

## **It's All About Deliverables**

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We all know that the point of any project is to produce a final deliverable that satisfies the customer, and is delivered on time and within budget. So, if it's a deliverable we're after, why not manage our projects with a focus on deliverables instead of activities or tasks? Focusing on deliverables at the main project level has several advantages.

**The level of detail is manageable.** When you're working with activities, the level of granularity in large projects can overwhelm your ability to see what's important. For example, the project team for the start-up of a large, offshore plant created a master schedule that included 300-500 activities. Because of the large number of activities, it was difficult to identify the interdependencies within the project. By converting the activities into deliverables and then manually mapping the interdependencies of each deliverable, they discovered the fact that raw materials had not been scheduled for delivery until six weeks after finished goods were supposed to be leaving the plant. Focusing on deliverables pulled the project up to a level of granularity they could manage, and after all, project management is all about making a project manageable. If it doesn't do that, what's the point?

**Deliverables focus on results instead of process.** When you focus on activities, you're focused on the process - how something will get done - instead of the results - what will get done by when. A deliverable is the output that results from a series of activities, and at the main project level we should be concerned with outputs or results - who needs to produce what, by when, for how much?

**The subproject leader is empowered.** By focusing on results at the main project level, you empower your subproject leaders to manage the 'how' of the project. For effective empowerment to occur, you need to clearly define what is required from each subproject (what deliverables they are accountable for), make sure each subproject has the resources required to get the job done, and set up a feedback reporting mechanism that allows you to track their progress. Then let the subproject leader do his job. He'll need to break the deliverables down into the component activities and assign responsibility for each activity to someone on his team. (This should be done in a participative mode as not to disempower the team members.) He'll then need to work with the team to track the completion of both activities and deliverables.

**The quality criteria for a deliverable can be defined.** Since a deliverable is an output that gets handed off to an internal customer, the requirements and customer acceptance criteria of the internal customer can and should be defined. This is a critical element of any scope quality plan. It's particularly important to do if you've had difficulty with a deliverable in the past – if it didn't meet customer expectations or it required rework after the deliverable was produced. Avoid future problems by clarifying what exactly is required.

**Deliverables create clear accountability.** The accountability for each deliverable should be defined during planning and each deliverable should be the accountability of someone on the main project team (usually the subproject leader for the appropriate subproject). Each deliverable should include a delivery date, an allowable cost (where applicable), and quality criteria. Once this is done, accountability is clear. It is then up to the accountable person to make sure the deliverable is produced on time, according to the internal customer criteria, and on budget. Project monitoring is the feedback mechanism to determine if accountability is being fulfilled.

A focus on deliverables will make a project more manageable and better help you to ensure that the final deliverable satisfies the customer and is done on time and within budget. Now life doesn't get much better than that!



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