

Litton Industries

Microsoft® Project automated a tracking and reporting system for strategic planning at Litton Industries. The time required to make scheduling changes was cut by up to 50%.

Vital Statistics: Litton Industries Woodland Hills, CA Standards and Resource Management Group Sergio Cortez, Corporate Program Manager

Industry: Aerospace and Defense

Employees: 29,000

Software Programs: Microsoft Windows® 95 Microsoft Project Microsoft Word Microsoft Excel Microsoft Schedule+ Microsoft PowerPoint®

Hardware: Dell Dimension P75 PCs

Results of Using Project: "Microsoft Project allowed us to integrate various schedules into a single application giving maximum flexibility for editing and for preparing executive briefs using Microsoft PowerPoint."

Litton Industries is a \$3.3 billion aerospace and defense company based in Woodland Hills, CA, with principal operations throughout the United States, Canada, Germany, and Italy. Litton is organized into product groups ranging from navigation, guidance and control systems, and electronic warfare and command to information technology and communication systems. Every product group and division is responsible for maintaining and reporting on the current status of strategic planning operations.

The Standards and Resource Management Group serves as a facilitator, providing support for other groups and producing a wide range of reports for senior management.

Strategic planning was reported to senior management on a regular basis by all groups using a paper scheduling and tracking system. Keeping top executives informed by presenting only the information they needed required a lot of work using the existing system.

Corporate Program Manager Sergio Cortez explained that one division manager asked his department if there was a tool available that could automate the paper scheduling system by producing strategic planning reports using a computer. After meeting with the manager and analyzing his scheduling and reporting needs, Sergio's department decided to create a system based on project management software.

Sergio identified the most important features his company needed in a project management software application after meeting repeatedly with the division manager. The software program needed to have output capabilities flexible enough to duplicate the reports currently received by senior management. Microsoft Project was selected after investigating a number of different software products.

Preparing these reports using the paper tracking system required extensive effort. Data retrieved from paper files had to be entered into a computer, then cut and pasted into a report. The new system needed to simplify this procedure and be easy for administrative personnel to learn. Support staff members were expected to maintain files once initial schedules were set up.

The Standards and Resource Management Group wanted to be able to easily update files and transfer information to create presentation charts. Sergio found that Microsoft Project fulfilled all of the needs in question and more.

Produces Reports with Ease

The Standards and Resource Management Group created a standard template that all divisions can use to input strategic planning information. This created common definitions for tasks and milestones to be used throughout the company.

The use of common terminology allows Microsoft Project schedules from any division to be easily integrated into a master corporate schedule. Division schedules are sent to the Corporate Standards and Resource Management Group where they are uploaded into Litton's master strategic planning schedule. Reports can be printed to include any level of detail on strategic planning issues for any desired group.

A typical example includes requests to create reports that only print financial details of strategic planning issues for specific divisions. Sergio can use Microsoft Project to select data and produce a report displaying only the precise information requested.

Communicates Current Information to Management

Sergio reports that one of Microsoft Project's most useful features is the ability to take a snapshot of a schedule and import it into Microsoft PowerPoint to produce a professional-looking presentation that can be displayed on a video monitor.

Microsoft's Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) technology automatically updates changes made to the Microsoft Project schedule so that they are reflected in the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. For example, in preparing a productivity review report for a particular region, Sergio can create a hot spot on the portion of the Gantt chart he wants to emphasize. He can then click the hot spot and bring up a previously prepared Microsoft PowerPoint slide.

Microsoft's OLE technology allows users to create a single graph that can be moved seamlessly to other Microsoft applications. This saves time by eliminating the need for recreating graphs and other charts that will be used more than once.

Saves Time

Sergio estimates that by using Microsoft Project he spends between 25% and 50% less time editing and updating changes to the master schedule. This time savings enabled him to accomplish much more than when using the paper tracking system.

Once baseline scheduling was established, editing and reporting with Microsoft Project became much easier and more productive. Microsoft Project automated the lengthy process needed to create project status reports, saving many hours in preparation time.

The strategic planning system based on Microsoft Project has proved to be vastly superior to the paper system for retrieving and reporting important data. Sergio notes that the new system is being expanded to include schedules from other Litton divisions.

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