



TIMELINES

What Are They and How Can They Be Used for
WorldCons?

Introduction

- Who am I and what gives me the right to be here in front of you?
 - *Not a professional project manager*
 - *No formal training in project management*
 - *Working/Volunteering at all types of SF conventions in all levels of responsibility since 1976*
 - *Independent meeting planner for 20+ years*
 - *Certified Meeting Professional*

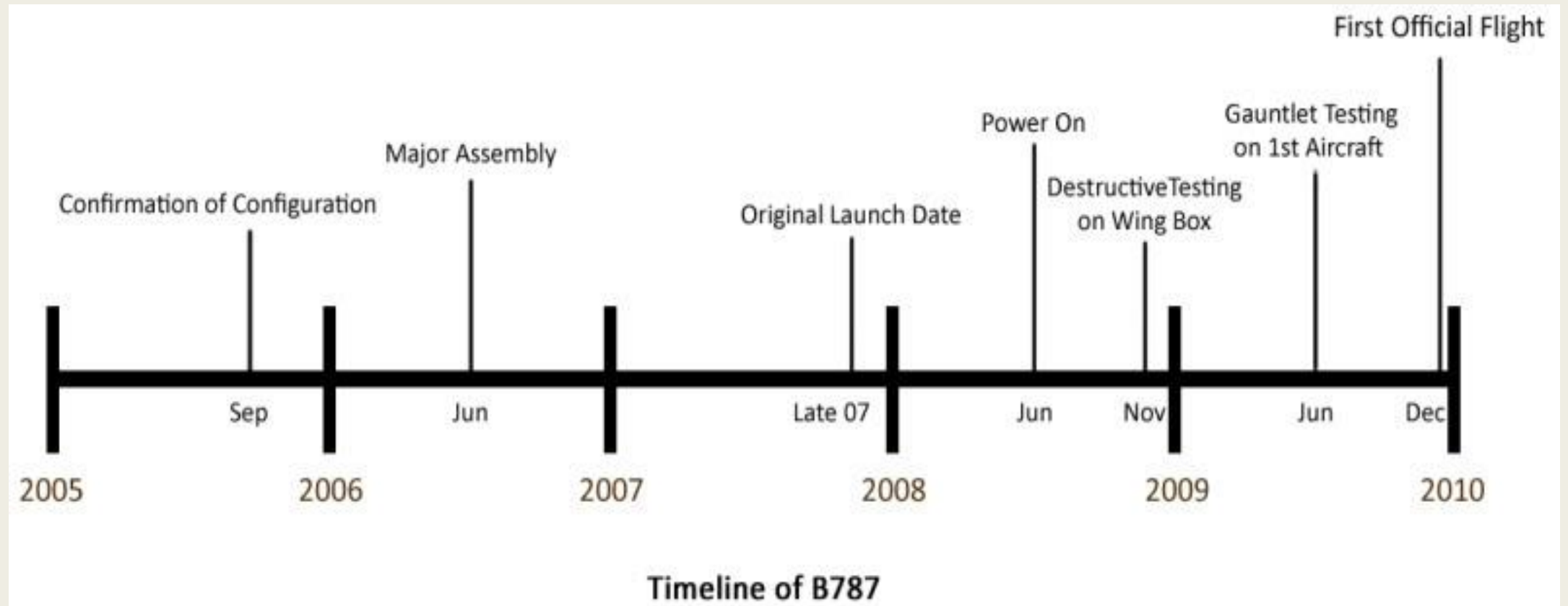
Stakeholders

- Defined as “a person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business.”
- This session has at least three stakeholders looking to get something out of it
 - *The convention – tie into con’s theme and talk about software*
 - *The presenter – review timeline project and get feedback*
 - *The audience - ??????*

