

# **Implementation of the time management software for controlling team**

Case: Save the Children Finland



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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli löytää menetelmä ajanhallinnan parantamiseksi Pelastakaa Lapset ry:n controlling tiimissä. Lisäksi tavoitteena oli arvioida, miten tehokas ajanhallinta vaikuttaa tiimin toimintaan ja hyvinvointiin.

Opinnäytetyössä kirjoittaja käsittelee teoreettisia käsitteitä kuten tiimi, ajanhallinta, työntekijöiden hyvinvointi ja projektinhallinta yleensä. Tutkimus toteutettiin analysoimalla monipuolista olemassa olevaa tietoa, jonka avulla hahmotettiin kokonaisuus osaamisenäkökulmasta. Ajanhallintaa ja työhyvinvointia koskevaa teoriaa käytettiin tukemaan opinnäytetyössä esitettyjä väitteitä.

Tutkimuksen käytännön osuudessa kirjoittaja soveltaa menetelmiä, joilla haastatellaan valvontaryhmän osapuolia. Saatujen tietojen analysoinnin jälkeen muodostettiin parannusalueet. Sopivin työkalu valittiin tiimin toiveiden perusteella ja vertaamalla sitä muihin olemassa oleviin hankesuunnittelutyökaluihin.

Opinnäytetyön tuloksena vastataan johdannossa esitettyihin tutkimuskysymyksiin ja määritetään työkalu, jota ehdotetaan organisaatiolle. Projektisuunnittelutyökalu auttaa controlling tiimiä suunnittelemaan työnsä tehokkaammin, parantaa vastuunjakoa ryhmän sisällä ja lisää avoimuutta. Lisäksi työkalu auttaa vähentämään stressitasoa, mikä puolestaan auttaa pysymään motivoituneena ja sitoutuneena työhön.

Avainsanat tiimi, projektinhallinta, ajanhallinta, hyvinvointi  
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Abstract

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The aim of this thesis was to find out method for enhancing time management within the controlling team at Save the Children Finland. Additionally, it aimed to evaluate how effective time management impacts the team's performance and well-being.

Within the thesis, the author covers the theoretical concepts of the team, time management, employees' well-being, and project management in general. The study was carried out by analyzing various existing information to understand the entire capability perspective. Theory about time management and work wellbeing was used to support the claims made in the thesis.

In the practical part of the research the author implements methods of interviewing the involved parties within the controlling team. After analysis of the received data, the areas of improvement were formed. The most appropriate tool was selected based on the team's requests and a comparison against other existing project planning tools.

As a result of the thesis, the research questions from the introduction are being answered and the tool is being identified and suggested to the organisation. The project planning tool aims to assist the control team in enhancing work planning effectiveness, allocating responsibilities within the team more efficiently, and increasing transparency. In addition, tool will help to reduce the stress level, which in turn helps to stay motivated and engaged to work.

Keywords team, project management, time management, wellbeing

Pages 30 pages and appendices 2 pages

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# 1 Introduction

Efficiently managing time is a crucial element in maximising team productivity. Time, being a finite and non-renewable resource, demands prudent allocation to tasks and responsibilities. According to Daniel Dowling, dedicating 10 to 30 minutes each day or week to organising tasks can enhance productivity as it offers individuals a clear sense of direction and helps them determine what needs to be accomplished within a specific timeframe. (Slack, 2019)

Moreover, it allows for better planning and allocation of resources, enabling the team to respond more flexibly to unexpected challenges or opportunities. Furthermore, efficient time management promotes a work environment that prioritises accountability and responsibility among team members, enhancing their probability of meeting obligations. In essence, time management serves as the cornerstone upon which team success is built, facilitating the effective use of resources and the achievement of goals, ultimately leading to heightened performance and outcomes. Effective time management can have a positive impact on reducing stress. Stress is the most common thing that lowers the psychological well-being of workers when there are too many tasks to complete within tight deadlines. (Go1, 2022)

The thesis topic was created during the author's internship in Save the Children Finland and the head of controlling willingness to improve the team's time management and resourcing. The scope of the project is restricted to assisting members of the controlling team and does not consider the perspectives of other employees. The research part is carried out as a qualitative study and team members interviews. The interview questions are based on the theoretical part of the work.

The key goal of this work is to find suitable and modern solution for project planning throughout the year. Time management tool is to be easily modified and filled when needed.

The main research question is: How can the efficiency of time management be enhanced within the controlling team in Save the Children Finland?

The secondary research questions are: How improved time management will impact employees? Are there notable differences in dividing roles and responsibilities within the controlling team with improved planning? How does efficient time optimization impact the overall communication with other teams?

## **2 Save the Children**

Save the Children is the world's largest children's rights organisation. The organisation was established in the United Kingdom in 1919, when Eglantyne Jebb launched the Save the Children Fund to raise money to help children who suffered during the First World War. Save the Children played a key role in the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in 1989. (Save the Children, n.d.)

Today, Save the Children operates in more than 100 countries and has helped millions of children around the world. Main areas of activity include providing education, health care, and protection from violence and exploitation. In addition to its humanitarian efforts, Save the Children has also been active in advocating for children's rights. (Save the Children, n.d.) Overall, Save the Children has had a significant impact on the lives of children around the world. Its history is a testament to the importance of providing support and protection to vulnerable populations, particularly during times of crisis.

