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Microsoft Project Standard versus Microsoft Project Professional, features, benefits and workings

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Article Info

Abstract
The article provides overview of Microsoft Project Standard (MPS), Microsoft Project Professional (MPP) from the project management perspective, core features, suited audience, benefits, differences. As a sample adding of resources in a project plan is discussed for the both MPS and MPP.

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Introduction
Microsoft Project
Organizations, large and small, are constantly under pressure to complete projects on time, within budget, and to the quality standards required by their stakeholders. Herein lies the significance of project management tools. Microsoft Project stands out among the many project management software on the market. A pillar in this field, Microsoft Project has been assisting businesses in achieving their project goals for decades.

Among project management tools, Microsoft Project emerges as a leader, offering two potent versions – Standard and Professional. Distinguishing the difference between Microsoft Project Standard and Professional is crucial for organizations aiming to adopt a solution that aligns with their unique business needs.

Microsoft Project Standard
Microsoft Project Standard serves as a stepping stone into advanced project management, offering core features that cater to the essential needs of teams and businesses. This version is designed to facilitate project scheduling, task assignment, and progress tracking, ensuring seamless execution.

Designed for simplicity and efficiency, it is a reliable tool for organizations beginning their project management journey.
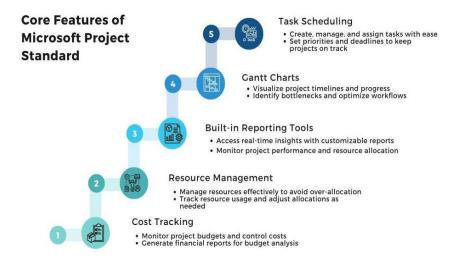
Fig 1: Core features of Microsoft Project Standard from invensis learning.

Core Features
- **Task Scheduling**
  o Create, manage, and assign tasks with ease
  o Set priorities and deadlines to keep projects on track

- **Gantt Charts**
  o Visualize project timelines and progress
  o Identify bottlenecks and optimize workflows

- **Built-in Reporting Tools**
  o Access real-time insights with customizable reports
  o Monitor project performance and resource allocation

- **Resource Management**
  o Manage resources effectively to avoid over-allocation
  o Track resource usage and adjust allocations as needed

- **Cost Tracking**
  o Monitor project budgets and control costs
  o Generate financial reports for budget analysis

- **User-Friendly Interface**
  o Navigate easily with an intuitive interface
  o Quickly access tools and features with a minimal learning curve

- **Integration Capabilities**
  o Integrate with other Microsoft products for enhanced functionality
  o Collaborate efficiently with team members using shared resources

Best Suited For
Given its straightforward functionalities and focus on essential project management tools, Microsoft Project Standard is best suited for small to medium-sized businesses or individual project managers. It caters to those looking for a cost-effective solution to manage single projects efficiently without needing advanced, enterprise-level features.

Benefits
- **New Project App**
  o Updated and user-friendly desktop application
  o Enhanced features for easier project planning and management.

- **Manage Schedules and Costs**
  o Effectively manage project schedules to stay on track
  o Control project costs to ensure staying within budget

- **Manage Tasks, Reports, and Info**
  o Centralize project tasks, reports, and company information
  o Improve project efficiency with easy data updates and accessibility

- **Auto-Filled Dates**
  o Automatically fill start and end dates based on dependencies
  o Reduce manual entry and minimize scheduling errors

- **Visualize Complex Schedules**
  o Visualize project timelines with multiple timelines
  o Identify potential issues and ensure task alignment with project goals

- **Streamlined for Simplicity**
  o Tailored to provide straightforward functionalities focusing on essential project management tools
  o Acts as a reliable tool for small to medium-sized businesses or individual project managers

- **Cost-Effective Solution**
  o Appeals to those seeking a budget-friendly option to manage single projects efficiently
  o Provides essential project management capabilities without the need for advanced, enterprise-level features

Microsoft Project Professional
Microsoft Project Professional is a gateway to more advanced project management. It extends beyond the foundational features of the Standard version to accommodate the complex needs of larger teams and businesses.

This version is designed to offer advanced scheduling, resource management, and collaboration tools, ensuring high adaptability and control in project execution. Created for enhanced functionality and flexibility, it is an ideal choice for organizations seeking to elevate their project management strategies.
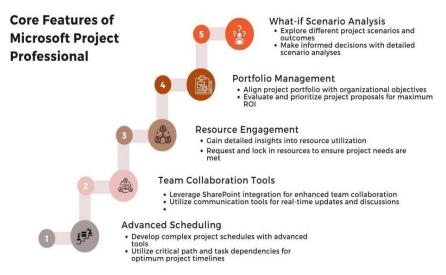
Fig 2: Core features of Microsoft Project Professional from invensis learning.

