

How to Develop a Responsibility Allocation Matrix



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HOW TO DEVELOP A RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION MATRIX (RAM)

WHY DEVELOP A RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION MATRIX?

Projects are done with groups of people. Groups lacking clearly defined leadership, however, typically fail to complete assigned activities because responsibility is ambiguous at best. Project teams as a whole generally do not feel responsible for their actions. Individuals, on the other hand do. Hence, to complete projects, responsibility for tasks must be specifically delegated to individuals. This is the purpose of the Responsibility Allocation Matrix. It establishes individual project responsibility on a task-by-task basis among the team members.

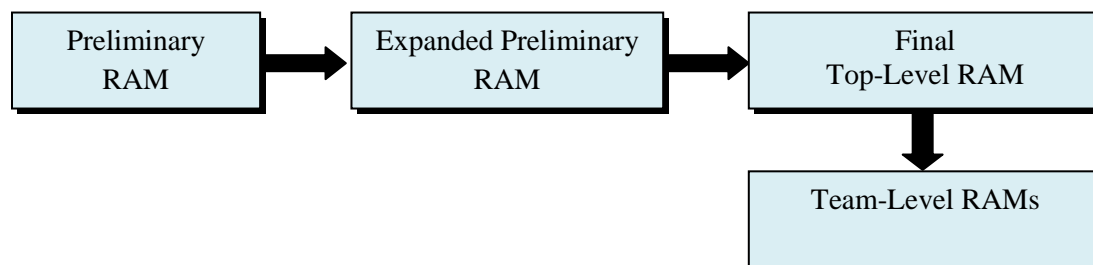
HOW A RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION MATRIX HELPS

The Responsibility Allocation Matrix is a project management tool--a simple tool with only one purpose:

It identifies who is to do what.

The Responsibility Allocation Matrix does not show when or how much - this information is provided in other tools. Instead, the Responsibility Allocation Matrix answers the question: "Who needs to do what to deliver the end-of-phase or end-of-project results?" See example on the last page.

DEVELOPING A RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION MATRIX



1. Preliminary RAM. To start a Responsibility Allocation Matrix, the project manager pencils in a "guess list" of tasks and departments, but not people. With the list in hand, the project manager consults with functional managers to get the names of the project startup people who will be assigned to the project. This preliminary RAM gives a clear, solid basis for discussion with the people who provide resources.

2. Expanded Preliminary RAM. At this point, the project manager has a preliminary RAM and a project startup team. Now it's time to expand the preliminary RAM by breaking it down into a more detailed version. Involving the project startup team members is done to:

- Get "buy-in" from the project team members
- Expand the top-level project responsibilities into lower-level responsibilities
- Eliminate any unintended bias from the preliminary RAM

Therefore, to build the expanded RAM, the project manager gathers the startup team and gets information directly from the members. Focus is on the project goals, scope and recording any issues if they arise.

3. The Final Top-Level RAM. The final project RAM is a fully expanded version and may be a combination of the top-level project version and other team RAMs. As it develops, project team members are listed along the top row, and responsibilities are listed along the left column.

Resources. Enter complete identifying and contact information, including department name, individual name, and phone number. When two or more people from the same department work on the project, enter each person in a separate box.

The RAM is not an organization chart. It depicts a project team, not a hierarchy; thus, resources can be listed in any order.

Responsibilities. Enter descriptions of the responsibilities to be met. Define each responsibility as clearly as possible. Use words such as "coordinate, monitor and plan." Later, the responsible person will translate the responsibilities into specific tasks.

Define the responsibilities by various levels of support. Each primary responsibility should have one, and only one person assigned. To assign more than one person with primary responsibility will result in the "outfielder effect" where the individuals will either assume the other will take the lead, or both compete for the responsibility. The remaining levels are supportive to the primary responsibility. A supporter makes a positive contribution to the responsibility.

For example, they

- May be required to be consulted by the primary person
- May or may not be consulted (optional)

- Have signature authority for a given document associated with the responsibility

Project Cost Estimates. Another advantage to using a RAM is realized when it comes time to provide cost estimates for the project, because team members will know to include estimates for both their primary and supportive roles. It is the supportive roles that are often omitted when estimating project costs.

