks are assigned and accounted for based on the structure of its arrangement. It also assigns specific stakeholders that are accountable for the successful completion of the set tasks. The next step is to make a list of tasks to be carried out for each work package. You need to constantly watch the gap between your basis and goal. The necessary steps that need to be overcome in between the gap are your work packages. Work package acts as a step-by-step transformation tool in getting your project from its starting point to the desired ending point. These work packages can be further broken down into easier tasks to ensure ease of completion. When drawing up your project timeline plan, it is important to note tasks that are similar in their structure and group them. This helps to ensure simplicity and clarity in task organization. It also boosts the next step as it makes it easier to determine dependencies within the organized structure of the work package breakdown down into tasks in the case of building a garden. Project Plan: To Build a Garden Project Work Package: To successfully harvest tomatoes, peppers, and onions after 6 months. Project Tasks Task 1: Preparation of Land Task 2: Tilling of Land Task 3: Planting of Seeds Task 4: Watering of Land Task 5: Weeding of Land Task 6: Harvesting of Land Source: Project Management Guide Project dependencies are tasks that are directly linked to other tasks and cannot commence unless the task it depends on has been completed. Source: Tiemchart Determining project dependencies for a project management timeline helps to give a clear sight of the project process. However, it becomes harder to determine as the complexity of the project increases. The use of a flowchart or diagram chart can be utilized in determining project dependencies. They usually help in the visualization and identification processes of these dependencies. One of the most widely used charts for the determination of dependencies is the swimlanes or color-coding software. Source: Visual Paradigm Online This software is specifically designed to help in the designation of tasks and responsibilities to various project stakeholders and teams. A real-life example of project dependencies is the case of a plan to build a garden. Two tasks of tilling the land and planting seeds need to be factored in the project timeline plan. The task of planting seeds is dependent on the task of tilling the land as you cannot plant on untilled land. Also, a practical example of the use of color-coding software is in the task of planting tomatoes and green beans, where they are split into two teams by color. Team red is tasked while team green is green beans. One of the key steps in building a project timeline plan is the need to accurately estimate the time required for each task. Your time estimate must be reliable and attainable. It should conform to the project's initial schedule and timeline. This step is critical in creating your project management timeline, as it directly determines the exact time required to complete the project. You need to go back to your list of tasks and consider the duration needed to complete each task. This is very important as it ensures the progress of the project can be meticulously followed. All project stakeholders must be carried along while estimating the time of each task as they are integral for determining if the timeline will or will not be achieved. The project manager needs to ensure the timeline is not too inconsiderate and necessary factors have been considered before arriving at the time estimate. The estimated timeline for the completion of the tasks involved in building a garden. Project Plan: To Build a Garden Project Tasks Timeline Task 1: Preparation of Land (To commence and be completed during the entire duration of the 1st week of the 1st month). Task 2: Tilling of Land (To commence and be completed during the entire duration of the 2nd and 3rd week of the 1st month). Task 3: Planting of Seeds (To commence and be completed during the entire duration of the 4th week of the 1st month). Task 4: Watering of Land (To commence and be continued regularly during the entire duration of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th months). Task 5: Weeding of Land (To commence and be completed during the entire duration of the 3rd and 4th week of the 6th month). Always check for the availability of all the resources needed, be it human or material before embarking on any assigned task. This is important to avoid the case of incomplete tasks which will eventually affect the project timeline plan. Resources are the driving force of every project timeline plan. It is not enough to have the resources; poor allocation of the available resources will ultimately lead to a deficit. The availability of the needed human resource for various tasks in the project timeline plan needs to be factored in. Although human resource is not the only resource available, it is the most liquid and flexible. The allocation of the specific timeline to various tasks need to depend on the availability of the project's stakeholders or teams. Project Team ProjectsProject SponsorThe in-house driver of the project creates the project vision, approves the project budget and changes to it. responsible for making key business decisions relating to the project, makes resources available for the projectExecutive SponsorUltimate decision-maker regarding the projectApproves changes to the project scope and project deliverables, provides extra funds needed to implement project changesProject ManagerOversees the day-to-day running of the project, creates the project plan and a project schedule, delegate tasks to the project team, leads and manage the project team through the five phases of the project management life cycle, communicate with project stakeholders, project clients, and team membersHires project staff, manages project deliverablesProject CoordinatorAssists the project manager, facilitates communication between the project manager and the project team, coordinates project schedules, handle administrative tasks for the project managerTeam MemberContributes their expertise to the project, completes individual deliverables within deadlines, communicate with the project manager on problems affecting the assigned tasks, works with the project