How to Write a One-Page Project Status Report



Write for the next decision

A one-page report should help a reader understand the position and act.

Define the purpose

Summarise progress, forecasts, significant risks or issues and decisions needed. Choose a view that fits the audience and does not conceal material uncertainty.

Office-service case

A relocation project targets readiness in week 8 with a $40,000 baseline. At the week-5 update, the forecast is week 9 and $43,000.

Use the status desk

Build the report from evidence, then reduce it to the information the reader needs. Keep supporting records accessible through controlled links.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Name the decision the next report should enable.

State the scope and status date

Readers need to know what the figures cover and when they apply.

Use a clear header

Include project name, owner, reporting period, status date, version and the relevant comparison basis. Identify the current approved baseline.

Office-service case

The report covers the relocation pilot through the end of week 5. Figures from a different supplier cutoff must be reconciled or explained before combining them.

Keep comparisons fair

A forecast based on new scope should not be compared silently with an old baseline that excludes it. Explain the basis and approved changes.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Check the cutoff and scope behind one report figure.

Use a decision-focused headline

The first sentence should explain the position and its consequence.

Write the message

State the most important change, objective affected and action required. Use plain language and distinguish an observed fact from a forecast.

Office-service case

“Readiness is forecast one week late and $3,000 above baseline; a decision on rollout sequencing is needed before next week's commitments.”

Avoid vague confidence

“Mostly on track” leaves readers to guess what matters. Describe the evidence and the actual gap rather than choosing reassuring wording.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Write a headline containing a fact, consequence and decision need.

Define the status criteria

Colours become useful only with agreed thresholds and judgement.

Set the convention

Define what green, amber and red mean for relevant dimensions. Include the role of forecast exceptions, critical readiness conditions and escalation.

Office-service case

The illustrative cost rule is red above a 5% forecast overrun. $43,000 versus $40,000 is 7.5%, so cost is red under that rule.

Explain the result

If the overall convention uses the worst material dimension, state that basis. A colour should support the explanation, not replace it.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Write the threshold behind one status indicator.

Show evidence of completed work

Progress should describe accepted results or other agreed completion evidence.

Choose the right measure

Report meaningful deliverables, milestones and verified changes. If using a count, explain whether items are comparable and what completion means.

Office-service case

Five of eight listed readiness items are accepted. That is a count of items, not automatically 62.5% of budgeted value or total effort.

Add the consequence

Explain what the completed work enables and which important handoffs remain. A busy task list can obscure the project's usable result.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Replace one activity statement with its delivered and verified result.

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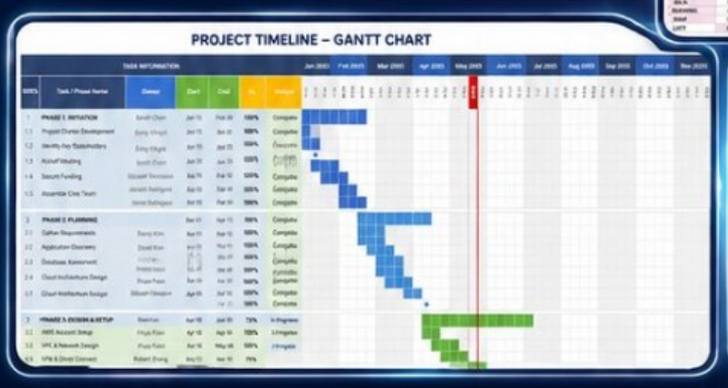
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Report the schedule forecast

The reader needs the planned point, expected point and reason for the difference.

Use the model

Update remaining work, dependencies, resources and risks at the status date. Recalculate rather than shifting bars to preserve the target.

Office-service case

Target readiness is week 8 and current forecast week 9. The main cause is a delayed operating rehearsal and a constrained training resource.

Show the response

Summarise feasible recovery or sequencing options and the decision required. A “one-week delay” without its cause and options leaves the reader little to act on.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Trace the forecast milestone back to its controlling dependency.

Report cost coherently

Actual spend and expected final cost answer different questions.

Use a consistent relationship

Forecast final cost equals actual cost plus the forecast remaining cost, with scope and cutoff aligned. Keep commitments from being counted twice.

Office-service case

Actual cost is $20,000 and remaining forecast $23,000, giving $43,000 expected total. Against baseline $40,000, the gap is $3,000 or 7.5%.

Explain assumptions

State the main cost driver and whether an option is already included. An unapproved additional-support proposal should not silently change the authorised budget.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Reconcile actuals, remaining work and final forecast.

Select the significant risks and issues

A status report needs the items that can affect a decision now.

