

## Multiple People on Multiple Projects

### *Tracking Workloads of Split-time Staff*

by John M. Nevison, PMP

The spreadsheet *MultPeopleMultPjctsV2* (the MM spreadsheet) is designed to help a council of project managers balance the workload of their joint staffs on multiple projects over the next three months. The spreadsheet displays an easy-to-grasp view of the allocated work along with two handy summaries.

#### The Basic Display

Figure 1 below shows the main display of the MM spreadsheet. The rows are arranged by project and then by task within the project. A blank row separates each project.

The columns of the table display the next 12 work weeks. The body of the display contains the number of hours or days a person will be working during that week. The table displays work in units of staff-hours for the next four weeks. After that, the table displays the work in units of staff-days.

Figure 1. The main display of the MM spreadsheet.

1/1/07 10:08		Week Number														
Task Number	Task	Project	Person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
				(Hours of work)				(Staff-days of work)								
	1 Start Milestone															
	2 Analyse field data	Blue	Grumpy	21	21	14										
	3 Write report	Blue	Grumpy			21	35	1								
3.5																
	4 Refine scope def.	Green	Bashful				35	3								
	5 Design structure	Green	Grumpy					4	5							
	6 Permits filed	Green	Doc					5	4							
	7 Build structure	Green	Doc								5	3				
7.5																
	8 Develop photos	Red	Grumpy								4	4				
	9 Plan posters	Red	Bashful								2	5				
9.5																
	10 Get data	White	Grumpy	14	14											
	11 Refine scope	White	Doc	35	35											
	12 Exterior landscaping	White	Bashful	35	35	35										
	13 Interior work	White	Sleepy			21	35									
	14 Clean up site	White	Bashful					3	5	1						
14.5																
	15 End Milestone															

The display allows the reader to see how each task's work spreads out over several weeks. To the reader's eye, the rows of numbers form an implicit "bar" chart of the task. The groupings of task-rows show how the whole project's work develops over time.

Figure 2 below shows how the basic table's results can be added up. Because each task-row is labeled with both a project name and a person name, the columns can be summarized by both project and by person. The consensus allocation can avoid overworking any one person at the same time it achieves the most possible work on each project.

Figure 2. The workload summaries of the MM spreadsheet.

<b>Workload Totals</b>	<b>Person's Load</b>	Grumpy	35	35	35	35	1	4	5	4	4
		Bashful	35	35	35	35	3	3	5	3	5
		Doc	35	35				5	4	5	3
		Sleepy				21	35				
	<b>Project's Load</b>	Red								6	9
		White	84	84	56	35		3	5	1	
		Blue	21	21	35	35	1				
		Green				35	3	9	9	5	3

In the example in Figure 2, Grumpy, Bashful, and Doc are at their maximum of 35 hours of scheduled work in the near term while Sleepy is unassigned. The two projects being worked on are White and Blue. Green will start in four weeks and Red will start in eight.

If the council of project managers wishes to rearrange the work, it can change work allocations in the basic table and check to see how the workload totals change.

### Sorting the Basic Table.

After the project managers agree on the near-term work allocations, they can publish a copy of the basic table for all to see. By re-sorting the basic table by person, the managers can create a second table that focuses each person on their own work for the next few weeks.

Figure 3. The basic table sorted by person.

1/1/07 10:13				Week Number														
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Task Number	Task	Project	Person	(Hours of work)				(Staff-days of work)										
	1 Start Milestone																	
	12 Exterior landscaping	White	Bashful	35	35	35												
	4 Refine scope def.	Green	Bashful				35	3										
	9 Plan posters		Red Bashful										2	5				
	14 Clean up site	White	Bashful						3	5	1							
	11 Refine scope	White	Doc	35	35													
	6 Permits filed	Green	Doc						5	4								
	7 Build structure	Green	Doc										5	3				
	10 Get data	White	Grumpy	14	14													
	2 Analyse field data		Blue Grumpy	21	21	14												
	3 Write report		Blue Grumpy			21	35	1										
	5 Design structure	Green	Grumpy						4	5								
	8 Develop photos		Red Grumpy										4	4				
	13 Interior work	White	Sleepy			21	35											
3.5																		
7.5																		
9.5																		
14.5																		
	15 End Milestone																	
<b>Workload Totals</b>			<b>Person's Load</b>	Grumpy	35	35	35	35	1	4	5	4	4					
				Bashful	35	35	35	35	3	3	5	3	5					
				Doc	35	35				5	4	5	3					
				Sleepy			21	35										
			<b>Project's Load</b>	Red									6	9				
	White	84	84	56	35		3	5	1									
	Blue	21	21	35	35	1												
	Green				35	3	9	9	5	3								

Grumpy can see that he will be splitting time between the White and Blue projects. Bashful and Doc will be working on the White Project in the coming week. Sleepy sees that his next bit of project work is scheduled to arrive in three weeks. If the list of people were to grow large, each person could print out a personal copy of their own set of tasks.

Notice the fractional task numbers that were used to create spaces between the rows of projects are all sorted to the bottom of the list. Notice also that the “start” and “end” milestones were *excluded* from the sort so that the formulas for calculating the workload totals would continue to work.

To reestablish the original list, the managers can resort the list by task number.

### Conclusion

With the MM spreadsheet project managers can conveniently see the consequences of their agreements as they negotiate workload allocations. The spreadsheet can make a difficult negotiation go much more quickly and, one hopes, more smoothly.

In a group where multiple people are working on multiple projects the MM spreadsheet displays the coordinated workload agreement in a way that gives everyone involved a clearer picture of who's working on which tasks.

**Further Reading (some available free at [www.newleafpm.com](http://www.newleafpm.com))**

-----, (May, 2001). *Advanced Project Management*, Course Notebook, Concord, MA: New Leaf Project Management.

Brooks, Frederick P., Jr., (1995). *The Mythical Man Month: Essays on Software Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Nevison, John M., (2009). *The Responsibility Matrix (RAM)*, White Paper, Concord, MA: New Leaf Project Management.

-----, (October, 2002). *Chartering the Project: Managing the Business Priorities of the Project Portfolio*, Course Notebook, Concord, MA: New Leaf Project Management.

**About the Author**

**John M. (Jack) Nevison**, PMP is the author of six books and numerous articles on computing and management. During the course of his business career, Nevison has built and sold two businesses, managed projects, managed project managers, and served as both an internal and external consultant to Fortune 100 companies. He is past president of the Mass Bay Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI®), a past president of the Greater Boston Chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Dartmouth.

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1. Which is not helped by the spreadsheet MultPeopleMustPjcts (MM spreadsheet)?
  - a. Workload of joint staffs
  - b. Council of project managers
  - c. Balance of work
  - d. Hiring and firing staff
2. How many weeks does the MM spreadsheet cover?
  - a. 4
  - b. 8
  - c. 12
  - d. 16
3. Which two workloads are totaled in the MM spreadsheet?
  - a. Person's and project's
  - b. Staff's and project's
  - c. Dept's and person's
  - d. Dept's and project's
4. What two ways is the MM spreadsheet sorted?
  - a. By person and by project
  - b. By staff group and by project
  - c. By department and by person
  - d. By department and by project
5. Grumpy will be splitting time between which two projects in the next two weeks?
  - a. Red and white
  - b. White and blue
  - c. Blue and green
  - d. Green and red
6. Which is not cited as an MM benefit in the conclusion?
  - a. Managers can see consequences of agreements
  - b. Difficult negotiations can go more smoothly
  - c. Everyone has a clearer picture of the workloads
  - d. Everyone is friendlier during the work month

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