

SMARTWORKS

➤ Project health - how to interpret various graphs

☞ Project Health - How do project graphs help us to get this picture ?

A Project typically has several parameters which needs constant attention. In order to monitor the health of a project various visual indicators which would help them overcome the several uncertainties in a project. In this paper we will discuss these visual indicators (project graphs) which help managers to get a good feel of the project's overall health.

Any project management package (e.g. Smartworks Project Planner) provides the managers with various graphs to monitor projects. Gantt charts , Network diagrams are some of the popular means managers employ to get a good feel of where they are heading. However in this paper we would be looking at other graphs which can also throw vital clues to project health.

☞ 1. Project Estimate Graph

Most of us would like to have a crystal ball to predict future. This need is more acute for project managers. The project management presented by Smartworks Project Planner fulfills this need of the project manager to some extent. Essentially it predicts the project would end based on the current progress made in the project. The accuracy of these graphs improves over time in a project estimate becomes more reliable as we cross a half way mark in a project.

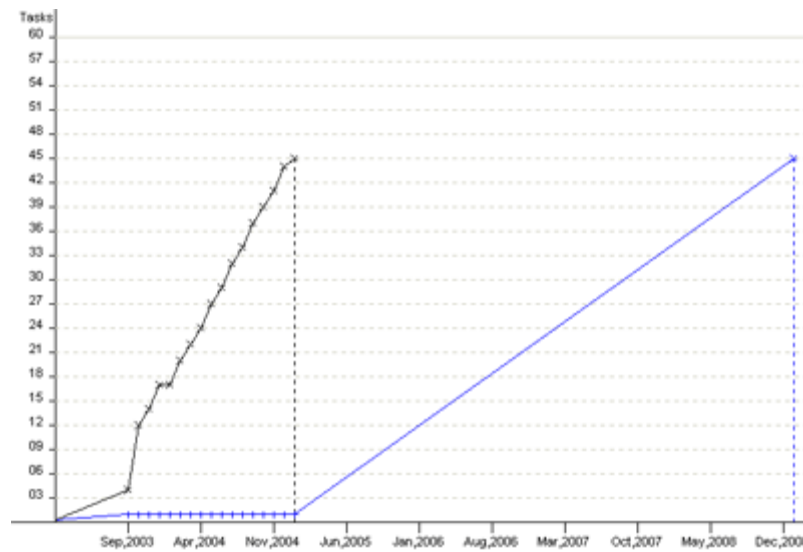


Fig1.1: Project Estimate Graph

In the above graph the dotted line indicates the estimated date of completion of the project while the rigid line indicates the project would complete as per the plan. A healthy project would have the variation between the planned and the actual less than 15% of the overall schedule. However if the variation is more than that it is a heads up for the project manager to take appropriate action.

☞ 2. Total tasks Vs task status (How much of the project is complete?)

This graph gives a bird's eye view of how much of the project is already done. It gives you a pie chart with tasks arranged by completion (varying from new task , partially completed task and completed tasks). In the case of Smartworks pr

new tasks are shown in the RED color. Hence if your pie chart is mostly red then you have a long way to go in completion.