Prioritise material information

Show the objective affected, evidence, owner, action and timing for the most significant uncertainties or current problems. Link to the full registers.

Office-service case

The rehearsal is currently incomplete: issue. The remaining training resource may become unavailable: risk. Each has a different next action.

Keep the request clear

If the owner can manage an item within authority, explain the action. If a decision is needed from the reader, make it explicit.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Choose one item to include and explain why it matters this period.

Make the decision request actionable

A reader should be able to identify what you need and by when.

Include the choice

State the options, relevant cost or schedule effects, recommendation, decision authority and latest useful decision point. Highlight missing evidence.

Office-service case

The team compares a staggered pilot with additional training support. Confirm the support cost and feasible dates before asking the sponsor to choose.

Track the outcome

Record the authorised decision and resulting actions. Carrying the same unanswered request forward needs an escalation or changed response, not just another copy.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Write a decision request with two feasible options.

Choose the next-period commitments

Forecast near-term work at a level people can verify.

State expected results

List a few important deliverables or decisions due next, with owners and completion evidence. Explain dependencies that could change the commitment.

Office-service case

Complete the operating rehearsal, confirm the training arrangement and decide the pilot sequence. Each has a named role owner and a readiness purpose.

Check feasibility

Compare the work with actual capacity and input availability. An optimistic list that grows every week weakens the report's usefulness.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Choose three verifiable commitments for the next period.

A filled one-page status report

Use this illustrative example as a compact decision note.

Header and headline

Office-Service Relocation Pilot; owner: PM; status: end of week 5. Overall red under the stated forecast-exception convention. Readiness is forecast week 9 versus target week 8, with a cost decision required.

Progress and money

Five of eight readiness items accepted. Operating rehearsal remains incomplete. Baseline $40,000; actual $20,000; remaining forecast $23,000; expected final $43,000. Forecast gap $3,000, or 7.5%.

Decision and actions

Sponsor to choose a feasible pilot sequence after option costs are confirmed. Service lead completes rehearsal; training lead confirms capacity. Report the decision date, owners and links to the current schedule and cost records.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Replace the illustrative facts with reconciled evidence from your own project.

Check the report before issuing it

A short page still needs reliable source data.

Verify the numbers

Reconcile totals, percentages, cutoff dates, scope, forecast assumptions and approved changes. Check the links and status definitions.

Office-service case

$20,000 plus $23,000 must equal $43,000. The percentage uses the $40,000 baseline denominator. A different baseline or missing accrual changes the interpretation.

Verify the story

Ask whether the headline matches the material facts, risks and decision requests. Remove contradictions between a green summary and an unexplained exception.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Perform one arithmetic check and one consistency check.

Keep the page readable

A decision note should make the most important information easy to find.

Use a clear hierarchy

Put the headline and request early, group related facts and use concise labels, simple tables or a suitable visual. Link detailed evidence rather than compressing it into tiny text.

Office-service case

One line shows target and forecast, another reconciles the money, and a short section states the required choice. Technical details remain in linked records.

Edit for purpose

Remove details that do not change understanding or action. Preserve material uncertainty and bad news even when space is tight.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Ask a reader to find the decision request in ten seconds.

Use the report in a conversation

The written page supports a working decision, not just distribution.

Prepare the interaction

Make sure the right people can ask questions, challenge assumptions and authorise the next step. Use the agreed communication and escalation arrangements.

Office-service case

The sponsor questions whether additional support can protect the date. The team brings capacity evidence and costs, then records the authorised response.

Close the loop

Update the plan, actions and next report from the actual decision. A meeting discussion that changes no record can leave conflicting expectations.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Trace one reported decision into its implementation owner.

Handle an improving or worsening trend

Explain changes in the forecast rather than only the current colour.

Use consistent measures

Compare periods using the same basis or state why the basis changed. Distinguish performance improvement from a revised baseline or reduced scope.

Office-service case

Forecast cost falls because an agreed supplier option is cheaper. Record the evidence and assumptions. A newly approved budget increase changes the comparison basis instead.

Keep learning visible

Report the cause, response and remaining uncertainty. A trend should help decide whether the current action is working.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Explain one status change without relying only on its colour.



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Your one-page report desk check

A good status page can be traced from evidence to a decision.

Check the essentials

Current scope and date, headline, status criteria, verified progress, schedule and cost forecast, material risks or issues, next commitments and decisions.

Check the reader's task

Can they see the consequence, options, authority needed and latest useful decision point? Are owners and supporting records accessible?

Use the case

The relocation report makes a one-week and $3,000 forecast gap visible and supports a controlled rollout choice. Use the same discipline with your own facts.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Review the next page against its intended decision before sending it.