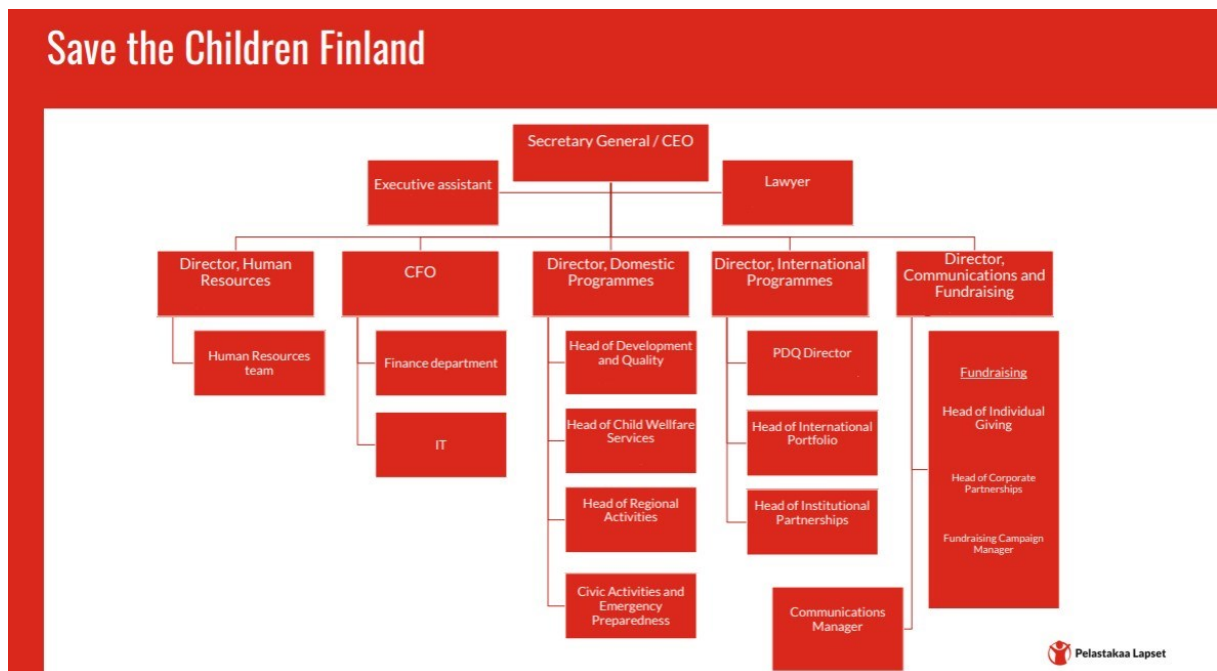
### **2.1 Save the Children Finland**

Save the Children Finland is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation which is the part of the global Save the Children organisation. Save the Children Finland was formed in 1922 when Ester Ståhlberg started to develop the system of foster homes for kids who suffered during the civil war in 1918. Nowadays it continues to improve children's life in Finland and globally. (Pelastakaa Lapset, n.d.)

Save the Children Finland has various funding sources such as own fund-raising activities, corporate partnerships, membership fees, financial assistance from the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA), and revenue from services provided to municipalities. The international development and humanitarian projects work of Save the Children Finland are supported financially by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA), the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), UNICEF, corporate partners, and private donors. (Pelastakaa Lapset, n.d.)

Like other regional representation offices of the organisation, Save the Children Finland has the developed structure. The structure of the organisation is being adopted to fulfil the tasks of the Finnish subsidiary to the most. The current structure is represented below.

Figure 1. Organisational structure (Intranet, 2023)



As it is visible from the organisation chart, the Save the Children Finland has relatively streamlined vertical hierarchical structure, thus the teams responsible for internal communication and monitoring of performance are essential. One of such teams, which acts as a bridge between different elements of the organisation, is the controlling team, which is the part of the finance department represented on the chart above.

## 2.2 Controlling team

The current controlling team consists of five members. The team, being part of the finance department, is responsible for budgeting, financial reporting, and coordinating the project's audits. The controlling team plays a critical role in ensuring proper financial management and accountability for the Save the Children Finland projects.

The controlling team performs a supportive role within the organisation, helping other departments. Therefore, resource allocation is of utmost importance to them. When work tasks are carefully planned and organised, the team has the ability to rearrange tasks and potentially allocate resources for new projects. In order to accommodate requests from other departments regarding new projects, the controlling team needs to have sufficient resources to provide support and aid in decision-making processes. In the current setup of the organisation, the task creation, resources distribution and work on such surfacing projects is achieved through the informal channels of communication within the team. However, it is



expected that the growing number of incoming projects would create the necessity for standardising the procedure of project tasks' allocation and project progress monitoring. Thus, the necessity of suitable software for such controlling is needed. That is exactly the basis upon which this given thesis is being created.

It is important to note that though consisting of professionals, who have a considerable experience in the area, the errors caused by human nature are appearing as well. This is a secondary reason for such analysis as implementation of suitable and user-friendly project monitoring and management tools would significantly decrease the number of errors caused by the human nature of the task performer, increasing the overall short- and long-term performance of the organization.

