What Project Managers Should Know
about **Information Flow Charts**

Business and process flow charts are popular diagramming techniques that enable project managers to document the flow of information, reveal process paths, and identify the tasks and people involved. Flowcharts typically show the steps involved in achieving a specific organizational process and can help you clarify complexity and possible parallel or concurrent work dependencies.

For example, organizing a meeting typically involves key steps such as designing an agenda, inviting attendees, compiling and distributing minutes, and following up on actions. Depending on your organization's structure, this main route may also involve other necessary paths such as flows for asking for agenda approval or requesting attendees' availability. Developing a visual and simple flowchart (see diagram) will give you a useful checklist tool to plan your time and manage your meeting process more efficiently.

Business flowcharts also facilitate communication among project stakeholders and will enable you to explain and disseminate a better understanding of your organizational methodologies and processes among team members, customers and key stakeholders. Diagrams save time and effort, and engage visual learners – which we all are!

Process Flow Chart: Organizing a Meeting

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Another type of useful flowcharts is the cross-functional diagram. It shows swim lanes highlighting the entity responsible for a particular step of a process. For example, UML activity diagrams present the flow of actions and the decision points across swim lanes and are used extensively in information technology projects. UML is a standardized modeling notation worth discovering, as it is common language in many software development projects. Activity diagrams are particularly useful as they include visual representation for concurrency work with joints and split symbols. These diagrams can help savvy project managers identify cross-functional dependencies and clarify the role of controlling entities, thus enabling identification of risk areas where potential conflict among entities or bottlenecks may occur.

There is no doubt that investing in learning a diagramming tool and keeping your flowcharts looking clean, simple and professional will enhance your practice and serve well your career.