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Progress Tracking Systems

The Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT), and the Gantt chart are amongst two of the most popular progress tracking systems used by software developers today. Each have their own advantages and disadvantages.

A Gantt chart is used to illustrate the current progress of a particular project. Typically, a set of relevant tasks or subtasks are listed on the y-axis of the graph, while the x-axis lists a timeline of the overall project, which can be in days, weeks, or even months. Each subtask includes a start and finish date; the length of this bar usually represents the expected time requirement to finish the task. Somewhere towards the center of the x-axis will be a "Today" line, indicating the current day the project is on.

The Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT) has several main differences from a Gantt chart. Visually, PERT is usually displayed in a tree format ("activity-on-arrow" or "activity-on-node"), with each task housed in a node, connected by branches to related tasks. A key advantage of using PERT over a Gantt chart is that PERT is better equipped at identifying the minimum time needed to complete the whole project, due in part to how it is laid out. A disadvantage to PERT is that it can grow large very rapidly, and can become convoluted and hard to read as the number of tasks and relationships increase.

Both Gantt charts and PERT are effective methods of progress tracking a project. Each possess their own advantages and disadvantages. The size, scope, and type of project will determine which one is best for you.