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Project Tips and Tricks?

1. Negotiate a good scope

✓ deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do
✗ avoid biting off more than you can chew
✓ re-negotiate the scope if necessary (with your project supervisor)
✗ avoid having to whittle your scope down to nothing (this is not good for your assessment)

2. Your best project tool is your Plan

✓ make a good plan (tasks and Gannt chart)
✓ review your plan weekly - use your Gannt chart to *gauge* your long-term progress
✓ review/revise/rewrite your plan on a one-weekly basis in the form of a To DO list:

To DO -- 19-Mar-01
Recruit volunteers to play test SOL II CDROM (GE)
Assemble and deliver printed copy to proof readers (GE/BB)
Continue to update Tech Data by e-mail correspondence, esp. EOS, SOC, CC, NED, etc. (GE)
Attend meeting with MegaSoft on Tuesday 2 pm (JEC/DJ)
Mail demo CD and permission to republish to all co-authors (GE/JN)

3. Use your To DO list to manage your week-to-week activities

✓ review/revise/rewrite your one-weekly plan on a regularly - write a new To DO list
✓ buy a small notebook and make it your project (To DO notebook -or- use a few pages from your diary to keep a running To DO list)
✓ assess your progress weekly, even if only to measure what you haven't done

4. There's good Project Engineering and bad Project Engineering

✓ good Project Engineering leads to tangible progress
✓ bad Project Engineering hinders progress

For example, take Task 0 (Client Meeting):
Good:
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I just wanted to confirm our meeting tomorrow
(Friday 16/3) to discuss projects. I am most
interested in knowing about the project, it's
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scope and your expectations. See you at 2 pm.
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Bad:
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The last time I spoke to you in your office about
my interest in the project. You told me to also
come along to meet someone on Friday (16/3) but
apparently.....I forgot all about it by
then....Sorry. My lectures ended about 1pm on
that day and then mysteriously I was home at
about 3pm. Maybe I find my lectures so boring so
'home' was the primary thought then.
I would still like to find out more about the
project, is there anyway you can give me some
brief information about it via email, because the
handouts on this project is so brief and I don't
really comprehend what is involved and what has
to be done project. Anyway sorry about not
turning up to the afternoon meeting.....
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The longer your excuse/apology, the worse your Project Engineering.

4. You're your own boss
- ✓ do what the boss says
- ✓ what you don't do won't get done
- ✓ if you want it done right, you have to do it yourself

5. Some advice:

On Getting Started:
- ✓ write a good proposal
- ✓ start with a good work plan, but minor changes will occur
- ✓ pick a smaller project for the given timeframe - the scope of the project blew out of proportion
- ✓ pick an interesting topic
- ✓ pick a resourceful project supervisor

On Planning:
- ✓ strike a balance between planning and doing
- ✓ make contingency plans and plan for the worst case in critical tasks

On Execution:
- ✓ be clear about your objectives - ask yourself why you are doing each task - if you don't know, find out or change the task
- ✓ completing tasks on time is critical, especially tasks that must be competed before other work can commence

On Supervisor Meetings:
- ✓ meet on a regular basis with your supervisor
- ✓ regularly update my Gannt Chart - bring it to every meeting with your project supervisor

On Time Management:
- ✓ time management is the key to getting a project completed
- ✓ everything takes longer than you thing it will - do tasks at earliest convenience
- ✓ pick an early deadline to allow for slippage on the Gannt chart (which there was a great deal of)
- ✓ follow the Gannt Chart to avoid doing the final report under extreme time pressure

On Project Management:
- ✓ project management and planning are essential - disorganisation can prevent the project from progressing
- ✓ don't rely too heavily on others - they can unintentionally prolong your project
- ✓ seek specific help if it can save you time
- ✓ personnel coordination is also important to making things happen
- ✓ communicate effectively and regularly with other people involved in the project