

Scheduling in Colour

aka

Microsoft Project for **Martha Stewart fans**

Ajesh B Sharma

Ajesh.Sharma@AppliedRational.com

www.AppliedRational.com

1 Introduction

MS-Project (MSP) offers some customization features that can help you highlight key information. This document outlines how you can dress up your schedule and give it that sparkling look.

2 A little background on MSP

MSP's main strength lies in its ability to quickly model a schedule and perform what-if analyses. For best results keep the task list simple and high-level.

Contact the author directly for more on schedule modeling using MSP.

However, a full discussion on that is out of scope of this document.

MS-Project uses a file called `GLOBAL.MPT` to store all of your custom settings. This includes things like your scheduling defaults, calendars, other little tick boxes and things you may have set up.

Most importantly, it stores all of your decoration settings.

In the following sections we'll cover these settings.

3 Feature item

And now, on to the reason for this little manual; the use of colour to enhance, highlight and dress up your MS Project schedule.

We shall see how to format your Text items, your Bar items and then some review some other things you can do.

3.1 Text items

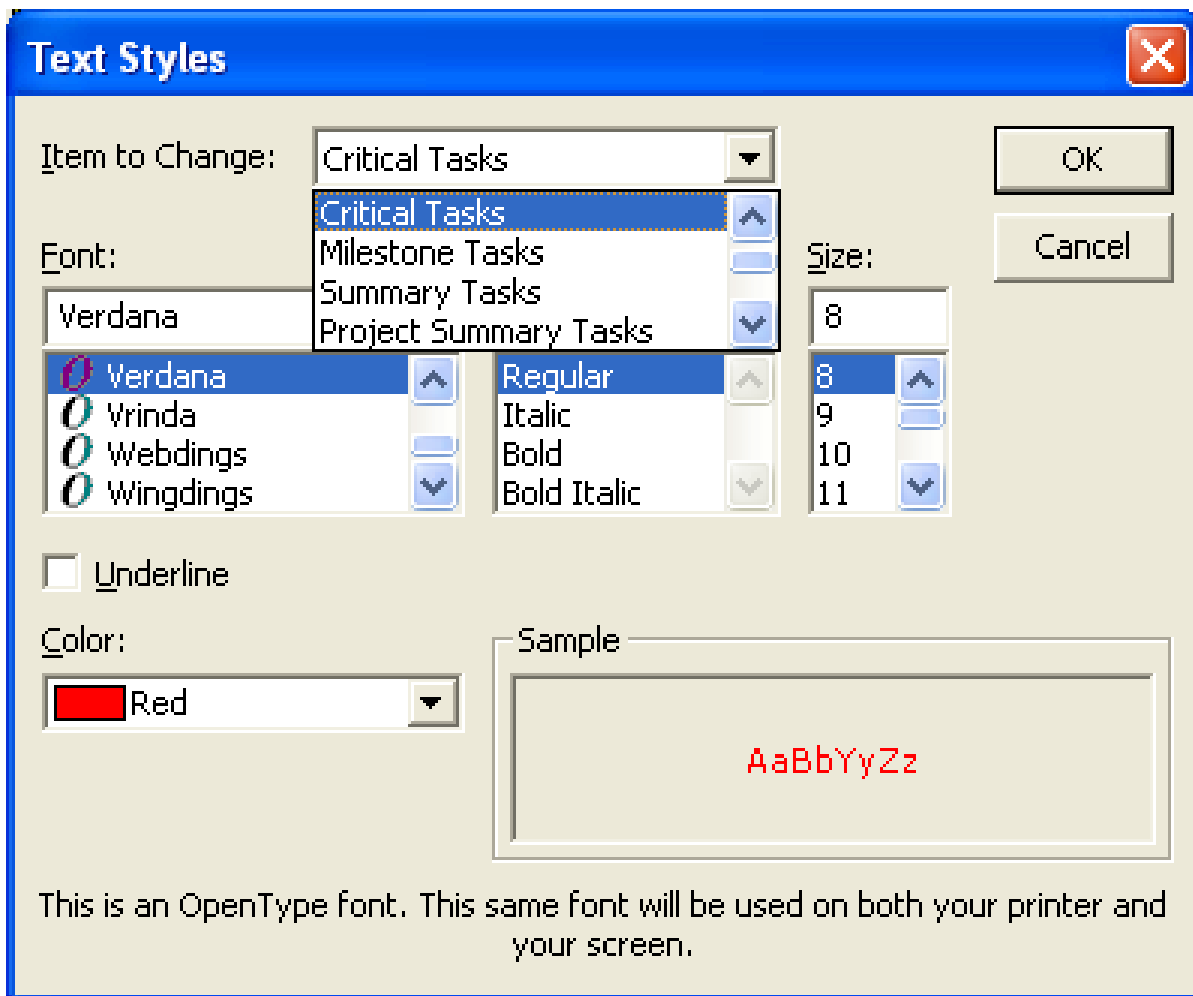
First things, first; Text that goes into the rows of your spread... um MS Project Schedule.