manager and other team members to complete the project deliverables, document the project processBusiness Analyst or Resource ManagerGathers and documents technical and business requirements from users or departments within the company, ensures that the project deliverables meet the requirements of the project client, solves resource problems affecting the project, use available tools to assist team members, assess project solutions to ensure they are effective Steering CommitteeApproves budget changes, provides strategic direction for the project, helps the project manager solace problems relating to the project Oftentimes, due to the demand of other tasks, the timeline for specific tasks needs to be adjusted to accommodate other tasks and ease the pressure off project stakeholders. This aims to ensure the success of one task is not directly negatively impacted by another task as they are all intertwined with the project process. Properly identifying important milestones is critical to the project timeline plan. Milestones are important markers that signify the end of an old and the beginning of a new phase. They are an important aspect of the project management timeline and are significant in tracking the progress of the project process. Project milestones help in making changes or adjustments at strategic stages of the project process. The project process might be derailing out of the set course, and through project milestones, you can track the progress and make the right adjustments. Milestones are attained by completing tasks in their sequence and order with deliverables. With the help of the project management software that assists in the designation and tracking of important project milestones, the project process is just a step away from successful completion. An example of the important milestones reached during the successful plan to build a garden is as follows. Milestone 1: Preparation Stage Milestone 2: Planting Stage Milestone 3: Harvesting Stage Source: Visual Paradigm Online Project timeline planning is relatively easy with the invention of the use of different software. These visual project management software programs afford project managers the ability to use various sophisticated but easy-to-use tools aimed at making the project planning timeline easy and stress-free. They also ensure the implementation of efficient project plan timelines which ensures the overall project schedule is not affected. A good example of efficient project timeline management software is Monday.com. This particular software uses the Gantt chart which acts as more than just a project timeline. Tasks need to be timed from one to another and each task length adequately reflects its time allocated. Milestones can be factored in through this software and it helps to perform various project timeline management functions with relative ease. Monday.com ensures tasks have estimated starting and completion dates displayed through the chart on a timeline. After successfully identifying and listing out the tasks and prioritizing them, the next step is to determine the duration and dependencies of the task. The start and end dates are connected and automatically displayed within the timeline and duration bar by adding them on the left-hand column of the Gantt chart. This online project management software provides a tool on your timeline for the proper identification of task dependencies and keeps the project process running smoothly. Linking dependent tasks on Monday.com is easy. Drag and drop one dependent task to the other and use the link function button to complete the process. Milestones are important markers that symbolize the end of one phase and the start of another. You can create milestones by highlighting the specific tasks you intend to make a milestone for the project. The purpose of having a schedule baseline is to ensure it captures the entirety of your project management timeline as scheduled. Upon execution of the project management plan, it is important to compare and record the extent of the project progress. Your project baseline needs to be after successfully computing your project timeline. It can be done by the means of the settings bar function. Once this has been computed, the software will automatically compare the schedule-timeline plan to the actual program process. Your project management timeline with the aid of Monday.com can be used as an active planning tool. It can be used to assign tasks to your project team. The process of assigning and collaborating tasks can be done directly from your dashboard. To ensure you complete your project successfully, various tools need to be utilized to assist in the process. The project management timeline needs to be managed with appropriate tools and practices to ensure the efficiency of the timeline. Choosing the appropriate project management timeline is one of the important tools for an efficient project process. Gantt Charts are the most popular tool used to create an efficient project management timeline. The Gantt project timeline is unique from the other types of project management timelines as they afford project managers the ability to visualize and also represent timelines with uncertain timelines. Accurately estimating the duration of each task is essential to planning, scheduling, and the eventual creation of a project management timeline. The most useful and efficient method used to estimate the duration of tasks is the use of the Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT). This technique helps in estimating the duration of tasks to be carried out by using various planning, scheduling, and management tools. Resources are one of the pivotal factors needed to execute various tasks and deliver deliverables. They usually offer a wide range of utilities, ranging from people to important materials and tools. A project timeline helps efficiently use these key resources by assigning them to various tasks and team members while ensuring various stakeholders are held accountable to ensure efficient monitoring. During a project process, a considerable amount of changes usually occur. These changes must be adequately reflected in your project management timeline. The use of project management timeline software makes the process of making changes to your project timeline relatively