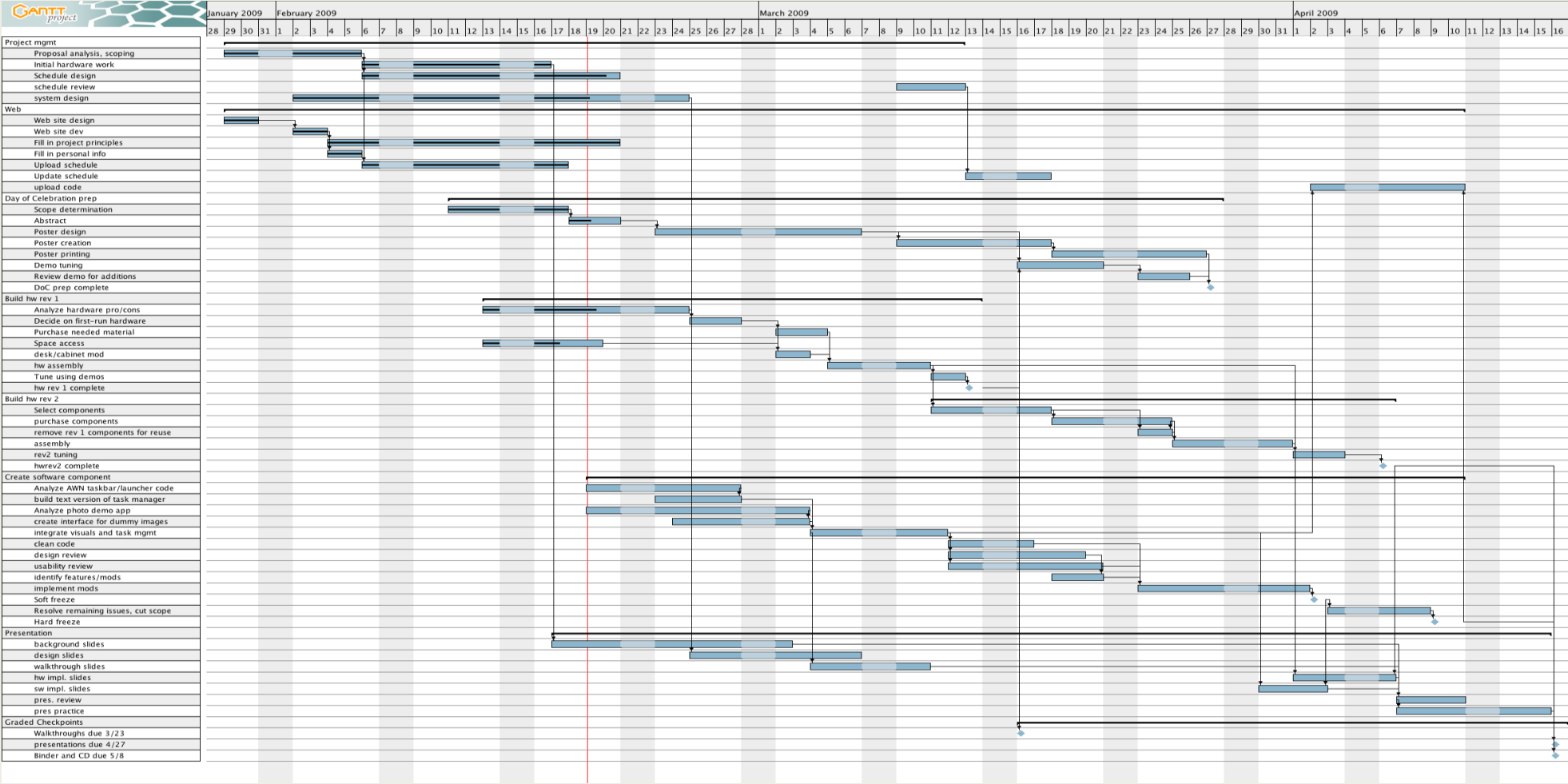
What is a timeline?

- Wikipedia says “A timeline is a way of displaying a list of events in chronological order, sometimes described as a project artifact”.
- Collection of dates and tasks that make up a project
- A collection and display of a project’s time-related data
- Project timelines outline the major deliverables of a project in a chronological sequence.

Historical Timeline



Classic Gantt Chart with Dependencies



Why use a timeline?

