

What's New in Microsoft Project 2007?

Advantages and Benefits of Upgrading from Microsoft Project 2000/2003 to Microsoft Project 2007

1. Summary:

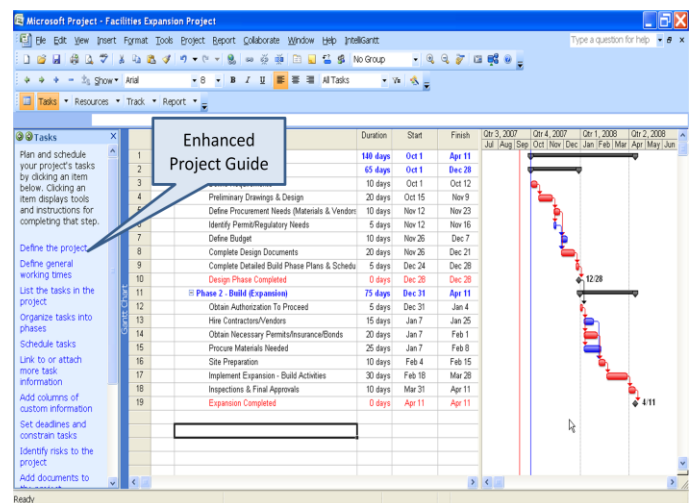
This whitepaper highlights the key new features in Microsoft Office Project 2007 and describes how it is more powerful and easier to use as a project management tool. This document is divided into three sections: Planning, Communicating, and Tracking & Analyzing. Learn about new tools such as 'multi-level undo' or 'show change highlighting' or 'task drivers' and understand how these and other tools will increase your effectiveness as a project manager.

1. Planning

Microsoft Project 2007's new and enhanced tools such as project guide, help, templates, task drivers and multi-level undo all make it easier and more effective to quickly and easily set up project plans. Ever wonder what is driving the start date of a task in your plan? Now you can take advantage of the new 'Task Drivers' tool which traces the source of the controlling factors affecting the start date of any task or milestone. Ever wanted to plan without worrying about the impact of adding new information? Now with multi-level undo, you can plan with the peace of mind knowing you can undo whatever information you put into your plan.

Enhanced Project Guide

The Project Guide provides a step-by-step, interactive aid that helps set up projects, manage tasks and resources, track status, and report project information. The Guide has been improved so that project managers can easily maneuver through the project management process and they are also customizable for different methodologies. For example, it is now possible to include tools such as a link to the forms developed following the Project Management Process.



Enhanced Help

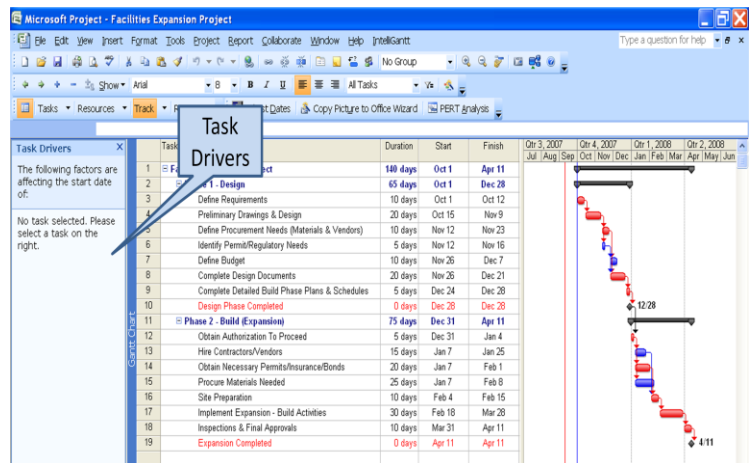
Microsoft Project 2007 provides assistance for novice to experienced users. It includes a robust Help search engine, smart tags, and wizards. Also included, is online access to training courses, templates, articles, and other help resources.

Enhanced Templates

The additional templates in Office Project 2007, and the downloadable free templates from Microsoft Office Online, make it easier to start projects and to save time. It is also possible to create custom templates to ensure greater consistency and standardization across an organization.

New! Task Drivers

Because this feature did not exist in previous versions determining all the controlling factors of a task was a cumbersome process. Task drivers can now trace the source of issues by showing which factors affect the start date of a task. Examples of possible drivers are predecessors, constraints, project start date and calendar exceptions. As changes are made, it becomes easy to identify factors affecting task schedules, and to follow a chain of factors back to identify the root cause of a particular delay.