easy and efficient without causing any considerable setback to the entirety of the project process. Schedule regular and periodic meetings which factor in changes made during the project process that directly affects the project management timeline. Project management timeline software acts as a link as it allows for ease in making changes while allowing the user to share the updated timeline with other project stakeholders. The critical path method (CPM) helps point out the critical activities as regards the project process which determines the duration. Knowledge of these critical tasks and their timeline is important in creating a project management timeline. Was This Article Helpful? Project timelines are a visual representation of the order of tasks and events within a project, from the kickoff and initiation up until completion. A timeline is vital for project success, as it coordinates the efforts of the team. Creating a great project timeline involves active and engaged collaboration and a conscientious review of relevant details. Reliable software can help streamline the creation and maintenance of project timelines. A project timeline, also known as project time frame, provides a visual representation of the chronological order of tasks, milestones, and deadlines within a project. By considering the start and end dates of tasks and the allocation of resources, the project timeline can determine the actual duration needed for the project team to complete the project. This allows for effective planning, organizing, and tracking of the project's progress. Project timelines require significant amount of time and management that provides many benefits that make the effort worthwhile. Below are some examples. One of the primary reasons why project management timelines are important is that they allow for progress tracking. By breaking down a project into smaller tasks and assigning specific deadlines to each task, project managers can easily monitor the progress of each team member and the project as a whole. By regularly tracking progress against the established timeline, project managers can make informed decisions and take necessary actions to keep the project on schedule. Project timelines are essential for effective schedule management. When creating a project timeline, it is important to carefully consider the dependencies and interrelationships between different activities. By identifying these dependencies upfront, project managers can create a realistic schedule that takes into account any potential delays or constraints. By adhering to the project timeline, project managers can minimize the risk of schedule slippage and ensure that the project stays on track. Project managers are often faced with the question on what to do when the project runs late. A project timeline offers a solution by making it easier for project managers to identify any potential obstacles or risks that may impact the project's progress. For example, if a task is taking longer than anticipated or if there are resource constraints, these issues can be quickly identified by comparing the actual progress against the planned timeline. This allows project managers to take proactive measures to mitigate risks and address any potential setbacks before they escalate into major delays. When everyone on the team has a clear understanding of what needs to be done and by when, it becomes easier for team members to coordinate their efforts and work towards a common goal. Moreover, by providing a visual representation of the project's timeline, team members can see how their tasks fit into the bigger picture and understand how their work contributes to the overall success of the project. This promotes collaboration and ensures that everyone is working towards the same objectives. Having a project timeline enables project managers to maintain a big-picture view of the entire project. It allows them to see how different tasks and project milestones are interconnected and how they contribute towards achieving the overall project goals. This helps in making strategic decisions and adjusting the project plan if needed. One of the most important functions is considering when developing a project management plan is to ensure communication protocols are established—especially with stakeholders. Stakeholders such as clients, sponsors, and other key decision-makers need to be kept informed about the progress of the project. By sharing the project timeline with stakeholders, they can have a clear understanding of when each milestone will be achieved and when they can expect to see results. This helps in managing stakeholder expectations and ensures that everyone is on the same page. For your project timeline to be effective, it needs to have your project's most relevant details. So what do you write in a project timeline? Tasks to complete Estimated task duration Dependencies Milestones and deliverables Let's go over each of them. The first element to consider is the list of tasks that need to be completed. These tasks should be specific and clearly defined, outlining the activities that need to be carried out in order to achieve the project objectives. In writing your project timeline, each task needs to have a unique identifier or name to make it easier to track and monitor progress. In addition to listing the tasks, it is important to have an estimate of the duration of each task. This estimate will take to complete each task, based on factors such as complexity, available resources, and any potential constraints or limitations. By estimating the task duration, project managers can allocate the necessary time and resources needed for each activity, ensuring that the project stays on track. Another crucial aspect to consider when creating a project timeline is identifying dependencies between tasks. Dependencies is a project management term that refers to the relationship between different activities, where one task relies on the completion of another task before it can begin. These dependencies need to be clearly identified and documented in the project timeline, as they can have a significant impact on the overall project schedule. By understanding the dependencies, project managers can plan and schedule activities in a logical sequence, minimizing any delays or bottlenecks