- While it is possible to drive from East to West Coast without a map, it is infinitely easier, faster, and less stressful with one.
 - *Gives an overview of what the project will accomplish and how it will be done.*
 - *Clearly communicates important milestones and tasks*
 - *Helps team to recognize of the value of time in a project*
 - *Helps avoid foreseeable legal and financial emergencies*



**WORLD CON
TIMELINE PROJECT**

Timelines & Worldcons

- Not your daddy's convention any more; increased financial exposure requires improved business practices
- Worldcon's have been using a standard budget template and philosophy for several years
- Need to develop something similar for timelines
- Bringing current the Smofcon sanctioned timeline template developed by Elaine Brennan & her team over a decade ago

The WorldCon Timeline Project

- **FLEXIBILITY** – adaptable to each Worldcon committee's unique structure & goals.
- **SIMPLICITY** – streamlined enough to hold a volunteer's attention and not scare them away with a torrent of information; useful information is not buried in detail
- **CLARITY** – well-defined/distinct/clear-cut and understandable presentation of useful information

Adjusting the Approach

- Began with WC76 (San Jose) using the Brennan/Smofcon template as a starting point.
 - *Adjustment #1* – Worldcon planning phases not defined by the months out from the con, but mostly by the intervals between Worldcons and Smofcon.
 - *Adjustment #2* – Worldcons are **very** complex projects and anything other than high-level milestones & deadlines would soon overwhelm useful information.

Adjustment #1 - Phases

PHASE 1 – BIDDING

- *Beginning of Bid to the vote*

PHASE 2 – TRANSITION

- *Vote through Smofcon1 (end of year)*

PHASE 3 – PLAN (& PLOT)

- *First of the year (Smofcon1) through Worldcon1*

PHASE 4 – DEVELOP

- *Worldcon1 through Smofcon2 (end of year)*

PHASE 5 – IMPLEMENT

- *First of the year (Smofcon2) through 3-months out*

PHASE 6 – PREPARE for MOVE-IN

- *3-months out through the day before the con*

PHASE 7 – WORLDCON

- *Convention dates*

PHASE 8 – CLOSURE

- *Post-convention until books closed & all monies disbursed*

Adjustment #2 – Critical Info Only

PROBLEM: TMI – text too dense to find specific data.

SOLUTION: Separate internal from inter-divisional projects & tasks in effect creating 2 timelines

CRITICAL INFO - Vendor Commitments

Contractual deadlines with outside entities

- Deposits or other payments due to the convention center or hotel(s)
- Catering orders due to the caterer or catering department
- Room reservation cut-off date & block review

CRITICAL INFO – Mandated Deadlines

Legal, governmental, and other external regulatory deadlines

- WSFS comes to mind
- National/Federal, State, and local tax or corporate filing deadlines
- Member registration deadline for Hugo voting eligibility

CRITICAL INFO - Inter-Divisional Deadlines

Deadlines affecting more than one division or the committee-as-a-whole

- Submission deadlines for convention publications such as progress reports and the souvenir book
- Anticipated membership rate hike dates
- Publicity/press release of event announcements