New! Multiple Level Undo's

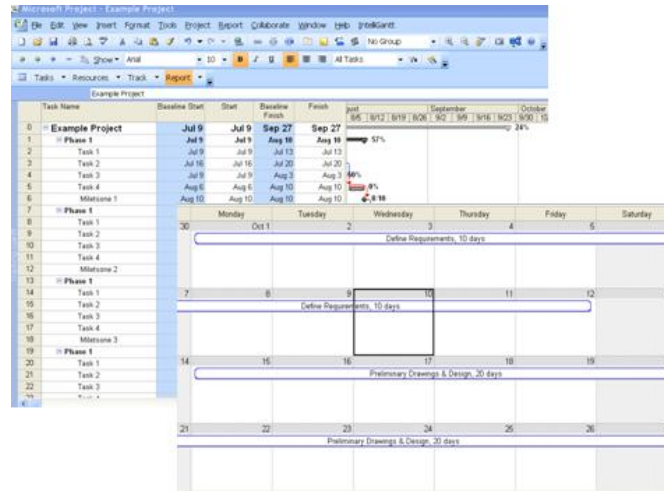
This is a much anticipated feature new to this version. What-if scenarios, such as reallocating resources, changing durations, and altering dependencies are easy to map using the undo and redo's. Changes to views, data, options and more are all possible with Multi-Level Undo's. Actions or sets of actions from macros can also be undone to test several what-if scenarios in order to fully understand the implications of each choice.

2. Communicating

Whether it is communicating with project team members, senior management, or project customers, Microsoft Project 2007's new communication tools can generate custom reports in a variety of format according to stakeholders needs.

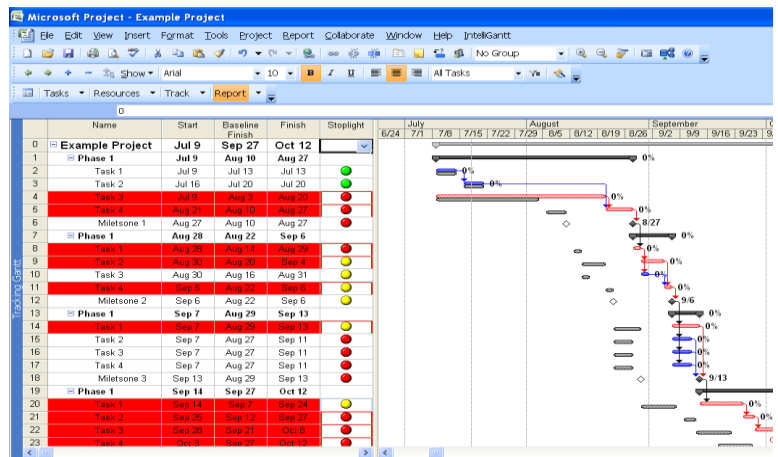
Enhanced Views

With new enhancements to the Calendar interface and the addition of 3-D Gantt bars, it is possible to create even more visually effective reports.



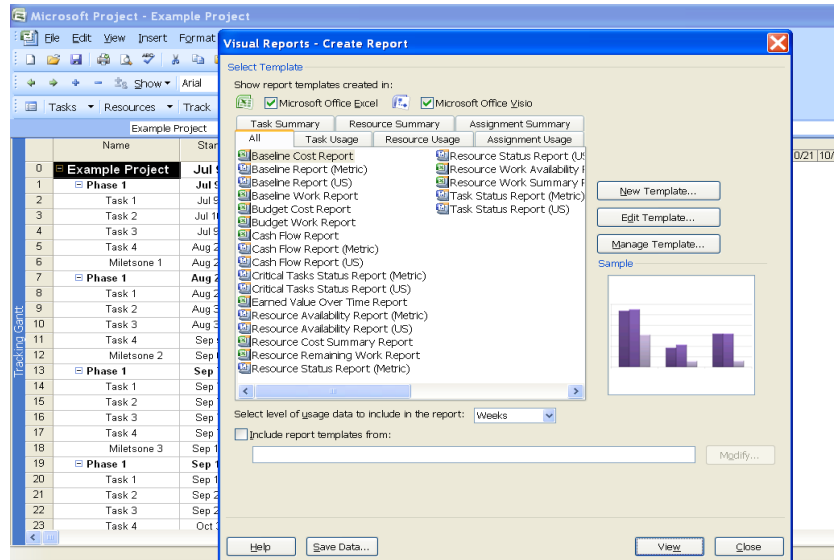
New! Visual Highlight

The cell shading background allows project managers to highlight cells in order to convey additional meaning. This feature has been popular in Microsoft Excel but was not in previous versions of Microsoft Project. Previously, it was necessary to change the font color to obtain this effect.



New! Visual Reports

The Visual Reports feature leverages charts and diagrams by using Microsoft Office Excel and Microsoft Office Visio Professional to produce charts, graphs, and diagrams based on Office Project data. A user can define custom report templates or choose from a list of customizable, ready-to-use report templates and then share reports with other Office Project users. In previous versions it was necessary to go through many steps to export the project data and then build the visual reports with other applications.