that may arise. Project milestones are key events or achievements throughout the project that mark significant progress or completion of a major phase. These milestones act as checkpoints for the project team and stakeholders, providing a sense of accomplishment and allowing for evaluation of progress. Deliverables, on the other hand, are tangible outcomes or results that are expected at specific points in time, such as reports, prototypes, or completed tasks. Including milestones and deliverables in the project timeline helps ensure that deadlines are met and progress is tracked effectively. Gantt charts are powerful visual tools that project managers use to plan and schedule activities in a logical sequence. Gantt charts display tasks along a timeline, showing start dates, durations, and dependencies. For project managers, Gantt charts offer clear visibility into project progress and resource allocation. However, they can become more complex for large projects and may require frequent updates. Despite these limitations, Gantt charts remain invaluable for project managers seeking to optimize timelines and ensure successful project management efforts. Smartsheet offers Gantt chart templates that are easy to navigate, allowing you to assign tasks, set deadlines, and track progress seamlessly. Source: Smartsheet accessed July 2024. Visit Smartsheet to download template BenefitsLimitations• Visual representation: Provides a visual representation of the project schedule, making it easy to understand dependencies.• Task management: Helps in managing and organizing project tasks, deadlines, and resources.• Communication: Facilitates communication among team members and stakeholders regarding project timelines and progress.• Complexity: Can become complex and difficult to manage, especially when dealing with large and complex projects.• Lack of flexibility: Limited flexibility in accommodating changes and unforeseen circumstances.• Lack details on resource allocation: May not effectively show resource availability and workload. ClickUp TeamGantt Smartsheet MS Project PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) charts are diagrams that enable project managers to identify critical paths, estimate project durations, and allocate resources effectively. PERT charts excel at handling complex projects with uncertain timelines, allowing for probabilistic estimations. However, they can be time-consuming to create and maintain, especially for large projects. Despite this limitation, PERT charts remain invaluable for project managers seeking to optimize schedules, mitigate risks, and ensure successful project completion in dynamic environments. Lucidchart has several PERT chart templates you can explore and choose from based on your specific needs. Source: Lucidchart accessed July 2024. Visit Lucidchart to download template BenefitsLimitations• Complexity: Can be complex to create and maintain, especially for larger projects with numerous tasks.• Time-consuming: The initial setup and maintenance of PERT charts takes a lot of time.• Lack of flexibility: Limited flexibility in accommodating changes and unexpected disruptions.• Readability: Confusing for stakeholders to interpret Historical timelines map events chronologically. These timelines can serve an overview of project milestones and general, and excel at illustrating complex sequences and interdependencies, enhancing stakeholder communication. Comrade provides project timeline templates you can use for your next project. Source: Comrade Digital Marketing accessed July 2024. Visit Comrade Digital Marketing to download template BenefitsLimitations• Documentation: Serves as a historical record of project activities, which can be valuable for future reference and learning.• Benchmarking: Provides a basis for benchmarking future projects against past performance and timelines.• Easy to interpret: Facilitates communication with stakeholders by presenting a clear historical overview of project milestones.• Static representation: Historical timelines may represent a static view.• Lack of real-time updates: May not capture dynamic project changes and adaptations over time.• Incomplete context: Historical timelines may remove several factors such as challenges encountered, resource distribution, etc. Miro Creating an effective project timeline is crucial for successful project management. By following these steps, project managers can develop a robust timeline that keeps their projects on track and stakeholders satisfied. Begin by clearly defining the project's boundaries. This step involves identifying what is and isn't included in the project, known as scope. Having a shared understanding of the project's extent. A well-defined project scope prevents scope creep and sets the foundation for accurate timeline creation. One of the best practices in project planning is to establish specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for your project. These objectives will serve as guideposts throughout the project lifecycle, helping you stay focused on the desired outcomes and measure progress effectively. Break down the project into smaller, manageable tasks and identify key milestones. This step requires a thorough analysis of the work required to achieve project objectives. Use techniques like work breakdown structure (WBS) to ensure no critical tasks are overlooked. Assess the time required for each task and determine the relationships between them. Some tasks may need to be completed sequentially, while others can be performed in parallel. Accurate estimation and dependency mapping are crucial for creating a realistic timeline. Match tasks with the appropriate team members based on their skills and availability. Ensure that resources are not overallocated and that there's a clear understanding of who is responsible for each task. This step is vital for preventing bottlenecks and ensuring smooth project flow. Develop a visual representation of the project timeline using project management tools. Incorporate a clear overview of the project schedule, making it easier for team members and stakeholders to understand the project's potential issues. Remember that a project timeline is a living document. Regularly review and update it as the project progresses, and make adjustments for any changes or