DRI Consulting

DRI Consulting uses Microsoft® Project as a valuable planning tool for all aspects of its business. It has proved to be highly effective for the planning, design, and implementation of professional training programs.

Vital Statistics: DRI Consulting Edina, MN Dr. John Fennig, CEO
Industry: Organization and Management Consulting
Employees: 5
Software Programs: Microsoft Windows® 95 Microsoft Project Microsoft Schedule+ Microsoft Word Microsoft Excel Microsoft Access Microsoft PowerPoint®
Hardware: Pentium 120 notebooks
Results of Using Project: "Microsoft Project integrates the three key ingredients for a successful business (strategy, people, and technology) and ensures fast and consistent results from the entire team."

DRI Consulting is a management and organization consulting firm based in Edina, MN, that provides a wide range of services, including training for management development and organization development.
A large Midwestern food company asked DRI Consulting to develop a three-day training program in the fundamentals of project management software for a group of 200 members of a trade marketing department.

DRI Consulting CEO Dr. John Fennig explains that the client company had several objectives in mind for the training session. The client's trade marketing group was rapidly expanding and adding staff members who were unfamiliar with the standardized company procedures they needed to perform their jobs.
The client's marketing department used a three-step model as its primary mechanism for developing and implementing new marketing programs for packaged food products.

The verbal instruction method used to teach new employees this model was slow and inconsistent. The company wanted to automate the process by teaching employees how to use the three-step model and implement it by using project management software.

The challenge for Dr. Fennig was to develop a course curriculum that taught participants the principles of project management software, as well as how to use the company's three-step marketing model.
Dr. Fennig used Microsoft Project to develop all aspects of the training program. He used the program to teach students how to use the company's three-step model, to teach principles of project management, and to instruct them in the use of project management software.

Effective Planning Tool
Microsoft Project proved to be an ideal planning design tool for the marketing group's training procedures. Microsoft Project's modular file structure was easily adapted to fit each of the three steps of the client company's marketing model.

The marketing model is used by the company's brand managers to launch new products and is based on three steps that involve increasingly detailed levels of retail planning. Microsoft Project was powerful enough to document every level of detail from all three steps.

Each step in the marketing model can be represented in Microsoft Project as a subproject with its own tasks and milestones. The first step, called "Basis for Interest," determines whether there is sufficient interest and resources available to move the concept forward to the next step.

The second step, called "Basis for Marketing," identifies the tasks needed to implement a marketing plan for the product. The third and final step of the model is "Basis for National Rollout of Product," which is the most detailed picture of a product marketing plan. Microsoft Project effectively outlined the sequence of tasks required by the model and the resources needed for each step.

Dr. Fennig observed that Microsoft Project's flexible output options enabled him to show any level of detail for the marketing model. This allowed him to present views that thoroughly explain the model and met the needs of everyone in the class.

Microsoft Project was valuable for improving training procedures that ensured employees had a solid understanding of the company's primary planning vehicle for introducing new products.

Flexible Presentation Formats

Microsoft Project can produce many types of output, including reports that make the program an effective presentation tool. Users can display any level of detail to emphasize important concepts. Dr. Fennig found this to be especially valuable when defining the three-step marketing model in project management terms.

Dr. Fennig printed the agenda for the course in the form of Gantt and PERT charts in place of a traditional agenda report format. All activities during the three-day course were included as tasks or milestones on a Microsoft Project schedule.

Printing the agenda as a Microsoft Project report reinforced project management concepts addressed by class topics. Students were motivated to learn more about project management principles in order to understand the agenda.

Teaches Project Management Software Skills

DRI Consulting adds value to their training programs by having students work in a hands-on environment with project management software. Students are more receptive to learning the concepts of project management with this approach.

Microsoft Project was well-suited for demonstrating project management software because it is both easy to learn and is widely used by many companies. Students only have to learn one program to become productive right away because it is used by so many organizations.

The learning curve for Microsoft Project was very short. Because the program was easy to learn, it did not present obstacles that hindered students' progress in grasping the concepts of project management.

Dr. Fennig finds that teaching employees how to use project management software enhances their technical abilities and also helps to build leadership skills. He also finds that students who become proficient in project management skills also become more effective managers in an organization.

Dr. Fennig plans to continue using Microsoft Project at DRI Consulting for a variety of applications. He observes that consultants can use the program as a valuable "toolbox" to produce results that reflect a high level of professionalism and expertise.