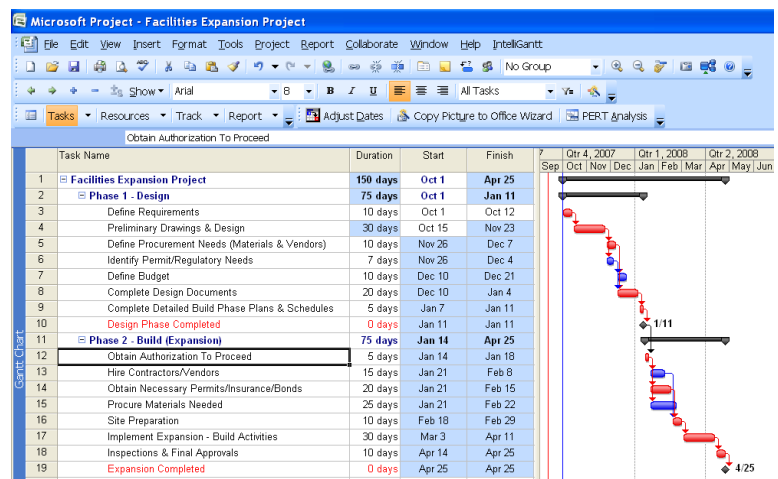


3. Tracking and Analyzing

With Microsoft Project 2007, once a project begins managers have a more effective tool to manage change, and keep projects on-track. Change highlights are a powerful new tool that makes it easy to understand the impact of making a change throughout the entire plan. The Top-Down Budgeting allows for assignment of budgets to projects and programs. Further, by defining custom fields based on formulas, managers can compute and track core metrics unique to specific projects.

New! Change Highlights

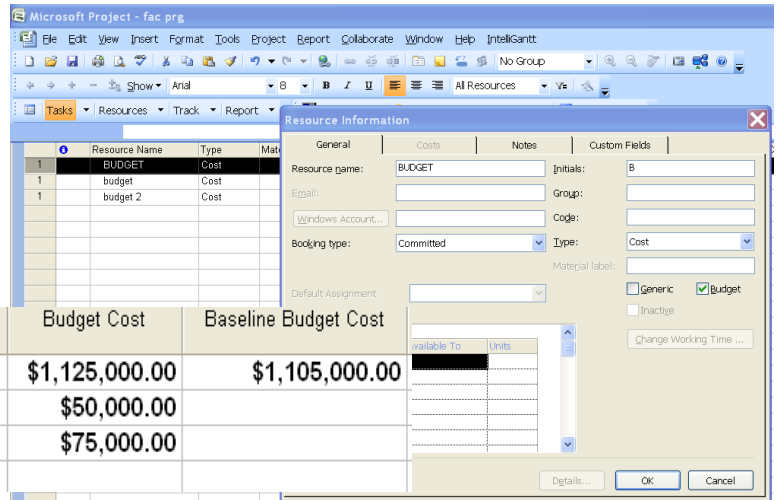
This new feature is simple, and the alternative in old versions was to have two copies of the file to compare. Microsoft Project 2007 will automatically highlight all items that shift as a result of the most recent change made. This means that it is now possible for users to see the impact that a change will make to the overall schedule and then decide to keep it or undo the change.



New! Control Finances

With Top-Down Budgeting, budgets can be assigned to projects and programs. The new "cost" resource type improves cost estimates and tracking. Other cost enhancements include more predefined fields that map to financial fields tracked in project accounting systems.

| | | Task Name | Budget Cost | Baseline Budget Cost |
|---|--|------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 0 | | Facilities Program | \$1,125,000.00 | \$1,105,000.00 |
| 1 | | Facilities Expansion Project | \$50,000.00 | |
| 2 | | New Project X | \$75,000.00 | |



Enhanced Flexible Project Tracking and Analysis

By defining custom fields based on formulas, it is possible to compute and track core metrics unique for projects. Graphical indicators can provide alerts when specific conditions are met.

Conclusion

These key new features in Project 2007 make it a more powerful and easy to use planning, tracking and communicating tool. These planning features - Project Guide, Help, Templates, Task Drivers - enable managers to successfully undertake and see projects to their conclusions. The improved communication tools enable managers to keep team members, senior management and project customers informed using custom reports. Managing change and keeping the project on-track is now easier using Change Highlights, the Top-Down Budgeting feature and by defining custom fields. As well, what-if scenarios are now possible during any stage of a project life cycle using Multiple Undo's. Microsoft Office Project 2007 provides you with all the tools to increase your effectiveness and productivity as a project manager.

About Author:

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