Project Accounting Module

Project Management

Wings project management application enables you to efficiently manage and track tasks, work on them effectively, quickly delegate them while keeping close track of your delegated tasks.

Creating Projects and Related Tasks

Define a new project,

The status of a project can take the following values:

- Open: the project is being carried out
- Pending: the project is paused,
- Cancelled: the project has been cancelled and therefore aborted,
- Closed: the project has been successfully completed.

On the Members tab, add Members to the project; this is related to access rights too.

Automatically keep your customer informed about the progress of the project.

Managing tasks

Once a project has been defined, you can enter the tasks to be executed.

Each task has one of the following states:

- Draft: the task has been entered but has not yet been validated by the person who will have to do it,
- Open: you can start working on the task, or task is in progress,
- Closed: task is completed,
- Cancelled: task work is no longer required,
- Pending: task is waiting for response of someone else (e.g. customer information).

A task can be assigned to a user, who then becomes responsible for closing it

Tasks in Project Management

Each user manages his or her own tasks using the various menus available.

Invoicing Tasks

Several methods of invoicing have already been described:

- invoicing from a sales order,
- invoicing on the basis of analytic costs (service times, expenses),
- invoicing on the basis of deliveries,
- manual invoicing

Although invoicing tasks might appear useful, in certain situations it is best to invoice from the service or purchase orders instead. These methods of invoicing are more flexible, with various pricing levels set out in the pricelist, and different products that can be invoiced. And it is helpful to limit the number of invoicing methods in your company by extending the use of an invoicing method that you already have.

If you want to connect your Sales Order with Project tasks you should create products such as Consultant and Senior Developer. These products should be configured with Product Type Service, a Procurement Method of Make to Order, and a Supply Method of Produce. Once you have set this up, Wings automatically creates a task in project management when the order is approved. You can even take this further by adding a default project to your product. In the Product form, on the Procurement & Locations tab, enter the default project to which the automatically created task (from the sales order) should be linked.

Priority Management

Several methods can be used for ordering tasks by their respective priorities. Wings orders tasks based on a function of the following fields: Sequence, Priority, and Deadline.

You can set the Working Time in the project file. If you do not specify anything, Wings assumes by default that you work 8 hours a day from Sunday to Thursday. Once the time is specified you can call up a project Gantt chart from Tasks. The system then calculates a project plan for earliest delivery using task ordering and the working time.

Delegate your Tasks

To delegate a task to another user you can just change the person responsible for that task. However the system does not help you track tasks that you have delegated, such as monitoring of work done.

Delegating a Task to another User

Instead, you can use the Delegate button on a task.

The system enables you to modify tasks at all levels in the chain of delegation, to add additional information. A task can therefore start as a global objective and become more detailed as it is delegated down in the hierarchy. The second tab on the task form gives you a complete history of the chain of delegation for each task. You can find a link to the parent task there, and the different tasks that have been delegated.

Project Phases

You can subdivide your larger projects into several phases.

Scheduling

You need to define a working schedule and leaves since the project scheduler will use these to calculate the project dates. Ensure that you have entered a working schedule for your project in the Working Time field in the Administration tab of the Project form. This is useful to generate accurate Gantt charts for your project.

If you have tasks related to a phase, you can see them in the Tasks Details tab of your phase form. Schedule them by clicking the Schedule Tasks button. All the tasks which are in draft, pending and open state are scheduled and their dates are calculated based on the starting date of the phase.

Planning to Improve Leadership

Planning in a company often takes the form of regular meetings between the different teams. Each team has a certain number of projects and objectives that they must organize and establish priorities.

Ideally, these planning meetings should be short but regular and systematic. They can be weekly or monthly depending on the type of activity. A planning meeting often runs in three phases:

1. Minutes of the preceding period, and analysis of the work done compared to the planned work.
2. Introduction of new projects.
3. Planning the next period.

The planning function covers several objectives which will be described in this section:

- Planning live projects against the commitments that have been made to clients,
- Determining staffing (HR) requirements in the coming month,
- Setting work for each employee or team for the periods to come,
- Analyzing the work done in the preceding periods,
- Passing the high-level objectives to lower levels in the company's hierarchy

Planning by time or by tasks

There are two major approaches to enterprise planning: planning by task and planning by time. You can manage both with Open ERP.

In planning by task, the project manager assigns tasks from the different projects to each employee over a given period. Employees then carry out precisely the work they have been assigned by the project manager. Planning by time consists of allocating, for each employee, some time on each of the different projects for the period concerned. The tasks for each project are ordered by priority and can be directly assigned to a user or left unassigned. Each employee then chooses the task that he or she will do next, based on the plans and the relative priorities of the tasks.

Monthly planning for work time of each employee

The figure Monthly planning for work time of each employee shows a monthly planning session where plans are being made for each employee to spend a number of days' work on various different projects.

In this time-focused planning approach, clients' priorities do not feature in the planning any more, but are explicit in the task list instead. So this approach helps you separate the planning of human resources on projects from the task prioritization within a project.

Plan your Time

On each planning line you should enter the user, the analytic account concerned, and the quantity of time allocated. The quantity will be expressed in hours or in days depending on the unit of measure used. For each line you can add a brief note about the work to be done.

