



CONSTRUCTION • DESIGN • ENGINEERING SERVICES • ENVIRONMENTAL • PROJECT MANAGEMENT • RIGHT-OF-WAY



Rick Land, Chief Engineer

Task Management

For a company to survive and be successful in the private market, the employees of that company must understand the impact of their efforts on the company's bottom line. The efficient use of time spent delivering products and services is integral to the profitability of the company. At Caltrans, this concept should be no different. Although we are not a for-profit private company, the public has entrusted us to spend their money wisely in the business of planning, building and operating an effective and efficient transportation system. Our responsibility to the public is analogous to shareholders expectations for success placed on the CEO and employees of a private company.

With that in mind, our focus on managing project delivery activities or tasks, is critically important. All of us involved in the delivery of transportation improvement projects have the responsibility to manage both our individual tasks and the tasks we have assigned to others. We must hold ourselves and our staff accountable for the work needed to efficiently deliver products and services

to the public. Those tasks involve a scope of work – what is to be done, a schedule – when it will be done, and at what cost – what resources it will take to complete. Performing, tracking, and reporting on the scope, schedule, and cost of assigned work tasks is the essence of managing project delivery tasks or “Task Management”.

You might be thinking, “Managing scope, schedule, and cost is the responsibility of the Project Manager.” The Project Manager is, in fact, responsible for managing the scope, schedule, and cost of the project. Projects, however, consist of multiple tasks (activities) that when completed produce specific deliverables. Task Management requires managing the scope, schedule, and cost of these tasks to ensure the specific deliverable is achieved.

Task Management, then, is nothing new. It is merely documenting the practices we have always used, and giving them a formal identification. In the simplest of terms it is an employee stepping up and taking responsibility and accountability for their work and work products. The Department has used many different terms to refer to Task Managers. These include "Project Engineer," "Resident Engineer," "Construction Engineer," "Design Engineer," "Right of Way Coordinator," "Environmental Coordinator," "Functional Coordinator," etc. These individuals have always managed the tasks for which they were responsible in order to achieve the desired deliverable.

Task Management is not the same as supervision. For example, Project Engineers have the responsibility for developing the Draft PS&E – WBS 230. They either perform, or manage the per-

formance of, all tasks that result in the Draft PS&E. Some of these tasks, such as typical cross sections or roadway layouts may be performed by staff assigned to the Project Engineer, while other tasks are performed by staff in other functional areas (e.g., Traffic Handling Plans, Draft Highway Planting Plans.) Regardless of who performs these tasks, Project Engineers are responsible for assuring that the tasks and work products needed for their Draft PS&E are completed, including the necessary supervision of their staff and coordination with other functional areas.

Task Managers may be defined at ever lower levels until, ultimately, a single individual is responsible for a task or work product. In essence, everyone performing a task or delivering a work product on a project is a Task Manager whether they are formally identified or not.

We are working on tools and processes to help make the management of project tasks simpler. One corporate tool, the Project Resource and Schedule Management (PRSM) system, is on track to be rolled out statewide beginning in the Spring of 2008. Many districts and regions have also been working on specific processes to help project teams manage project delivery tasks. But while these tools and processes will help, a basic, understanding and commitment to the principles of Task Management is critical to “efficient, effective project delivery with teamwork.” By working together across all functions of Project Delivery at managing the work we do, we can continue to demonstrate to California's public, our shareholders, that their investment in transportation is being used wisely.