

What project management tools & techniques should be used?

#7. Deadline Change

A project manager is working on a single large project for a year. She received a call from her project's sponsor. The two of them have a good business relationship. The project manager is exactly 2 months away from the project's hard deadline and her project's sponsor wants the deadline bumped up by 3 weeks.

He says it is due to an unforeseen market change and it is critical - so much so that the project will be worthless if it is not received by the new deadline. The project manager knows that meeting this new deadline will be particularly challenging due to some personal vacations and training plans that her project team members already have planned during this timeframe.

What does the project manager do in this situation?

#7 Instructor Notes

You have to move quickly, which you can do if you understand the sponsor's priorities and the project's critical path. You need to quickly find the answers to a few key questions: Is there a financial reserve you can use for schedule crashing? Is there a possibility that the employees can be given extra vacation days for shifting their planned vacations? Is the planned training something that must happen during this time, or can it be postponed? What other internal and external resources might be able to help finish the work?

These are the tools and techniques that are most important:

1. **High level planning.** See step 3 in the workbook. You should know the project's flexibility profile. Even if it wasn't before, you know that the time is now inflexible. The flexibility profile should tell you if you should shorten the time by reducing scope or by adding cost/resources to the project.
2. **WBS.** See step 13 in the workbook. Review the WBS to see what deliverables may be taken out of the project to help meet the revised schedule.
3. **Cost budgeting.** See step 19 in the workbook. Review the cost budget contingencies to see what financial resources can be used for schedule crashing. Can you provide financial incentives to the vendors and employees to help with the schedule crisis?
4. **Network diagramming.** See step 16 in the workbook. The critical path on the network diagram will show you the activities that should be shortened. Start by crashing and fast tracking the longest activities on the critical path.
5. **Change control plan.** See step 24 in the workbook. Follow the change control plan to ensure that the conscious decisions for changes to the project get correctly integrated through the project – including the communications of the changes.