Have you ever wondered how to set certain tasks to show up in something other than the base Model T colour?

You have?

Well, look under the Format option. You'll find an option called `Text Styles`.

Select that and you will see a dialog box as follows.



Note the Item to Change drop down list.

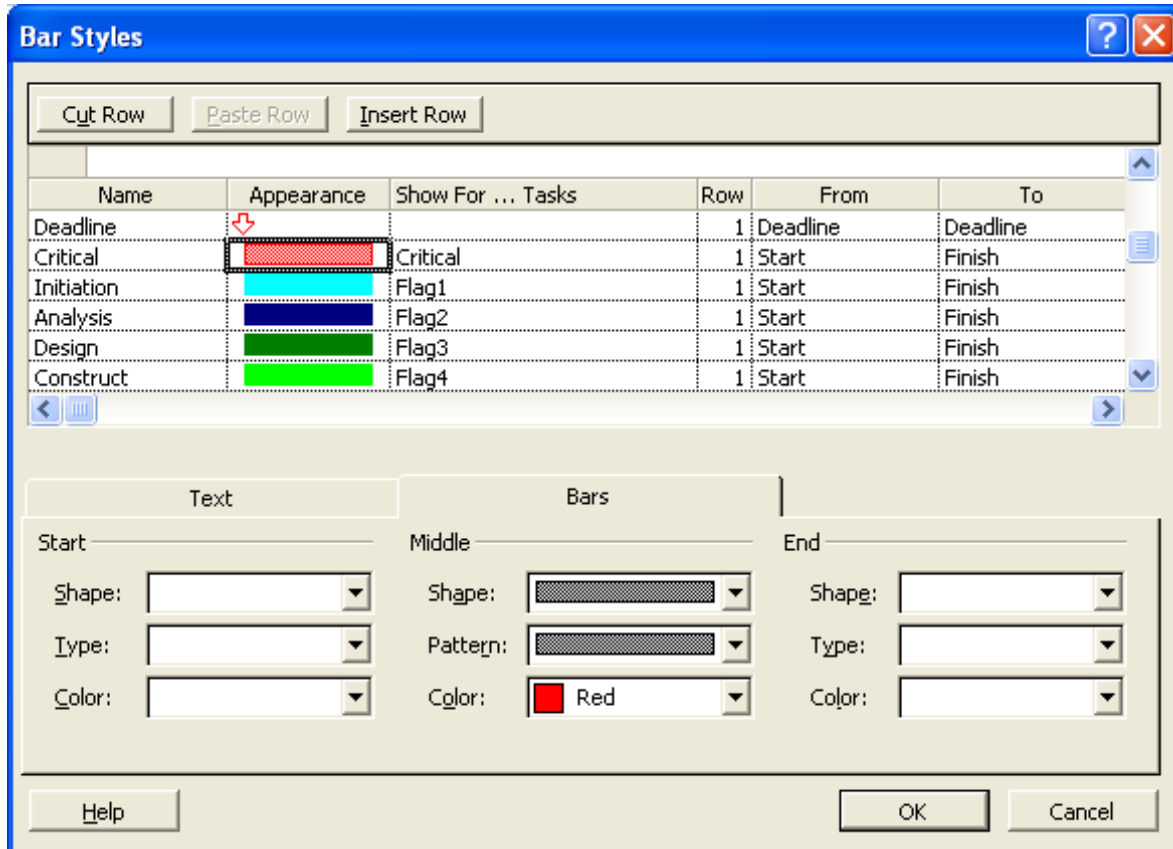
Select an item (normally a task type), and then, set the font and colour settings.

