(WhenTimeisMoney) PDF

Software thats more powerful yet easier to use lets the nonspecialist stay on top of complex projects.The ancient Egyptians managed to construct the pyramids without it. The builders of the transcontinental railroad and the Golden Gate Bridge got by without it, too. But these days, whether youre planning a giant construction project, developing a new product, or launching a marketing campaign, youll likely need the help of project management software. At its most basic level, the software enables you to handle the same issues that faced the pharaohs construction managers: scheduling and allocating resources and keeping the effort on track. During the planning phase, you can run through a series of "what-if" scenarios. And because nothing ever proceeds quite as planned, project management software also allows you to monitor progress, adjust schedules, and generate extensive reports. Not surprisingly, the software programs for managing complex projects were initially developed for the engineering and construction industries. The mainframe or minicomputer-based systems were very costly and were used almost exclusively by professional project managers. Thats not true today. You dont have to be building an oil refinery or developing a new jet engine to use project management software. The advent of the personal computer is the early 1980s changed the market radically. Today the best-selling project management

software packages are priced in the $500 range and aimed at nonprofessionals. The software is being employed for everything from audits and managing new product launches to planning weddings and other events. The market leader is Microsoft Project, which retails for $469 and has sold more than two million copies. "What weve done with the market _ and what we hope to continue to do _ is to broaden this category to basically anyone who needs to manage projects," says Jean Cho, group product manager for Microsoft Project. More than 70% of users, Cho adds, are completely new to the category. Missionary WorkEven competitors agree that Microsoft has helped expand the market. "Theyre doing a lot of the missionary work that needs to be done to inform people that project management is a useful and not-so-difficult thing to do," says Joel Kopelman, president of Primavera System in Bala Cynwyd, PA., which offers the popular Project Planner P3 for professionals at $4,000, as well as SureTrack, at $399, for the nonprofessional user. Choosing the right project management software requires a careful assessment of your needs. As the guide accompanying this article indicates, theres a wide array of software available _ from lower-priced packages for nonprofessionals to the high-end software for running giant, complex projects. When looking for a project management system, start by deciding how youll use it. Here are a few questions to consider: Is the software for your personal use _ or will others be involved in the projects management? If you are simply looking for a personal scheduling system, there are several fine lower-priced desktop tools on the market, including Microsoft

Project, Scitor Corp.s Project Schedule 7, SureTrack, and others. Choose one youre comfortable with and figure on using it for at least a year before you start thinking about expanding into more advanced systems. If you are looking for software that several people will use together, you should consider some other facts as well. Will you be running multiproject operations? Are you planning to bring the data of several projects together for analysis _ in order to allocate resources among them, for example. Will you need to combine data to generate multiproject status reports? If so, you should consider how the system will deal with ancillary files such as resource definitions, work categories, and calendars. Can they be defined centrally and shared across projects? Does the system support multiple calendars? Youll also need to check what multi-project reports can be created. Tasks that once took days can be done in minutesAnother factor to consider is whether more than one person will need to use the same file at one time. How does the system support multiple users? Can multiple users edit the same project file simultaneously? If so, how is security handled and what about data integrity? The products in this multiuser category include Welcom Software Technologys Open Plan, Primaveras Project Planner, and Artemis Views. Staying in SynchThe basic architecture of the system should also match your corporate requirements. Consider what databases and other software you will need to work with. If your organization has moved or is in the process of moving most of its data into Oracle, or SQL Server, it makes sense to ensure that your project management data are compatible with that too. Be sure to

distinguish between the ability to save data directly into the database and the ability to import and export the data from the systems native format. This will guard against data that might end up out of synch between the project management system and the corporate database. Wider use of project management software within organizations has spurred the vendors to tailor their latest offerings to corporate requirements. "We [rewrote] Open Plan so it supports client/server databases, OLE Automation, and the latest guidelines from Microsoft on interfaces," says Tony Welsh, president of Welcom Software. Manufacturing software specialists such as Baan and SAP are adding project management systems as well. If you require both low-end and professional systems in your organization, be sure that whatever you 0select will allow both levels to work together. Welcom, for example, has two editions of its Open Plan scheduling systems. one aimed at professionals, the other at occasional users. The products share the same database. Instead of creating a professional addition, Microsoft has relied on third party vendors. There are more than 100 third-party products that work with Microsoft Project. 100Test

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