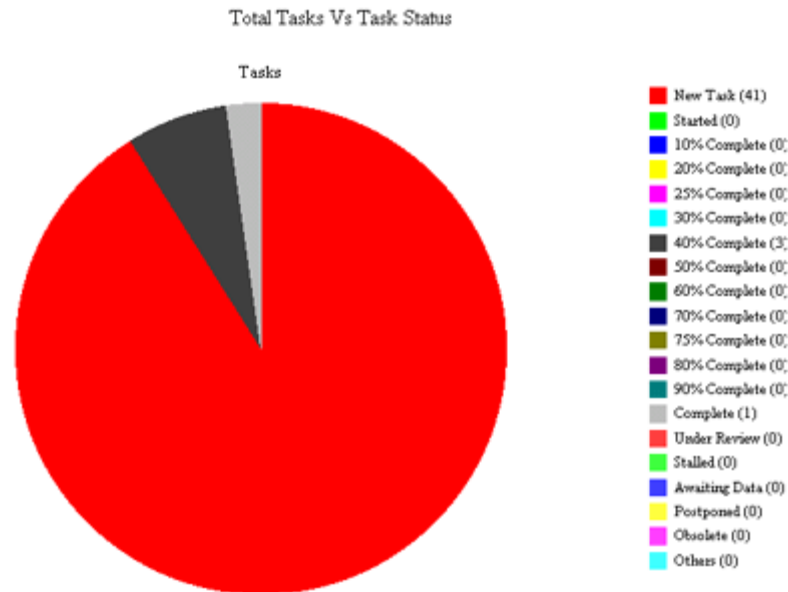


Fig1.2: Total task vs Task status graph

A word of caution. The pie chart lists the number of tasks and the associated task status. It has no means of knowing the task. So it is possible that lots of simple tasks in a project could have been completed while most complex tasks have not started. This could give a feeling to the project manager that things are OK when it is really not. A possible future improvement can be done in smartworks project planner is to have the duration of the tasks also to be considered while computing the overall status. This could give a better picture than what is done currently.

3. Total tasks Vs User (How are tasks distributed in the project?)

This graph gives a good overview of how various tasks are distributed among the project members. It also gives an idea of how far the project members have progressed so far. This graph gives the following details for each of the project members :

- Total tasks assigned to them (Blue)
- Total tasks completed by them so far (Green)
- Total tasks which are yet to be completed (Red)

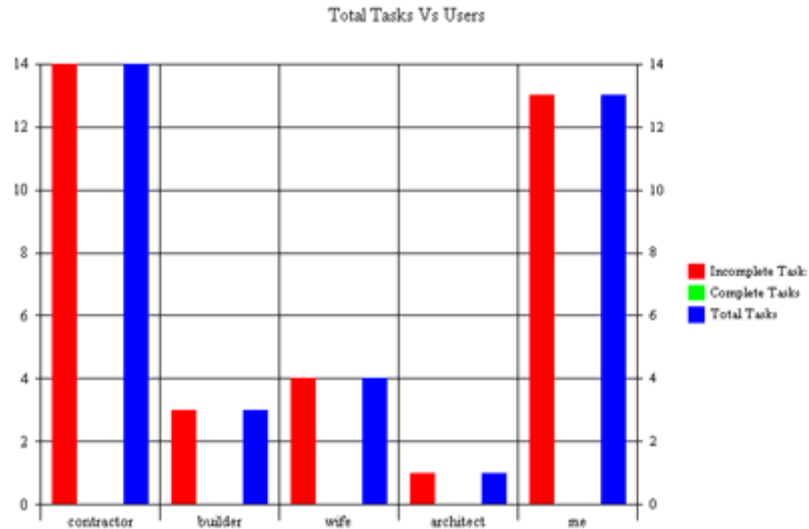


Fig1.3: Total tasks vs Users

These graphs give a project manager a quick way to assess the work distribution and to plan remedial action in case are struggling with their assigned work.

4. Total task vs completion time (Are we completing on time?) ?

There is a common saying that a 1 year delayed project got delayed one day at a time. Project managers often need how well tasks were completed in a project with respect to a given schedule. If more number of tasks (even if they are delayed it could result in the eventual delay of the project. Not keeping up the schedule is a disease in a project which

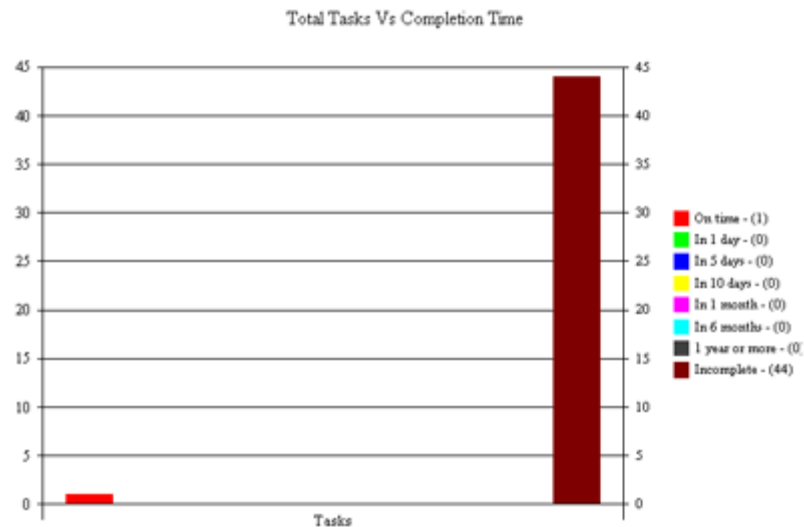


Fig1.4: Total tasks vs Completion time

In the graph you have number of tasks listed in the Y axis. On the X axis you have bar charts representing tasks slippage ranging from 0 (on time) to (incomplete) encompassing various time duration such as slippage by a day, months and a year. A project manager is happy to see majority of the tasks to be completed on time or within a week

