



Project Dashboards

Keeping Your Project on Target

In today's busy organizations, project and program managers need to know exactly how the projects they're responsible for are doing. But they also rarely have the time to read through detailed status reports covering all aspects of the project.

Perhaps Project A is on time and on budget, but is it going to deliver all the functionality that your sponsor needs? Or maybe engineers have been working overtime to ensure that every bug has been ironed out. But how can you find out what this overtime has done to the budget?

From this "time versus information" dilemma grew the concept of the Project Dashboard. Just as a car's dashboard provides immediate and up-to-date information about the speed of the vehicle, the amount of gas in the tank and the temperature of the engine, a Project Dashboard provides immediate and up-to-date information about the status of a project. A common and easily understood approach to using the dashboard is to use red, yellow or green symbols that quickly identify whether the thing being measured is in good shape (green), requires attention (yellow), or is critical condition (red).

With the overall simplicity of a dashboard, you need to remember that dashboards are not, in and of themselves, a panacea. The end product is only as good as the inputs. A dashboard is only an effective tool if firstly the right things are being tracked and secondly, the classifications being made are well-judged.