

# TechTips

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## ON TIME PROJECTS



As an old saying goes, "*Time is Money.*" Therefore, it would also seem to be true that "*Lost Time*" is also "*Lost Money.*"

When planning your projects ensure that you have considered all elements of risk that could cause the project to slip. Unfortunately, one area that is almost always left out of the initial planning is the documentation. When establishing the project time lines **DO NOT FORGET** the time necessary to prepare both project and product documentation.

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION: This type of documentation typically includes written versions of the Project Plan and the Statement of Work. Also included are meeting notes, task lists, emails, and all project reports.

PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION: This type of documentation is required if the project involves the development of a product. Product documentation, whether for a software product, or a hardware product, typically includes product specifications, marketing literature, press releases, user guides, owner's manuals, assembly or installation instructions, website literature, help files, service manual/update (for hardware), customer service support documents (for software) and product announcements.

LOW PRIORITY: Unfortunately, many managers do not understand the true value of proper documentation. They often believe that "anyone" can write meaningful documentation, thus they often make this very important part of their project a low priority. They typically believe that doing the "paperwork" is reserved as part of the project's final clean-up, not something to be planned and worked on throughout the project.

Documentation that is not properly planned, designed, or thoroughly reviewed because it has been considered more of an "after-thought" to the project, rather than a vital component of the project can lead to problems for the company. Last-minute rushing of your documentation usually results in poorly written manuals and specifications that can have embarrassing gaps in the content.

Worse yet, the last-minute rush to review these poorly written documents during an emergency release cycle (afterall, the printer can't wait, he has his work planned) can also leave the company at risk legally. When documents are pushed

through the review process, they often do not get the thorough review they deserve. This can leave the company potentially liable for these possible omissions.

DO IT RIGHT: So, when planning your project, make sure that you identify each piece of documentation that will be required for the project. Share this information with your Project Team and assign documentation tasks to team members as appropriate to the subject matter and the documentation type.

Finally, make sure you use the services of a professional technical writer or editor to produce the final product before it is released.

With proper planning, your technical publications staff should be able to do this work and allow you to keep to your project timelines. If circumstances change and your timelines slide, then get some extra professional help to complete your documentation in a professional manner and within your mandated timelines. If needed, you can use professional staffing firms to provide temporary help, or you can simply hire a company, such as ours, to be your "extra set of hands."



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