

Dynamics™ AX for Professional Services

Better Manage Enterprise Resources with Dynamics AX for Professional Services

White Paper

April 28, 2008

Introduction

The name of the game for Professional Services Companies is utilization. Under-utilized resources cost you money, and over-utilized resources cost you employees and higher maintenance costs. Ideally, resources are utilized and billed out at 100%. At 100% utilization, your company is generating the full margin potential of every hour you invest in your resources. However, this is not often feasible or practical. Employees, equipment and even facilities need downtime and maintenance. This, of course, costs you money either directly or indirectly. Under-utilized resources decrease your revenue potential and margin as you pay for the unused resource while it sits on the bench. Over-utilized resources result in either a loss of the resource or additional downtime requirements somewhere down the road.

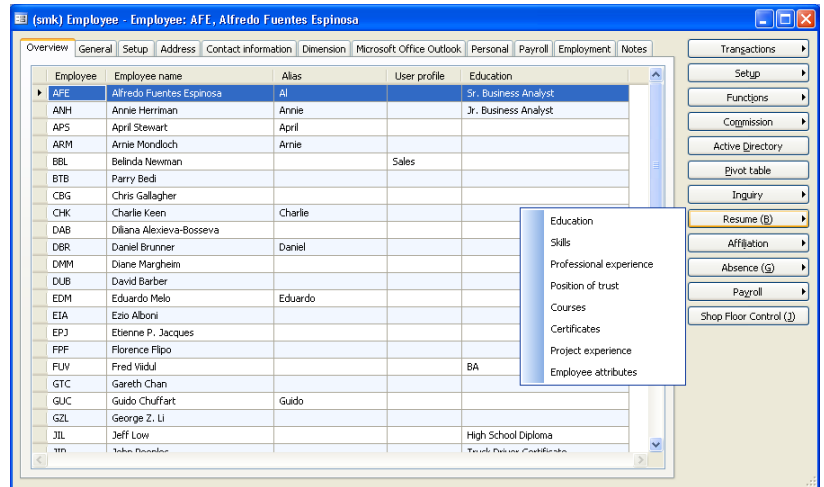
Most often, companies plan their resource needs on a fixed period basis (annual, quarterly, monthly, etc.) for the purposes of budgeting. It usually paints an ideal picture where everybody is utilized all the time, all projects are started and completed as scheduled and that various projects do not compete for the same resource at the same time. However, we know that this does not happen in reality. Projects are dynamic. Schedules shift, people come and go and scopes creep. Without proper tracking and active management, the problem is often not recognized until it comes time for the work to be done. The result is lost revenue, unhappy clients and over- or under-utilized resources.

So, what if there was a way to proactively plan your projects, manage resources and keep your finger on the pulse of it all while it's unfolding? Now there is. The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling Module gives you the power to better plan and manage your resources in real-time.

The following sections are intended to give you an in-depth look at how the Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module can help professional services companies better manage their resources and generate a higher return on their resource investment.

CENTRALLY MANAGING RESOURCES AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES

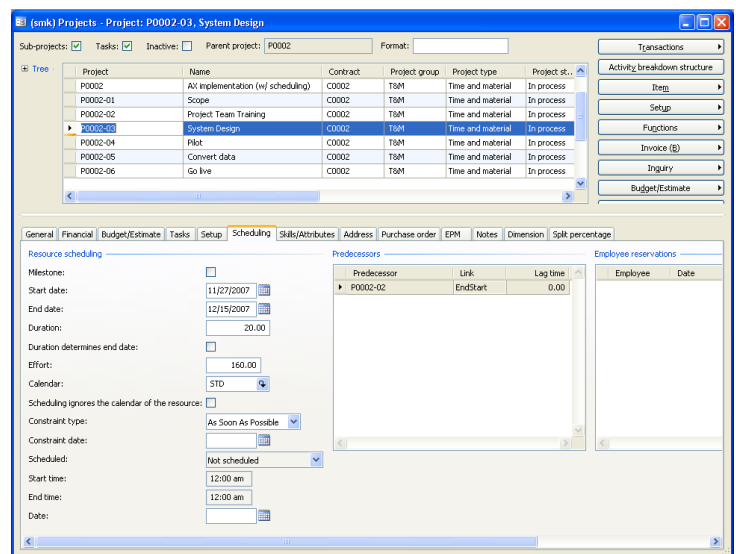
Having the right tools for the job is important in every industry, but it's critical in professional services, where knowledge, skill and experience are the key sellable asset. Knowing who has certain skills and what equipment and/or facilities are available is fairly easy when you have one location and limited resources. However, companies with hundreds or even thousands of resources and multiple locations can be negatively impacted without a centralized database of such critical information. It can result in missed opportunities, operational inefficiencies and revenue loss.