Core Features

- **Advanced Scheduling**
  o Develop complex project schedules with advanced tools
  o Utilize critical path and task dependencies for optimum project timelines

- **Team Collaboration Tools**
  o Leverage SharePoint integration for enhanced team collaboration
  o Utilize communication tools for real-time updates and discussions

- **Resource Engagement**
  o Gain detailed insights into resource utilization
  o Request and lock in resources to ensure project needs are met

- **Portfolio Management**
  o Align project portfolio with organizational objectives
  o Evaluate and prioritize project proposals for maximum ROI

- **What-if Scenario Analysis**
  o Explore different project scenarios and outcomes
  o Make informed decisions with detailed scenario analyses

- **Sync with Project Online and Project Server**
  o Access projects from anywhere with online and server sync
  o Ensure team members are on the same page with centralized project information

- **Integrated Microsoft Teams Experience**
  o Enjoy seamless integration with Microsoft Teams
  o Foster team communication and collaboration through a unified platform

QAIP components from KPMG site
Best Suited For
Given its advanced functionalities and comprehensive project management capabilities, Microsoft Project Professional is ideally suited for medium to large-sized businesses and experienced project managers overseeing multiple projects. It is the perfect choice for those who are searching for a dynamic solution to efficiently manage intricate projects

requiring a more integrated approach and advanced, enterprise-level features.

Benefits

- **Manage Resources Easily**
  o Simplifies resource management across projects
  o Ensures optimal resource allocation and utilization

- **Insight into Timesheets and Invoices**
  o Provides detailed insights into timesheets for accurate time tracking
  o Streamlines administrative tasks like managing salaries and invoices

- **LTSC Support**
  o Offers support through the Long Term Service Channel (LTSC)
  o Ensures stability and long-term support for enterprise deployments

- **Adaptability and Control**
  o Offers a high level of adaptability for diverse project needs
  o Grants greater control in project execution and resource management

- **Tailored for Complexity**
  o Designed to manage intricate projects with advanced tools.
  o Suits organizations seeking to elevate their project management strategies

- **Cost Management**
  o Advanced tools for monitoring project budgets and controlling costs
  o Facilitates the generation of detailed financial reports for budget analysis

Microsoft Project Standard vs. Professional: Key Differences
Microsoft Project, a leading project management tool, offers two distinct versions: Standard and Professional. While both are designed to streamline and enhance project management processes, they cater to different levels of complexity and organizational needs.
The Standard version is tailored primarily for smaller teams

or businesses, providing essential tools like basic task scheduling, Gantt chart visualization, and standard reporting capabilities. On the other hand, the Professional version delves deeper, targeting larger organizations or multifaceted projects. It boasts advanced scheduling tools, detailed resource engagement features, enhanced integration options, and capabilities like portfolio management and what-if scenario analysis.

Thus, while both versions contain the essence of efficient project management, their choice largely depends on the projects' scale, intricacy, and specific demands.

Feature Microsoft Project Standard Microsoft Project Professional

- **Scheduling**
  o Microsoft Project Standard (MPS) - Basic task scheduling and management
  o Microsoft Project Professional (MPP) - Advanced scheduling with critical path and task dependencies

- **Gantt Charts**
  o MPS - Standard visualization of project timelines
  o MPP - Enhanced Gantt chart capabilities with detailed views

- **Reporting Tools**
  o MPS - Built-in reporting for insights on project performance
  o MPP - Advanced reporting tools with more customization options

- **Resource Management**
  o MPS - Basic resource allocation and tracking
  o MPP - Detailed resource engagement and request capabilities

- **Integration**
  o MPS - Integrates with core Microsoft products
  o MPP - Extensive integration, including SharePoint and Microsoft Teams

- **Cost Tracking**
  o MPS - Monitor project budgets and costs
  o MPP - Advanced cost management and analysis tools

- **Team Collaboration**
  o MPS - Basic collaboration features
  o MPP - Enhanced collaboration with SharePoint and integrated Teams experience

- **Portfolio Management**
  o MPS - Not available
  o MPP -Comprehensive portfolio management tools for aligning with business objectives

- **Scenario Analysis**
  o MPS - Not available
  o MPP - What-if scenario analysis for exploring project outcomes

- **Online and Server Sync**
  o MPS - Not available
  o MPP - Sync capabilities with Project Online and Project Server

- **Target Audience**
  o MPS - Small to medium-sized businesses or individual project managers
  o MPP - Medium to large-sized businesses or experienced project managers

Adding resources to the project plan

Resources are typically people included in your project plan, whether or not they are assigned to tasks. However, a resource could also include anything that is used to complete a project, including equipment and other materials (such as cement or web servers). There is a windows version of Microsoft project plan and a web version. Here steps are related to Windows version.

