Lesson 10-3: Viewing the Project's Critical Path

Figure 10-3

Viewing the critical path.

Figure 10-4

Using the Critical filter.

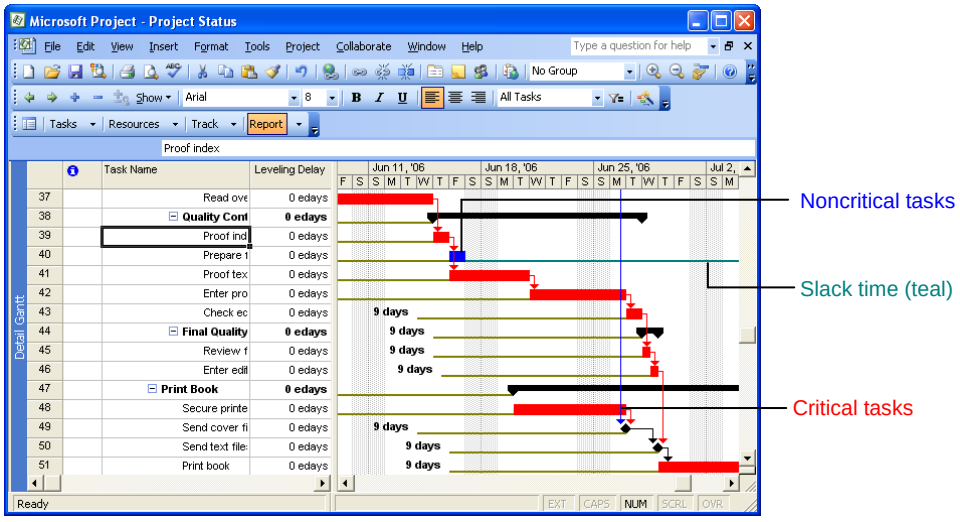

Figure 10-3

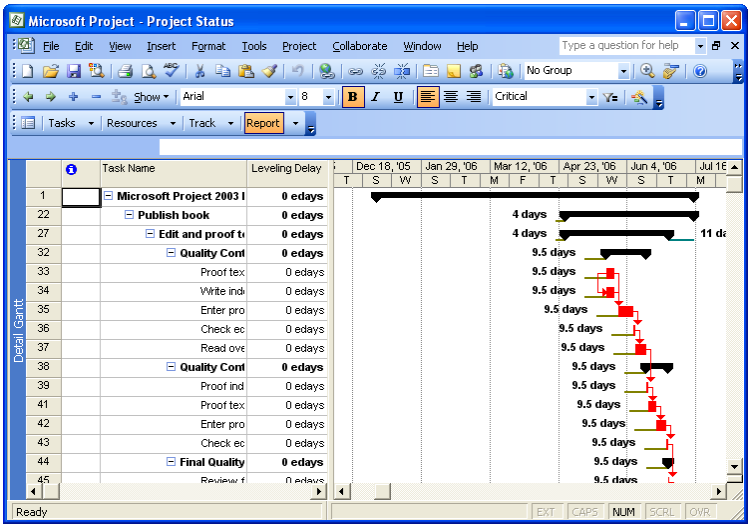

Figure 10-4

In a project schedule, some tasks affect the overall project length more than others do. These tasks, called *critical tasks*, must be completed on time so that the project sticks to its schedule. If a task has no slack time, it is a critical task. If a task has some slack time, it is not a critical task.

The *critical path* is the series of critical tasks that must be completed on time for the project to finish on schedule. Over the life of a project, the critical path will change; if you want to shorten the duration of a project, you have to shorten its critical path. Let's take a look at this project's critical path.

1. **Select View → More Views from the menu.**

   The More Views dialog box appears.

2. **Select Detail Gantt and click Apply.**

   You are now in Detail Gantt view.

   You may have to scroll over in the Gantt Chart to see the critical path.

3. **Press <Ctrl> + <G>. Type 39 in the ID box and press <Enter>.**

   Notice that the task bar is red, as are some of its successor tasks, as shown in Figure 10-3. This series of linked red tasks is the critical path.

   To get a better look, zoom out to view the entire project.

4. **Select View → Zoom from the menu. Click the Entire Project option and click OK.**

   Now you can see critical tasks over the entire range of your project.

   Scroll down through the project. Critical tasks have red task bars, and noncritical tasks have blue task bars. You should be able to see a clear representation of how the critical tasks are linked in the project.

   Also, notice that many tasks have slack time on them, signified by teal lines. This means that they have until the end of the teal line to be completed without affecting the project's finish date.

   Now filter the critical path for only critical tasks.

5. **Select Project → Filtered for: → Critical from the menu.**

   Now you can see critical tasks over the entire range of your project, as shown in Figure 10-4. Remember, as long as these tasks are on schedule, the project will stay on schedule.

   Return to the Gantt Chart view.

6. **Select View → Gantt Chart from the menu.**

That's it! Now all you have to do is make sure that you and your resources stay on top of all those critical tasks.

Quick Reference

To View the Critical Path:

1. Select View → More Views from the menu.
2. Select Detail Gantt from the dialog box.
3. Click Apply.

To View Only Critical Tasks:

- Select Project → Filtered for: → Critical from the menu.