



November-December, 2010 Topic Thread

Project Planning: A Guide To Help Plan Your QMS Implementation

Presented By: Bob Clancy, SVP of BIZPHYX

[Planning Your Quality Management System \(QMS\) Implementation: New Series \(Post 1\):](#)

At the request of several clients and support desk subscribers, we're beginning a new series on TL 9000 QMS project planning. Planning a QMS implementation can be a daunting task, especially if you don't have much experience in project planning. So after you recover from panic mode, you may be looking for some basics to help you along. In this new series, we will dedicate several articles to "tips" for planning a QMS project. So let's begin!

First, you need to know what the major milestones are and when they must be completed.

Without them, your plan will either be late or will fail. Every project has them. For instance, if I plan to go to Hawaii in June of 2011, I need to make plane reservations (by a certain date) or I'm not going. That's an example of a major milestone!

Next, I use a technique called "backward planning." I start at the end and plan to the project's beginning. This is because things normally need to happen in sequence and some milestones have to happen before others—to make the plan complete on time. To illustrate this, let's return to the Hawaii travel plan. I need to make reservations far enough ahead so that I can get them at a reasonable cost. This is where the interval becomes important. Furthermore, I know there are 5 people going, so before I can make plane reservations I need to reach out and firm up all 5 schedules. This scheduling activity becomes a major milestone that has to occur before "booking reservations" and with a healthy interval in between! Both of these intervals work against the trip taking place on time and both milestones need to be done in the proper sequence. Get the idea?

A QMS plan is no different. There are "drop dead" milestones that if not completed on time, will become "show stoppers." **Work to identify these from the plan end date—to the present and plug them in.** I can help you identify many of these for the QMS, but it is likely that you will have some others based on barriers you need to overcome and so forth. Also, remember that we're talking about major milestones. There will be multiple others in between. **Here are some of the common major milestones in a QMS plan, working backward from the completion date:**

- Completion and certification
- Registrar audit
- Management review
- Internal audit of your QMS
- Measurements reporting (TL 9000)
- Documents complete and released
- Conduct initial project plan meeting

In our next article we'll flesh out some of these milestones and the recommended intervals in between them, working with the "backward planning" technique. If you need immediate assistance please contact blancy@bizphyx.com

[TL 9000 Implementation Project Planning: Intervals Between Key Project Plan Dates \(Post 2\):](#)

In last week's post, we addressed how to develop a basic project plan for TL 9000 Implementation and we reviewed key techniques and tasks for the project planner. We outlined a technique called "**backward planning**" starting with the end date and planning backward sequencing key milestones until the basic plan takes shape. Here are the major milestones for a TL 9000 project plan once again, in order from the end to the beginning:

- Completion and certification
- Registrar audit
- Management review
- Internal audit of your QMS
- Measurements reporting (TL 9000)
- Documents complete and released
- Conduct initial project plan meeting

This week our post is about intervals, or the time between major plan milestones. **From the registrar audit to completion and receipt of your certificate, you should allow approximately 30 days.** However, this interval will vary based on factors including registrar processing interval and your time to close any nonconformances from the audit. Therefore, you need to plan for those additional milestones and adjust accordingly.

Management review needs to consider your fully implemented quality system using the required inputs and outputs from the standard and a review of your measurements and internal audit results. It needs to happen between the internal audit and your certification audit. **I usually plan the management review around thirty to 45 days prior to the certification audit.** Do you see the pattern developing? One milestone leads to another because things need to be done in a certain order. You need to complete your internal audit cycle at a minimum of 30-45 days prior to management review. The plan interval for the internal audit activity will vary depending on the size of the organization and how you choose to conduct your audits. It can be a few days for a small organization. For very large organizations, it can be weeks or months. You will need to plan the interval based on size and number of key processes or organizations being audited. Completing the internal audit in plenty of time will allow you to correct any nonconformances so they can be examined during management review.

Other milestones like data reporting and completion of documents are like the interval for internal audits. They depend on size and complexity. I would plan completion of the required documents based on complexity, number of people that will need to be trained on the process documents and the number of locations where the processes reside. **For a small to medium size company you could allow between 5 and 6 months from the kickoff meeting to complete all of the processes, procedures and data collection activities.** Next week, we'll cover risk assessment and how to make sure that you have planned for "things that go bump in the night" in order to keep your project on track. For more information, contact blancy@bizphyx.com.

