

Project Management Glossary

THE VOCABULARY OF ACHIEVEMENT

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This glossary is an excerpt from Ron Black's book,

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G L O S S A R Y

activity—An element of work that must be accomplished to complete the project. Also known as a *task*.

activity duration estimating—Estimating the number of work periods needed to accomplish an activity.

Activity-On-Arrow (AOA)—A network diagramming method that uses arrows to represent activities.

Activity-On-Node (AON)—A network diagramming method that uses nodes or boxes to represent activities.

Actual Cost of Work Performed (ACWP)—The total of all costs incurred during a given time period.

Actual Finish Date (AF)—The date work on an activity was completed.

Actual Start Date (AS)—The date work actually started on an activity.

administrative closure—Formally closing the project in accordance with the organization's documentation procedures.

arrow—The link between tasks in a network diagram that shows the sequence of workflow.

Arrow Diagramming Method (ADM)—A network diagramming method in which activities are shown as arrows.

as-of date—The date the data was collected.

backward pass—Calculating the late finish dates and late start dates of activities by adding the duration of the successor task to the dependent task in a network diagram.

bar chart—A network diagram of activities where the tasks are listed down the left

side and activity durations are shown as a horizontal bar scaled to the length of the activity. Also known as a *Gantt chart*.

baseline—The scheduled dates, durations, resources, and costs according to the original plan, used to compare progress.

baseline finish date—The originally scheduled finish date.

baseline start date—The originally scheduled start date.

Budget at Completion (BAC)—The planned total cost of the finished project.

Budgeted Cost of Work Performed (BCWP)—The total value of activities actually completed within a given period according to the planned costs.

Budgeted Cost of Work Scheduled (BCWS)—The total value of activities as planned for a given period.

calendar—The methodology used to schedule workdays, shifts, resources, tasks, and the project as a whole. There are four calendar types in Microsoft Project: base, project, resource, and task.

change in scope—A change in the goals and objectives of the project after the project has been planned.

chart of accounts—An accounting numbering system used to relate project costs to the organization's financial control system.

charter—The responsibilities and authorities assigned to the project.

contingencies—An allowance set aside for potential problems to mitigate risk.

contingency planning—A planning technique used to identify and mitigate potential problems.

control—Measuring, evaluating, and taking action based on actual performance compared to the planned performance.

cost estimating—Estimating the total direct and indirect expenses required to achieve project activities.

Cost Performance Index (CPI)—Budgeted costs divided by actual costs (BCWP/ACWP). Sometimes used to predict the project's completed costs.

Cost Variance (CV)—The difference between actual and estimated costs of an activity.

crashing—Compressing the project's schedule through extraordinary means. Also known as *expediting*.

critical activity—Any activity that is part of the longest sequence of tasks from project start to project end. If the completion of a critical activity is delayed, the total duration of the project is delayed.

critical path—The series of tasks in a network diagram that requires the most time to complete. Activities on the critical path have zero slack or float.

Critical Path Method (CPM)—A project scheduling technique where the duration of the longest complete series of tasks from project start to project completion is used to predict project duration.

Cross functional team—A workgroup that embodies diverse professions, skills, or expertise.

deliverable—Any specific, measurable project accomplishment or outcome.

dependency—Term used to describe the relationship between two or more activities or tasks. See *logical relationship*.

dummy activity—A drafting convention used as a placeholder to show a logical relationship in a network diagram, but where no duration is planned.

Duration (DU)—The number of minutes, hours, weeks, or months required to complete an activity or task.

Early Finish Date (EF)—The earliest possible date an activity can be completed based on the schedule.

Early Start Date (ES)—The earliest possible date an activity can start based on the schedule.

Earned Value (EV)—The total cost of work calculated by comparing planned work for a period against actual work accomplished.

effort—The amount of work units needed to complete an activity.

estimate—A forecast of cost or duration for an activity.

Estimate at Completion (EAC)—The expected total cost of an activity or project when finished.

Estimate to Complete (ETC)—The expected additional cost needed to complete an activity or project.

Event-on-Node—A network diagramming technique in which activities are shown as nodes or boxes and workflow logic is shown with arrows. The original Program Evaluation and Review Technique used event-on-node to diagram workflow.

expediting—Shortening the duration of a task or project by any means available. Usually increases costs. Also known as *crashing*.

fast tracking—Compressing a project's schedule by running tasks in parallel that are normally run in sequence, such as

beginning construction before design is complete. Usually increases risk.

finish date—The actual, planned, estimated, early, or late date an activity is to be completed.

Finish-to-Finish (FF)—The workflow logic between two tasks in which the dependent task may not finish until its predecessor task is finished.

Finish-to-Start (FS)—The workflow logic between two tasks in which the dependent task may not start until its predecessor task is finished.

float—The amount of time a task may be delayed without pushing out the project finish date. Also called *slack*.

forward pass—The calculation of the early start and early finish dates of all activities in the network diagram.

Free Float (FF)—The amount of time a task can be delayed without pushing out the start of any immediately following activities. Also called *free slack*.

Free Slack—See *free float*.