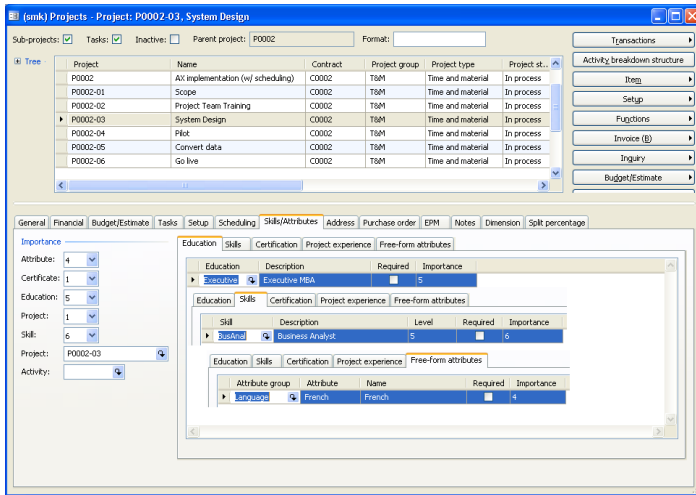


The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module leverages and extends the core Microsoft Dynamics AX Human Resources (HR) module, where attributes such as employee education, skills, certification and experience can be stored. Resource Scheduling allows project managers, resource managers and executive management to search the organization to identify best-fit candidates for projects and tasks. Project managers can establish resource criteria at the project or task level and the Resource Scheduling module will automatically search the organizational database and recommend resources that best match both skill and schedule criteria.

EFFICIENTLY PLAN, STAFF AND MANAGE PROJECTS

Project managers often need the ability to create complex, multi-level project plans that detail phases, tasks and milestones. Other times they just need to schedule a piece of equipment to be on a job site. Either way, they need the tools to help organize, staff and manage scheduling activities to ensure the successful completion of projects. Although several strong project planning and management solutions exist in the market, very few integrate with and leverage back-office ERP data. This often results in complex and costly custom integration efforts, manual redundant data entry or a complete lack of data exchange between the front and back offices.

