

# The Role of the Project Coordinator

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*Michael D. Taylor*

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# THE ROLE OF THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

*M*ost project managers find that they when they complete the planning of a project they become inundated in the following execution phase. This is primarily because of the need for overall project coordination, routine schedule management, integrated change control, and project status tracking. In most cases, there is more work than can be accomplished by the project manager, even when working overtime. For this reason, many corporations are realizing the need for a project coordinator, also called a project expediter.



## PROJECT COORDINATION

Project teams often require coordination of activities, resources, equipment, and information. To satisfy this need the project coordinator functions in their primary role. Any coordination issues which cannot be resolved are elevated to the project manager.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE MANAGEMENT

It is the project coordinator who is to be the expert on the project schedule software. If project managers attempt to fulfill this role they will discover that it is so time consuming that it diverts their focus from the overall management of the project. In many cases they often find themselves having to “relearn” the intricacies of the software. To alleviate this dilemma, a project coordinator assumes the role of working with project team members to develop the initial project schedule, making certain that all project schedule conflicts are resolved, and then updating it routinely. When schedule compression techniques, such as lead-lag exploitation, fast-tracking, or critical path crashing become necessary, it is the project coordinator who works with project members to develop the trade-off data required by the project manager for making such decisions.

## PROJECT STATUS REVIEWS

While some project managers prefer to have each team leader present the status of the recent work, many insist on having the project coordinator present the status since they will be unbiased. As a result, true project problems will be surfaced in the project status review meetings. It will then be up to the project manager, and the “problem owner” to work out a corrective action plan. The project coordinator follows up on the approved corrective action plan.

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The task of presenting, reviewing, and tracking approved changes to the project management plan can also be very time consuming. Some larger companies adopt the practice of using a “configuration manager” to accomplish the necessary coordination of all proposed and finalized changes, however, many combine this role with that of a project coordinator. The coordinator would ensure that all necessary information has been gathered by the change initiator prior to presenting it to the change-control board, monitoring the review, and following up on all approved changes including the dissemination of any revised project documents.

## CONTRACT AND SUBCONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

When projects involve either contract or subcontract administration, the project coordinator works to ensure project schedule integration with either the customer, or the subcontractor. Generally, the coordinator also tracks subcontractor schedules to identify problem areas.

## THE DILEMMA

Since most corporations do not appreciate the need for supplying a project coordinator to the project as a support to the project manager, many project managers find themselves in the dilemma of becoming overwhelmed by the functions described above. George Heywood and Thomas Allen have posited that about 2% to 5% of the total project budget must be allocated to project coordination in order to prevent this dilemma.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Heywood, George E., Thomas J. Allen, *Project Controls: How Much is Enough* (PM Network, November, 1996).