[TL 9000 Project Planning: Risk Management \(Post 3\):](#)

In our last two articles, we discussed the major milestones for your TL 9000 project implementation and how to plan the intervals necessary to complete the project on time. In this article we will cover risk assessment and management relating to your project plan.

Someone once said, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.” Chances are that won’t actually happen to you as the project planner, but barriers come up and it is best to anticipate as many of them as possible. **TL 9000 actually has a risk management requirement that relates to project planning, so this is a great exercise in applying the technique.**

You can probably make a pretty good list of risks yourself, but you certainly cannot address them all. **Therefore, you should engage key managers and process owners in risk assessment.** I’m sure you will have engaged them as you developed the plan. Now is the time to reengage them to “shoot holes” in it. You can use brainstorming for this activity in order to encourage a free-flow of ideas. However, if you choose to orchestrate the risk assessment, **consider these minimal risks** along with others that are raised by the team:

- Holidays and non-work days
- Shift schedules impact on accessibility of participants
- Availability of resources to complete process and procedure work
- Availability of resources for training, consulting and internal auditing
- Availability of registrar and other auditors
- Approvals of necessary expense and/or capital spending

Once you have a list of the risks, determine the best strategy to mitigate them. Let’s take one of the examples above. If there are capital dollars required for a new system, or modifications to an existing one, you will need to carefully consider the approvals needed, whether you can reasonably expect to receive approval and how long this will take. If input from key participants working second or third shift is needed, how will you obtain approval? If everyone is already stretched to the max with their regular work, how will they help move the project forward?

All of these considerations should be made. **Once you’re convinced you have a good handle on risk management-finalize the plan, distribute it and keep it current and relevant.** We’ll provide some tips on how to do this next week. If you need more detailed assistance with TL 9000 risk management planning, please contact bclancy@bizpphyx.com

[TL 9000 Project Planning: Managing The Project \(Post 4\):](#)

As In past articles, we have discussed project planning techniques including “backward planning”, managing key milestones, intervals and contingency or risk planning. In this article we will discuss managing the plan so that you give yourself the best chance to succeed.

The project has certain outcomes that include a successful registration audit and on time delivery to a planned date. In order to meet these objectives, it will be necessary to have a systematic method to review and revise the plan. In order to make the plan work and hold people accountable, at a minimum you will need to identify in the plan:

- The process owner for each phase or activity
- The due date for completion of each phase or activity
- Deliverables that constitute a complete phase or activity
- A status of the phase or activity

There may be other information that you want to track during the plan such as actual completion date, revised planned completion date and comments. **You'll need a tool to record the plan.** There are many tools available ranging from a yellow legal pad to sophisticated project management software and you need to select what works for you. For the most part, I use Microsoft Excel because nearly everyone has the tool or can open a software version of it and most people can find their way around this tool. I used project management software years ago, but found that I had to copy it into Microsoft Word or something else, just to send it to people. Almost nobody had the tool or knew how to use it effectively.

An Excel-based project plan can also give you a quick status of the project if you will set up a column with a pull down that includes Red, Yellow, Green and Closed. I use Red to mean the completion date has passed, Yellow to mean that the completion date is within a week away and is not complete and Green to mean that the activity can still be completed on time. These, plus the "Closed" category can be sorted and summarized to give you a quick status dashboard. You can also calculate the total plan interval and compare each status period to the amount of interval that has elapsed versus the number of completed tasks.

If the percentage of the project interval and the percentage of completed actions are somewhat close, then the project is in pretty good shape unless there are actions that specifically cannot be closed, which will be revealed by the Red, Green, Yellow status. **If the project interval is 70% expended and you have only completed 10% of the actions, then you are in big trouble.** These metrics comprise an effective, high-level status of the project at any given time.

Once you have the project plan recorded, it is usually a good idea to meet either in person or via conference call to status the plan and determine actions that may be needed to keep the plan on track. **This is where you need to be strong as the manager of the project and hold people accountable for their assignments.** Two big risks to completing the project on time can be a lack of strength on the part of the PM and/or the process owners not being open and honest about problems in meeting the plan and their resulting solutions.

We hope you found this 4-part series on project planning helpful. If you require further assistance, please contact bclancy@bizphyx.com.

