An Introduction to Microsoft Project

~ By Duncan Haughey

Microsoft Project is the world’s most popular project management software developed and sold by Microsoft.

The application is designed to assist project managers in developing plans, assigning resources to tasks, tracking progress, managing budgets and analysing workloads.

Microsoft Project creates critical path schedules, although a critical chain third-party add-ons is available from ProChain and Spherical Angle. Schedules can be resource levelled. The chain is visualised in a Gantt chart.

Resource definitions (people, equipment and materials) can be shared between projects using a shared resource pool. Each resource can have its own calendar which defines what days and shifts a resource is available. Resource rates are used to calculate resource assignment costs which are rolled up and summarised the resource level.

Each resource can be assigned to multiple tasks in multiple plans and each task can be assigned multiple resources. Microsoft Project schedules task work based on the resource availability as defined in the resource calendars. All resources can be defined in an enterprise resource pool.

Microsoft Project creates budgets based on assignment work and resource rates. As resources are assigned to tasks and assignment work estimated, Microsoft Project calculates the cost equals the work times the rate. This rolls up to the task level, then to any summary tasks and finally to the project level.

Microsoft Project has been extended with Microsoft Office Project Server and Microsoft Project Web Access. Project server stores Project data in a central database.

Project Web Access allows user to display and update this data over the Internet. Web Access allows authorised users to access a Project Server database across the Internet. Web Access includes timesheets, graphical analysis of resource workloads and administrative tools.

Microsoft recognises different classes of users. These different classes of users can have differing access levels to projects, views and other data.

Custom objects such as calendars, views, tables, filters and fields are stored in an enterprise global database, which is shared by all users.