

REGIONAL REPORT – ROMANIA



Project Scheduling Tools and their Public Perception

A report on the current status of the most used software
for project scheduling in Romania

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An old sports saying states that only number one counts and the rest is to vanish and be forgotten with the time. If one would apply this to the battle for the top position when discussing the dedicated software used for project scheduling in Romania, then it would retain two names on the battlefield: Microsoft and Primavera.

It is hard to state how much from the market each one shares, but one thing is true: there is nothing left after these two. In other words the scheduling techniques are almost entirely based on these two applications and third place is not awarded to anyone.

Companies being at their fresh start on the Project Management way are prone to adopt the Microsoft Project package due to the easiness of this undertaking: facile use of the friendly properties deriving from the MS package and relatively a large dissemination throughout the scheduling techniques embraced by the users. Closely after, the Primavera Project Planner has gained a well known reputation and the local Primavera representative, who is extremely well organized in Bucharest and other main cities, is persistently challenging the market share occupied by MS Project.

Basically, one can observe the market shared by these two major scheduling technique players. The market seems to be driven by the various project stakeholders' interest in better monitoring and controlling the projects behind their investments.



There is a significant and dramatic change from the situation that existed 10 years ago when the most powerful tool for scheduling was the classic Excel table format in which bars resembling actual bar chart could be easily seen on every spreadsheet. Whether in industry, construction or any other application deemed as a project, Excel was the major planning tool the users could afford at that time. There was a sort of reluctance to buy the new software, either MS Project or Primavera Project Planner, since the pressure

for controlling the project, reporting the status and controlling variances was almost insufficient to trigger the buying decision. At that time companies were not accustomed to the science of modern Project Management techniques. They could not find a reasonable reason to buy the software and to get people trained. Socially speaking this was mainly because the form of ownership: companies were held by the Government and the competition was shallow.



Today and in recent time, dramatic changes to the form of ownership have happened, competition is fiercely sharpened in various industries, and shareholders have become more attentive with their capital. As a result of these social and economical triggers, companies and employees were urged to refine their skills and abilities to provide immediate and detailed response on how the project is going, how is going to last a certain activity or the entire project, what is the budget departure from the baseline and so on. It was quite obvious the old Excel could not represent an option, Primavera and MS Project naturally came across the users' new needs.

It is unclear how the market is shared between the two but final decisions toward buying one or another lie in each one's ability to satisfy the core interest of the Client, to better understand the needs and the extent of usage in the specific project environment. Rather than advocating for one or another, both vendors are keen to make most out of any Project Management event. It is a record of gatherings when the agenda is comprised of either Primavera or the new MS Project 2007 in order to catch the Customer's attention.

In the Public Governmental sector of project implementation financed by large banking institutions Primavera seems to be the preferred tool for scheduling and project monitoring and control. This is due to the specific requirements postulated in the contracts between parties. Large private corporations which lately acquired the former state-owned companies in the field of oil & gas and banking industry are also going with Primavera Project Planner. This seems due to the fact that at the moment of taking over there were trained Primavera specialists inside who have regularly used this tool in their projects.

There is also a portion of the market that goes with MS Project Professional 2003 and their choice is probably a result of the Microsoft package long history of use. The interface is well-known and the operators are accustomed to the main functions and commands, even though the scheduling tool entails additional knowledge derived from the scheduling techniques, PERT and CPM analysis, critical path method and so on.

Even when opting for one or another software tool, the customers need to refine and define their basic functions of scheduling. If only a basic time schedule is needed, then the choice would probably be in the favour of MS Project. Experts in operating scheduling techniques are more in favour of Primavera due to the perception that resource allocation, risk management and other analysis are only available in this environment. At this point Microsoft perhaps did not target too well the tool's capability since this false perception makes MS Project being ranked on second place and evidently due to the lack of understanding.

One thing is sure when disputing these two tools' capabilities: up to a certain level of usage both are sufficiently qualified to meet the requirements and the needs. It is probably only a matter of cost of license and operators' preferences when deciding for one of them. For highly detailed applications, when resource allocation, levelling, risk management, interface with other software for transferring the input data are needed, the Primavera seems to be the choice.

Besides, Primavera is strongly backed up by a local company that for years in Romania has rendered professional services related to training, customer service and marketing toward the brand promotion and development. There is also a Primavera Users Conference held every year and this occasion is a formal event meant to consolidate the existing pool of customers and to gain others.

To conclude the current standing among the scheduling tools competitors it might be stated that both Microsoft and Primavera goes tightly shoulder to shoulder in their strive for new customers. The difference is made upon cost criteria and other package incentives since both can do technically the same things. It is further a matter of marketing and events targeted to the customers in need to attract the users and to convince them that one tool or another is their best choice.



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