

The Scheduling Conundrum

The scheduling conundrum is simple:

We know effective scheduling makes a significant difference to project success and we know what effective scheduling looks like but in most projects, the schedule is ignored, bad scheduling practice is the norm and most projects finish late.

The concepts and ideas that will be outlined in this series of articles are drawn from many sources and an on-going dialogue with friends and colleagues around the world. These are indeed 'interesting times'; the business of scheduling and its underpinning concepts and theories underwent a revolution in the early 1960s with the introduction of critical path scheduling but since then all that really changed until recently is the scheduling tools and the hardware they run on.

This is now changing, in the last few years that have been new ideas emerging including the effective application of the Theory of Constraints¹ (Critical Chain), Location Based Scheduling², Momentology³ and the Relationship Diagramming Method variation of the Critical Path Method⁴ (RD-CPM[®]).

There has also been recognition of the need to develop an effective community of practice for schedulers including training, credentialing and a career path, supported by effective advocacy at all levels. Over the next few months these different strands will be explored in more depth, the balance of this article will focus on outlining the current 'state of play'.

The Planning and Scheduling Profession

The two major groups world-wide focused on providing a 'home' for planners and schedulers are Planning Planet (www.planningplanet.com) and the PMI Scheduling Community of Practice (<http://scheduling.vc.pmi.org/Public/Home.aspx>). Planning Planet is free to join; you have to be a PMI member to join the PMI Scheduling CoP.

Other resources include the AIPM Project Control SIGs in Melbourne and Canberra that are open to all interested professionals (not just AIPM members) and a host of Linked-In groups. This list is far from complete but indicates the degree of interest planners and schedulers have in belonging to a group that meets their requirements, Planning Planet alone has over 30,000 members and a significant level of daily activity on its web site.

The current state of training and certification of planners and schedulers is nowhere near as healthy. PMI have offered the Scheduling Professional⁵ credential for the last 4 years and AACEi has offered the Planning and Scheduling Professional (PSP) credential for around 8 years. The

¹ For more on Critical Chain see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1050_Critical_Chain.pdf

² For more on Location Based Scheduling see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1021_LOB.pdf

³ For more on Momentology see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1036_Momentology.pdf

⁴ For more on RD-CPM[®] see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1035_RD-CPM.pdf

⁵ For more on the PMI-SP credential see: <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-Planning.html>



combined world-wide uptake is less than 2000 qualified practitioners. My feeling is that both of these credentials are aimed at senior schedulers with 5 to 8 years experience and have essentially 'missed the market'. The PMI-SP focuses on the skills needed to manager planners and schedulers – typically a PMO Manager. The PSP focuses on heavy construction scheduling and is almost a pre requisite for Experts offering scheduling forensic analysis in the USA court system. For the rest of us, by the time you have a 5 to 8 year career track in scheduling your capabilities are known and the qualifications don't help a lot.

What has been seriously missing is a way to train junior scheduler in the art and practice of planning and scheduling; this is a distinctly different skill set to learning how to make a software tool work! Certainly, the scheduling software industry have provided excellent tools based training for decades but knowing how to make a tool work is not the same as knowing why you need the tool or the ultimate objective of using the tool. It may be a surprise to many, but **the objective of scheduling is NOT to create an accurate schedule!** The ultimate objective of scheduling is to help the project team deliver the project on time.

There are two current initiatives focused on creating a career path for schedulers and developing a basic training framework for teaching scheduling.

The first is the creation of The International Guild of Project Planning, Controls & Delivery (The Guild) within the overall Planning Planet community⁶. The objectives of The Guild are:

For the Profession...

- To align global and industry variations in planning standards, methods and norms
- To have regional Centre's of Excellence, run transparently by the community
- To have a globally recognized suite of best practices or standards
- To support the ongoing efforts of existing Professional Bodies and Organisations

For Planners...

- To have their skills independently assessed and publically recognized
- To have employers be able to validate that their skills are proven
- To have their colleagues recognize their level of capability
- To have the opportunity for continued professional development / career path
- To have the opportunity to seek technical / training scholarships / mentoring

For Employers...

- To have a pool of proven and graded professionals from which to employ
- To have means of confidentially benchmarking the company planning or project team
- To have a reference to complement internal Corporate competence systems / standards

This is a huge on-going effort that should over time create and integrated framework for the planning and scheduling profession. It is a volunteer driven process and assistance is welcome.

⁶ For more on The Guild see: <http://www.planningplanet.com/guild>



The second key initiative, driven by the recognition that planning and scheduling skills in the construction industry are severely lacking, is the development of a credential framework by the Chartered Institute of Building⁷. The CIOB have completed the publication of the *Guide to Good Practice in the Management of Time in Complex Projects*⁸ (*The Guide*) and are now working on a series of planning and scheduling credentials.

The Guide was developed as a scheduling reference document capable of wide application. It is a practical treatise on the processes to be followed and standards to be achieved in effective management of time. It can be used in any jurisdiction, under any form of contract, with any type of project and should be identified as the required standard for the preparation and updating of contract programs, progress reporting and time management. With this foundation in place CIOB are working to develop new contracts that encourage the proactive management of time and will launch the first of a three level series of credentials in Q2 of 2012.

The CIOB Project Time Management Certificate⁹ (PTMC) is an examination based credential with no prerequisites (training courses are optional). The knowledge to be tested is schedule development and analysis based on a PDM network and *The Guide*. The examination will be in an on-line multiple choice format; more details to be released in December – I'm heavily involved in the development of this examination so watch this space.....

Conclusion

Its early days, but I believe over the next couple of years planning and scheduling will start to emerge as a structured profession within the overall ambit of project management. This will be aided if the current willingness of the different organisations involved in the development of the profession to work collaboratively continues into the future.

My belief is the only way to solve the 'scheduling conundrum' is for the profession to collectively develop effective people through training and accreditation, and from this foundation develop a 'strong voice' that can be heard by general management and project management.

As stated above, the intention of this series of papers is to draw together these emerging developments and provide readers with a useful information resource to help in this process. My article next month will focus on how the planning and scheduling profession reached its current state of development.

⁷ For more on the CIOB see: <http://www.ciob.org.uk>

⁸ For more on *The Guide*, see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Book_Sales.html#CIOB

⁹ For more on the PTMC certification see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-CIOB-TM_Credential.html

