



Time Management

Tips for Product Managers

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Everything to Everybody productcamp AUSTIN

Good product managers quickly become the “go-to” person in an organization. They are the “fix-it” person and develop relationships throughout an organization to get projects completed on time and on budget.

That’s the good news!

Overwhelmed!



Being the person that knows how to fix what's broken or where to find answers can mean a product manager has very little time to actually get work done.

Product managers have to develop strong relationships, but have to be very protective of their time.

The Road To Recovery



- Get organized
- Be protective of your time
- Facilitate meetings with a firm hand
- Manage your inbox/calendar/tasks
- Multi-tasking can be an enemy
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Let technology work for you, not the other way around

Get Organized!



- As a product manager, you probably have several projects going at the same time.
- Seek out what tools work for you. Personally, I love a Gantt Chart.
- Gantt charts allow me to visually introduce accountability into every project I'm working on and removes ambiguity.

Responsible Party

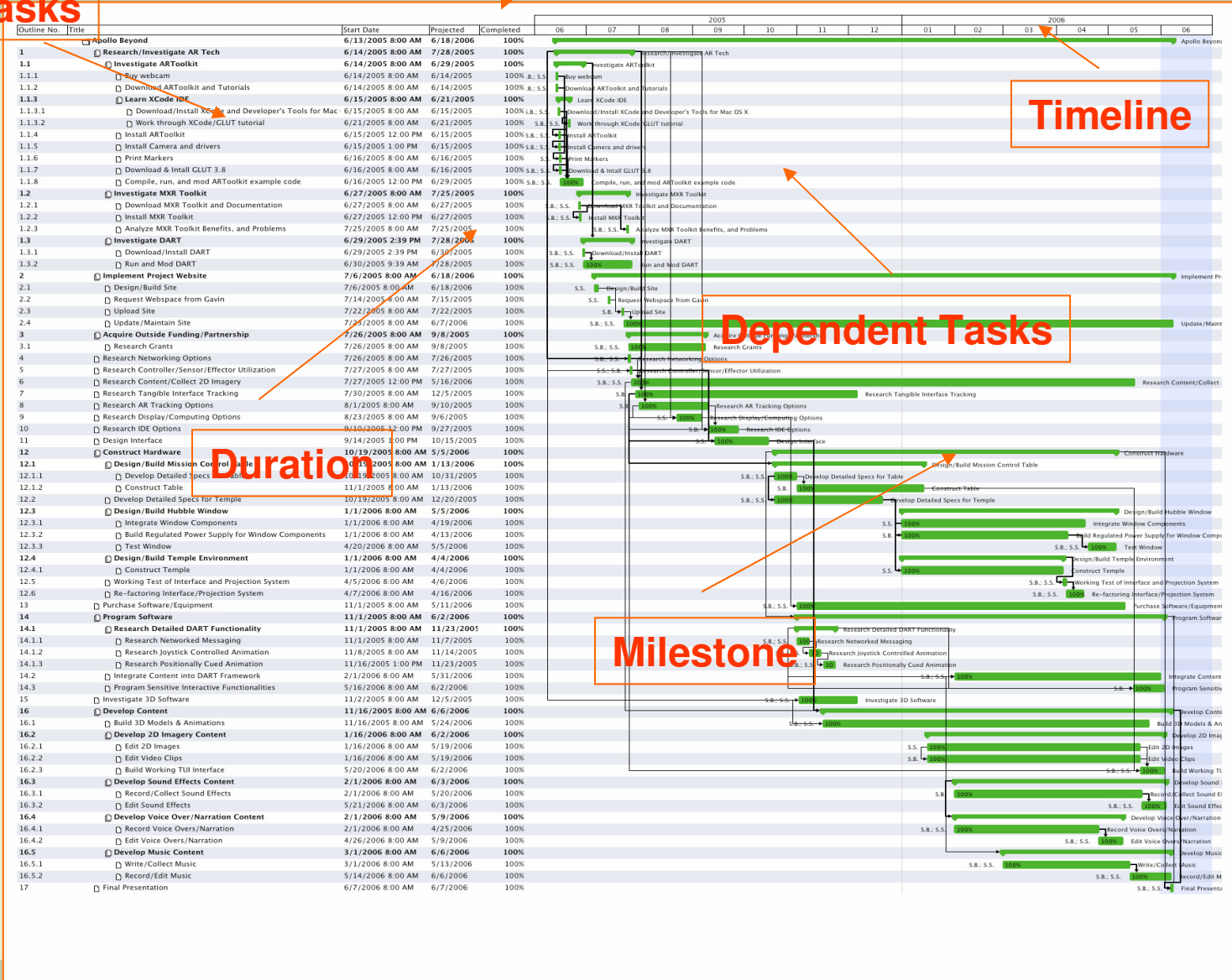
Tasks

Timeline

Dependent Tasks

Duration

Milestone



Be Protective Of Your Time



- Eliminate unnecessary meetings
- Have no-email hours
- Work from an action task list
- Prioritize!
- Don't get distracted
- Set boundaries on your time

- Eliminate unnecessary meetings
 - If a meeting doesn't have an agenda or specific goal/decision to be made...you aren't ready for a meeting. Don't go.
 - If a group of people that regularly meet do not accomplish anything in the meeting...don't go.
 - Ask if the meeting really requires your presence. It doesn't? Don't go.