You can add several types of resources to your project. Resource in MPS

1. On the View tab, in the Resource Views group, choose Resource Sheet.
2. In the Resource Name field, type a job title, material, or generic resource name.
3. If you want to designate resource groups, then in the Group field for the resource name, type the name of the group.
4. Specify the resource type.
- To specify that this resource is a work resource, in the Type field, select Work.
- To specify that this resource is a material resource, in the Type field, select Material. In the Material Label field, type the label (for example, yards, tons or boxes) for the resource.
- To specify that this resource is a cost resource, in the Type field, select Cost.

5. In the Max. Units field for the resource, type the number of total units that this resource is available for this project. The maximum units value specifies how much of this resource is available for this project — for example, part-time or multiples.

For example, if you have a resource who is available for your project two days a week, you can enter a maximum units value of 40%. You can use maximum units to specify multiple availability of a resource designation. For example, suppose you have a resource named Engineers, a single resource that represents three individual engineers on your team. You can enter the maximum units for Engineers as 300%. You can schedule all three engineers for full-time work at one time without the Engineers resource being overallocated.

You can enter maximum units as a percentage (50%, 100%, 300%), or as a decimal (0.5, 1, 3).

Enterprise resources (MPP Only)

An enterprise resource is a part of the list of resources for the whole organization; therefore, each of these resources can be shared across multiple projects. Typically, the list of enterprise resources is managed by an administrator, and each project manager adds these resources to their projects as needed.

1. On the Resource tab, in the Insert group, choose Add Resources > Build Team from Enterprise.

2. In the Build Team from Enterprise dialog box, in the Existing filters box, select the filter that you want to apply. The filtered list of enterprise resources is displayed in the Enterprise Resource column. Any resources already assigned to your project team are listed in the Project Resource column.

3. To search for resources who are available to work a specific number of hours during a particular time range, select the Available to work check box. Enter the amount of time a resource needs to be available to work, and then select the date range by using the From and To boxes.

4. In the Enterprise Resource column, select the enterprise resource that you want to add to your project, and then choose Add. To select multiple resources, hold down CTRL while you select each resource.

▪ To find enterprise resources that match the skills and other attributes of one of your team's existing resources, select the resource that you want to match under Project Resource, and then choose Match.

▪ To replace an existing resource with an enterprise resource, in the Project Resource column, select the resource or generic resource that you want to replace. Under Enterprise Resource, select the new enterprise resource, and then choose Replace.

When you replace a resource, the replaced resource is not removed if they have completed any actual work. The replacement resource is assigned the remaining work.

5. To add a proposed resource to the project team, in the Book column, choose Proposed.
6. To view a graph of a selected resource's availability, choose Graphs.
7. Choose OK.

Non-enterprise resources (MPP only)
A non-enterprise resource, or local resource, is not a part of the list of resources for the whole organization. No other project manager can use your non-enterprise resources in their projects.

1. On the Resources tab, in the Insert group, choose Add Resources > Build Team from Enterprise.
If there are more than 1,000 enterprise resources, you can filter the list of resources by using enterprise outline codes. Outline codes are defined based upon the requirements of your organization.
2. In the Build Team dialog box, choose + to expand Customize filters.
3. Under Customize filters, select Generic in the Field Name column, select Equals in the Test column, and then type Yes in the Values column.
4. Choose Apply filter to apply the filter settings to the list of enterprise resources.
5. To search for resources who are available to work a specific number of hours during a particular time range, select the Available to work check box. Enter the amount of time a resource needs to be available to work, and then select the date range by using the From and To boxes.
6. In the Enterprise Resource column, select the generic resource that you want to add to your project, and then choose Add. To select multiple resources, hold down CTRL while you select each resource.

Generic resources (MPP only)
Generic resources are used to specify the staffing requirements for a project, such as carpenters and developers, or a team of resources.
1. On the View tab, in the Resource Views group, choose Resource Sheet.
2. In the Resource Name column, type a name for the generic resource, such as "carpenter."
3. Right-click the resource name, and choose Information. In the Resource Information dialog box, select the General tab, and then select the Generic check box
4. On the Custom Fields tab, under Custom Fields, enter values for any fields that are required for this generic resource.

Because these custom fields are unique to each organization, see your administrator for answers to any questions about their use.

Conclusion
While Microsoft project standard provides essential project management tools suitable for individual users and small teams, Microsoft project professional offers advanced features like enhanced resource management, team collaboration, and integration with the project server. Which one to choose depends on the complexity of the project and the need for collaboration and resource management? For straightforward projects, project standard suffices, but for larger, more complex initiatives, project professional is the better option.

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