WORK BREAKDOWN STRUCTURE (WBS) CHECKLIST

This checklist allows you to produce an accurate and details work breakdown structure (WBS) document that encompasses all the necessary work for your project. This document will enable you to create your project schedule, costs and resource requirements.

This document enables you to communicate easily and concisely with all those involved in the project about the processes and work that need to occur during the project. From the WBS document your project manager and project team will produce three key items for your project. These are the:

- Project schedule,
- Resource requirements
- Costs.

Many organizations have the '8-80 rule' when decomposing the work packages to the correct and practical level. This means that:

'8-80 Rule' –is defined as 'each item of work is broken down so that it can be completed in 8-80 hours'.

You should check if your organization has a preferred method of displaying a WBS as the format can alter depending on the level of information required for its intended reader. It is also important to create a glossary at the end of this document to ensure that every ones understanding of the terms used within the document have the same meaning and are clearly understood by all.

Your WBS document should contain:

- Decomposition of the project work to the level of work package
- Visual representation of WBS
- WBS dictionary
- Glossary of project and industry terms to be used.

This document must be signed off and accepted as the work standard by your project sponsor or stakeholder.

WBS DICTIONARY

With all projects there is a specialist language and terminology that needs to be defined so that all project participants become familiar with them. These are commonly used phrases and acronyms that are required for project completion and are defined in the WBS dictionary section of this document. If the project requires various external suppliers or participants then any industry specific terms will also be included.

It also has a definition of each 'work package' that is key to avoiding misunderstandings and confusion. This definition defines the scope of each work package and as such is constantly referred to throughout the project.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This section is an essential aspect of your WBS document and makes sure that all individuals involved in your project can comprehend your project documents whether or not they have a background in project management. It also ensures that terms used within your project are clearly understood regardless of the project management methodology being used.

POTENTIAL FORMAT OPTIONS FOR WBS

The format that best suits your WBS document will depend on the level detail and knowledge base of your target audience requires to accept the project. The complexity of your project will also influence the format that best suits your needs. The most common options are:

Outline View – this option is easy on the eye and makes it easier to understand so is often used for communicating at higher-level or in situations where your audience is from a wide variety of disciplines. It uses indenting to show different levels and makes it easy to alter details, so is often used in the earlier stages of creating a WBS.

Hierarchical Structure – allows for you to incorporate more levels so it is more suited to representing more complex projects that the outline view. This format requires some practice at being able to read it accurately so is more suited to an experienced project audience.

Tabular – represents the work details in a tabular form and often is the preferred option for some organizations. If your project is quite complicated you can use a spreadsheet package, such as Excel, to allow you to display more information than a word document. This option provides an easy to read format to display your WBS.

Tree Structure – whilst creating an easily read format, a tree structure chart often requires specialist software to produce it. The resulting organizational style chart enables the work breakdown to its work package levels to be easily understood by the majority of its readers. It also is one of the most practical formats to use as part of your project management and monitoring.