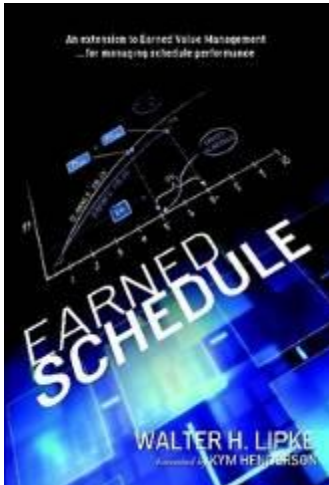


PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: ***Earned Schedule***

Authors: **Walter H. Lipke**

Publisher: LuLu Publishing

List Price: US\$36.04 (eBook \$13.99)

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Reviewer: **Robert Van De Velde, Ph.D., PMP**

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Introduction

Earned Schedule is an innovative extension to Earned Value Management. In a ground-breaking series of articles over the past few years, Walt Lipke articulated the concept, described the required calculations, and applied the theory to improve project performance measurement. In his new book, Lipke weaves the content of the articles into a coherent whole, leavened with fresh insights and illustrated with new examples.

The basic idea behind Earned Schedule is deceptively simple: the time at which an amount of Earned Value has actually been accrued is measured against the time when it should have been accrued—that is the “earned schedule”. Lipke unfolds the idea carefully and thoroughly.

Overview of Structure

A brief primer on Earned Value Management opens the book, setting the back drop for an explanation of the Earned Schedule concept. As he does throughout the book, Lipke provides verbal and graphical descriptions as well as examples to explain the mathematics. At a couple of points in the book, Lipke adduces empirical support for his claims. He uses the data first to verify his theory and later to demonstrate the superiority of Earned Schedule as a forecasting method.

After warning about the impact of re-baselining, Lipke extends the concept of Earned Schedule to show how it addresses Critical Path Analysis, how it can be used to

enrich the traditional “To Complete” metric, and how it can be used to guide management action for improved project performance.

While much of the book is focused on overall project performance, Lipke does not forget individual tasks. His concept of schedule adherence shows how individual tasks can be assessed to fit, or fail to fit, the profile of scheduled activities. This is especially useful to project managers who need to remediate problems, as it directs their attention to specific activities.

Lipke concludes with another innovative application—the use of statistics to predict project performance. Appendices are used appropriately to detail points that would otherwise have detracted from the focus of the core text.

Shortfalls

There are no real shortfalls in the book, but there are three points to keep in mind. First, while mathematical and statistical skills are not absolute requirements for understanding the book, they are an asset for appreciating the chapters on the verification of the theory and the comparison of methods. Second, one of the examples has some minor numerical errors, but they do not have a material impact on the argument.¹ Third, there are questions that call for further research.

- Can the concept of schedule adherence be extended to costs? If so, tasks failing to contribute to the planned cost profile can be systematically identified.
- The concept of symmetry is introduced in the statistics section. The symmetry of upper and lower forecast values around a nominal value indicates that the nominal forecast will be close to the actual outcome. How is the amount of symmetry to be calculated, and what is the threshold value beyond which asymmetry emerges?
- Metrics are defined for performance, efficiency, and statistical forecasting. Because they have different bases, the metrics can produce conflicting results. How are such conflicts to be resolved?

These questions can be addressed in a future edition of the book.

Who Benefits?

¹ Given the values on Figure 7-1, the Planned Values on Figure 7-2 are incorrect for periods 5-8. They should be: 35, 25, 25, and 10. Consequently, the SPI and SPI(t) results on Figure 7-3 are incorrect for the same periods. For corrected results, send an email to Robert.VanDeVelde@ProjectFlightDeck.com, and I will provide you with them.

The book targets a wide audience: project managers from novices to masters, academics from mathematicians to statisticians to methodologists, and students at all levels. There is something for everyone. Novice project managers will find the early chapters provide a sound basis for understanding the concept. Experienced project managers, especially those with a background in Earned Value Methodology, will discover the later chapters yield new, powerful metrics that will help them better manage their projects. Academics will appreciate the research results and rigorous derivations. For students, the book represents a comprehensive treatment of an important, emerging project management practice.

Conclusion

Although compact in length, the book is tightly packed with theory, empirical data, and examples. Project managers who want to put the concepts into practice can move directly from the text to either free spreadsheets offered on the Earned Schedule Web Site (www.EarnedSchedule.com) or to commercial products that implement the approach (for example, www.ProjectFlightDeck.com). Lipke's book sets the benchmark against which future publications on Earned Schedule will be measured.

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About the Reviewer***Robert Van De Velde***

Robert Van De Velde is an experienced project manager who has delivered award-winning projects in financial services, natural resources, telecommunications, and health care. His article, *Time Is Up: Assessing Schedule Performance with Earned Value*, appeared in the October, 2007 issue of *PMWorldToday*. Rob holds a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, a B.Sc. from the University of Manitoba, and certifications in project management and MicroSoft Project™. His current research interests include quantitative project management, techniques for managing time-driven projects, and the effective use of MicroSoft Project™. Rob operates a commercial Web Site that features plug-ins for MicroSoft Project™, including Earned Schedule utilities. You can reach Rob via e-mail at Robert.VanDeVelde@ProjectFlightDeck.com. Visit www.ProjectFlightDeck.com for more information.