When to Start the RAM

Prepare the RAM early in the project, before scheduling and costing are done. This way, team members, those who will do the work, can identify tasks and develop a schedule and cost for them. After this information is developed, it can be assembled into the project schedule and project budget.

Make It Available To Everyone

Display the RAM in a prominent location, along with other project documents, such as the Project Plan. Keep the team size workable. The RAM works best for project teams ranging in size from a three people to a maximum of ten. If a RAM is being developed for the project manager's immediate staff members, it is wise to remember that in high-tech projects the management span should be held to six or less individuals.

Manage the Number of Responsibilities

Make sure you have enough responsibilities: roughly 5 to 20 for small projects, 20 to 35 for medium projects and 35 to 70 or more for large projects. They represent the level of visibility and direct contact with activity that the project manager wants on the project.

Identify Any Missing Members

If there is no individual shown on the RAM for a given primary responsibility then another member must be added to it.

Take a Second Look at Team Members without Primary Roles

If an individual on the RAM has no primary roles, that person may not need to be on the project team and can be considered as a "consultant" to the project.

Review the Project Manager's Responsibility Span

The RAM will determine the project manager's role. On small and medium projects the project manager may take on responsibilities for some of the technical work in addition to the normal management responsibilities. As a rule of thumb, when a project requires more than sixteen people, the control responsibilities may be more than one project manager can handle. To handle these additional responsibilities it may be necessary to add a "project control" column to the RAM and assign appropriate members.

RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION MATRIX EXAMPLE

1 = Primary responsibility
 2 = Must be consulted
 3 = May be consulted
 4 = Has signature authority

	Project Manager	Systems Engineer	Project Control Manager	Project Coordinator	Team Leaders	Manufacturing Manager	Marketing Specialists	Subcontract Manager	Design Engineers
Define and communicate overall project goals	1,4	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3
Oversee the development of a project plan	1,4	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3
Develop a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)	2,4	2	1	3	3	2	2	3	3
Establish top-level project requirements	1,4	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3
Develop product specifications		2,4			2,4	2,4	2,4	3	1,4
Develop project team RAMs	4	2,4	3	3	1	2,4	2,4	2	2
Develop the project organization breakdown structure (OBS)	1,4	2	2		3	3	3	3	
Define overall project workscope	1,4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Develop the project responsibility allocation matrix (RAM)	1,4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Identify major project technical risks & develop mitigation plans	2,4	1,4	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Identify major project business risks & develop mitigation plans	2,4	3	1,4	3	3	2	2	2	3
Conduct make-or-buy decision process	1,4	2	2		3	3	3	2	3
Develop a project tracking system	1,4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	
Identify major project milestones	1,4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	
Develop a project reporting requirements	1,4	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	
Conduct regular project status reviews	2,4	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Prepare project budgets	2,4	2	1,4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Develop the detailed project schedule	2,4	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Conduct designated product design reviews	2,4	1,4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Customer point-of-contact	1	2	2						
Develop a project change-control system	2,4	2	1,4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Chair the change-control board	1,4	2	2						
Manage subcontractors	2,4	2	2					1	
Monitor and track all project baseline changes	2,4	2	1,4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Prepare a manufacturing plan	2,4	2,4		3	3	1,4			3
Identify and monitor customer needs	2,4	2,4	2,4	3	3	3	1,4	3	3

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Cleland, David I., *Project Management, Strategic Design and Implementation*. 1994. McGraw-Hill Inc., ISBN: 0-07-011351-3.

Kerzner, Harold, *Project Management, A Systems Approach to Planning, Scheduling, and Controlling*. 1995. Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York. ISBN: 0-442-01907-6.

Shtub, Avraham, Jonathan F. Bard, Shlomo Globerson *Project Management, Engineering, Technology, and Implementation*. 1994. Prentice-Hall, Inc., ISBN: 0-13-556458-1.