

# **Project Management Glossary**

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**THE VOCABULARY OF ACHIEVEMENT**

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This glossary is an excerpt from Ron Black's book,

***The Complete Idiot's Guide to  
Project Management with Microsoft Project 2003,***

which is available in bookstores January 2005.

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**G L O S S A R Y**


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**activity**—An element of work that must be accomplished to complete the project. Also known as a *task*.

**activity duration estimating**—Estimating the number of work periods needed to accomplish an activity.

**Activity-On-Arrow (AOA)**—A network diagramming method that uses arrows to represent activities.

**Activity-On-Node (AON)**—A network diagramming method that uses nodes or boxes to represent activities.

**Actual Cost of Work Performed (ACWP)**—The total of all costs incurred during a given time period.

**Actual Finish Date (AF)**—The date work on an activity was completed.

**Actual Start Date (AS)**—The date work actually started on an activity.

**administrative closure**—Formally closing the project in accordance with the organization's documentation procedures.

**arrow**—The link between tasks in a network diagram that shows the sequence of workflow.

**Arrow Diagramming Method (ADM)**—A network diagramming method in which activities are shown as arrows.

**as-of date**—The date the data was collected.

**backward pass**—Calculating the late finish dates and late start dates of activities by adding the duration of the successor task to the dependent task in a network diagram.

**bar chart**—A network diagram of activities where the tasks are listed down the left

side and activity durations are shown as a horizontal bar scaled to the length of the activity. Also known as a *Gantt chart*.

**baseline**—The scheduled dates, durations, resources, and costs according to the original plan, used to compare progress.

**baseline finish date**—The originally scheduled finish date.

**baseline start date**—The originally scheduled start date.

**Budget at Completion (BAC)**—The planned total cost of the finished project.

**Budgeted Cost of Work Performed (BCWP)**—The total value of activities actually completed within a given period according to the planned costs.

**Budgeted Cost of Work Scheduled (BCWS)**—The total value of activities as planned for a given period.

**calendar**—The methodology used to schedule workdays, shifts, resources, tasks, and the project as a whole. There are four calendar types in Microsoft Project: base, project, resource, and task.

**change in scope**—A change in the goals and objectives of the project after the project has been planned.

**chart of accounts**—An accounting numbering system used to relate project costs to the organization's financial control system.

**charter**—The responsibilities and authorities assigned to the project.

**contingencies**—An allowance set aside for potential problems to mitigate risk.

**contingency planning**—A planning technique used to identify and mitigate potential problems.

**control**—Measuring, evaluating, and taking action based on actual performance compared to the planned performance.

**cost estimating**—Estimating the total direct and indirect expenses required to achieve project activities.

**Cost Performance Index (CPI)**—Budgeted costs divided by actual costs (BCWP/ACWP). Sometimes used to predict the project's completed costs.

**Cost Variance (CV)**—The difference between actual and estimated costs of an activity.

**crashing**—Compressing the project's schedule through extraordinary means. Also known as *expediting*.

**critical activity**—Any activity that is part of the longest sequence of tasks from project start to project end. If the completion of a critical activity is delayed, the total duration of the project is delayed.

**critical path**—The series of tasks in a network diagram that requires the most time to complete. Activities on the critical path have zero slack or float.

**Critical Path Method (CPM)**—A project scheduling technique where the duration of the longest complete series of tasks from project start to project completion is used to predict project duration.

**Cross functional team**—A workgroup that embodies diverse professions, skills, or expertise.

**deliverable**—Any specific, measurable project accomplishment or outcome.

**dependency**—Term used to describe the relationship between two or more activities or tasks. See *logical relationship*.

**dummy activity**—A drafting convention used as a placeholder to show a logical relationship in a network diagram, but where no duration is planned.

**Duration (DU)**—The number of minutes, hours, weeks, or months required to complete an activity or task.

**Early Finish Date (EF)**—The earliest possible date an activity can be completed based on the schedule.

**Early Start Date (ES)**—The earliest possible date an activity can start based on the schedule.

**Earned Value (EV)**—The total cost of work calculated by comparing planned work for a period against actual work accomplished.

**effort**—The amount of work units needed to complete an activity.

**estimate**—A forecast of cost or duration for an activity.

**Estimate at Completion (EAC)**—The expected total cost of an activity or project when finished.

**Estimate to Complete (ETC)**—The expected additional cost needed to complete an activity or project.

**Event-on-Node**—A network diagramming technique in which activities are shown as nodes or boxes and workflow logic is shown with arrows. The original Program Evaluation and Review Technique used event-on-node to diagram workflow.

**expediting**—Shortening the duration of a task or project by any means available. Usually increases costs. Also known as *crashing*.

**fast tracking**—Compressing a project's schedule by running tasks in parallel that are normally run in sequence, such as

beginning construction before design is complete. Usually increases risk.

**finish date**—The actual, planned, estimated, early, or late date an activity is to be completed.

**Finish-to-Finish (FF)**—The workflow logic between two tasks in which the dependent task may not finish until its predecessor task is finished.

**Finish-to-Start (FS)**—The workflow logic between two tasks in which the dependent task may not start until its predecessor task is finished.

**float**—The amount of time a task may be delayed without pushing out the project finish date. Also called *slack*.

**forward pass**—The calculation of the early start and early finish dates of all activities in the network diagram.

**Free Float (FF)**—The amount of time a task can be delayed without pushing out the start of any immediately following activities. Also called *free slack*.