5. Users Vs completion time (which team members normally finish on time?)

A project manager needs to identify team members who are likely to finish their tasks on time. Procrastination is a habit and it is better for the project manager to identify which of his/her team members have this Vs completion time graph gives a petty good picture of this.

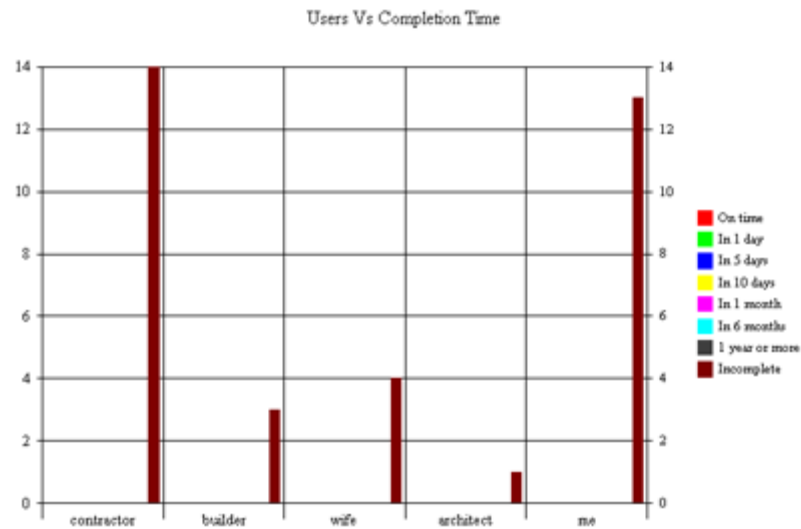


Fig1.5: Users Vs Completion time

Project managers can use the above graph to take corrective actions by monitoring people who slip in most of the t them, redistribute tasks, replan tasks in case the task's complexity had been under estimated before.

6. Cost graphs

All project managers have a budget for their project. Project manager always should have a tab of how much money | consumed at any given time in a project. This piece of information helps the manager to control unwanted expense an project does not overshoot the allocated budget.

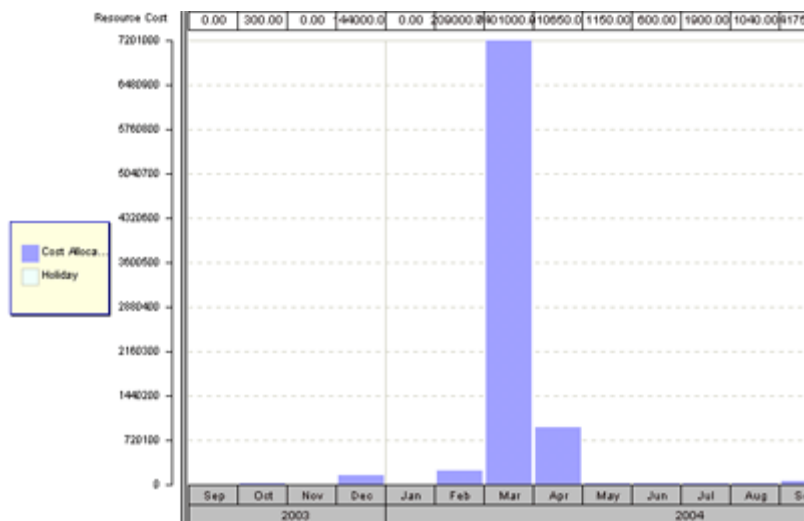


Fig1.6: Cost Graph

Smartworks Project Planner graph allows managers to view project costs in terms of hours, days, weeks, months and project duration as well. Managers can track the cost incurred by a specific resource or for all the resources in a proje set up a cost threshold for the project manager to be alerted would have been useful. Perhaps they might provide version of their product.

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