### **3 Literature review**

This chapter covers various aspects related to team dynamics and management to enhance project outcomes. The literature review will cover a range of topics including team composition, project management strategies, time management techniques, well-being of team members, and factors influencing them.

Time management techniques form an essential pillar of this research, as they address the critical aspect of effectively allocating and utilizing time throughout the project's lifecycle. The review will delve into time management practices and tools that can aid project teams in meeting deadlines, avoiding delays, and optimizing resource utilization.

#### **3.1 Team and teamwork**

Team is a group of people with complementary skills, who united by a collective objective, have set of goals and approach with mutual responsibility. (Cook, 2009, p.13)

The concept of the team emerged with the development of the society. The necessity to perform more and more complicated tasks related to the survival of prehistoric tribes resulted in evolution of the concept where the specific smaller task to reach a broader common goal were allocated to the most experienced member of the tribe with regard to a particular task. Thus, from the perspective of human evolution, the idea of mankind's survival was brought to life by the development of teamwork. Alternative lines of our ancestors' evolution which

lacked social skills and cooperation to reach a common goal disappeared in the layers and layers of soil, only to be discovered one day by future archaeologists. (Christiano, n.d.)

Fast forwarding into more modern times, team and teamwork shapes the economic and cultural development of the society we live in now. The idea of the team, brought people together, creating an instinct of ours to live in a place “where other people live”. This was the base step towards development of settlements and cities.

In the modern times, the concept of the team is also connected with what is known in management as the synergy effect. In plain words, it can be described as the outcome of the effort which is higher or better than the sum of efforts of the participants of the project. It is an additional product, additional value to the project created by the sheer fact that the teamwork has been implemented to complete the task. To some extent it can be due to better utilisation of team members’ efforts and resources. Thus, implementation of the efficient teamwork to the task not only allows to reach a better result but gives opportunity for overachieving.

That being said, the result of the task depends on the commitment and the performance of each and every team member to complete his or her part of the task. Thus, it is important to define which roles team members play in a given team.

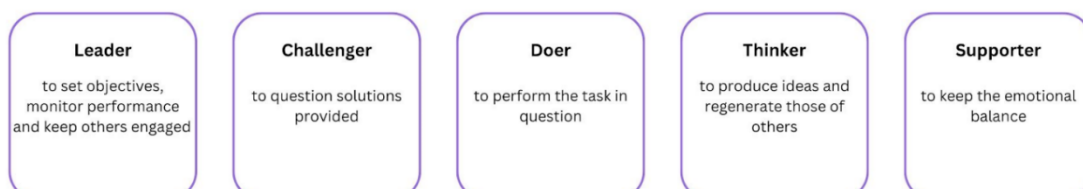
There are different approaches to categorization of team members. In the part of the research below, some will be covered. The list is not exhaustive as there is a wide variety of approaches to the topic in question, it is only the effort to draw some lines in the sand to standardise our own internal understanding.

The figure 2 below depicts various team roles as identified by psychologist Peter Honey.

Figure 2. Five main roles within any team (Honey, 1988)



## 5 main roles within any team



Some other approaches to definition to the roles of the members of the team date back to the development of the CRM or Crew Resource Management procedures within NASA. Later it was implemented within other industries with the help of psychologist and airline pilot David Beaty. He was the first to look at limitations, inefficient crew of the aircraft has and how these limitations can be overcome. His implementation of CRM techniques to airline crew operations found its way in the following industries as well and now they are implemented in many, including medicine and firefighting. For example, within different methodologies of CRM implemented for the firefighting, the fire has to be fought by a team of at least 3 members: a fighter, an assistant and a communicator. (Shively et al., n.d.)

Finally, British researcher and management consultant Meredith Belbin (n.d.) defined 9 roles of members within a team. He assumes that each team should consist of following:

1. Resource investigator (to find ideas)
2. Teamworker (to make a team work together)
3. Coordinator (to delegate tasks)
4. Plantor (to find alternative, "out of the box" solutions)
5. Evaluator (to judge the results achieved)
6. Specialist (the data tank on the task)
7. Shaper (to move the team forward)
8. Implementer (to carry out the task in efficient way)
9. Finisher (to perform quality control of the task)

### **3.2 Project management**

According to Management library (2023) project management started evolving in the 20th century around infrastructure projects. Thus, infrastructure projects of the prehistoric and ancient times also required a certain approach to management, they lacked consistency and the theoretical or even philosophical background and were mostly based on manager's personal abilities and non-codified set of skills. On the contrary, in the 20th century project management as a science started evolving. Surprisingly, the concept developed not from the backend as practical implementation of the philosophical concept but a bit in reverse, from the front end, when Henry Gantt invented a way to visualise the progress of a certain complex action, for which we are now very thankful and know it as Gantt chart. Being presented in 1910 it shifted the understanding of project evolution from simple effort to catch the deadline to the more complex set of tools and techniques. It is considered that this invention triggered the first stage of project management history which lasted till the middle

of fifties. In the same period the concept of Critical path method (CPM) and Project Evaluation Review Technique (PERT). Significant boost to early ways to run the projects was given by the First and the Second World wars, where complication of the warfare production, ways of conducting the war, battles themselves required the complication of the processes associated with them. As a result, one of the first examples of usage of Project management techniques as we see it nowadays was the Manhattan Project.

