

MIS Project Manager

User Guide

hear-see-do.com



Overview

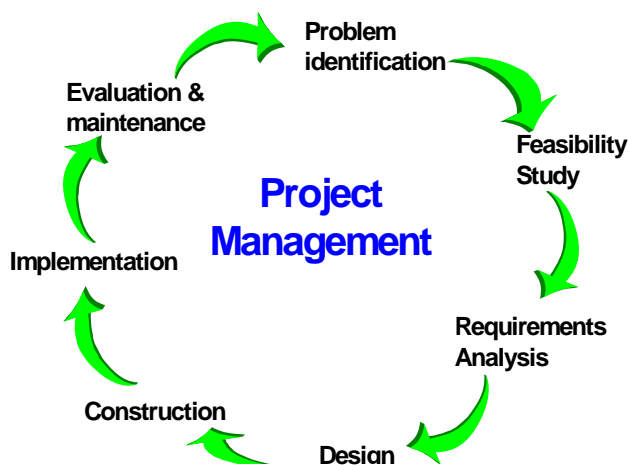
The simulation emulates the management of an information systems development project. The user takes the role of project manager. Following your selection of a strategy for focus, as project manager you work through the systems development life-cycle (SDLC) (illustrated below), which follows the project from the feasibility study stage through to when the system goes “live”. Once completed, on-line feedback helps you to evaluate the project, the decisions you made, the consequences of those decisions and the issues which are addressed, through on-line feedback.

During the running of the project, several events occur; some planned, others not; the project manager must make decisions about how to deal with these events. The decisions taken will affect the cost, time, technical quality, user acceptance, morale, or security of the project and the project team. The project manager’s performance in these areas is assessed. There is a budget of £1,100k, and 66 weeks to complete the task.

Aims of the simulation

The simulation provides MIS (Management Information Systems) project management experience in a safe environment with a relatively light-hearted approach. It is not intended to be technically authoritative but gives a good feel for a general approach to MIS project management. The simulation aims to provide experience of making general project management decisions, whilst at the same time giving an insight into more specific IS issues. The main learning objectives are to highlight:

- the commercial aspects of project management
- the practice of project planning
- the trade-offs between cost, technical quality, security and time.
- some of the ‘softer’ elements of IS project management such as staff morale and user acceptance
- the necessity of living with the consequences of your decisions and strategy
- some of the concepts, issues and practical dynamics of the management of IS development
- the differences between diverse approaches to IS development



Performance assessment

Individuals/groups will be assessed on their performance relative to other participants. Performance is based on the average score for each indicator shown below, with the score relating to group strategy counting **twice**. *Each group should keep a note of their key decisions and be ready to make a case for 'why they won the game' during the debriefing.*

Objectives / Strategies

Strategies

Strategy

Justification

Cost

It is important that you do not overspend the budget, and overruns will be taken into account at your next appraisal.

Time

Your main objective is to deliver the system to the users on time.

Technical Quality

The system must be delivered exactly to the requirements set out in the specification, and a quality approach must be adopted throughout the development process.

User Acceptance

The users must be satisfied with the system when it is delivered, otherwise it will not be used. Users should feel confident that the system is robust, they should feel it has top management support. They will have been involved in development process. They are capable of using the system.

Morale

Concentrate on maximising staff morale; build a project team, which can develop further systems in the future.

Security

Your organisation has had real problems with security in the past, and the management is very keen to improve this situation.

Startup

To start up, ensure you are using an Internet browser that has Style sheets, Cookies and Javascript enabled, and that allows this site to send its own pop-up windows. The connection speed is not critical, although there are some graphics that will obviously load faster with a faster connection. The screen resolution must be at least 1024x768 and preferably more, to show the multiple windows. If you have minimal resolution, make the windows as large as possible and **delete any unnecessary toolbars** including the standard buttons toolbar.

First, access the main site <http://www.hear-see-do.com> and click on *MIS Project Manager*. You will see instructions, help and an easy-to-use menu system that leads you into the simulation itself. Anyone can access the **demonstration version** using ID '**demo**' and password '**demo**', in which case a restricted set of activities and events are available, but you can gain a feel for the simulation. You will need to acquire a special login code and password to access the full simulation; see your tutor or use the contact details on the site.

Clicking **Log In** will check your ID. Then click **Start new game** to open the a new run of the simulation. During a game you can click the 'CONTROL' button to get back to the main site, then save either on your local PC (**Save local**) or on the Server computer (**Save on Server**) and load these back later; the computer will remember the state of your latest run of the simulation up to when it was last saved. ***You will need to save your session if you leave the game for 20 minutes or more of inactivity.*** More details below.

