

Identifying Project Planning Timelines



The “what”, “why” and “how” of project planning timelines.

At Astratek Manufacturing Engineers we know first-hand that a timeline is essential to any project. It is not only helpful in organizing the work that needs to be done, but it holds everyone accountable for completing their work within the allowed timeframe. The timeline encompasses what the project will accomplish and helps to set clear direction and priorities. Timelines also provide a simple visual overview of a project from start to finish and lead to increased work efficiency among teams.

In the FMCG industry the accuracy of a timeline is of the utmost importance as any delays, no matter how small, can lead to substantial losses in production and therefore, profit.



How do you create the most accurate project timelines in an ever-changing environment? Think “What”, “Why”, and “How”...

What is a project timeline?

A project timeline is a detailed schedule for a project. It indicates which tasks need to be completed and when, so that the entire team can see what individual steps need to take place and when the whole project will be completed. A project timeline serves as a visual overview of the project and can be presented in several ways.

Why are project timelines important?

Project timelines provide your team with an action plan, ensure accountability, and help you navigate around any potential roadblocks. Timelines provide all stakeholders with a high-level view of the project and allow you to proactively identify any potential roadblocks or requirements before your project commences. Your project will require resources such as equipment, budget, and team members.

Knowing when specific tasks will be taking place assists you in allocating and managing your project resources more effectively.

One of the biggest benefits of a project timeline is that it helps you stay the course. By breaking the project down, it's easier to identify any inconsistencies and monitor progress. If a critical action misses its deadline, you know your entire project is at risk of falling behind schedule.

How do you create an accurate project timeline?

Identifying what is required from the outset will not only enable you to create a more realistic timeline, but it will also help you proactively address scope creep, which is when your project's requirements expand beyond what was originally agreed upon. Your timeline isn't about setting one end date for your entire project; you need to set milestone dates for tasks throughout the project. This is referred to as a work breakdown structure (WBS), which splits the full project into different deliverables. This makes it much easier to tell which tasks are involved in each deliverable. After you've determined what all the deliverables are and their related tasks, look at each task you have outlined under each deliverable and estimate the time required to complete it. More often than not, you'll find it's necessary to involve your project team in this process, as they'll have a more realistic view of how long their assigned tasks typically take.

How do you deal with delays?

To an extent, project delays are quite common and to be expected. The "unexpected" nature of the project delay is not related to possibility, but rather to the type, source, probability, and timing. Certain types of delays are more predictable than others and can be factored into the schedule before the project continues. Other types of delays may be foreseeable but cannot reasonably be factored into the schedule in advance. If every possible delay was factored into a schedule, the planning process would take too long, projects would be deemed too lengthy and costly, and would never be approved.

Projects can get delayed for many reasons from third party suppliers failing to deliver on time, to poor communication between project stakeholders or sometimes the deliverables are simply unrealistic within the project constraints. Then there are the unpredictable and devastating external factors, like COVID-19, that disrupt the project on an unprecedented scale.

Countless projects have been delayed or suspended as a result of the COVID-19



pandemic, labour shortages, and disruption to supply chains. During this time project managers need to take control, look ahead, stay productive and identify mitigation options.

In conclusion, one of the most important reasons to create a project timeline is so that everyone involved in the project, from stakeholders to executives, understands the big picture and their role within the project.

A well-planned project timeline gets everyone on the same page, allows you to identify roadblocks and delays when they occur, and prevents confusion in responsibilities. In setting up a proper project timeline you are taking the first step in ensuring a successful project.

To contact Astratek Manufacturing Engineers for assistance and advice regarding Project Planning Timelines on your FMCG projects you can scan the QR code and complete the online form or e-mail us at info@astratek.co

