



Project Planning

A log cabin must be built within six weeks
- and you are competing for the contract!

Key Skills

- **Planning**
- **Working as a team**
- **Scheduling**
- **Costing**
- **Assessing labour requirements**
- **Critical path analysis (Gantt charts)**
- **Planning smooth cash-flow**

Numbers	Up to four teams of four to six people
Timing	1.5 - 2 hours
Cost	£495

Summary

Teams have to quote for building a log cabin within six weeks. That means working out all the costs of labour and materials and then adding a profit and sending in a quote.

This activity is a great introduction to project planning or can be used as a test of just how well participants have learned some of the basic concepts of planning and scheduling.

Each team starts with a folder giving them details of a log cabin that must be constructed within six weeks. There are seven phases to the construction from clearing the site to building the walls, putting in the windows and door and roof to finishing and landscaping. Each phase takes a set length of time but they do not need to be done consecutively – some elements can be done concurrently. So what is the best order and how can the use of manpower be maximised.

Some parts of the job require skilled workers, some unskilled. Teams need to plan their labour requirements accurately and logically minimising the time workers have nothing to do.

They also have to order their materials in good time once they have chosen a supplier. If the logs or nails or gravel arrives on the wrong day then the workers may be standing around with nothing to do – but they are still on the payroll.

The client will make two stage payments and teams need to stay in the black throughout the course of the project - so they need to smooth their cash-flow to ensure outgoings never exceed income.

Teams fill out a timetable of when they are going to start each phase of the project using a large Planning Chart as a Gantt chart if they wish; they then complete their labour and materials planning and submit their quote for the total job - remembering to add a profit margin!.

The details are quickly fed into a computer and a five page report printed for each team. This compares what they should have ordered with their actual order and awards them a score out of 100. To be in with a chance of getting the job teams must exceed 80%.

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What to do

- 1 Give a brief Introduction to the exercise, using the **PowerPoint presentation**.
- 2 Issue each team with a **Briefing Folder** and a **Planning Chart**.
- 3 Allow teams up to two hours to complete their planning and come up with a schedule and a quote.
- 4 Collect in their completed **Decisions Forms** from teams and input into computer – a simple process.
- 5 Enter date from forms onto the **Computer Program** each team's report.
- 6 Begin the **Debrief** by asking each team to give feedback on their teamwork and planning (*before* issuing the final reports).
- 7 Issue the reports and award the contract to the highest scoring team
- 8 With the help of the **PowerPoint presentation**, lead a discussion on the key points that emerged from the activity, then summarise how project planning skills can be improved back at work.



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Trainers' Comments

"Project Planning had a high impact both in doing the activity and in the review. Knowledge was willingly shared. Delegate feedback was exceptional. They felt they got far more out of the review session having gone through the actual "doing" beforehand. The session ended with a standing ovation and request for more!"

L. Taylor, Cundall Johnson & Partners

"We used Project Planning with senior management from our Surveyors Department. The exercise proved very useful and the delegates said the session interesting, challenging and relevant."

K White, Blyth Valley Northumberland

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