

Microsoft Announces Project 2010 at Project Conference

By Paul Estabrooks

**On September 16th, 2009
Microsoft publicly unveiled
Project 2010 at the Project
Conference in Phoenix Arizona.**

The new version includes a number of important improvements over 2007 as well as several new features that were met with enthusiastic applause from the audience of customers and implementation partners.



We are very excited about the new version and the opportunities it presents for our customers. Below is a recap of some of the new features and improvements that we believe will be the most valuable to you.

Project Professional

Updated User Interface – Project 2010 includes the “ribbon” currently in use in Word 2007, Excel 2007 and PowerPoint 2007. The Ribbon exposes common tasks and functionality to the user in a very intuitive interface.

The Team Planner – This new feature will give users capabilities that they have not had in MS Project. Users will be able to view the resources on the project as well as the tasks they are on and drag and drop tasks from resource to resource to resolve conflicts or shift workloads.

Manual Scheduling – This new scheduling option enables users to schedule a task as they desire without dependencies and calendars affecting it. Users can insert manual tasks within a larger plan and retain control of the scheduling of this task.

Top-down scheduling – Scheduling can now be done starting at the summary level, enabling users to start with a big picture and drill into greater detail over time. This new scheduling option will broaden the appeal of Project and is substantially easier to use than any previous version of Project.

The timeline – This was by far the most impressive new feature for the audience. Project plans can be rendered into a single, tube time-line view and immediately cut and pasted into Word, PowerPoint or E-mail as Office Art. The ease of use of this feature and immense improvements in communicating high-level project timelines to a broader audience is a huge win.

Backwards Compatibility – Project 2010 is fully backwards compatible with previous versions of Project. This will assist with migration and adoption.

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Project Server

There are a number of improvements in Project Server 2010 that must be noted. Microsoft has removed all dependencies on ActiveX. The new time and task sheet web pages are enabled using Jscript and are fully editable grids. Additionally, and most importantly, Portfolio Server has been merged into Project Server making it a single Server offering. The Portfolio Server functionality is now called Demand Management and is an impressive web-based experience. Merging these two projects is a huge improvement in the platform.

Finally, the new version is built on SharePoint Server 2010 and requires Windows Server 2008, 64 bit. This is a substantial change in the underlying infrastructure requirements but does give enterprise users enhanced collaboration capabilities, improved reporting and greater scalability. We view this change as necessary to address the increasing demands many of our customers are placing on the platform.

Overview of the new features:

Demand Management – Microsoft has brought over most of the functionality currently in Portfolio Server into the Demand Management module. It now has a new user interface that is consistent with the rest of the EPM environment and built upon SharePoint. In this module you can create custom proposal templates, input forms, specify specific workflow steps for different

types of projects, implement an approval process, and optimize the number of selected, proposed projects in accordance with human resource availability by making “what-if” adjustments to anticipated project schedules. The optimization capabilities are powerful and give new flexibility to those making the difficult decisions.

Web-based Project

Management – Project Managers will now be able to more fully edit and manage their projects from within Project Web Access including editing with multiple-level undo. These enhancements will make PMs more efficient and extends the capabilities of Project to a broader audience.

Improved Time and Task updates – In 2010 time and task updates can be done in a synchronized fashion. This is available in 2007 using “Tied-Mode” which some of our customers have implemented. In 2010 this capability is built into the product. It is not mandatory and users can still choose to use Task updates only, timesheet only or both. The synchronized time and task update is a welcomed change.

Microsoft has not yet announced the release date for Project 2010. They have announced that the public beta of Project 2010 will be available in 2009 and that the product is currently scheduled to ship in H1 2010. We continue to ramp up our depth on the new platform and will be in a position to start presenting the beta shortly after it becomes available. For those interested in seeing it, please let us know and we will be sure to schedule a session later this fall or early in the new year.

For more information about Project Server or our Enterprise Project Management practice, please visit our website at www.agorainc.com/EPM

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