



## Case study - small software company

This case study discusses the usage of the 3f Software Planner in small to medium sized software companies.

### Problem facing many smaller software companies

Most small to medium sized software companies use Excel or a "home grown" application to track and managed projects. The price for the home grown project management application is usually a well guarded secret buried inside countless other projects. To make things even more exciting, these applications have usually been developed by multiple developers some of whom no longer works in the company. Pre calculation is something which is done using guts feeling, or by looking at what the competitive charge and post calculation is normally not done because by the time a project is over nobody really knows how much time they spend on the project anyway. Sounds familiar?

### Why is it so?

There are a multitude of reasons for this industry problem. One of which is that the systems available on the market are so complex in nature that nobody takes the time to sit down and learn how to use the systems. Another reason is that many of these systems are very expensive and out of reach for most small to medium sized companies, and finally sometimes companies simply lack the will to implement any formal project management.

### How can 3f Software Planner help?

The 3f Software Planner can be used to get formal project management introduced into smaller sized companies easily and without high cost. This is achieved because the 3f Software Planner is a modular system and you only pay for the modules you use. When you start out using the 3f Software Planner you do not start out with an enormous application full of features you don't know anything about. The base model in the 3f Software Planner has only the tools you need to setup project, plan tasks, track time and managed issues. It will take an average person between one and two hours to learn how to use the system effectively. As you go on, and when everybody are comfortable with the system, you can add additional modules by introducing Gantt diagram and Scheduling, Approval Management and Test Management. All of these modules are optional, and can be added at any time. Finally, when you start you will not have to read through help files, because the system comes with video tutorials that are started from within the application. By following the tutorial you are taken through the application step-by-step including the configuration process and how you can setup projects, track time and submitted timesheets.

### Planning process

Before you can give the price for project, you must plan it. It is important to sit down and put some thoughts into what needs to be done, and how much time it takes to do it. This is done in the task list by entering all the tasks you can think of for the project. For each task you enter you have the option of further breakdown the task into smaller bites, something we call for work breakdown. You even have the option of creating a project template, so that when you setup new project all you have to do is to import tasks from a project template. When you have finished the planning process, in order to estimate the price of the project export the task to Excel, from where you easily can apply whatever formula you use in order to estimate cost and ultimately a sales price.

### Project phase

Everybody involved with the project should always start time tracking on the task they are working on regardless the circumstances. If you can teach your coworkers to start time tracking each time the work on a task, and before going home in the evening submit their timesheets then you know exactly how much time have been spent on the project, and how much time has been spent on individual tasks within the project.

### Project management

While the project is being undertaken, you, the project manager, should on a daily basis review the entire project. This is done in the project management console where you can see all the remaining hours entered by the resources when they submitted their timesheets. From this page you can adjust the remaining hours for each individual task or simply accept the remaining hours as entered by resources when they submitted their timesheets. When you have adjusted the remaining hours in the project management console, the project overview report will show if you are ahead or behind in the project broken down by the individual tasks. This report will also warn you, if a task is beginning to fall behind schedule. Consider this example: A task has been planned for 10 hours and a resource works 3 hours on the task, but when the timesheet was submitted the resource enter 8 hours as remaining for the task. This task is now 1 hour behind schedule even though only three hours have been worked on it.

### Issue management

When the project is coming to an end and the project testing begins all issues found can be entered into the issue management system. In that system everybody working on the project can sort outstanding issues by their name, priority or any category setup in the project. Long Word documents listing all the issues in a project becomes a thing of the past, and you no longer have to synchronize these documents! As issues are resolved they are automatically removed from the list.

### Post calculation

When the project is finished, you can take out a time report and export it to Excel. From here you can apply whatever formula you use in order to calculate the cost of a project. Next compare the cost with your pre calculation to see where you made and, hopefully not, lost money.

### Project history

Project data are kept in the system for as long as the system lives. In other words, when the project is finished the data are still there and can be accessed at any time.

#### Getting started

Your company can get started right now by setting up a free 14-day trial account hosted on our secure server. During the trial you can test the functionalities of the 3f Software Planner including the different modules available. When the trial is over, you can continue to use our hosting service or do your own hosting by download and installing the system on your own Windows 2000 or 2003 server.

To get started, go to the start section of our web site from where you can download a small (6MB) setup file which, upon installation lets you setup a free 14 day hosted trial account. You will be guided step-by-step through the entire process.

Note: No downloads required if you access the system from a different computer once the trial has been setup.

1902 Software Development Corporation

Unit 1906 Atlanta Centre

31, Annapolis Street

Greenhills San Juan

Metro Manila

Philippines

Phone: +63-2-726-6190

Fax: +63-2-726-6189

Email: [sales@3fsoftwareplanner.com](mailto:sales@3fsoftwareplanner.com)

[www.3fsoftwareplanner.com](http://www.3fsoftwareplanner.com)

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