Probably you have heard the word “ software project milestone ” thousand times or more. But, what are these milestones, who needs to create them, when are they needed, does every project require milestones, what are the advantages of them, etc.? These are the questions you might have in mind and this article is all about that.

**What is a milestone?**

Any project or startup can “survive” without milestones. That’s true. But, will every project be delivered on time without milestones? And will it be exactly how you wanted it? That’s much unlikely. Milestones are hugely important for the [agile team](https://apiumhub.com/tech-blog-barcelona/building-agile-team/) and project success overall. They help you stay accountable, stay on track and complete things on time.

I would say that milestones are closely related to [road mapping](https://apiumhub.com/tech-blog-barcelona/product-roadmap-agile-project-management/). After completing a road mapping process, you might want to divide your roadmap into [iterations](https://apiumhub.com/tech-blog-barcelona/scrum-sprint-explanation/)and milestones. Then you can see approximately which features are assigned to each milestone.

A milestone symbolizes an achievement, is one of the most important aspects of project planning, because project milestones are the most visible indicators of project progress toward its objectives. Failure to meet a milestone indicates that a project is not proceeding to plan and usually triggers corrective action by management. Also, in some cases, milestones determine when payments are sent to vendors and contractors.

Just to give you a simple example, even though not everyone is a project manager in the construction field, but most are at least familiar with the steps involved in building a new home:

1. The basement will be finished on Monday
2. The floor will be finished by 1st of June.
3. The roof will be completed on August 1st
4. Etc.

For a clearer picture, let’s take a look at a specific example in a software project: an app that aggregates messages from lots of different sources (e.g. messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Viber, etc. ) and lets the user manage them from one place. First off, you need a list of all the broad phases of your project. For our example the list might look like this:

* Registration and login
* Connecting social networks
* FB integration
* Whatsapp integration
* Viber integration
* Snapchat integration
* Instagram integration
* Messaging interface and logistics
* Push notifications
* Profile settings
* Offline behavior
* Design implementation
* Etc.

And then, of course, you need to put the date for each one. Like this, you can track the progress of your project and make sure it goes as expected.

Milestones also help the developer to understand the structure of the project. When they create the milestones they need to understand that each step is a visible, functioning element of the app. Often one function is dependent on another. For instance, the ‘forgot password’ functionality is unlikely to be in the first milestone, as it requires a “registration and login” functionality to be developed first.

**Rules of Thumb: software project milestone**

Let’s look at some rules of thumb in software project milestone:

* A demonstrable milestone in 5 to 10 working days ( minor milestone )
* A demonstrable milestone in 1 to 3 month (a major milestone )
* When milestones are completed, it means that they: met requirements, met design, have tested code and shipped/accepted/deployed product.

**Why use milestones in software development?**

Software project milestone can benefit you in a number of ways:

**Monitor project progress**  
It is a checkpoint for tracking what has been done and how.

**Meet deadlines**  
No plan is ever complete without a list of deadlines! The best way to make them noticeable and track the progress is to use the project management milestones and deliverables.

**Spot important dates**  
There are always some days in your project that could impact a project in some way. It can be a mandatory training, someone gets sick, someone leaves the company, etc. It’s important to keep all of these important events in mind when you’re planning a project because they could possibly impact your project schedule. So, when you have a milestone, most probably you will pay attention to this details to be more accurate in your estimations.

**Identify project bottlenecks**  
Many projects rely on the work provided by external teams or some software teams just heavily depend on other departments, such as design, for example. If you’re not tracking those external factors, you will most probably have a problem with reaching the deadlines. As milestones are shared, it will help you to work hand in hand with other teams and departments.

**Evaluate team performance**  
It is a very good way of evaluating team’s efficiency and performance.

**Manage risks and assumptions.**   
Risks and assumptions are present in every single project. To ensure that the risks mitigated and assumptions validated as the project progresses they should be linked to milestones.

I should say, that milestone is an integral part of an [agile project management](https://apiumhub.com/tech-blog-barcelona/benefits-of-agile-project-management/). Without it, a project reminds me the road to nowhere. Believe us, it helps! In [Apiumhub](https://apiumhub.com/) we use milestones as for us, internally, as for managing the [projects for our clients](https://apiumhub.com/software-projects-barcelona/). Without any doubt, a milestone will make you focused on the right things at the right time.

If you would like to add some other benefits or other milestones related information, that I haven’t included in my article, feel free to share it in the comments section below! Thank you!

And if you are working on a software project and you need help with software architecture and development to meet your milestone, [let us know](https://apiumhub.com/contact-software-developers-barcelona/)! We would like to know more!

And if you want to know more about software project milestone, don’t forget to subscribe to our monthly newsletter [here](http://eepurl.com/cC96MY).

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**What Are Project Management Milestones?**

A **project milestone** is a way to observe, measure and monitor the progress and/or performance of a project. Milestones in general exist as intermediate stages that must be fulfilled before reaching a final goal or objective. In terms of their usefulness, milestones can be defined and provide a foundation from which to monitor progress. They can also serve as proof for explaining and reporting the status of a project. Key characteristics of milestones include their frequency and potential for providing opportunities for course corrections and learning experiences. Milestones can also be used to maintain accountability and motivate staff.

**Examples of Project Milestones**

Let's look at some of the different types of milestones often used during a project, including some real-life examples. Keep in mind that not every deadline met or task completed will represent a milestone. Intermediate stages should be considered significant in terms of meeting the overall project goal.

The first example is high-priority tasks or decisions crucial to the completion of a project. For example, if children will be participating in your project, you'll need to get parental consent forms signed. You may also have to research the ethical and legal considerations involved in having minors participate in a project.

Another example would be checkpoints or percentages of completion. For instance, if you are designing an advertising campaign, obtaining sketches and images might be considered a project checkpoint. If you obtain them on schedule halfway through the project, you'll know the project is 50% complete.

Deliverables that meet deadlines can also be milestones. If you are designing new computer software, the actual software is the deliverable. Therefore, you can measure the progress of the project when the deliverable or software is completed.

Another example of milestones would be the usage of time or resources. This refers to the specific number of hours or materials allotted to a project. For example, if a project is expected to take 10 hours and cost $10,000 to finish, completing five hours of work and spending $5,000 may be considered a milestone.

Some other examples of milestones include:

* Soliciting and receiving funding for a project
* Completing prototypes
* Obtaining patent approvals
* Hiring and staffing a project
* Signing contracts
* Writing press releases

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