



White paper

Sometimes it just doesn't add up

How to use Microsoft Project as an adding machine

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Scoutwest, Inc.

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If you are still estimating projects by writing down major tasks on a legal pad and mentally estimating their durations, there's a step up you could easily take; use Microsoft Project as an adding machine. If you are unfamiliar with Microsoft Project, it can be intimidating. The product naturally suggests that you use it for scheduling, resource allocation and leveling, but here's a simpler way to get started using Project.

Start by creating a new project, and hiding all the columns except Task Name and Duration. Next, open the Options dialog, click on Schedule, and set the "Duration is entered in" dropdown to "Hours." Widen the Task Name column so you can enter long task names. Now you are ready to list your tasks.

The first task should be the name of your project. All other tasks under it should be indented. This is important to allow you to see the duration for the entire project – the number you were looking for in the first place. Simply enter all the tasks you can think of, indented under the main project summary task. Enter the number of hours you think each task will take into the Duration column. To use Microsoft Project as an adding machine, simply link all the tasks together. To link all the tasks, click in the corner selection area, and then click the Link Tasks button. This effectively adds up the durations of all tasks. You'll see the total duration for the project in the first summary task, in hours.

You may consider breaking areas up into more summary tasks. You can do this by creating a new task, and indenting all the subtasks under it, just like you did with the first task. This task will summarize the subtasks under it, and show the total duration. The summaries will roll up to the project level and show the total duration for the entire project.

Make sure to add time for administrative tasks, like email and voice communications, project setup, burning CD's, etc.

About Us

Scoutwest, Inc. develops and publishes project management and time tracking products for consulting, manufacturing, government, and general business applications.

Thousands of small to large businesses, in dozens of countries worldwide, trust their mission critical business processes to Scoutwest products. Standard Time® and Standard Issue® work together to offer well-rounded project management solutions.

We specialize in packaged software for timesheets, project management, time tracking, defect tracking, and issue tracking. Standard Time is a web-based timesheet that also runs on Windows, Palm OS, and Pocket PC. It can be used for client billing and task management. Standard Issue is used for bug tracking and general issue tracking.

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