



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **Project Managers Need to Set Deadline Date, Even if the Client Doesn't**

In many cases, there are firm business events that drive the project deadline. A common example of this is a little event called YR2K. However, other events might be an annual sales meeting, an annual user's conference, the monthly closeout cycle, etc. All of these business events could not be postponed, and so projects needed to be completed before the event occurred.

#### **Artificial but firm deadlines**

There are other project deadlines that are not necessarily based on business events, but are firm nonetheless. The most common artificial deadline is imposed by yearly budget deadlines. This one is very common for most all companies. It's not a business deadline, but a firm deadline nonetheless.

A second major cause of artificial deadlines is the timing and relationship of projects that all need to complete in a given year. Sometimes a deadline for one project is based on allowing for the start date of another one. Most companies have a process to prioritize projects for a given year. The projects are started based on urgency and staff availability.

#### **What if you do not have a firm deadline?**

So far we have discussed projects that have a firm deadline based on business priorities and projects that have a firm deadline based on non-business priorities. However, that still leaves many projects that do not have firm deadlines at all.

All projects, by definition, need an end-date. When you manage projects that do not have a firm deadline, it is important to work with the project team to set one. In these cases, you still create a Project Definition and workplan based on the best guess of the resources available and work effort required. Also, bring the team into the planning process so everyone knows what you are shooting for. Once the team agrees with the schedule, then that becomes your firm end-date, and you should manage it as firmly as if there was a business driver behind it.

#### **Summary**

A project team without a firm deadline will be unfocused and will ultimately take much longer to deliver than necessary. Work with the project team to have them set a reasonable deadline, and then hold them accountable for that date. This allows the team to work with purpose and focus. It is also a way of making sure that the projects don't continue indefinitely. Even if the client does not have a sense of urgency on when the project is completed, you will want to make sure that the project team does not have this same attitude.