



Why is Accountability so Hard?

By Tim Gryder

This accountability thing...such an important term yet subject to so much variance in opinion as to what it really means. In today's world, accountability is constantly being redefined to us by a political and culture flag that shifts with every change in the direction of the wind. While terms and opinions vary, it's good to know that some things never change...for example: gravity.

While gravity isn't a social topic it is definitely a physical force which keeps us accountable to something...such as the ground. It is well defined and absolute and not up for debate as to what it means. In dealing with gravity we apply many points of physics and as a result, we are able to achieve flight but always within the boundaries of rules and physics of gravity.

So what does this have to do with Project Management you might ask? Well in my mind, Project Management is simply like the rules and physics of the absolute of time. If we apply the right business rules, sequences and events, we can manage time and ultimately cost. I recently heard an associate claim the being a Project Manager is like being a glorified note taker and task chaser. I also heard another associate claim that we never get anything done on time and on budget. These perspectives are symptomatic of not understanding the absolutes of time and its best and most profitable use.

Today, we have proven techniques, logic and technology that allow us to manage time. Never before in the history of humanity have we been able to define, plan, schedule, analyze, resource, cost, track, report etc, etc. The access to these tools are great, the use and understanding is maybe not so much.

Look at the resources at our disposal; we have tools like Microsoft Project that allow us to manage the absolutes of time. These tools are way underutilized. What is the biggest reason for not using these tools? I have come to this conclusion: Its accountability! Yes there can be other reasons but I truly believe that accountability is the culprit that deters us from unfettered time management.

Project Management tools and techniques are extremely oriented towards absolutes and holding us accountable to a "Due Date". There....I said it...yes, time is an absolute.

Does this sound familiar?

- "The reality is if we don't ship our product by this date the customer will reject it".
- "The buyout transition must happen by a certain date or we will lose our tax advantage".
- "Yes, the interest will accumulate on the mortgage note if the construction is not completed on time".

These are simple realities that have real implications when not met. Yet I see where it is still often easier to avoid accountability than to manage these processes with business rules, techniques and tools that drive us to deliver. Human nature hates to be run like a machine, but the bottom line sure likes it.



The reality is... we all need accountability. Project Management gives us techniques and processes by which to manage time. Tools such as Microsoft Project and Project Server enable us to acknowledge the absolutes and manage them as fact. Dealing with the truth is well worth the investment of using these techniques and tools....as opposed to the cost of not being on time.