Second stage of the project management development, which covered the period of 1958 to the end of 1970ies saw the formalisation of the topic under the umbrella of international organisations. In 1965 the International Project Management Association (IPMA) was created, and the Project Management institute was founded. Development of the USA Space Program contributed to techniques we use nowadays.

Third stage of the project management development happened in the eighties and the nineties. In that period of time project management (PM) was enriched by developing methodologies for the risk management, thus the potential threats could have been analysed which resulted in induction of threat and error management into PM. In that period, so-called Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK) was significantly improved, extended and received its first fame.

Finally, we are now working in the fourth circle of the project management, where we put more attention towards the employees performing the tasks. In today's world we are actively implementing agile techniques which aim towards project self-steering and collaboration between performers within the team. These concepts were put to test and such skills within employees hardened during the COVID and current post-COVID times with the introduction of the home office concepts and idea of remote working place. Ever so high importance is given to employees ability to conduct themselves within the project, thus the development of PM trainings and certifications as well as employees' access to suitable PM software, thus the challenge and task we are to solve within this bachelor thesis.

One common challenge in project management is the sharing of resources. Often, team members are assigned to multiple projects along with their regular responsibilities, which can make it difficult for them to devote their full attention and time when required. This issue is closely tied to multitasking, as many individuals find themselves needing to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously. However, multitasking typically leads to decreased productivity. An effective project manager should make a conscious effort to understand the various

commitments of his or her team members and work towards minimizing the need for multitasking. (Wells & Kloppenborg, 2019, pp.37-39)

Another common challenge faced by project teams is dealing with geographical dispersion. Virtual teams often consist of members located in different time zones and even across different continents. This creates a unique set of difficulties compared to traditional face-to-face teams, as effective communication becomes much more challenging within virtual environments. Firstly, the physical distance between team members can make it difficult to coordinate schedules and find suitable meeting times that accommodate everyone's availability across various time zones. Secondly, cultural differences may arise due to diverse backgrounds among team members from different locations, which could lead to misunderstandings or conflicts if not properly addressed and managed. (Wells & Kloppenborg, 2019, pp.37-39)

We have seen a considerable rise of the role for the online meetings during the heat of COVID and it seems like nowadays, even though the battle with the decrease is successfully won, meetings through the online channels like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and others are still present. Throughout the business world it is considered that the boost in usage of the of such online solutions is even affecting the policy making for travelling within Europe and making its impact on industries dependent upon necessity of business persons to move around the continent

On the other hand, in some industries there is a set of restrictions which make the online meetings not the most efficient way of conducting activities. Industries involving direct B2C and B2B cooperation from both sides (medicine, education), in many cases remain much more conservative and maintain the necessity to travel from one location to another. (BCG, n.d.)

However, as a global trend, it seems like the usage of online solutions for organising the business flows have entered our lives not to disappear easily. And while the mentioned challenges remain, the new solutions are being found and the employees are getting more and more accustomed to the changed flows of doing business.

### **3.3 Time management**

The success of the project includes a plan of the activities, monitoring and regulating them to ensure that the goals of the project are met. Effective planning saves time and money in a

long-term and brings control of your work. The feeling of chaos at work usually arises from the fact that that many projects are running on top of each other and at different stages, and they are not connected in any way. Different responsible persons make more challenging to understand what is being done. (Hietala et al., 2023, Toimiva työyhteisö chapter, 3.1.1 Vuosikello toiminnan ohjausvälineenä)

Identifying of how much time project will take, ensures that it will be completed in agreed timeframe. Tasks and determination of their duration happens during planning processes. By summing up the durations, project's schedule can be identified. Schedule provides reference point for evaluating the project's progress at any point of time. Once schedule is established, it must be controlled. Schedule control involves managing any changes that may impact the project's timetable (Baca, 2005, p. 7)

One of the basic parameters of the any project, is that it has a defined beginning and defined end. Beginning and end of any project is defined by the input and output required, but also, even more importantly, the time of realization of a given project. No project can be indefinite, as in such a scenario, there cannot be a goal or output defined for it. Moreover, presence of the timeline, imposes preferably reasonable deadlines on the each and every step of the project, guaranteeing the commitment of accountable managers or product owners on stage result delivery. In a macroscope, lack of predefined time limit for the implementation of a project can lead to competitive disadvantage, loss of revenues and ultimate bankruptcy of any given company. Thus, project management tools related to time and scheduling are extremely important from the microeconomic and macroeconomic perspectives. (Wells & Kloppenborg, 2019, p. 69)

Of course, it should be mentioned here that time scopes of any project and any of its stages, especially on the stage of project initiation are in the field of a best guess possible as prediction of the future is not yet mastered by the humankind. That's why the project management has the concepts of lag and lead time to ensure certain flexibility for performance of the task and to showcase the extent of such flexibility that would not affect the time scope of the broader task.

Monitoring the timely performance of elements of the project and as a result ensuring the successful completion of the project in general, can be most easily achieved by tracing back to the roots of the PM in general. It started with the Gantt chart and to this very day remains one of the two most used solutions for tracking the success of the project from the

perspective of timely and successful completion of all its elements. Another way to represent evolution is the so-called annual clock.