CRITICAL INFO - Other Important Dates

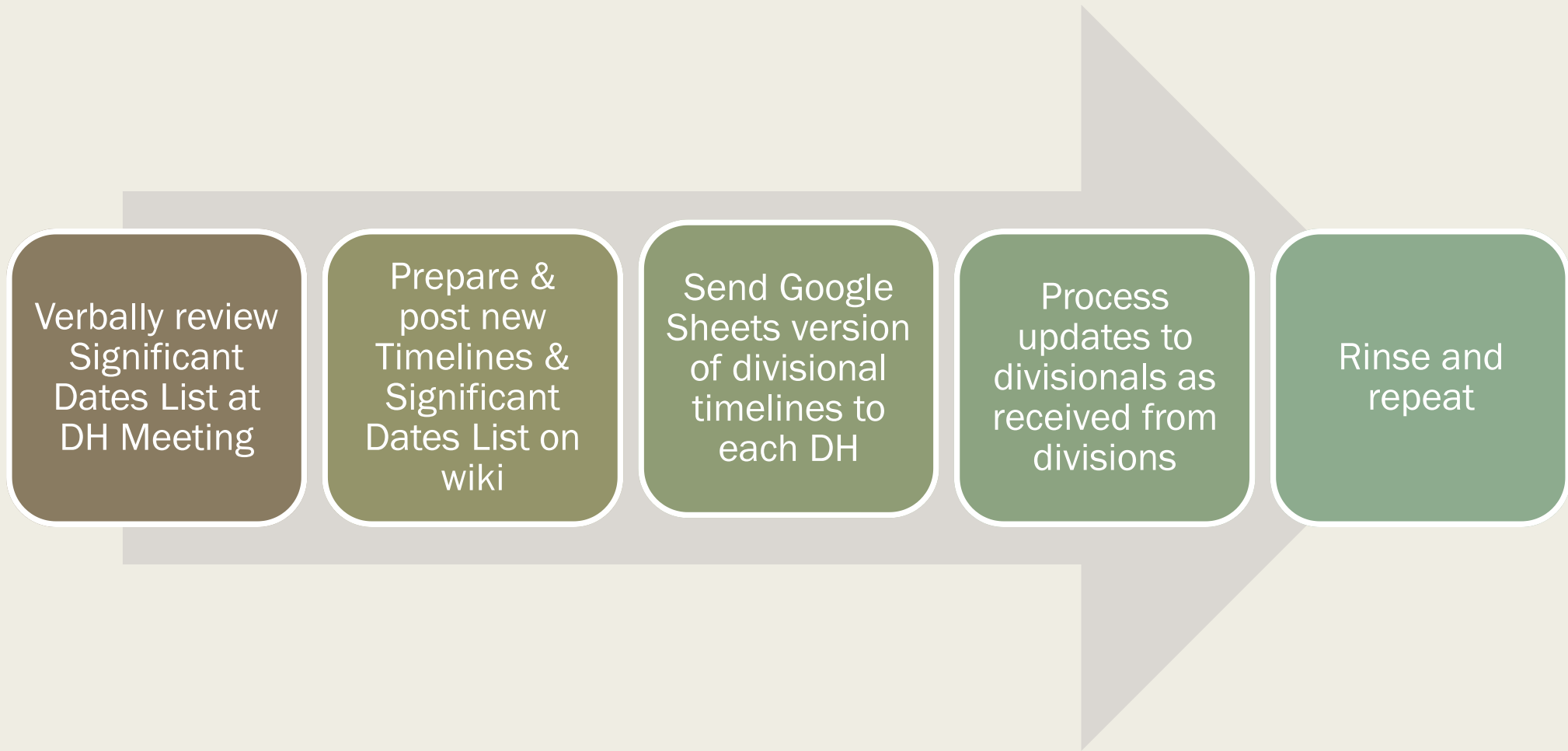
Events that the committee-as-a-whole should be aware of

- Dates of Committee meetings, whether on-line or in-person
- Dates of important conventions like Smofcon, and the seated Worldcons, and others that may be important to the group
- DH requested review points

Scope of Timeline Project

- Gather, maintain, & present the critical dates in a convention's planning process
- NOT “classic” project management - Working with “high level data” i.e. deadlines & milestones only
- NO resource management, dependencies (at least not at the moment), critical paths, etc.
- Most of all, no nagging. This is an informational only tool to assist DH's in keeping their divisions on track. No email reminders advising people they're behind on their project.

Updating Process



The image features two large, thick black L-shaped brackets. One is positioned in the top-left corner, and the other is in the bottom-right corner. They are oriented towards each other, framing the central text.

SOFTWARE

It's a Jungle Out There

There are hundreds of applications that can help manage a project or keep a timeline

- Heavyweights such as MS Project designed for large projects
- Moderate PM/timeline software targeting mid-sized companies & projects
- Basic approaches use common spreadsheets and a variety of templates
- Many group collaboration applications also include PM/timeline features
- Vast majority are cloud based and many are cross-platform capable
- Almost all of them cost money, although a few offer free limited access

What to Choose?

Depends on what you want to do; what info to be collected and how it should be stored and presented

- For the Worldcon Timeline Project, the original 3 criteria apply to software selection as well
 - *FLEXIBLE* in order to adapt to new groups & approaches
 - *SIMPLE* to use
 - *CLEAR* data presentation with multiple types of report formats
- **NOT** needed were most of the standard PM tools and features including group collaboration

Current Adaptation

Worldcon Timeline Project currently using a combination of software

- SmartSheet for data storage and manipulation as well as some reporting
- Goggle Sheets for the divisional timelines including tracking changes made by DH's
- Google Drive to store and make reports accessible

Always looking for better options!