

Using Special Purpose Schedule ... INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

By Anil Seth

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. ~Frederick Buechner

One thing in baseline which every project engineer talks about is schedule:

Forward pass, backward pass, successor, predecessor, logic tiles, durations, Finish-to-Start, Start-to-start, Finish-to-finish, Start-to-finish,

And after establishing (*say*) EPC schedule, the battle does not end and it starts again with reporting - daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually.

Nothing unusual in this; all project team members start following up and pick up the pace. In earlier days the float and critical paths were the terms generally used to explain the current forecast.

In today's world we now have another item which is "Near term critical path"; this near term critical path owes its origin to modern day compressed schedule. There are many activities which run with minimum float and hence these make the job of Project engineers almost nerve breaking. These are those with which we must be careful. Primarily the management focuses on critical path in the report, however in general a comfortable view is taken on these near term critical. But generally these are the activities which can make or break the project.

Now since the culprit is known, the question is how to tame the animal?

Nowadays project engineers use various innovative techniques like excel chaser, mile marking, etc. to fight out the schedule. These are Special Purpose Schedules.

One of the special purpose schedules, the excel chaser, is a customization of near term critical path activities. This is nothing but a chart where percentage completion is added manually by a project engineer. The assessment is mainly based on criticality seen by the project engineer; the criticality could be the result of past experience with selected vendor or change orders foreseen in lump sum project or inconsistent performance factor of task force, etc. This assessment may or may not match with prediction calculated by schedulers'.

One of the examples of excel chasers is shown in figure 1. The procedure is same as the rolling board which used to be hanging in corner of Engineering Manger's cabin:

- have your morning meeting,
- mark concerns and progress on board,

About the Author



Anil Seth

Gurgaon, India



Mr. Anil Seth is working as Project Manager in Fluor's Indian office at Gurgaon. Fluor Daniel India Private Limited (Fluor India) provides a full range of engineering, design, procurement, and construction management services to Indian and overseas clients. Fluor India is an established quality provider of engineering, procurement, construction management (EPC) and project management services for Fluor's energy and chemicals, power, mining, and industrial projects, and is a key support office for Fluor facilities located in North America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia Pacific

Earlier to Fluor, Anil was at Larsen & Toubro Ltd. at Faridabad, India and managing the Project Engineering Manager Portfolio for hydrocarbon projects. Before joining Larsen & Toubro Engineering and construction division he has worked for Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited. He holds B.E. degree with Honors in CHEMICAL Engineering from Panjab University Chandigarh India and has also done Diploma in Environmental Management. He is certified for Harvard Manage Mentor and specializes in Building High Performance cross functional Task Force as well as Converting Breakeven Projects to Profitable scenario. He can be reached at anilshivani99@gmail.com or Anil.Seth@Fluor.com

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