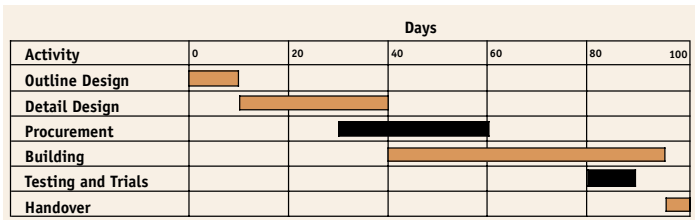




Use the right words and revive project planning

On numerous occasions when we have asked a Project Manager to show us the plan for their project and all that has been produced is a Gantt chart, often with pretty coloured bars and symbols on it but nothing more. When asked 'where is the rest of the plan' most have looked totally dumbfounded, some have even made statements like 'this is the plan' or 'what else do you want?' What this means is that for many Project Managers, the PLAN for the project is only a timetable and there is actually nothing else; no cost plan, no resource plan, no quality plan, no risk plan, no communication plan. The truth is we don't know or perhaps we have lost the meaning of the word PLAN.



A PLAN is and must be more than a timetable; if it is only this then we are not really PLANNING our project. Because we are told to produce a PLAN, and we think that's a Gantt chart, then that's all we do and as a result all we actually produce is a SCHEDULE. But is there a difference and if so what is it?

In North America there is not a problem because, and it grates on us to say it, Americans use the words SCHEDULE and PLAN properly but we British use the word PLAN synonymously and incorrectly with the word SCHEDULE. According to the Oxford English Dictionary a SCHEDULE is 'a list or plan of intended events, times etc' whereas a PLAN is 'a formulated and detailed method by which a thing is to be

done - an intention or proposed proceeding'. These are explicitly very different and of course in project management terms the SCHEDULE is but one key component of the PLAN.

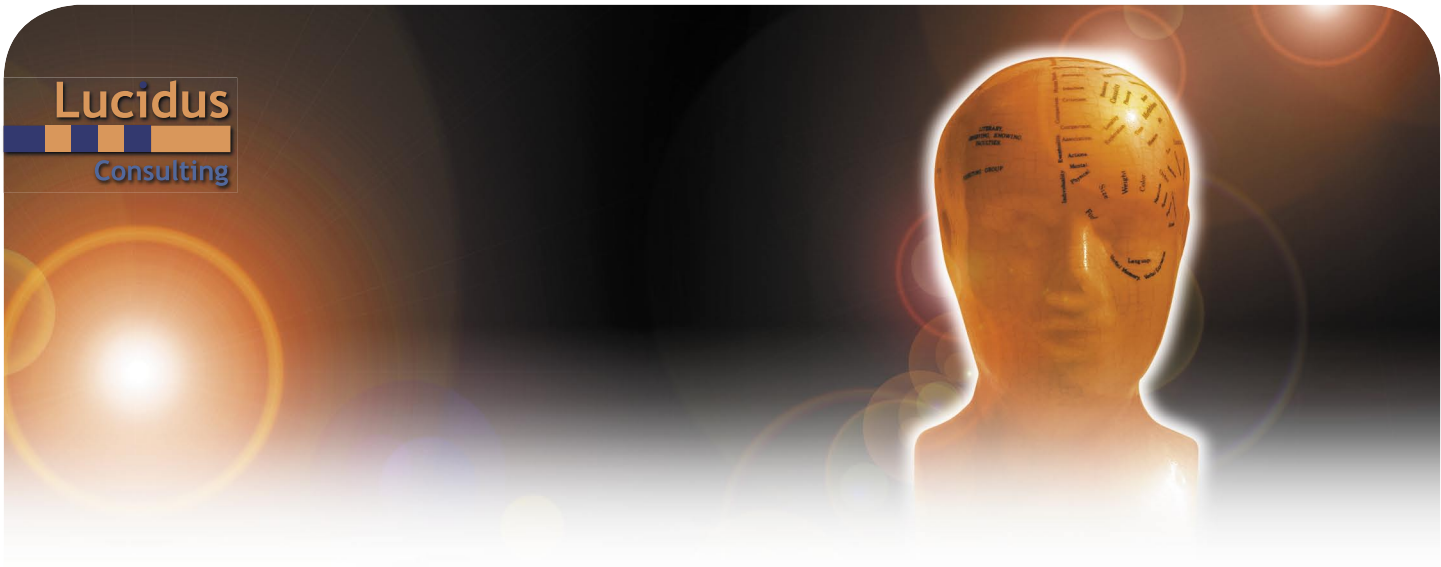
Most project management methods require the production of a Project Management Plan (PMP) or equivalent such as a Project

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN	
Why	Business Case
What	Scope and Quality
How	Strategy and Communications
Who	Resources
How Much	Budget and Cost Phasing
When	Schedule
Risks	How they will be managed

Initiation Document (PID) at the end of the definition phase of the project. The APM's Body of Knowledge defines the PMP (the PLAN) as the document that 'establishes project management's (the project manager's) interpretation of the why, what, how, who, how much and when of the project'.

The Gantt chart or SCHEDULE covers the when - the time plan, but the rest is just as important. But are we just arguing semantics here - is there a real problem to address or are we losing the plot by arguing about jargon?

We argue that it does matter if the SCHEDULE - as we suggest it must always be called to avoid what by now should be the obvious confusion - is the only constituent part of the PLAN that is produced. How can we expect to manage a project without formerly documenting how we will manage scope, resources, quality, risk, communications etc? Of course we can't but many people do try to and are inevitably unsuccessful. It may sound trite to quote the age old saying 'Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail' but this is oh so true and note the saying is not 'Failing to Schedule is Scheduling to Fail'. For years



people using this saying have been telling us to PLAN not SCHEDULE so it's time we started.

In future we suggest that you use the words as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary and talk about a SCHEDULE when you mean a Gantt chart or timeline, and talk about PLANS when you mean the more important bigger picture; the why, what, how, who, how much and when.

We believe that making this subtle vocabulary change will be **important in raising awareness of the issue, changing attitudes to project planning and hence improving project management as a whole.**

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