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Project Assistants Newsletter

February 2008

Achieving Project Management Nirvana

We all know what Project Management perfection means: your organization's processes, technology and resources are efficiently aligned to allow you to complete your projects on time, on budget, and within established specifications. But there is no magical formula to achieve this perfect state. Instead, the path to nirvana is often littered with all kinds of obstacles including ineffective technology, failed initiatives, and other "quick fixes".

In this series of articles, we will lay out a framework for how to progress on the path to project management excellence.

The first step in improving your organization's project management environment is to undertake an assessment of your organization's current state; this assessment must provide an objective and measurable picture of the existing project management infrastructure. Following this assessment, you must also clearly identify the desired future state, your goals – again, in an objective and measurable manner. Identifying the gap between these two states allows you to develop logical steps to achieve your *nirvana*.

Throughout this process it is critical to remember that quick fixes just don't work. For example, buying technology and then figuring out how to use it to achieve your goals doesn't usually work in the long run. You must first establish goals, and then develop logical evolutionary steps to improve your people, processes and technology to reach these goals.

Visit Our New Website at
www.projectassistants.com

Project Assistants is proud to announce the relaunch of www.projectassistants.com. Our new website offers detailed content about how we can partner with you to transform your approach to Project and Portfolio Management to allow you to achieve a standard of excellence in execution that consistently delivers expected project outcomes.

Microsoft Pulling Support for SQL Server 2000 – How Will This Impact your Microsoft Project Technology?

As you have probably already heard, Microsoft recently announced it will stop mainstream support for SQL Server 2000 by April 2008. Extended support will be available as needed but will be relatively expensive; service packs will be provided only for 12 months following the next release.

If you're currently running Microsoft Project 2003, which is built on the SQL Server 2000 platform, you have three options:

- Pay for premium support as needed, and upgrade to Microsoft Project Professional and/or Project Server later with Service Pack 3 or to version 2007.
- Upgrade SQL Server 2000 to SQL Server 2005, which also requires installation of the Microsoft Project Server Service Pack 3.
- Upgrade to Microsoft Project Professional 2007 and/or Project Server 2007, which includes SQL Server 2005 as the database platform.

As experts with EPM technology, Project Assistants can guide you through the process of determining which option is best for your organization. Contact us at info@projectassistants.com for more information about this issue.

Consultant Spotlight – Michael Steinberg, PMP

With an average of 20+ years each of project management and related business experience, Project Assistants' consultants are recognized experts in the field of project and program management. To give you an idea of the type of expertise our consultants offer, we'd like to share with you some of the leadership positions our consultants undertake in the greater project management community.

Please take a look at www.projectassistants.com and let us know what you think! You can send your comments to newsletter@projectassistants.com.

Project and Portfolio Management Webinar Series

Topic: Evolve or Die: How Organizations Use Project & Portfolio Management to Adapt to Change

Date: Thursday, March 13th

Time: 12:00 pm EST

Project Assistants is pleased to announce that registration is open for the first webinar of our 2008 Webinar Series. On March 13th, Project Assistants CEO Gus Cicala will address ***Evolve or Die: How Organizations Use Project & Portfolio Management (PPM) to Adapt to Change***.

Darwin's *Theory of Evolution*, written over 150 years ago, remains a rock-solid scientific theory for how organisms adapt to their external environment. Just as the *Theory of Evolution* defines a framework for dealing with environmental change, PPM brings to the business environment the science required by organizations to successfully adapt to change and to thrive with that change.

In this webinar, Mr. Cicala will show how an organization's strategy is doomed to fail without a clear way to execute this strategy – a well-defined approach to PPM. Mr. Cicala will present a framework – including PPM best practices – that can be used to develop a convincing business case that will garner the investment necessary to drive these changes in an organization.

This webinar, which is offered at no cost, will last for one hour and will include time for questions and answers. To learn more about this webinar and to register, please contact us at webinars@projectassistants.com.

Michael Steinberg, a Senior Project Management Consultant at Project Assistants and Project Management Institute (PMI)-certified Project Management Professional (PMP), was recently invited to give a presentation to the Atlanta PMI Chapter. The topic, ***Critical Path Management Using Microsoft Project***, included the following:

- A brief overview of the benefits of identifying and using Critical Path management
- A review of the basic definitions, concepts and techniques related to identifying and using the critical path in project planning, monitoring and controlling
- An introduction to the settings, fields, and views available in Microsoft Project for effectively applying these techniques
- Recommended best practices in project schedule development to enable effective use of Critical Path Management

According to Chuck Magee, Vice President of Operations for the Microsoft Project Association's (MPA) Atlanta Chapter and Vice President of Finance for the PMI Atlanta Chapter, "Michael's leadership in Atlanta's Project Management community is invaluable. Through his numerous formal presentations to the organizations' membership, the newsletter he publishes monthly for the MPA Atlanta Chapter, and the technical Microsoft Project-related expertise he readily shares at monthly meetings, he has proven to be a tremendous asset in this community."

To learn more about the topic Mr. Steinberg presented, please contact us at info@projectassistants.com.

At Project Assistants we are THE EXPERTS in Project and Portfolio Management, devoted to effectively creating, enhancing and supporting our clients' project management infrastructures – the people, processes and technology that work together to help you reach your organizational goals.

Founded in 1996, Project Assistants is headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware with international delivery capability. A leading Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and Microsoft Office Project Premier Partner, Project Assistants was recently recognized in Inc 500 as one of "America's Fastest Growing Private Companies." On average, each member of our consulting team has over 20 years of project management and related business experience. The team also includes a significant number of published authors of the best-selling Microsoft Project publications and other leading Project Management publications. For more information about Project Assistants, Inc., please go to www.projectassistants.com or call us at 1-800-642-9259.