The annual clock serves as a calendar for the year, taking the form of a clock face. It is an effective tool that enables companies, organisations, or teams to strategically plan and schedule their activities and processes throughout the year. By incorporating all known tasks and events into this visual representation, the annual clock offers valuable insight into how these various elements are interconnected. This holistic view allows for better understanding of task relationships within one comprehensive image. (Hautanen, 2018)

Annual clock is a good approach to schedule projects. It brings together all the themes related to managing people together and helps to visualize things between different groups. It also helps to describe for the team members what kind of things are coming during the year and what are the connections between them. Things that will in some way during the year take up team's time, time either directly or indirectly should be listed. It's good to take into consideration times that either enable or slow things down: for example, the approaching summer holidays forcefully affect when certain things can be promoted or when new projects should be started. (Hietala et al., 2023, Toimiva työyhteisö chapter, 3.1.1 Vuosikello toiminnan ohjausvälineenä)

The annual activity clock can be updated anytime a new activity or event comes, or something is cancelled. This makes it a good time management tool and easy to use when schedules are planned. Annual activity clock can be customised to its user's needs. The annual activity clock is usually in the shape of a clock, but it can be visualised in any form that the user finds the best for them.

The Gantt chart is a valuable tool for project management. It consists of two main sections: the left side lists all the tasks involved in the project, while the right side shows a timeline with schedule bars to visualise the progress. In addition, a Gantt chart can also incorporate important details such as task start and end dates, milestones, task dependencies, and assigned team members. (Gantt, n.d.)

Both ways of visualising the progress of the project, should it be an annual clock or Gantt chart are very useful for fast evaluation of the progress, delays and the start point for root-cause analysis of problems appearing for the particular project. However, both these visualisation techniques solve different problems. For example, Gantt chart is much more suitable for ad-hoc projects which are appearing once or have very specific points of start

and finish. On the other hand, the annual clock, being a closed circle, gives more flexibility on the projects which are consistently or repeatedly running throughout the different stages of the lifecycle of the company. Of course, there is no obligation for the annual clock to represent the year, any circled time period can be utilised, but the annual representation is by far the most common usage for such a technique.

### **3.4 Well-being and productivity**

Well-being is a summative concept of being healthy, happy, contented, comfortable and satisfied with the life. Employees can work with their full potential benefiting themselves and interest of the organization. (Schulte & Vainio, 2010, p. 423)

Wellbeing of employees is in many cases measured only by the financial parameters. However, it includes the whole variety of non-tangible elements related to the person's attitude towards his or her work, towards the work being done and ultimately towards the employer itself. Healthy attitude of the employer towards the wellbeing of an employee leads to improvement in performance, more efficient completion of the tasks in hand, and built on the trust and loyalty towards the employer. It guarantees the long-term development of the company and creation of a strong team of professionals devoted to the success of the business. (Fast Company, 2023)

Lack of such attitude, efforts of the employers to achieve the short term goals without looking towards the next time horizons, result in a scenario, so well-known to each and every one in the business world. Such an unhealthy relationship between the employer and the employee leads to all efforts being "sucked" out of an employee, his or her distrust towards the employer, feeling of "not getting anywhere". One of the first signals of such crisis escalation are formal errors being done by the employee and his or her stress. (Forbes, 2021)

Stress can be caused by inability of the employee to achieve the result on task given due to lack of skill, lack of time, lack of procedure, or even wilful negative intent of the employee.

It is widely understood, that the deadlines play important role in doing business in order to achieve the competitive advantage against the competitor. In the efficient company, deadline imposed will be fully devoted to the employee performing a given task, while in a company lacking internal communication culture or proper project management technique, a considerable amount of time can be used to communicate the task down to an employee and then back up on the result of the task performed. It leaves an employee with much less time



to perform the very same task, which was to consume the whole available time in the first place anyway. Clear internal communication is the result of correct, understandable procedure within the company. Moreover, distribution of the tasks and collection of the results for the tasks can be organized through the project management tools existing nowadays. Thus, established project management bubble around the company processes and production can solve the wellbeing of the employees thus, contributing the success of the company in long term.

Second reason depriving the employees' wellbeing is the lack of the skill within the employee. In one scenario if the necessity in such a skill was understood from the moment of employee's hiring, there may be grounds for error being done by the Human Resources department. In a second scenario, if lack of such a skill was caused by the change in company procedure or way of conducting business, acquisition of new production, provision of new service, training of an employee should have solved that problem on the earlier stage, making an employee prepared for the new task in hand. In here, project management techniques are extremely useful too. They can be used by both Human resources to guarantee that the most useful candidate is being chosen for the position as it would be clear for the Human Resources Officer, what the head of the department is looking for. Secondly, the training of the employee is the project in its own, with the targets established, timelines, necessary results to be achieved and monitoring of the progress. (RMIT, 2022)

The next reason for employee wellbeing not being achieved is the lack of the procedure, thus, lack of understanding from the employee on how the task is to be performed. Even though it looks as repetition of the previous reason, it is different in root-cause. In the previous example the employee was to be taught on the correct procedure, but this example is worse. It is the case, when fully trained and prepared for the task employee is working extremely inefficient, with low KPIs as there is no clear internally described ways on how the task is to be done. In that case, an employee is dragging his or her experiences and "best practices" from the previous employment, or start creating procedures on his or her own, to the best of his or her understanding, which have considerable risks related to the compliance, safety of the employee and company assets, security of the company from internal and external intruders. At the same time on the emotional level, the employee ends up being saturated with the tasks, having feeling of dissatisfaction towards his or her performance as to employee's understanding the task is being performed perfectly, but it is not in line with company expectations. The frustration with the work is arising. Should there have been an established process, which is done with the project management technique, such scenario could have been avoided.