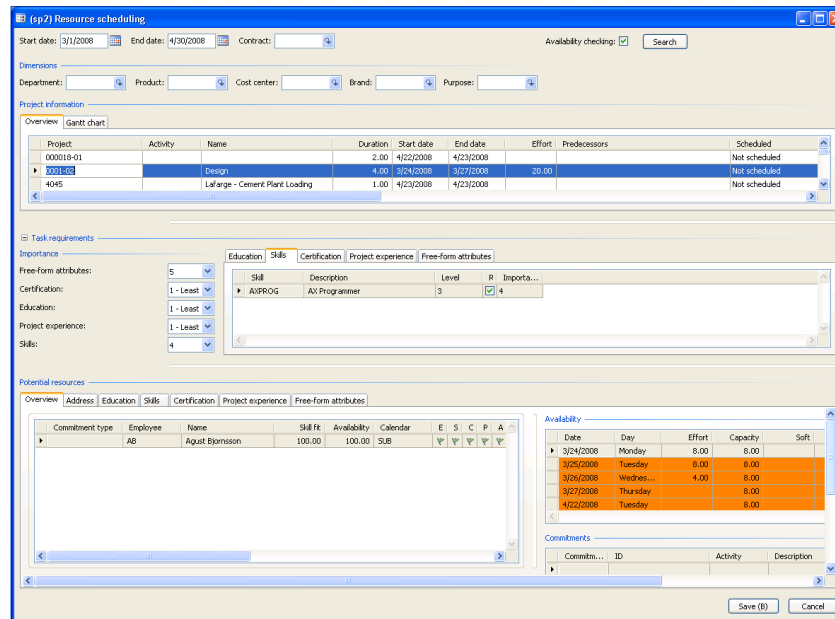




The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module includes a fully-integrated project planning module that allows project planners to create complex project work breakdown structures (WBS) complete with task dependencies, lags and effort vs. duration definitions. Projects and tasks can also be attributed with requirements that can be used to identify appropriate resources through best-fit matching.

At the heart of resource scheduling is the identification of the kind of resources that will be needed, when they will be needed and where. By leveraging the resource attributes database, project managers can quickly

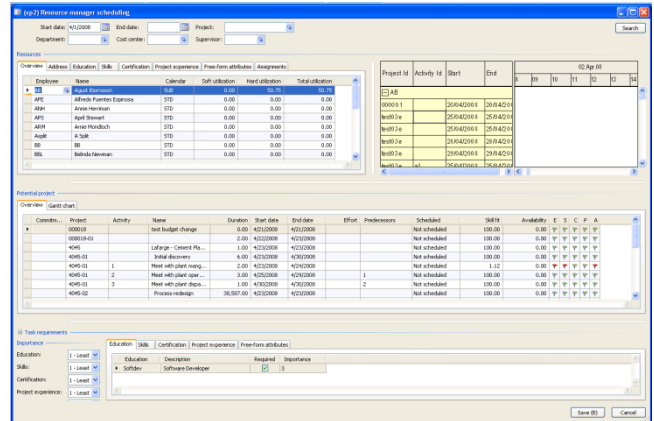
identify potential candidates for projects and tasks and view their availability. This gives project managers the ability to better plan projects around available resources and even identify where new resources may need to be brought in to meet specific skills criteria. The Project Manager's Workbench (shown below) shows what resources best fit the criteria for the project or task and allows you to drill into the details to identify opportunities to adjust your plans or find suitable replacements when conflicts exist even before the plan is committed. Visual indicators show planners where resources match the criteria and where they don't. Once the best combination of skill and availability is identified, resources can be soft (tentative) or hard (booked) committed to projects and tasks. Remaining availability is then automatically updated to reflect the commitment.



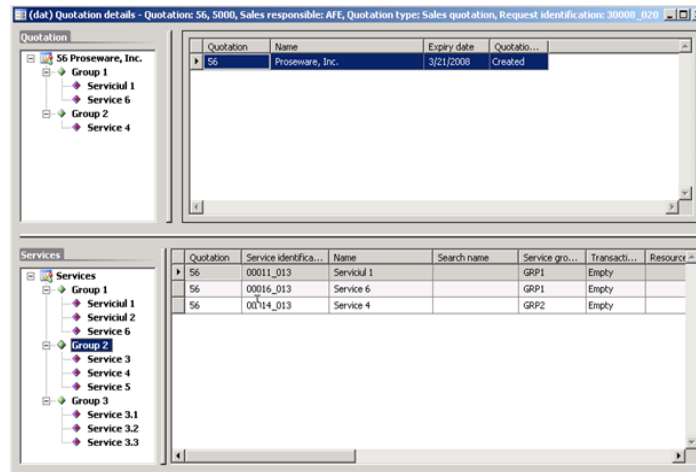
IDENTIFY RESOURCE ALLOCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Department managers and resource managers need to be on the lookout for opportunities to keep their staff allocated. This often involves searching for new projects outside the organization or lobbying project managers or account managers to identify existing tasks and small projects that can “fill the gaps”.

With the Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module, resource owners and managers can quickly identify opportunities that exist within the committed or proposed project list by identifying projects and tasks that have requirements consistent with the skills and attributes of their resources. This can help increase employee utilization without having to invest money and effort chasing down small opportunities that are likely to generate little revenue or margin. It can also be used to identify replacement resources for resources that become unavailable due to attrition, illness or maintenance.