You have to set all the items individually, but a little bit of work here will repay you with many hours of pleasure as you bathe in the afterglow of the accolades from your team.

For example, you could set Critical Tasks as red, Summary Tasks in Dark Blue Bold, Milestones in Fuchsia and leave the non-critical tasks as basic (boring) black.

Play around with Fonts, Font Styles, Font Size!

3.2 Bar items



Now that you've got the Text all settled, we can move on to the right hand side of your Gantt

See that window above?

You too can get to this window by looking under the `Format` option and clicking the `Bar Styles` option.

In our text-formatting example we had set all tasks on the critical path to show up in red. We should maintain harmony by remaining consistent to our theme.

Click the row marked `Critical`. Sometimes the critical row may not be available to you. Don't panic, just click the button marked `Insert Row` and type in "Critical" into the `Name` field.

Now check your `Bar Tab` (always a good idea to do this periodically, especially as the evening wears on!).

Click the color "red". In the column headed `Show for ... tasks` click `critical` from the drop down list.

Now move on to the next item and so on.

You should have made notes when you were fixing the Text Items.

Just saying.

I mean it would have helped with the Bars.

3.3 Other good stuff

In the example screen shot you may have noticed a number of rows showing settings for Flag1, Flag2, etc tasks.

Here is a way of being even more creative with colours!

MSP offers a set of 20 fields called (inevitably and aptly) named Flag1... Flag20. You can use these fields anyway you wish.

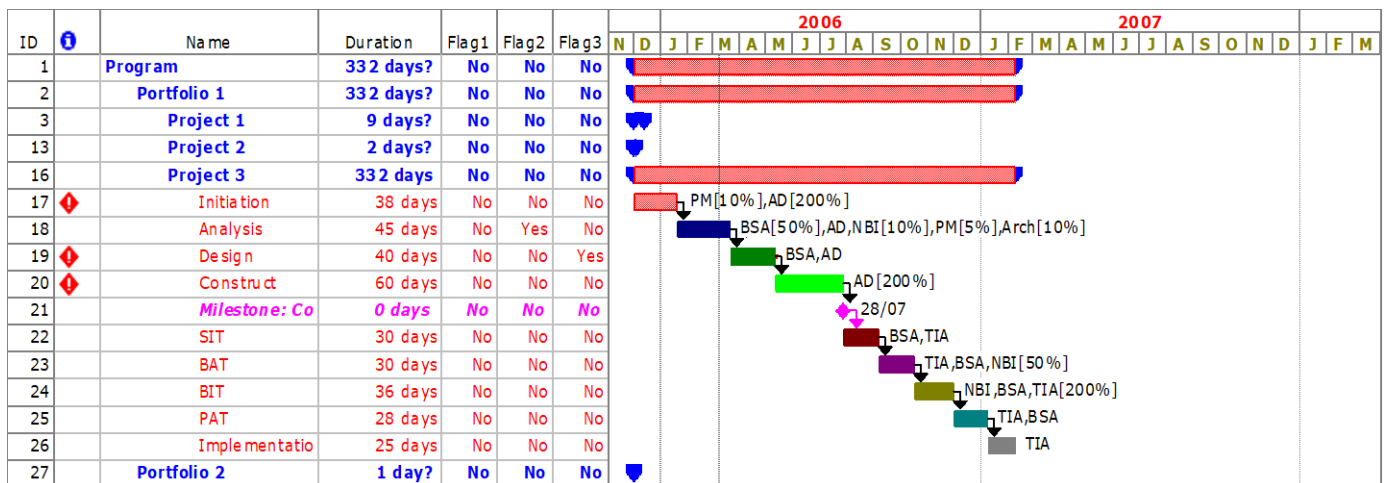
The author uses them to denote SDLC phases and sets separate colours for each SDLC phase.

