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NASA TECH BRIEF



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Vis-A-Plan (Visualize A Plan) Management Technique Provides Performance-Time Scale

The problem:

To devise a bar-charting technique for representing and evaluating project activities on a performance-time basis.

The solution:

Vis-A-Plan is a rectilinear method of charting that presents the logic diagram of a project as a series of horizontal time bars. Although compatible with and supplementary to PERT, this technique may be used independently in development planning without the need for sophisticated machine programming and computer analysis.

How it's done:

The event/activity relationship between Vis-A-Plan and PERT is the same, but the manner of display is significantly different. In PERT, the activity is represented by a line with an arrowhead showing the direction of activity flow, the length of the line has no real meaning in terms of graphic representation of length of time. In Vis-A-Plan, the length of the activity bar is the true length of the planned activity indicated by time scale, and each activity is identified by notations describing it and the individuals or offices responsible for its accomplishment. In addition, Vis-A-Plan uses alphabetical coding along the vertical axis, facilitating location of any stage of activities by rectangular coordinates.

Two fundamental types of activities are generally shown with the Vis-A-Plan chart: series and parallel. Series activities which have direct relationships and modifying effects upon each other are depicted as a series of steps. Parallel activities are those which proceed independently and concurrently, appearing as parallel bands. The network notations and reporting methods developed to simplify and standardize charting procedure are shown.

Notes:

1. This technique offers a number of distinct advantages to both management and the work force, as it is relatively simple to use and interpret. It can condense information from many documents and planning elements into a single time-scaled picture from which one can, by inspection, determine activity sequence and interrelationships, key events and dates, concurrent activities, procurement lead times, critical situations, and project status.
2. This technique should find many applications in management practice covering a wide range of activities including aircraft maintenance, manufacturing, publication production, government agency operations, research projects, and procurement activities. It should be particularly useful for making surveys and project reports in almost any work area because this system is easy to set up and maintain and is based on simple time/cost logic which anyone can understand.
3. Inquiries concerning this innovation may be directed to:

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Reference: B67-10240

Patent status:

No patent action is contemplated by NASA.

Source: Nathan H. Ranck
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(continued overleaf)