unforeseen circumstances. This ongoing process ensures that your timeline remains an accurate and useful tool throughout the project lifecycle. Project timelines are the backbone of successful project management, coordinating team efforts and ensuring smooth execution. A well-crafted timeline not only keeps everyone aligned but also helps anticipate potential bottlenecks and adjust strategies proactively. Reliable project management software plays a crucial role in streamlining the creation and maintenance of these timelines, offering real-time updates and visualization tools. By leveraging them, project managers can easily track progress, manage dependencies, and communicate changes efficiently. A thoughtfully developed and consistently maintained project timeline serves as a roadmap to success, guiding teams from initiation to completion with clarity and purpose. Project time management refers to a component of overall project management in which a timeline is analyzed and developed for the completion of a project or deliverable. Project time management consists of six different components or steps. Activity Definition- Identifying and scheduling different components of the project management sequence that are required for completion of project deliverables. Activity Sequencing- The process of project time management that defines the order in which deliverables must be completed. Activity Resource Estimating- Indentifying and defining the types and quantities of resources and materials required to complete a deliverable. Activity Duration Estimating- Identifying and estimating the timeline for completion of durations. Schedule Development- the analysis of the order of activities, timelines, resources, and schedule barriers to develop a project schedule. Schedule Control- Project management intervention to mitigate changes to the product schedule The project time management process is dynamic and may require input from several different teams and each individual project time management process in order to integrate the various interdependent component parts of the project to achieve the project deliverable(s). The processes are recurrent within each work package of the project and occur at least once within the project as a whole. This process is called the Develop Project Management Plan process. The output from this integrated team effort is called the schedule management plan and is a subset of the overall project management plan. This term is defined in the 3rd and the 4th edition of the PMBOK. Audio version: Whether your project is plain or complex, you need a handy and functional timeline for high-level planning and scheduling. A project timeline ensures that your project is transparent and well-planned. It helps managers to anticipate bottlenecks and streamline workflows. Wondering how you create an effective project timeline? This post will help you get the basics about this subject and explore some vivid examples and relevant tools to create a stunning timeline. Contents: A project timeline is a chronological order of events. In most cases, it is a line with dates, events, or important actions that give team an understanding of what work is at a glance, keeping everyone aligned at every stage. It is crucial to have enough professional skills to build an accurate timeline. It shows what phases are already in the past, what is in progress, and what is supposed to be finished. It means it helps to be on projects' tracks. Project timeline elements According to your requirements and preferences, timelines can have multiple elements. However, there are typical components they should include in any case: Tasks that are to be accomplished. Starting and ending dates of tasks. Duration of tasks. Task dependencies. To save you from the theory overload, we are moving to study a project timeline in practice. Project timeline examples Timelines provide many benefits to project teams, assisting them in organizing tasks, showing when work should start, and displaying deadlines and dependencies. One of the most reliable tools for creating a timeline is a Gantt chart. Its advantage lies in its simplicity, as you can see task dependencies and the current progress of your work at one single glance. Below is a sketchy example of a Gantt chart timeline. However, these timelines can also be designed with the help of a horizontal chart, vertical chart, PERT diagram, Excel table, and other tools and approaches. Below is a closer look at project timeline examples that are built based on a Gantt chart. Some real-world timetables adapt to 5 fields where planning is crucial for the success of any undertaking. You can visualize project development You can somehow convince stakeholders to approve and support your idea. However, without a solid plan for each stage, things can fall apart easily. A product launch plan timeline demonstrates the work required in each phase, from initial planning to product launch. It also reflects essential milestones. Project timeline example for construction Another project plan timeline example relates to the construction industry. Construction projects are typically the most complex ventures because they integrate so many specific tasks and subtasks. Therefore, most scheduling tools for this niche tend to be overly complicated and sophisticated. Here's how a high-level construction timeline example may look like. Project timeline example for marketing This project management timeline example may showcase tracking the customer's journey from research to purchase. A marketing timeline serves to navigate and map this process by organizing tasks and milestones logically and under the phase of the process where they belong. Project timeline example for web design A web design project plan timeline example for the web design area can include research for the main layout, concept generation, content presentation, multimedia assets, prototypes, bug reports, finalizing, etc. Here's how a web design project plan timeline may look like: Project timeline example for event planning Any event is also a project, no matter if it is formal or not. A well-designed timetable will be the key to successful project implementation. It can be a seminar, conference, corporate meeting, trade show, or even your wedding. Here's an example of an event planning project timeline: How to create a project timeline in 8 steps Now that you have a better understanding of what is a project timeline and how to create a project timeline step by step. You don't have to be a very skilled manager or technically savvy professional to do this. It's possible to build a timetable even working remotely away from your colleagues. And this is an important option, as remote work nowadays requires agility and efficient strategies for any kind of action. When the pandemic hit the world, all of the predictions for the future of PM. So, let's clarify how to create a timeline for your business needs without extra pain. 1. Define the scope of your project Any project begins with a brief or a plan. Managers need to take good care of these foundations and understand the scope as accurately as possible. In general, it should sum up the main goals and objectives. 