Once the plan has been saved, use the other tabs of the planning form to check that the amount of time allocated to the employees or to the projects is right. The time allocated should match the employees' employment contracts, for example 37.5 hours per week. The forecast time for the project should also match the commitments that you have made with client.

You should ideally complete all the planning for the current period. You can also complete some lines in the planning of future months – reserving resources on different project in response to your client commitments, for example. This enables you to manage your available human resources for the months ahead. Plans can be printed and/or sent to employees by email. Each employee can be given access to a dashboard that graphically shows the time allocated to him or her on a project and the time that has been worked so far. So each employee can decide which projects should be prioritized.

The employee then selects a task in the highest priority project. She ideally chooses either a task that has been directly assigned to her, or one which is high on the priority list that she is capable of completing, but is not yet directly assigned to anybody.

At the end of the period you can compare the duration of effective work on the different project to that of the initial estimate. Print the plan to obtain a comparison of the planned working time and the real time worked.

Planning at all levels of the Hierarchy

To put planning in place across the whole company you can use a system of planning delegation.

The planning entry form can reflect the hierarchical structure of the company. To enter data into a plan line you can:

- Assign time on a project to an employee,
- Assign time on a project to a department manager for his whole team.

You can now allocate the working time on projects for the whole of a department, without having to detail each employee's tasks. Then when a department manager creates his own plan he will find what is required of his group by his management at the bottom of the form. At the top of the form there is a place for assigning project work in detail to each member of department.

If you do not have to plan time to work on a final draft you can do it on an analytic account that relies on child accounts. This means that you can create plans to meet top-level objectives of the senior management team and then cascade them down through the different departments to establish a time budget for each employee. Each manager then uses his own plans for managing his level in the hierarchy.

The Art of Productivity without Stress

Now you can take a slight detour away from pure enterprise management by looking at some tools offered by Open ERP to improve your own personal time management. It is not much of a detour because good organization is the key to better productivity in your daily work.

Not everything that is urgent is necessarily important

The first modification brought by the module to the basic Open ERP system is a separation of the concepts of urgency and importance. Tasks are no longer classified by a single criterion but by the product of the two criteria, enabling you to prioritize matters that are both urgent and important in a single list many managers with a heavy workload use urgency as their sole method of prioritization. The difficulty is then in working out how to plan for substantive tasks (like medium term objectives). These are not urgent but are nevertheless very important.

In Open ERP urgency is given by the Deadline of the task and importance by the Priority. The classification of the tasks then results from the product of the two factors. The most important tasks and the most urgent both appear at the top of the list.

Organizing your life systematically

A methodology of organizing yourself using the concepts of context and time box is presented in this section.

Context

The context is determined by the work environment you must be in to deal with certain tasks.

You then have to define the time boxes. You have to complete the tasks in the time interval specified by a time box. You usually define time boxes with the following periods:

- Today : for tasks which must be handled today,
- This Week : for tasks that have to be dealt with this week,
- This Month : for tasks which have to be completed within the month,
- Long Term: for tasks that can be dealt with in more than one month.

A task can be put in one and only one time box at a time.

So start by entering all the tasks required by project. These could have been entered by another user and assigned to you. It is important to code in all of the tasks that are buzzing around in your head, just to get them off your mind. A task could be:

- work to be done,
- a short objective, medium or long term,
- a complex project that has not yet been broken into tasks.

A project or an objective over several days can be summarized in a single task. You do not have to detail each operation if the actions to be done are sufficiently clear to you.

Timesheet Management

In most service companies where Wings has been integrated, service sheets, or timesheets, have revolutionized management practices. These service sheets are produced by each employee as they work on the different cases or projects that are running. Each of these is represented by an analytic account in the system.

Throughout the day, when employees work on one project or another, they add a line to the timesheets with details of the time used on each project. At the end of the day, each employee must mark all the time worked on client or internal projects to make up the full number of hours worked in the day. If an account is not in the system, then the time is added to the hours that have not been assigned for the day.

Major Advantages

- Enabling tracking of the true costs of a project by accounting for the time used on it,
- Tracking the services provided by different employees,
- Comparing the hours really used on a project with the initial planning estimates,
- Automatically invoicing based on the service hours provided,
- Obtaining a list of the service hours for a given client,
- Knowing the costs needed to run the company, such as the marketing costs, the training costs for a new employee, and the invoicing rates for a client.

The implementation of timesheets in Wings relating to analytic entries is managed by an inheritance mechanism: the timesheet object inherits the analytic entry object.

The information is therefore not encoded into the database as two separate events, which avoids many synchronization problems. They are stored in two different tables, however, because a service is an analytical entry, but an analytical entry is not necessarily a service.

This is not a classical approach, but it is logical and pragmatic. Employee timesheets are a good indication of how the costs of a service enterprise are spread across different cases, as reported in the analytic accounts.

Integrated timesheets, you can then:

- Track the profitability of projects in the analytic accounts.
- Look at the history of timesheet entries by project and by employee.
- Regularly adjust hourly costs by comparing your rates with reality.

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