DYNAMICALLY QUOTE, STAFF AND CREATE PROJECTS



Often times, projects are quoted prior to the creation of a full project plan. In this case, it would be useful to know not only what the project is going to cost, but also what types of resources might be needed to execute the project if approved. The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module extends the core Dynamics AX quotation capabilities by allowing you to leverage project plan templates, work packages and group dependencies to not only create the quotation, but also leverage that quotation to create your project and resource requirements when the quotation is accepted. In addition, you can create and manage

multiple versions of your quotation to account for a variety of approaches to the project.

Work packages (or resource groups) can be defined to include both the resources and tasks and task sequences necessary to complete a project or project phase. Resources within the work package can be generic (attribute driven) or named (known entity). In addition, any dependencies between work package members can be enforced at the time of project creation, ensuring that a resource with a dependency on another resource (such as camera and photographer) can both be scheduled to complete the work package. Work packages can also be used in the scheduling engine for drag-and-drop scheduling of multiple resources at once.

QUICKLY IDENTIFY AND MITIGATE SCHEDULING CONFLICT AND RISK

Invariably, your best resources will be in the highest demand. Often they find themselves booked on more assignments than they can physically complete in a given period. Although it is sometimes feasible to double-book resources, it's not a practice you want to

maintain. One of the main reasons this happens is that multiple project managers commit a resource without knowledge of that resources' other commitments. At best, you end up with a burnt out resource. At worst, you could lose it altogether.

With the Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module, over-bookings become a conscious decision rather than a consequence. Project and Resource managers have complete visibility into the resources available and where they're currently committed. When researching potential resources, the system automatically scores candidates based on their attribute match *and* their availability during the proposed task timeframe. Managers can view where resources are booked and either substitute resources, shift projects or challenge a competing project for the desired resources. Configurable approval processes can then be applied to resolve the conflict before it becomes a problem.

Over-committed resources, both tentative and booked, are flagged for review according to company scheduling rules, making it easy for resource managers to identify and address resource conflicts before they get out of control. And when schedules shift, as you know they do, project and resource managers are notified of any resulting commitment conflicts immediately.

Commit	Employee	Name	Skill fit	Availability	Calendar	E	S	C	P	A
Hard	APE	Alfredo Fuentes Espinosa	100.00	0.00	STD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hard	AMH	Anne Herрман	20.78	0.00	STD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hard	APS	April Stewart	0.00	0.00	STD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hard	ARM	Arnie Mondloch	0.00	0.00	STD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Soft	EBL	Belinda Newman	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	BTB	Parry Bedi	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	CBG	Chris Gallagher	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	CHK	Charlie Keen	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	DAB	Dilana Alcinova-Bosseva	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	DDR	Donel Brunner	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	DWH	Diane Margheim	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	DLB	David Barber	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	EDM	Eduardo Melo	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	EIA	Eric Albani	0.00	0.00		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

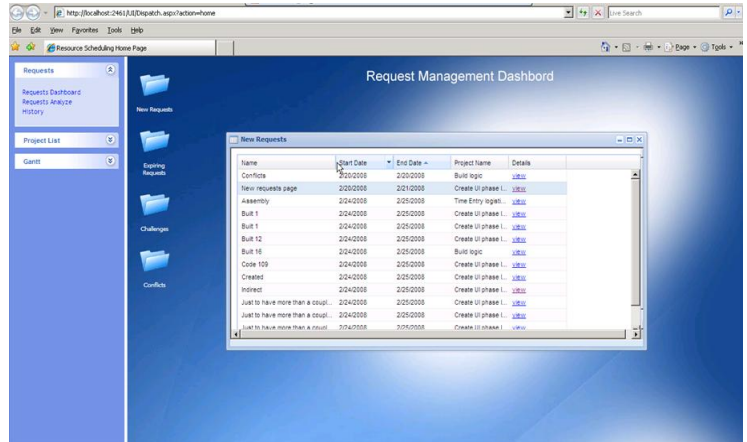
Date	Day	Effort	Capacity	Soft	Hard	Remaining
11/27/2007	Tuesday	8.00	8.00		8.00	8.00
11/28/2007	Wednesday	8.00	8.00		8.00	8.00
11/29/2007	Thursday	8.00	8.00		8.00	8.00
11/30/2007	Friday	7.50	7.50		7.50	7.50
12/1/2007	Saturday					