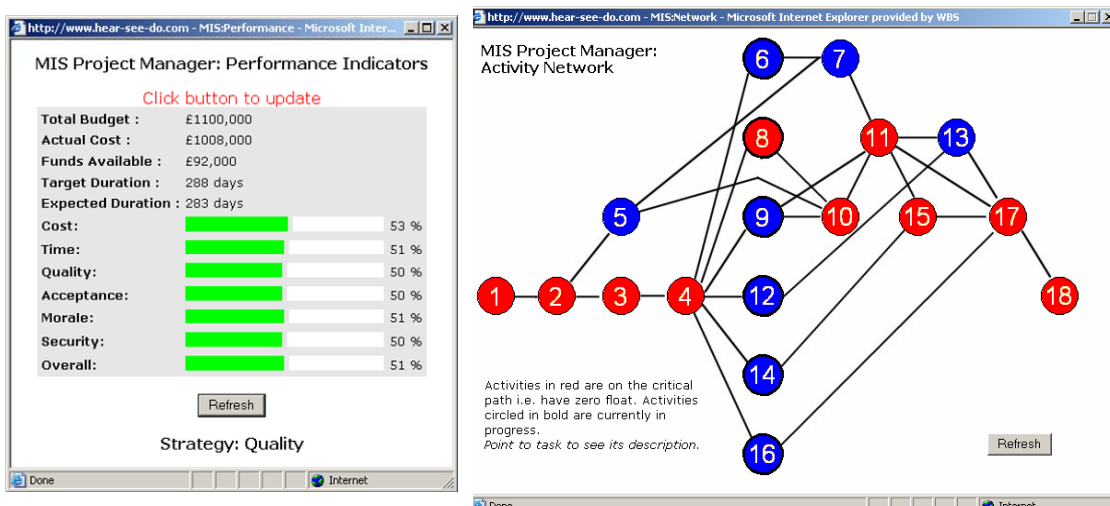
Operation

Select a strategy as discussed above. The project immediately starts and you must manage it through to completion, in particular by deciding how to respond to eventualities. You see a main control panel which shows the current day, and details of the first event that has

happened and is demanding your attention. Use the **performance and network windows** in order to help you make optimal decisions. Note that the network window highlights the activities in progress with a slightly bolder border.



For each event there are one or more alternative responses. These may affect the project performance directly, and may cause other events to occur at a subsequent time in the project. Scroll **carefully** through these using the control buttons. When you are sure about your response, ensure this response is shown, and **only then press the DO IT! button**. The next event, whenever it happens, will be automatically presented to you - wait for this and **do not click DO IT! again until you have considered the next event** and the browser is fully refreshed. You cannot go back on your decisions! Don't forget to monitor your performance and progress using the activity and project status information; you will be given occasional reminders to do this. The network diagram shows the dependence of activities on each other, and the critical path through the project.

