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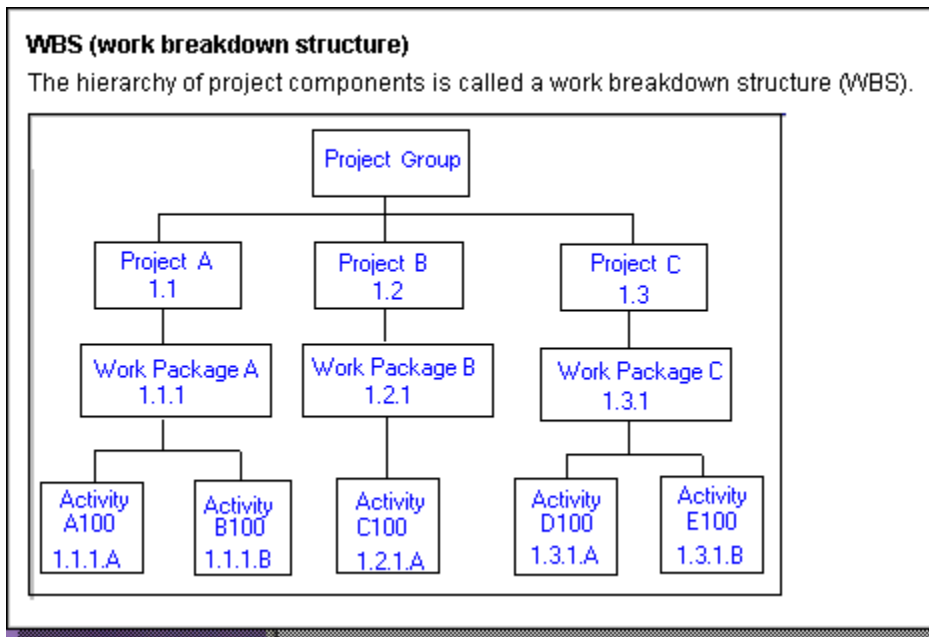
Primavera Project Planner (P3)

■ Version 3.1

Consideration for Using Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) Codes

by Eric Chou, PE

What is a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)? A WBS is the top down hierarchical structuring of project work (usually project deliverables) that defines and displays all of the work to be performed in accomplishing the project objectives. Graphically, it would look like this as illustrated from P3 Glossary:



In the field of Cost Engineering, the theory behind effective project control through WBS is simple – to manage a whole operation, you manage and control its parts, these parts being work packages in the case of construction. A project is planned by work packages, estimated by work packages, scheduled by work packages, and cost controlled by work packages.

In other words, a WBS is a cost center. A well-designed code of accounts often to be a representation of an effective WBS system, which is also closely integrated with the accounting system.

Tips, Tricks & Techniques for Project Controls Software

P3 has provided the feature of assigning WBS coding to the schedule activities so that the schedule can be easily integrated into other components (such as the accounting system) of a complete and effective project control system. However, if WBS is not being implemented as a whole, it seems to be redundant to be included in the schedule system alone.

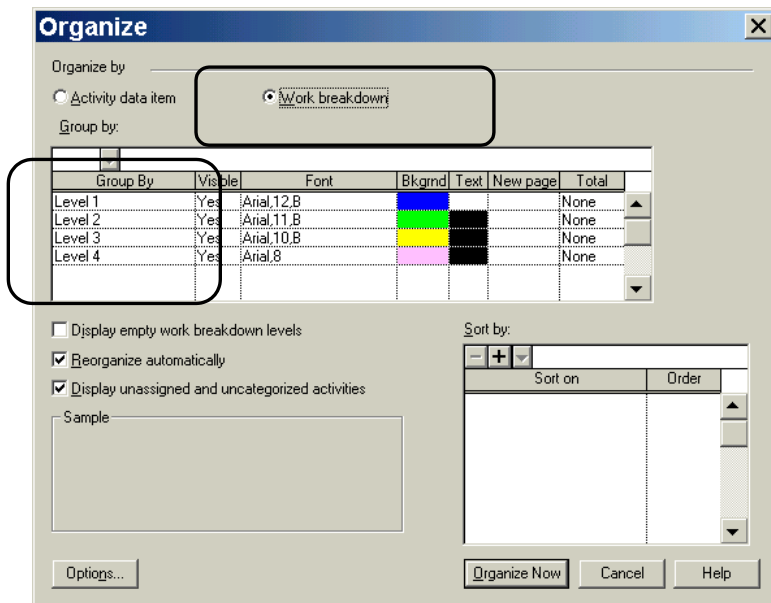
Comparing to the more flexible features of Activity Code in organizing activities, WBS also has very limited use.

For example,

Once you have defined the WBS dictionary and assigned the WBS code to each activity, you are now trying to organize all activities by WBS. Let's look at the Organize dialog window as shown below.

As soon as you check the option – Work Breakdown Structure, P3 automatically display all defined WBS level in the Group By column starting from Level 1 down to the bottom level. You may choose to hide certain levels, however, you can't reverse or change the levels. This reflects exactly the concept of the WBS – Hierarchy. If this not your original intends, you are stuck.

On the other hand, if you mirror all levels of WBS codes in Activity Codes, you can be very flexible in organizing activities.



Final Words

WBS is a fancy word. However, use them wisely. Sometimes, less is more.