Project Planning • PERT Charts

Using PERT Charts

A PERT chart is a project management tool used to schedule, organize, and coordinate tasks within a project. PERT stands for Program Evaluation Review Technique, it was developed by the U.S. Navy in the 1950s to manage the Polaris submarine program.

Some project managers prefer a PERT chart because of its ability to represent events and milestones of a project in a graphical method. The PERT chart shows which parts of the project need to be completed in a sequential method and which parts can be worked on simultaneously. The PERT chart is often preferred over the Gantt chart because it is able to clearly illustrate task dependencies. Frequently, project managers use both techniques.

Development of a PERT chart
The first thing that the team must do is divide their overall project into small tasks. Each small task should be assigned a leader. Then the team must sequence the order of completion. Some tasks of the problem may be completed independent of others. These tasks can be worked on simultaneously. Some tasks may need to be completed before others can start. These things must be worked on sequentially. The team will look at the tasks and try set deadlines based on prior experience. They should break tasks into the smallest parts possible to accurately calculate time.

1. Discuss the overall problem
2. Break the problem into small tasks
3. Sequence the order of completion of tasks
4. Schedule the tasks
5. Assign responsibility for tasks to teams and individuals
6. Meet regularly to check progress of overall project
7. Help each other complete tasks in a timely manner

Sample PERT Chart
Arrows illustrate places where one task depends on another.

This task has many dependencies and cannot be done until those tasks are all finished

This task does not depend heavily on other tasks, and so it can be done simultaneously