Excluding the case of wilful mishandling of the task in hand, it is obvious that the correctly implemented project management techniques into company's operations can significantly increase the well-being of employees.

## **4 Research**

The evolution of project management should be driven by specific development requirements. This chapter includes the objective and validity of the research as well as data collection method, current state analysis, and development needs based on gathered interview data.

### **4.1 Background and need of the thesis**

The objective of this thesis research is to identify the primary deficiencies in project management within the controlling team. The study intends to examine the current state of affairs within the team and evaluate how projects are being executed. Additionally, it will assess the impact on employee well-being. The goal is to propose a solution that enhances working conditions for members of Save the Children Finland's controlling team.

### **4.2 Research method and implementation**

Qualitative research was selected as the research methodology for this thesis in order to gain a profound understanding of the topic. The primary aim of employing qualitative research was to gather rich and detailed information that would enable an in-depth exploration of the subject matter. In line with this objective, data for the study were gathered through conducting interviews with members of the controlling team. Utilizing interviews allowed for engaging directly with individuals who possess firsthand knowledge and experience related to the topic, thereby providing valuable insights into their perspectives, attitudes, experiences.

Individual face-to-face interviews were held with each member of the controlling team. Every interview had a duration of 30 minutes. The interview questions remained consistent across all team members, except for the team leader who was asked an extra question about budget allocation for a potential time management tool. The questions were premade but open so the employees could tell what they wanted the tool to have. The interviews were

recorded by writing down the answers. The interview questions can be found from the appendices.

### **4.3 Analysis of the collected material**

As a part of the research, the interviews were conducted within the organisation. The main idea behind these interviews was to understand the weak points for the management of the projects within the controlling team and figure out the important points where, as per respondents' point of view, the improvement is needed the most. The summary of the interviews conducted is represented in this chapter of the thesis.

After conducting interviews, a clearer understanding of how the controlling team currently manages planning tasks has emerged. Team members utilise various tools such as Outlook calendar, OneNote, Microsoft Planner, or individual Excel spreadsheets to monitor project statuses and deadlines. Regular team meetings, budgeting and reporting periods and deadlines are usually marked in the Outlook calendar half year ahead.

Most team members have around 15 projects that are going on at the same time. Some of these projects require regular attention and active participation, while others only require periodic monitoring. The roles within the controlling team are well-defined. Currently, the team holds bi-weekly meetings and monthly one-on-one meetings to discuss everyone's tasks and potentially reassign resources as necessary. Sometimes, there may be a lack of clarity in defining roles and assigning tasks when working with other teams.

It was also important to understand what were the main hurdles within the current setup of project management within the controlling team. Amongst other things, respondents mentioned that occasionally, unexpected tasks can arise even if they are repetitive. This may occur if a person forgets to set a calendar reminder for themselves. Additionally, unforeseen tasks can arise during external audits or other similar situations.

From a well-being standpoint in the workplace, employees often experience busy periods where they are required to juggle multiple projects without being able to fully engage with any particular aspect. This is particularly evident during phases such as reporting, where there may be minimal time available for monitoring, correcting errors, or reflection. Due to the absence of a structured schedule, work spills over into evenings and weekends in order to meet deadlines.

Transparency was emphasised by team members, expressing a desire to have visibility into each other's work. This would provide a better understanding of the team's progress and direction. This would also allow for easier delegation and task assignment in case one member is unavailable.

During the discussion on future project management tools, team members highlighted several desirable features. It was noted that a visually appealing interface is crucial to maintain user engagement. In terms of practical functionality, the following aspects were emphasised: the ability to categorise work tasks, obtain an overview of the entire project at a glance, simplicity in usability with minimal clicks required for navigation and updates, file attachment capability, and visibility into project status. In terms of budget, the team has indicated a maximum allocation of 50 euros per month. Nevertheless, the team is curious to explore alternative options and potentially allocate a higher budget if the tool proves to be beneficial.

For the given analysis it has been specifically pointed out by the team, that due to the nature of projects being run, the annual clock visualisation of the project status is more preferable. This position outlined by the team members is to be taken into consideration in the following stages where all chosen tools are being compared between each other with the task of finding the optimal one.

The interviews conducted were crucial for further research as the results helped to narrow down the number of solutions which would be most appealing to the team. Bearing in mind the main aspects of the project management described above as well as the preferences of the end-users for any solution chosen, the following tools were shortlisted and analysed.

## **5 Improvement plan**

To sum up employees have a clear picture of their own roles and to do's in the controlling team. One common way of tracking and planning work is still missing. The controlling team is interested in acquiring a user-friendly tool to assist with planning their individual work tasks and monitoring the current status of the entire team. The team believes that it would improve the work quality and personal well-being.