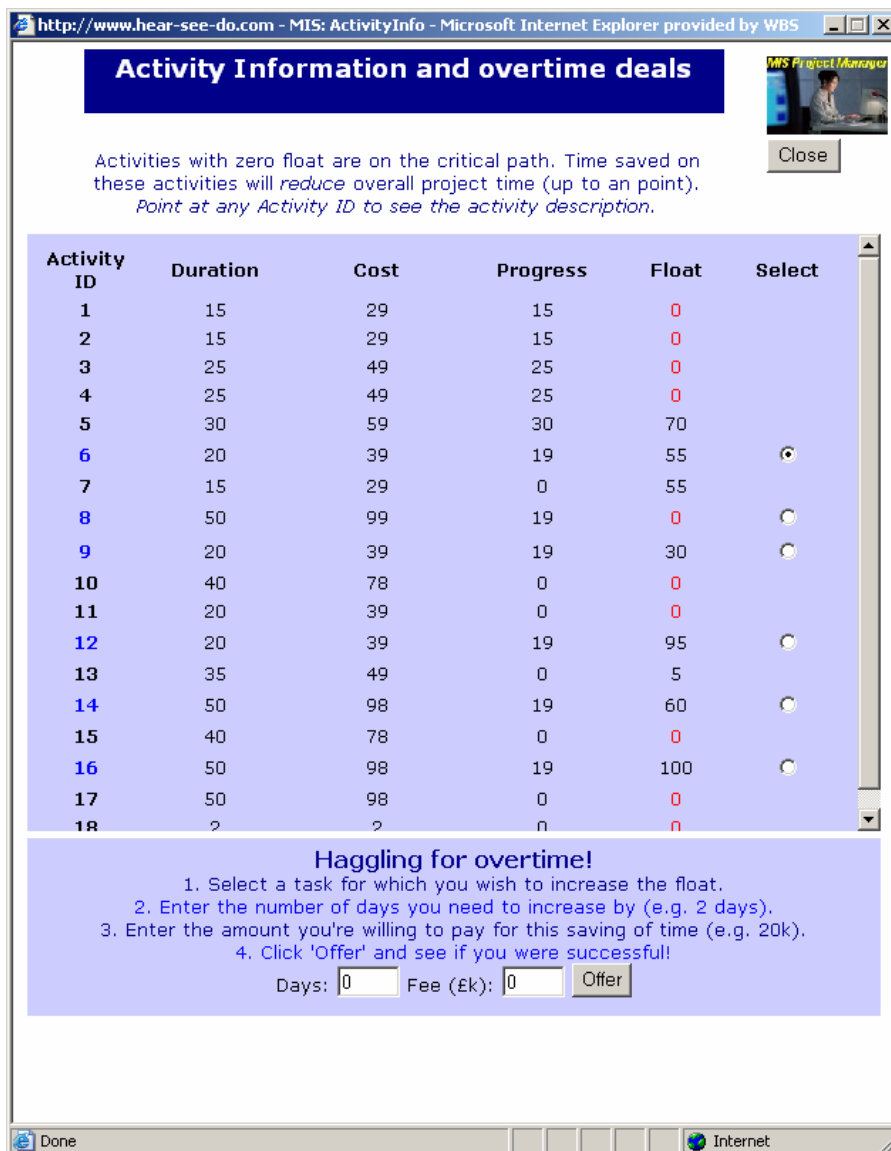


Saving

It is a good idea to save from time to time 'just in case'. Use the Control page; if you go to the Control page then you *must* save or you will lose your position. Saving to your local PC is straightforward - choose 'Save local. If you cannot return to your local machine you can use the option of saving for up to a week on the server. In this case you will be asked for a User Name; this can be any name of your choice, as long as it is not in use. It does not have to be your Login ID, but **you must remember it in order to load back later**, so write it down!

Offering 'Overtime'

At any time you have the option to try to negotiate overtime with contractors on active tasks, offering them bonus payments to shorten the duration of their task. To do this, **Activity Progress and Overtime** button, select an activity, choose how many days you would like to save, and make a reasonable offer. The contractors may reject your offer; there is a higher chance of acceptance of larger offers; if they reject, you can offer more. You may haggle at any time while the task is active, unless it is very close to completion, and for time savings up to a maximum of 20% of the task duration.



Activity Information and overtime deals

Activities with zero float are on the critical path. Time saved on these activities will *reduce* overall project time (up to an point).
Point at any Activity ID to see the activity description.

Activity ID	Duration	Cost	Progress	Float	Select
1	15	29	15	0	
2	15	29	15	0	
3	25	49	25	0	
4	25	49	25	0	
5	30	59	30	70	
6	20	39	19	55	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
7	15	29	0	55	
8	50	99	19	0	<input type="radio"/>
9	20	39	19	30	<input type="radio"/>
10	40	78	0	0	
11	20	39	0	0	
12	20	39	19	95	<input type="radio"/>
13	35	49	0	5	
14	50	98	19	60	<input type="radio"/>
15	40	78	0	0	
16	50	98	19	100	<input type="radio"/>
17	50	98	0	0	
18	2	2	0	0	

Haggling for overtime!

1. Select a task for which you wish to increase the float.
2. Enter the number of days you need to increase by (e.g. 2 days).
3. Enter the amount you're willing to pay for this saving of time (e.g. 20k).
4. Click 'Offer' and see if you were successful!

Days: Fee (£k):

General

If nothing appears to happen as a result of a decision it may simply mean ‘you got away with it this time’ - or it may mean the consequence will be later! Note that, as in real life, there is a random element to some events, so even your best made plans do not always work out as expected!

You should expect the simulation to take about one hour and a quarter; upon completion you will be shown your final scores including your overall score, weighted by your strategy. A weighted average score of 50-54 constitutes satisfactory performance (depending on strategy); 55-59 is good; 60+ is very good; below 50 is poor.

At the end, refresh the final screen to confirm your final score.

Then consider:

- what was your strategy for playing the game?
- how successfully did you implement that strategy?
- what major events occurred and how did you deal with them?
- what surprises did you encounter?
- why should you or your group gain an award for your performance?

Take the opportunity presented on the final screen to **review your history of decisions** and gain some feedback.

Troubleshooting

If you get an error message on the screen, try pressing Refresh.

© Andrew Martin, May 2006