After this is setup, go to the Gantt view and insert the various Flag fields into columns in the view. Set the value in the appropriate Flag fields to Yes and watch for the pretty colours in the Gantt on the right. To make life easier, you can set each Flag to show up with it's alternate name, so instead of Flag 1...Flag 20, you can see the Phase Names!

In the screen shot below, note that tasks on the Critical Path show up in red, as do the corresponding bars. Regular task appear in basic boring black while summary tasks show up in dark blue bold. Milestones show up in fuchsia bold italic.

Also the SDLC phases appear in the colours we set in the previous step.

Note also that the TimeScale text appears in Red (major) and Green (minor).



4 But, isn't that all this time consuming?

It would be if you did it all by yourself.

However, help is available in the form of a microwave ready pack!

Just follow the instructions that come with the pack and you too could have an MSP schedule that will amaze your colleagues and (maybe) impress your boss.

In fact, to make it even simpler the instructions appear in Section 7 of this document.

5 About the author

Some say the author is an experienced project manager and some say he has a past.

Those who know something of him agree he retains his sanity (barely) by tinkering with technology tools. A critically acclaimed (by self) authority on MSP, he is an ex-systems designer who is also a PMI certified project manager.

Caveat emptor.

He can be found at ajesh.sharma@appliedrational.com

6 This is great! Where can I get my MSP SiCPac?

All requests for the MSP SiCPac as well as a copy of this document should be addressed to the author via email.

7 Instructions for installing and using the MSP SiCPac

7.4 System requirements

Needs a computer with MS-Project installed, v 2000, 2002 and 2003 and beyond.

7.5 Human requirements

Needs a human with basic knowledge of MSP and an interest in scheduling and colour. (Remember, the late 20th century version of GIGO is “Intel inside, Idiot outside”).

7.6 Installation & usage

- 7.6.1 Read this document, especially the Disclaimer type stuff, dear Prudence, before you come out and play.
- 7.6.2 Find your current personal copy of GLOBAL.MPT. Normally to be found in C:\Documents and Settings\\Application Data\Microsoft\MS Project\1033 (MSP 2000/2002) and C:\Documents and Settings\\Application Data\Microsoft\MS Project\11\1033 (MSP 2003).
- 7.6.3 Rename it to GLOBAL<your initials>.MPT.
- 7.6.4 Now save the GLOBAL.MPT you received from the author in the same directory.
- 7.6.5 Fire up MSP and click the View option and select the ABS-Plan view.
- 7.6.6 Dream, sorry er... schedule, away in colour.

8 Disclaimer type stuff

Author offers no guarantees whatsoever. He will offer sympathy, though, coupled with encouraging advice on how to get out of the mess you find yourself in.

He suggests making a backup copy of your GLOBAL.MPT (see instructions above).



MSP SiCPac V 1.0, Revised September 2022

While you're doing that backup your MSP file(s) (they normally have a .mpp extension) before messing around with the SiCPac, but you had already thought of that, hadn't you?

Note that the SiCPac may modify your current custom settings.

So, be careful.

On the other hand it's a schedule.....

Good luck!