

If You Think Your Scheduler is a Technician—Think Again!



In the construction industry, schedulers are often considered techs that build the schedule and enter data. *Technically* this perception is correct. A technician is a person whose occupation requires specific training in a technical process. All schedulers must be proficient with their tools, such as software: Microsoft Project and Primavera P6 are popular. They should be well versed in the terminology required to build the schedule: tasks, dependencies, deadlines, milestones, critical path, total float, and constraints.

Unfortunately, project stakeholders are generally disappointed that the schedule does not convey how they want to build the job or the real-time progress of the delivery. The over-simplification of the scheduler's role in the project and the resulting frustrations with the schedule become a project-sabotaging cycle.

The technician viewpoint allows the project leaders on the PM team and in the field to spoon-feed the scheduler at their convenience. The information provided, if any, is biased in favor of their performance. Thus, the scheduler cannot equip the stakeholders with valid schedules and reports. Forget analyses.

The schedulers attempting to be thorough in their role face resistance. Treated as outsiders and bureaucrats, they find obtaining pertinent information like pulling teeth. For the schedule to have a positive influence on the project, the scheduler must be a significant part of your project management team with direct authority over schedule management.

Project managers and superintendents have distinct job responsibilities that require most of their time and energies.

Schedule development and management become too far down their lists of priorities to give the time and attention necessary to build and maintain a schedule that surrounds, penetrates and binds the project together, *(Star Wars fans can appreciate this)*.

The scheduler is a planner, a builder, communicator, coordinator, manager, and

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analyst. The scheduler turns a static schedule into the hub of project information. A great technician can work his or her tools with finesse, but a professional scheduler's talents and abilities go far beyond the technical aspects of scheduling.

The Professional Scheduler's Abilities include:

- An understanding of the project
- The ability to identify which project stakeholders need to be in the scheduling loop
- Perceiving what information each of those critical individuals wants to know
- Perception of who the leading information suppliers are
- The ability to keep them engaged in providing progress updates from the field
- Analytical skills to use the gathered information in providing objective insights

If the project manager is the captain of the project, then the scheduler is both the chief communications officer and the navigator.

Therefore, the scheduler has a

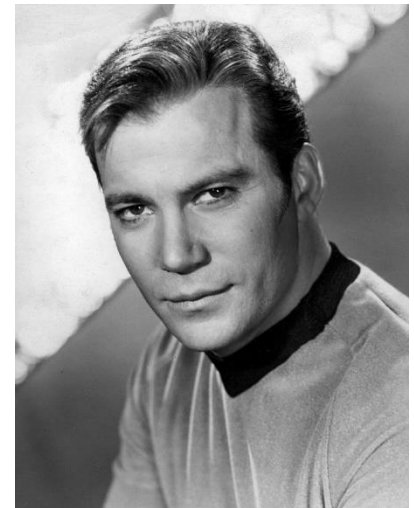
vital role of support to the project manager.

The project manager and team need to be able to rely upon the scheduler's work, or scheduling team's if the project is complex. Project teams need the right information at the right time to make the best decisions while delivering projects.

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