



Quick Tips on Estimating Your Projects

- Collect historical data** on all projects, categorized by task type. Derive as many metrics as possible (such as for analysis, design, meetings, reviews) and use them in future bids.
- Try comparing a new effort to an earlier one**, using a **complexity factor** to increase or decrease the figures where the efforts are not likely to be on a par. Always explain the logic behind its use. For example: "Project B is likely to entail six new modules, four new tutorials, and totally redesigned navigation, making it at least 300% more complex than Project A."
- Use multiple estimating methods** and then average the results. For example, you could:
 - Multiply your initial estimate by a **realistic buffer** based on historical data (e.g., 225%).
 - Compare your initial estimate to a similar effort using a **complexity factor** (see above).
 - Perform a bottom-up, **detailed task analysis** to estimate all discrete tasks (see below).
- Prioritize the key deliverables** as "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves." Especially on a fixed budget or schedule, agree early on that *lower* priority items can be scaled back or eliminated if the project meets unforeseen obstacles. You can then complete all work in priority order.
- Always specify caveats, constraints, and assumptions*** to bound your conditions for staying within scope, especially when asked to "back into" a tight budget or schedule. Use the "Project Diamond" below to adjust the *cost*, *schedule*, *quality* or *features* up or down.
- Try phase-based estimating** in really nebulous or dynamic situations, as explained below.

Example of Phase-Based Estimating

Phase 1 – Estimate and complete just a needs assessment, project plan, and/or detailed outline.

Phase 2 – Once the plan and/or outline are approved, proceed to estimate the remainder of the project, such as by using a **detailed task analysis** to itemize tasks in these high-level buckets:

1) Administrative meetings and planning	56
2) Requirements analysis	160
3) Design and prototyping	228
4) Development and implementation	332
5) Testing and evaluation	240
6) Delivery rollout and training	120
7) Maintenance and support	140

(These figures are for illustration only) **Total: 1,276**

*Sample caveats, constraints, and assumptions:

"Reviews: a) A maximum of three internal review passes is assumed; any further reviews will be considered out of scope. b) All reviewer comments must be returned by the scheduled due dates. c) Final review comments must not introduce any substantial changes."

