



How To Create Effective Gantt Charts

Project Management Tips and Tricks

Table of Contents

Project Management: Tips on Creating the Most Effective Gantt Charts.....	3
Summary.....	4
About Our Group.....	5

Project Management: Tips on Creating the Most Effective Gantt Charts

Gantt charts are popularly used by project managers to ensure a project remains on schedule. They are typically presented with dates across the top of the chart and a list of activities in the rows. Horizontal bars represent when an activity is scheduled to start and end. Gantt charts are typically created in Microsoft Excel or even specialized project management programs like Microsoft Project. Guidelines for creating effective Gantt charts include:

Use Clearly Defined Dates Appropriate to the Scale of the Project

If your project spans several years, you may want to define your Gantt chart in terms of months. However, if your project lasts several weeks, you will want to define your chart in terms of days. Whichever format you choose, ensure that your dates are clearly labeled, with year, quarter, and month labels as necessary. You may also want to color code these labels for easy readability. It is always a best practice to use actual dates instead of a generic “Week 1, 2, 3” to maintain a real frame of reference by tying it back to a calendar.

State Tasks at an Appropriate Level of Detail

Activities or tasks need to be stated at an appropriate level of detail. If it is too granular, you will have an ungainly chart that cannot be easily read; too high level and the chart will not be as effective as it could be. A good rule of thumb is if most of your bars stretch for only one or two boxes, where the time period of a box is defined by the time scale you selected, then your activities are too detailed. On the other hand, if each bar stretches across more than a third of the page, your activities are too high level.

Show the Person in Charge

Having tasks and a concrete timeline for completion is an essential part of project management, but an effective Gantt chart will also include information on the person or team in charge of that activity. This will allow the project manager to easily identify at-a-glance who the contact person is, in order to follow up on whether the task has been completed.

Highlight Dependencies

Most projects have a critical path of activities where one task cannot be started unless another one is completed. These dependencies should be clearly marked on the Gantt chart so that the project manager can easily identify the critical path and make sure those activities are completed on time.

Summary

Named after Henry Gantt, who designed and published the first charts circa 1910–1915, Gantt charts are a favorite presentation method for project managers. Effective Gantt charts should be created at the appropriate level of detail, both in terms of dates as well as activities. The person in charge of each activity should be clearly stated, and dependencies for each activity should be marked. This will enable easy identification of tasks, timelines, and people in charge, all key elements for effective project management.

About Our Group

Data Meaning utilizes cutting-edge technologies to build innovative and effective Business Intelligence and Data Warehousing solutions. Our experienced, professional staff can design and deliver pioneering reporting systems to give you a unique perspective to your data and an edge in your decisions.

Along with the world-class consulting services Data Meaning offers, they are also an official licensed reseller of the award-winning MicroStrategy Business Intelligence Reporting Suite, a fully integrated BI platform that makes Business Intelligence faster, easier, and more user-friendly. Data Meaning has MicroStrategy certified consultants available to help you deploy MicroStrategy with ease. For your BI and DW design, install and implementation and training needs please visit us at www.datameaning.com or email info@datameaning.com.