## 5.1 Software options

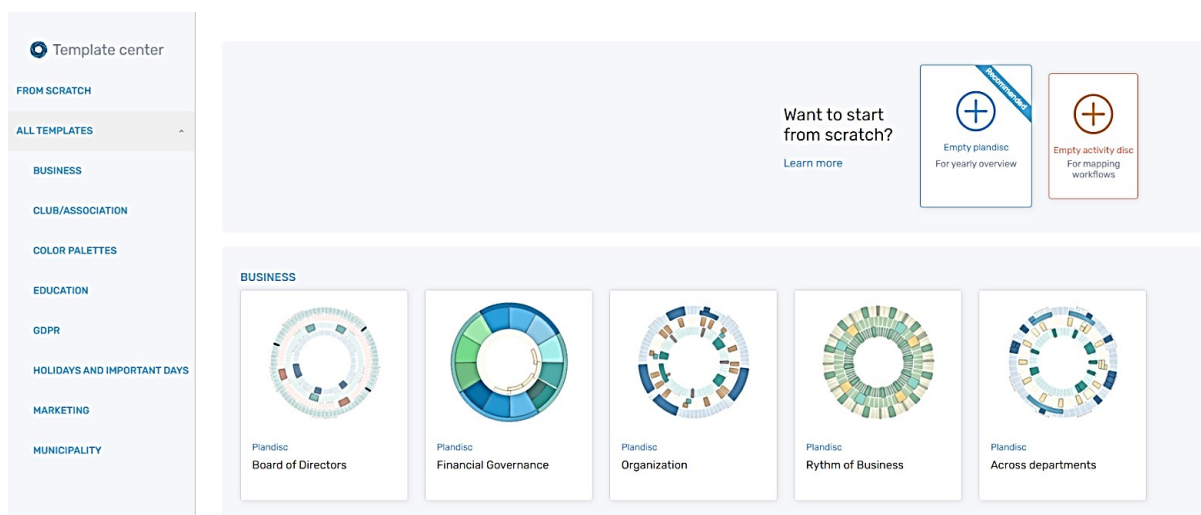
In this study, a selection of various software and tools commonly utilized for team collaboration and project management were identified. The goal was to find different options including free and paid tools, and evaluate their features, ease of use, and effectiveness in team management. In order to gain a better understanding of their functionality, each tool was tested by the author. The author also emphasises that all the features and prices are accurate at the time of the study.

### 5.1.1 Visma Plandisc

Visma Plandisc is a calendar tool that works as a cloud service online. Plandisc helps make an annual clock, for any company or team, depending on the needs. Plandisc is a customizable calendar tool that works with MS Office (Teams, Outlook, PowerPoint, SharePoint and Planner) and is suitable for various companies and industries. (Plandisc, n.d.)

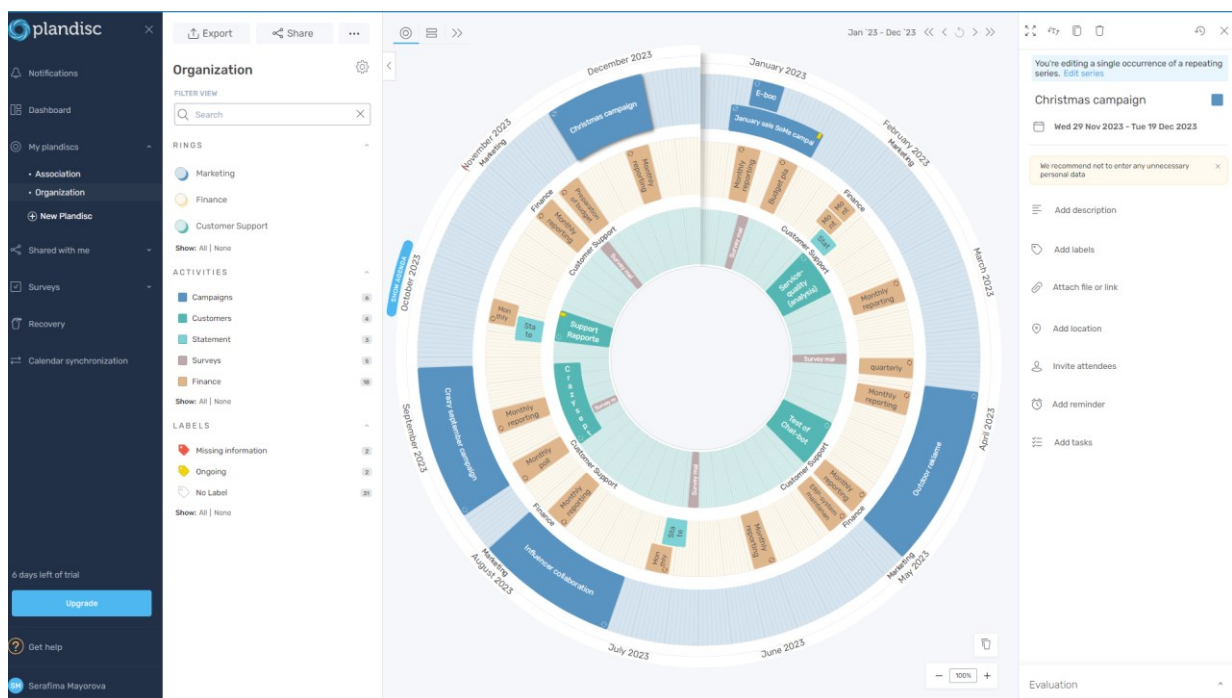
Visma Plandisc provides a 14 day free trial period. Programme offers many options of ready to use plandiscs for different needs, which can be pre-filled or empty as you can see in the figure 3. There is also an option to make your plandisc from scratch.