2. Choose appropriate software After planning your high-level timeline, you will need to put it together in a logical and adaptable way. It is often easier said than done. Therefore try to choose a professional PM planning tool in advance. 3. Break your project down into smaller chunks Projects always contain many moving pieces and constituent parts. This step is about recognizing which smaller pieces make up the big statement. 4. Create tasks based on those small chunks At this stage, you should dig deeper into the timeline to get an idea of how to tackle the work that will make up the sub-deliverables and fill up the following steps. 5. Add task dependencies Some tasks cannot begin until others have been completed. Task dependencies mean that the project has a definite order. Luckily, there are robust planning and management tools that can help to turn this headache into a smooth process. 6. Determine the time required for each task. You should have enough experience and skills to create accurate estimations for each task. As you space out your tasks on a horizontal line, you will see that you can naturally develop an estimate for how long a project might take. 7. Assess the resources Project managers should be able to take the abilities and preferences of their team into account to improve creating more accurate timelines. It is not easy to assess all the resources, but it will simplify the upcoming efforts. 8. Set milestones Project milestones are essential because they signify significant achievements and the completion of important series of tasks. As you're planning a project, milestones serve as anchor points during the development of your undertaking. 8. Get the feedback far before the final deadline. It is recommended to place essential project milestones regularly and based on certain key moments, like completing a large task. 9. Share your timeline Many PM tools allow sharing timelines with all stakeholders. It enables them to review, discuss, and approve files in one place simultaneously. This transparency will lead to receiving feedback much faster that will streamline the entire process. Feel free to follow and apply all the steps described above when you want to create a truly stunning timeline. Now let's get back to choosing an appropriate timeline tool because many things depend on it in the overall success of the project. Project timeline software Today, the role of online management tools, like digitalization in general, continues to grow. No coincidence that this growth is called one of the current trends in project management. When choosing an appropriate project timeline maker, you will also find so many reliable different options that should be considered? What do you need to pay attention to? Here is a closer look at three excellent timeline project management software worth your favor. 1. GanttPRO Free trial: 14 days. Core: starts at $7 user/month (billed annually). Business: starts at $17 user/month (billed annually). Enterprise: custom price. GanttPRO deservedly tops our list of the best project management timeline software. The famous online Gantt chart maker with a growing number of subscribers each passing day offers a solid feature set for managing and completing tasks of various complexity. With the help of its handy Gantt chart timeline, you can plan and schedule tasks, set dependencies and milestones, manage resources, and collaborate with stakeholders. These features make GanttPRO a powerful tool for many industries and sphere. For example, you can use it as handy construction management scheduling software, IT software, or for other purposes if you need an easy start. From this video, you will learn how to create your first project timeline in GanttPRO. 2. Workzone Free trial: not provided Team: starts at $24 users/month. Professional: starts at $34 user/month. Workzone is also a reliable online project timeline maker that allows viewing schedules graphically across a colorful timeline. This cloud-based PM solution is powerful enough to manage tasks of different complexity but simple enough that your team will actually use it. The users of Workzone can quickly shift from a bird's-eye view of projects down to a handy dashboard that gives an instant big-picture view of the status of projects across the company. This project timeline software (that can be installed on Mac, Windows PC, or Linux) suits the teams with a diverse mix of experienced and less-experienced users. 3. Monday Free trial: 14 days Standard: starts at $10 user/month. Pro: starts at $16 user/month. Monday is widely known for its versatility, affordable price tag, and advanced features. It also succeeds in generating online project timelines. The timeline project management tool professionally helps plan and schedule work and ensures that teams are on the right track. It is pretty simple to use, which makes it suitable for beginning users. Monday has excellent timeline views, collaboration features, calendar views, time tracking, and many integrations. You can visualize your work based on your preferences applying a Gantt chart, Kanban, and calendar view. This timeline tool also offers friendly templates to accommodate your needs. These three tools truly deserve attention and a place on the authoritative list of professional project timeline makers. If you want to explore more budget-friendly or free project timeline software solutions, don't hesitate to search – you will