**Free Slack**—See *free float*.

**Gantt Chart**—A network diagram of activities in which the tasks are listed down the left side and durations are shown as a horizontal bar scaled to the length of the activity.

**lag**—Describes the delay of a successor task from its predecessor's start or finish. See also *lead*.

**Late Finish Date (LF)**—The latest a task may finish without delaying the project's finish date.

**Late Start Date (LS)**—The latest a task may begin without delaying the project finish date.

**lead**—Describes the advance of a successor task's start from its predecessor's start or finish. See also *lag*.

**leveling**—The process of effectively allocating resources to tasks.

**link**—The arrow that shows the logical work sequence relationship between tasks.

**logic**—The workflow sequence.

**logic diagram**—A project's network diagram.

**logical relationship**—The workflow logic between two project tasks or activities (the predecessor and the dependent tasks) described as a finish-to-start, finish-to-finish, start-to-finish, or start-to-start relationship. Also known as *dependency*.

**milestone**—A point in the network diagram that shows significant accomplishment.

**monitoring**—Collecting progress information for judging progress against the plan.

**network diagram**—A diagram showing the workflow sequence of all tasks required to complete a project.

**network logic**—The workflow sequence as shown by a network diagram.

**network path**—Any series of tasks in a network diagram.

**overlap**—The concurrent period of time two or more parallel tasks share. See *lead*, *lag*, and *parallel task*.

**noncritical task**—Any task or activity that does not fall on the longest (critical) path.

**Over-allocation**—The condition having of too much work for the available resource capacity.

**parallel task**—A task undertaken during the same time period as another task.

**path**—A series of activities in a network diagram.

**path float**—See *float*.

**Percent Complete (PC)**—Estimate of progress derived by comparing the amount of work completed with the amount of work planned for an activity or project.

**PERT Chart**—A critical path scheduling method using an activity-on-node network diagram and the Program Evaluation and Review Technique of weighted average duration estimates.

**phase**—A major subunit of a project's work or set of project deliverables.

**Planned Finish Date (PF)**—The scheduled finish date of the project.

**Planned Start Date (PS)**—The scheduled start date of the project.

**precedence relationship**—The description of two or more task's workflow sequence.

**predecessor activity**—The task which immediately precedes the dependent task.

**program**—A group of projects that are related and managed in a cohesive way.

**Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT)**—A critical path method of scheduling a project using the weighted average method to estimate durations.

**project**—The implementation of a strategy to create a specific, measurable outcome.

**project charter**—The document that authorizes a project manager to use the organization's resources and outlines the intended outcomes of the project.

**project management**—The process of undertaking and completing a course of action to meet the stated goals and objectives of an endeavor.

**Project Manager (PM)**—The person responsible for planning and implementing the project.

**Remaining Duration (RDU)**—The amount of time required to complete a task.

**Request for Proposal (RFP)**—A solicitation for proposals from potential vendors for good or services.

**Request for Quotation (RFQ)**—A solicitation for quotations from vendors for goods or services.

**resource leveling**—Applying available resources to a project to determine task start and finish dates, project duration, and resource utilization rates.

**resource planning**—Estimating the people, equipment, and material resources required to complete a project.

**resources**—All the people, equipment, materials, and money required to complete a project.

**risk assessment**—Evaluating potential risks and their affect on the project.

**S-Curve**—The graph of cumulative project expenditures plotted against time.

**Schedule Performance Index (SPI)**—The work performed compared to the work scheduled (BCWP/BCWS).

**Schedule Variance (SV)**—The actual versus the planned cost, duration, work, or percentage complete of an activity.

**Scheduled Finish Date (SF)**—The date the task was to be completed according to the plan.

**Scheduled Start Date (SS)**—The date the task was to be started according to the plan.

**scope**—The description of the project's intended breadth and depth.

**scope change**—Alterations in the project's goals or objectives at any time after the project has been initiated.

**slack**—The amount of time a task or path can slip without causing the project to finish late. See *float*.

**slope**—The dependent variables that describe the change in cost and duration when expediting (crashing) a task. Used to compare alternate methods and calculate the total costs required to shorten a project's duration. **start date**—The actual, planned, early, late, or baseline date a task is scheduled to start.

**Start-to-Finish (SF)**—The workflow logic between two tasks where the dependent task may not finish until its predecessor task has started.

**Start-to-Start (SS)**—The workflow logic between two tasks where the dependent task may not start until its predecessor task has started.

**successor activity**—The activity that follows a predecessor activity.

**target schedule**—The baseline schedule.

**Target Finish Date**—The baseline date work is scheduled to finish.

**Target Start Date**—The baseline date work is scheduled to start.

**task**—An element of work which must be accomplished to complete the project. Also known as an *activity*.

**Total Float (TF)**—The amount of time a task or path can be delayed without delaying the completion of the project.

**triple constraints**—The interrelationship of a project's time, cost, and performance elements. Understanding their relative importance facilitates decision making and problem solving. Usually described as a driver, middle, and weak constraint.

**Under-allocation**—The condition having of too much resource capacity for the available work.

**Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)**—The decomposition of the project's goals and objectives into increasingly detailed units of work, eventually identifying all tasks that are essential to the project's successful completion.




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#### ABOUT RON BLACK

Throughout 30 years of business leadership experience, Ron has built a reputation for delivering down-to-earth, results-proven content in all he does. As a business consultant, author, and award-winning speaker, he works with top managers who want to move their organizations to new levels of performance and entrepreneurs launching new products and services.

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