Commit	ID	Activity	Description	From	To
Hard	P0002-03			07:00:00 am	11:30:00 am
Hard	P0002-03			12:00:00 pm	03:30:00 pm

REMOTELY MANAGE COMPANY RESOURCES

Let's face it; we live in a mobile society. Professional Services Resources can spend a significant amount of time away from the office. We're also a digital society. The Internet has transformed the way we work and communicate. Most successful applications address this by exposing part or all of their functionality through the web so that work can be completed anywhere you can get an internet connection.

The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module comes standard with a robust web-based client. In fact, everything that can be done in the rich client can be done remotely through the web interface. Project planning, resource requests, approvals and allocations can all be done through a user-friendly interface, often with drag-and-drop ease.

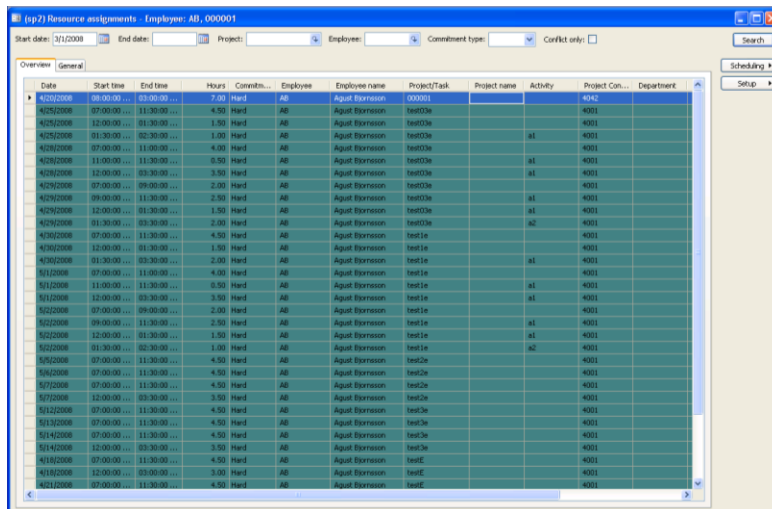
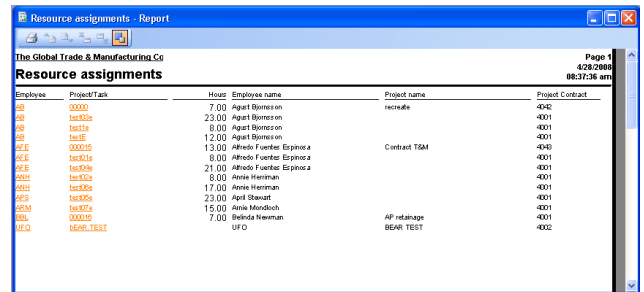


Actual interface subject to change

KEEP TABS ON PERSONAL AND TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

Having a macro view of scheduling is great for resource managers trying to juggle tens, hundreds or even thousands of resources. The rest of the organization, however, needs the details of personal and departmental assignments at their fingertips to execute the day-to-day work.

The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module provides standard reports and inquiry tools to help you be productive right out-of-the-box with the ability to create new reports and views as needed.



CONCLUSION

Billable resources are the most valuable asset of a professional services organization. Over-use them and risk downtime, attrition and diminishing returns. Under-use them and find your profits ever-shrinking. Managing this balance takes thought and negotiation and most of all information.

The Microsoft Dynamics AX for Professional Services Resource Scheduling module gives project managers, resource managers and executive decision-makers the tools they need to create, identify, manage and commit resources with the confidence that their decisions will best fit the needs of the company *and* their resources.