Email is not your friend



- Email is a “time suck”
- Turn off email when you are trying to concentrate on work
- Don’t “reply-all”
- If it’s more than two emails generated from your email...pick up the phone
- Clean out your inbox. A full inbox creates false anxiety

Can I Get An A.T.?



- “Give me the bullet”
- Accept or decline action tasks
 - Before accepting ask yourself:
 - Is this my action task? Am I responsible?
 - Can I meet this deadline?
 - Does this contradict existing priorities
 - Is the priority the same priority I would give it?
- Give action tasks
 - Hold people accountable for accepting and completing action tasks on time

Prioritize

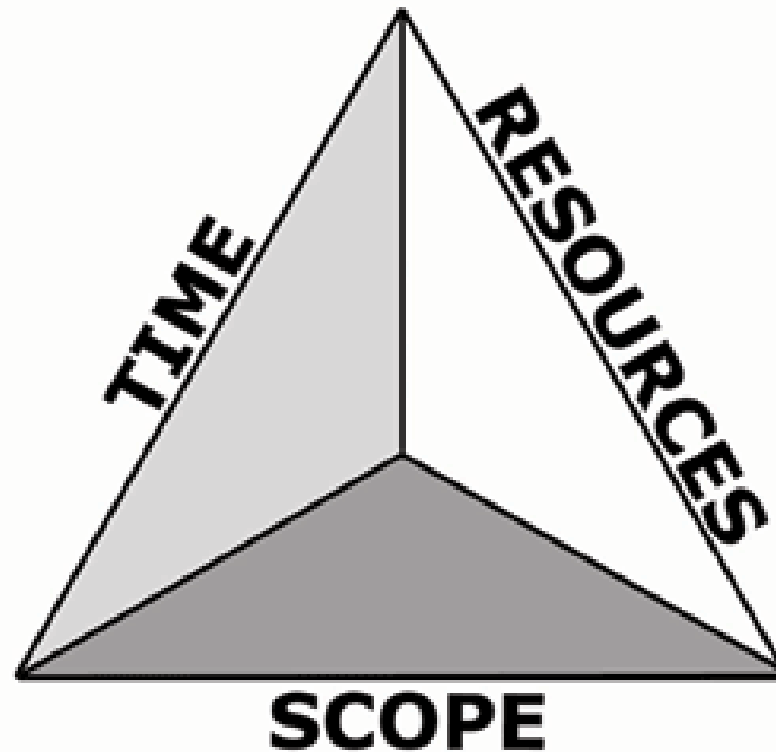


Diagram A: The Triple Constraint

Not everything can be “Number 1”
Not everything is urgent
Get in line, take a number....

How to prioritize



- Rank your projects
 - Does this project generate revenue?
 - Is this a strategic imperative for the company?
 - Is the delivery date an absolute?
 - What are my resource restrictions?
 - What are my obstacles?
- If a project gets bumped... Communicate and Educate!

Don't get distracted



- Besides email, there are many distractions in the office.
- The phone...DND
- The Blackberry...silence it
- The open door...close it
- The co-worker...send them away (nicely)
- The OMG I NEED A BREAK!...Take one.

Setting boundaries



- Determine what you are going to commit to this project and stick to it. If you need additional resources, ask for them.
- For me, I turn off my Blackberry at 6 p.m. and on weekends.
- I learn to say “no” and quickly!

Be a good facilitator



- A good facilitator keeps a meeting on time, on task and productive.
- A good facilitator makes sure action items are clear and reasonable
- A good facilitator never loses control of the meeting

Be a good facilitator



- Meetings have an agenda
- Meetings have a definite start time and definite end time
- Put it in the Parking Lot
- Keep the meeting on topic
- Send out notes after the meeting
- Repeat action tasks and their assignments along with due dates.

Manage your calendar



- Include “office hours” in your daily calendar as a blocked off amount of time to get work done.
- Losing control of your calendar is the fastest way to miss deadlines and deliverables.
- Don’t go to a meeting unless it’s on your calendar

Multi-Tasking...the enemy



People are not processors. We are thinkers. As product managers one of the most important attributes we have is the ability to strategically think and execute for our company.

Don't let distractions and too many things pull you away from important tasks at hand.

It takes time to think through issues with product management and product development, they need your focus and attention. Don't apologize for having to think about something or focus on something.

Under promise



- Under promise and Over deliver! It's a sales cliché, but it fits for product managers, too.
- I stopped saying yes in the hallway. I only say yes via email or calendar requests now.
- The most important sentence I learned as a product manager was: "I don't know, but I will find out."

Technology works for you



- Turn off email
- Manage your calendar
- Use the Task Lists
- Gantt Charts
- Blackberry etiquette
- Take a break from technology

My grandmother used to say...

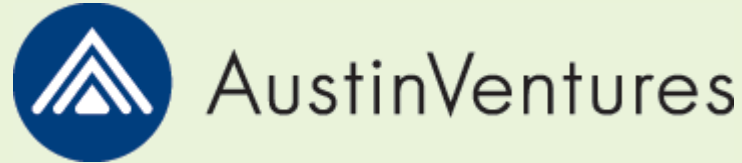


“An education is the one thing no one can ever take away from you.”

My version:

“I won’t let anyone else steal my time from me.”

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