definitely find your best option. Create an online project timeline in minutes. Sign up for free Level up your business with a stunning project timeline The topic of project timelines cannot be exhausted in one article. Skills and knowledge come with practice. To become even more successful in planning and applying a timeline, try to learn more about them and explore examples. For example, how it differs from a word plan, what distinguishes the pair "Gantt chart vs. timeline" has, what connects it with a roadmap, etc. Anyway, don't be afraid to delve into the characteristics of online timelines - it will help you pay special attention to picking the right tool that will lead your timeline to the triumph of your business. A timeline in project management is a visual representation of a schedule that outlines tasks, dates, and important events. It gives teams an understanding of their work, promoting alignment and efficient resource use. A project timeline should include the following elements: tasks (clearly defined activities or steps required to complete a project), milestones (significant checkpoints or achievements that mark progress), dependencies (relationships between tasks), and start and end dates for each task. The first consideration when creating a project timeline is to define the project's scope and objectives. Understanding what a project should achieve ensures that a timeline accurately reflects all necessary tasks, milestones, and deliverables. This clarity helps in setting realistic deadlines and identifying task dependencies. A Gantt chart is a well-known tool in project management that visually represents tasks along a timeline. It displays task durations, start and end dates, dependencies, and progress. Gantt charts are widely used for their clarity and ease of use. One of the powerful platforms that offer such a tool is GanttPRO. A project timeline is a visual list of tasks or activities placed in chronological order, which lets project managers view the entirety of the project plan in one place. A project timeline typically takes the form of a horizontal bar chart, where each task is given a name and a corresponding start and end date. A project timeline provides an in-depth overview of the entire project from start to finish. You can see when a task starts and when it's due—and importantly, whether or not it's dependent on another task. A project timeline can be priceless for a project team, but they can be challenging to make by hand or even in Excel. Fortunately, project planning software can create an interactive timeline in just a few clicks. With ProjectManager, all you have to do is add your tasks and due dates. Want more detail? Add subtasks, milestones, dependencies, cost estimations and more. As your team executes their tasks, your timeline updates instantly, turning it into a powerful tracking device. Try it for yourself with a free 30-day trial. With ProjectManager, you can make a timeline in a matter of minutes—Learn more. Why Is It Important to Create a Project Timeline? Project timelines provide a simple, high-level overview of relevant dates and key milestones in a project. As the name suggests, a project timeline usually focuses on specific points in time in the project such as start and end dates in addition to milestones, or major project events. A timeline outlines task start and finish dates to better inform resource allocation and team workload distribution. As a pivotal facet of project management, project timelines act as a communication tool with stakeholders. They can help ensure the project is completed on time while using the agreed-upon budget and meeting key objectives. Get your free Project Timeline Template Use this free Project Timeline Template for Excel to manage your projects better. When to Create a Project Timeline While in some cases, the project timeline is created during the initiation phase, it's standard for the timeline to be created during the planning phase of the project. Unlike the initiation phase, the planning phase typically has more details available such as the timeframe, key deliverables, milestones, resource allocation and detailed scheduling. As the project scope, objectives and resources are established by this point, the planning phase is the ideal time to create a project timeline. Project Timeline Uses Project timelines give project managers an opportunity to: Organize their tasks Show when in the project the tasks start View task deadlines Link dependent tasks Break the project into phases Identify team members assigned to a task Project Timeline Video for Beginners Watch this tutorial video by Jennifer Bridges, PMP, who walks you through how to make an effective timeline. Determine if you're making a linear or comparative timeline. Then follow her steps to better organize your work. Once you've grasped the basics, continue reading our guide below. How To Create a Project Timeline Project management timelines can take many different forms with varying levels of efficacy. They can be drawn by hand, or on a whiteboard, but this method is inflexible and large changes to your project might require scrapping the entire timeline. Using a spreadsheet loaded up with macros can make for very capable, if time consuming to create. A project timeline excel template can save you the effort and time it takes to create your own spreadsheet. However, such macro-heavy Excel sheets can prove difficult to maintain for larger products. To run projects effectively and efficiently, project managers prefer project timeline software that integrates their tasks with an interactive, feature-rich Gantt chart that can schedule, assign tasks, monitor progress and report on performance. Project timeline software is more versatile than project timeline templates because it allows project managers to easily update the timeline and keep track of tasks with dashboards and reports. To make a thorough project timeline with a Gantt chart, follow these steps: Write a project scope statement: A scope statement outlines the tasks, milestones and deliverables for the project. It's an essential part of the project management plan and it has all the information you need for your project plan timeline Make a work breakdown structure (WBS): Use this graphic tool to break down the project scope into smaller work