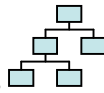


Work Breakdown Structure

Introduction:

Congratulations, you have completed your project charter and gotten it approved by management! A work breakdown structure (WBS) is the next thing you should develop. A WBS is just what it sounds like, a tool that helps the project team identify and break down all the work that needs to be done to accomplish the project's objectives. Because



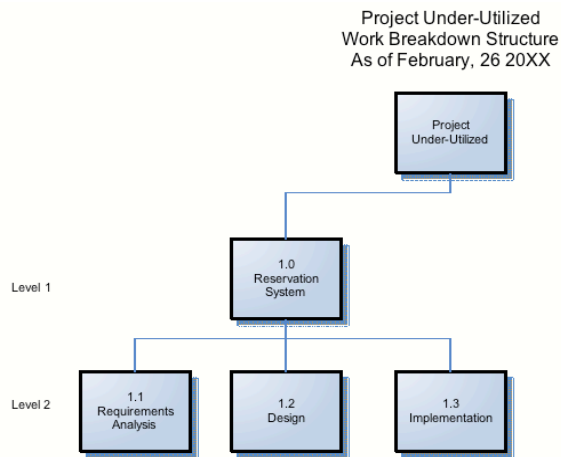
of the way it is represented (tree structure), it is easy for the project team to see how their individual efforts help accomplish the project whole. In other words divide and conquer. It also is an easy way for the project team to identify if any important work is missing from the plan. This is done by reviewing the activities listed on the WBS as part of a team meeting(s) and walking through the tree to determine if what is shown there addresses all the work that needs to be done as defined by the project charter.

The WBS is used as input into the scheduling process which comes next.

How is it created?

There are many ways to approach creating a WBS. One of the easiest is to start with your project deliverables and determine what work needs to be done to complete these. For example with our project, one of the deliverables is a new web-based reservation system. So we would add a box at level 1 labeled “reservation system”. The software development approach our organization follows includes “requirements analysis”,

“design” and “implementation” which are added on level 2 just below the box “reservation system” and so on.



Of course there are other ways to determine the work that needs to be done to complete the project. In the construction industry it is common to use a methodology for building a building. This methodology can be used to as the starting point to define the work that needs to be done in order to complete the project. For instance the level 1 steps might include: “estimating; scheduling; purchasing/budgeting; construction; customer service/warranty”. It is not uncommon for different industries to have their own unique terminology and approaches. The WBS is easily tailored to meet these specific needs.

What it isn't!

A WBS is not a project schedule. It doesn't show dependencies, activity durations or resource responsibilities. The WBS is used as input into developing the project schedule which comes next in the planning process. So a WBS doesn't show work in the order it is to be performed, who will do the work nor when the work should be completed. All of these details are in the project schedule.

How do you know when you are done?

As with any project, you will rarely achieve perfection. This should not be your goal either; rather you should make sure to complete the work necessary to achieve the level of quality, time and cost expected, no more and no less. If you have not had much or any experience with this type of project, you should make sure to get at least one if not more people with experience on a similar project to review the WBS to determine if you have missed anything important.

One reason many organizations have developed methodologies for different project types is to address this very problem. By following the methodology and referencing examples of deliverables from past projects, a project manager can achieve a reasonable level of comfort regarding their WBS and other deliverables.

First Draft WBS

Project Under -Utilized
 Work Breakdown Structure
 As of February 28, 20XX

