

# Weekly Project Design Insights

*Visual Forecasts Trigger Early Dialogue and Options for Scope and Schedule Feasibility with Executives*

**A heavy machinery corporation serves the global agricultural and construction industries. New products are designed, developed, tested, and marketed by cross-functional platform teams made up of businesses, engineering, purchasing, manufacturing, and other functions.**

*"Status reviews used to take half the meeting for the execs to understand the charts. Every program showed their own set of charts, and we needed to re-explain ours each time. This new method has compelling charts that the execs can read in an instant, and show both past and future progress."*

*"When issues arose, we were able to explore the forecasts on two or more alternatives, and see the downstream schedule and cost impacts. We were able to get quick decisions and keep moving."*

## Problem

The product development teams found themselves struggling with chronic schedule delays threatening market introduction. The company missed promised customer delivery dates and faced potential penalties for noncompliance with new environmental standards. The delays resulted from three primary causes: imposed schedules misaligned with development realities, insensitivity to project risk, and a shortage of information needed to influence executive decision-making.

## Solution

For several ongoing programs, GPD implemented routine project analysis and redesign with TeamPort, which allows teams to account for both work and coordination activity as they rapidly and repeatedly simulated their projects. Project Design yields an optimized feasible plan with accurate schedule and cost forecasts. The process included weekly interaction with team leads to measure progress against plan, generate an updated forecast of remaining schedule, analyze project risks and issues, and redesign the remaining project plan as appropriate. At the end of the program, a facilitated "lessons learned" exercise was informed by a rich, analytical forecasts history.

## Results

As a result of applying Project Design, the client improved its ability to develop plans and understand divergence from original targets. With visualized analysis of why outcomes are likely to stray, the teams gained management buy-in for additional feasible and optimal scenarios. The team identified options and, through cross-functional cooperation, mitigated significant risks early. The collaborative process on multiple programs yielded shared lessons across the portfolio. The tone, speed, and substance of overall dialogue amongst teams and executives was transformed, leading to better performance.

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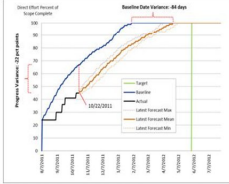
At a Glance  
2011 Nov. 15

Project ABC

GLOBAL PROJECT DESIGN

## Progress vs. Plan

- Baseline Variance of -44 days
- Schedule Mitigations being investigated
- 1000 hr. test continues beyond first production
- Supplier quality check adds scope



## What happened?

- Cooling test did not meet expectations
- Software problems for released version new features

## Why?

- Remedial changes to cooling package are generating additional design changes, and prevent effective operation
- Late releases and lack of sufficient testing by software vendor

## Happening now

- Continuing toward completion of 4 remaining design tasks
- Additional sound and cooling testing required to meet targets
- Evaluating the latest fixes in software for advanced model

## Likely to happen

- Forecast shows completion of required tasks within days of baseline plan, assuming no further design changes
- Plan includes multiple iterations to verify fixes

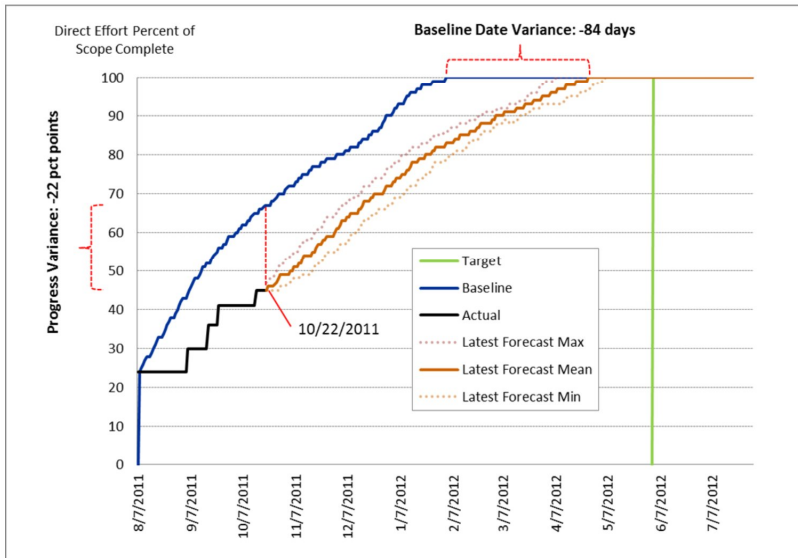
## Insights, Learnings

- Anticipate propagating changes: one leads to another
- Maintainability must be re-evaluated following design change, and may drive additional change
- Software vendor needs to meet their target dates and provide more robust datasets

## Remedial Actions

- Continue to make progress on remaining tests, focus on highest remaining risks.

Performance is promoted with weekly team sessions to assess their project, easily generating reports which drive cross functional team and executive dialogue. The example report summary shows progress against plan and targets with simulation based forecasts of activity to completion. The analysis is matched by qualitative elements of recent progress, issues, risks, near term deliverables, and lessons learned.



As things change (and they always do), the team analyzes remaining scope, coordination, risks, and priorities. Key charts include target completion (green vertical), baseline plan (blue curve), actual progress (black step curve), and forecast of remaining work (gold curve). These clearly visible trends and gaps, seen at various levels, push teams to consider adjustments to priority and behavior. Multiple paths forward, as feasible schedule options, are rapidly simulated and compared.

"These progress reports made it easy to review lessons learned at the end of the project. We had a running record of them, and could jump right to the overview at project closeout."

"Those nasty flat spots on the Actual Progress curve haunted us every time we looked at them on the War Room wall."

## Contact

### Global Project Design

#### Americas

San Francisco    Denver  
Cincinnati        Boston  
+1 (800) 473-2902

#### Asia

Tokyo

#### Europe

Berlin

#### On the Web:

www.gpdesign.com  
info@gpdesign.com

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