packages. The WBS allows you to visualize and organize the project's tasks, milestones and deliverables by hierarchy to establish a chronological order Identify task dependencies: Now that you've identified every task required for the project, find out which of those activities are dependent on other tasks to start or end Estimate task duration: Make a reasonable time estimate for each task. This is a critical step to create your project management timeline, and determine the time required to complete the project Define deadlines: Determine how much time your team can spend on each task Set milestones: Milestones are important dates that mark the end of one phase and the beginning of the next, which makes them an important component of a project management timeline. Milestones are reached by completing task sequences and deliverables Project Timeline Examples Let's look at two examples of project timelines to get a better idea of what it's used to accomplish. We'll start with a generic timeline for an implementation plan. Generic Project Timeline Example On the left-hand side of the timeline is a list of your tasks and subtasks. These tasks can be further broken down by phases, and given different colors to distinguish one from another. It is, for all intents and purposes, a regular spreadsheet; it has columns for tasks, costs, etc., and rows signifying each task or subtask. But it's on the right side where the timeline comes to life. Every task listed on the right is represented on a Gantt chart. Each task is represented by two points in time, the start and end dates. Between those two points is the duration bar. Those diamond symbols indicate milestones. When you see a dotted line connecting two tasks, that tells you that the tasks are dependent on each other to start or finish before the other can start or finish. Construction Project Timeline Example Now, let's get industry specific. Below is a project timeline example that outlines an apartment complex construction project. On the left-hand side, you'll see six different project phases, starting with design and planning and finishing with HVAC. Under each phase are the tasks that make up each phase. In the design and planning phase, the tasks include architectural designs, structural engineering plan and final review. If one task takes longer than expected or exceeds the planned budget, simply change the data in the spreadsheet accordingly. The planned start and finish dates are also listed as well as the planned cost for each. All of this data is represented by a Gantt chart on the right-hand portion of the project management timeline example. This is a visual representation of the project that can show project managers at a glance how the project is progressing. On June 25th, for example, there is a diamond icon that represents a project milestone. Free Project Timeline Template Need help building a project timeline? Try ProjectManager's free project timeline template and practice adding tasks, dependencies, phases, milestones and more on a dynamic timeline. On the left-hand side the data grid, where the various phases of the project are outlined. Under each color-coded phase are the tasks associated with it, including WBS, assignees, due dates and other resources needed to execute the scheduled tasks. The project timeline on the right is where things get interesting. You can see the whole project in one place, dependent tasks can be linked and milestones added. Put your project timeline knowledge to the test and build one today. Get started for free. What Is Project Timeline Software? As stated, software is commonly used by project managers to create their project plan timelines. Project timeline software is an integral part of the planning process and often includes additional features that help to monitor progress when executing the project. Using project timeline software is generally regarded as a necessity for keeping a modern project on schedule. It allows managers and teams to see the status of their tasks; that is, whether they're in progress, overdue or done. Related: Best Project Timeline Software (Free + Paid)

its most basic, project timeline software creates a graphic representation of the project on a timeline with tasks and milestones plotted across. Tasks can be assigned start and end dates, and display a duration bar that indicates the planned amount of time to complete the tasks. More powerful software offerings can also include further options to manage tasks. Microsoft Project is one of the most commonly used project management software, but it has major drawbacks that make ProjectManager a great alternative. Benefits of Online Project Timeline Software In ye olden days, project timelines were charted on paper—or a chalkboard, if ye olde project manager was lucky. While it did get the job done, these early solutions were extremely limited. Having to make changes required creating a whole new timeline, which takes time. As project management has emerged from the caves and embraced digital technology, the humble project timeline grew dramatically in power. Online project timeline software offers a centralized data repository in which everyone involved in the project can access the project timeline and other critical project documents and data. This means that managers and teams can access the project timeline when they need to, even if they're working different shifts and located in different timezones. Using an Online Project Management Timeline Every project is impacted by the triple constraint of time, cost and scope. To start controlling the time and scope part of that important triangle, you need to create a project timeline during the planning stage. The project timeline helps everyone on the project team by giving them a roadmap of where they are, and where they should be, at every point in the project. Timelines and schedules are essential to execute the project plan. Tasks are given start and end dates and show on the timeline as a line connecting to points in time. If some of those tasks are dependent on another to start or finish, these task dependencies can be indicated on the project timeline as well. This assists a manager by keeping those dependencies visible and preventing possible bottlenecks that could block the time during the execution of the tasks.