Gantt Chart—A network diagram of activities in which the tasks are listed down the left side and durations are shown as a horizontal bar scaled to the length of the activity.

lag—Describes the delay of a successor task from its predecessor's start or finish. See also *lead*.

Late Finish Date (LF)—The latest a task may finish without delaying the project's finish date.

Late Start Date (LS)—The latest a task may begin without delaying the project finish date.

lead—Describes the advance of a successor task's start from its predecessor's start or finish. See also *lag*.

leveling—The process of effectively allocating resources to tasks.

link—The arrow that shows the logical work sequence relationship between tasks.

logic—The workflow sequence.

logic diagram—A project's network diagram.

logical relationship—The workflow logic between two project tasks or activities (the predecessor and the dependent tasks) described as a finish-to-start, finish-to-finish, start-to-finish, or start-to-start relationship. Also known as *dependency*.

milestone—A point in the network diagram that shows significant accomplishment.

monitoring—Collecting progress information for judging progress against the plan.

network diagram—A diagram showing the workflow sequence of all tasks required to complete a project.

network logic—The workflow sequence as shown by a network diagram.

network path—Any series of tasks in a network diagram.

overlap—The concurrent period of time two or more parallel tasks share. See *lead*, *lag*, and *parallel task*.

noncritical task—Any task or activity that does not fall on the longest (critical) path.

Over-allocation—The condition having of too much work for the available resource capacity.

parallel task—A task undertaken during the same time period as another task.

path—A series of activities in a network diagram.

path float—See *float*.

Percent Complete (PC)—Estimate of progress derived by comparing the amount of work completed with the amount of work planned for an activity or project.

PERT Chart—A critical path scheduling method using an activity-on-node network diagram and the Program Evaluation and Review Technique of weighted average duration estimates.

phase—A major subunit of a project's work or set of project deliverables.

Planned Finish Date (PF)—The scheduled finish date of the project.

Planned Start Date (PS)—The scheduled start date of the project.

precedence relationship—The description of two or more task's workflow sequence.

predecessor activity—The task which immediately precedes the dependent task.

program—A group of projects that are related and managed in a cohesive way.

Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT)—A critical path method of scheduling a project using the weighted average method to estimate durations.

project—The implementation of a strategy to create a specific, measurable outcome.

project charter—The document that authorizes a project manager to use the organization's resources and outlines the intended outcomes of the project.

project management—The process of undertaking and completing a course of action to meet the stated goals and objectives of an endeavor.

Project Manager (PM)—The person responsible for planning and implementing the project.

Remaining Duration (RDU)—The amount of time required to complete a task.

Request for Proposal (RFP)—A solicitation for proposals from potential vendors for good or services.

Request for Quotation (RFQ)—A solicitation for quotations from vendors for goods or services.

resource leveling—Applying available resources to a project to determine task start and finish dates, project duration, and resource utilization rates.

resource planning—Estimating the people, equipment, and material resources required to complete a project.

resources—All the people, equipment, materials, and money required to complete a project.

risk assessment—Evaluating potential risks and their affect on the project.

S-Curve—The graph of cumulative project expenditures plotted against time.

Schedule Performance Index (SPI)—The work performed compared to the work scheduled (BCWP/BCWS).

Schedule Variance (SV)—The actual versus the planned cost, duration, work, or percentage complete of an activity.

Scheduled Finish Date (SF)—The date the task was to be completed according to the plan.

Scheduled Start Date (SS)—The date the task was to be started according to the plan.

scope—The description of the project's intended breadth and depth.

scope change—Alterations in the project's goals or objectives at any time after the project has been initiated.

slack—The amount of time a task or path can slip without causing the project to finish late. See *float*.

slope—The dependent variables that describe the change in cost and duration when expediting (crashing) a task. Used to compare alternate methods and calculate the total costs required to shorten a project's duration. **start date**—The actual, planned, early, late, or baseline date a task is scheduled to start.

Start-to-Finish (SF)—The workflow logic between two tasks where the dependent task may not finish until its predecessor task has started.

Start-to-Start (SS)—The workflow logic between two tasks where the dependent task may not start until its predecessor task has started.

successor activity—The activity that follows a predecessor activity.

target schedule—The baseline schedule.

Target Finish Date—The baseline date work is scheduled to finish.

Target Start Date—The baseline date work is scheduled to start.

task—An element of work which must be accomplished to complete the project. Also known as an *activity*.

Total Float (TF)—The amount of time a task or path can be delayed without delaying the completion of the project.

triple constraints—The interrelationship of a project's time, cost, and performance elements. Understanding their relative importance facilitates decision making and problem solving. Usually described as a driver, middle, and weak constraint.

Under-allocation—The condition having of too much resource capacity for the available work.

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)—The decomposition of the project's goals and objectives into increasingly detailed units of work, eventually identifying all tasks that are essential to the project's successful completion.



ABOUT RON BLACK

Throughout 30 years of business leadership experience, Ron has built a reputation for delivering down-to-earth, results-proven content in all he does. As a business consultant, author, and award-winning speaker, he works with top managers who want to move their organizations to new levels of performance and entrepreneurs launching new products and services.

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