Figure 3. Template center. Screenshot (Visma Plandisc, 2023)



Circular layout of Visma Plandisc visually represents a clear overview of the entire year at a glance. (Figure 4) It offers several customization options for modifying the annual clock based on individual requirements, such as adjusting segment sizes, changing colours, or adding extra layers for more complex planning. The segments of the clock can be easily rearranged by dragging them around. User can attach files or links to activities. To efficiently track activities, labels and reminders can also be added as needed. Annual clock can be export in different form such as image, PDF-, Excel- or PowerPoint file.

Figure 4. Overview. Screenshot (Visma Plandisc, 2023)



One potential disadvantage of this tool is that learning all the features and customization options may take some time. Team members may not be willing or able to invest the time required for mastering these aspects. Also using this tool for planning simple task might be time-consuming and unnecessarily complicated. If some project requires in-depth breakdown of tasks and dependencies, team might need other project management tool.

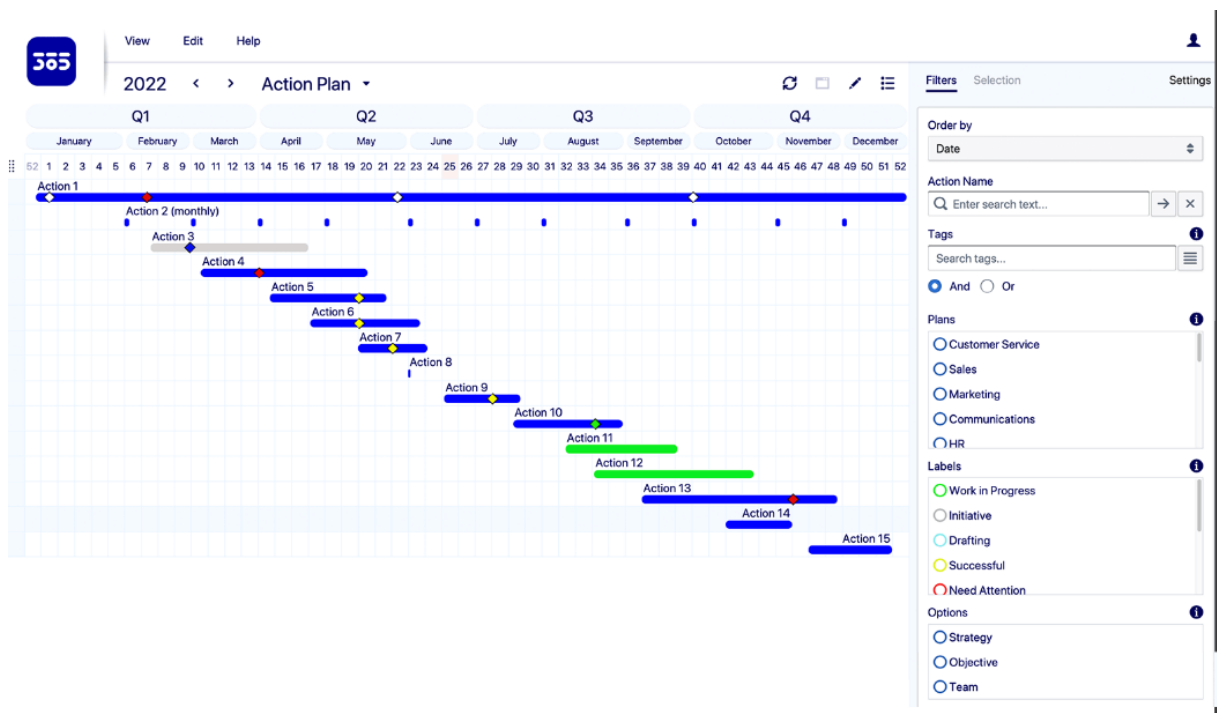
At the time of the analysis Free plan and Business subscription, with a price of 28€ per month per user, are meant for individual users. Small Enterprise subscriptions, which serves a team of 2-4 users, is priced 26€ per month per user. Larger teams need to reach out to sales for customized offers.

### 5.1.2 Plan 365

Alternative solution, to gather team's plans in one place, was created in Finland. Plan 365 includes a cloud-based Team Plan and Free Plan, which is designed for individual use and requires downloading onto the user's computer.

The desktop provides an overview of the entire year's activities in a timeline format. (Figure 5) Plan-365 has the capability to display the timeline by quartile, six months, or one month at a time. Users have the option to view all actions or the actions of specific plans. Additionally, actions can be organized and sorted by departments, labels, and tags for effective project management.

Figure 5. Overview. Screenshot (Plan 365, 2023)



The software includes all the typical features of project management tools. (Figure 6) It provides a space for initiating and describing project tasks, as well as various customization options and filters for actions. Actions can be color-coded, and files can be attached to each one.

Figure 6. Adding action. Screenshot (Plan 365, 2023)

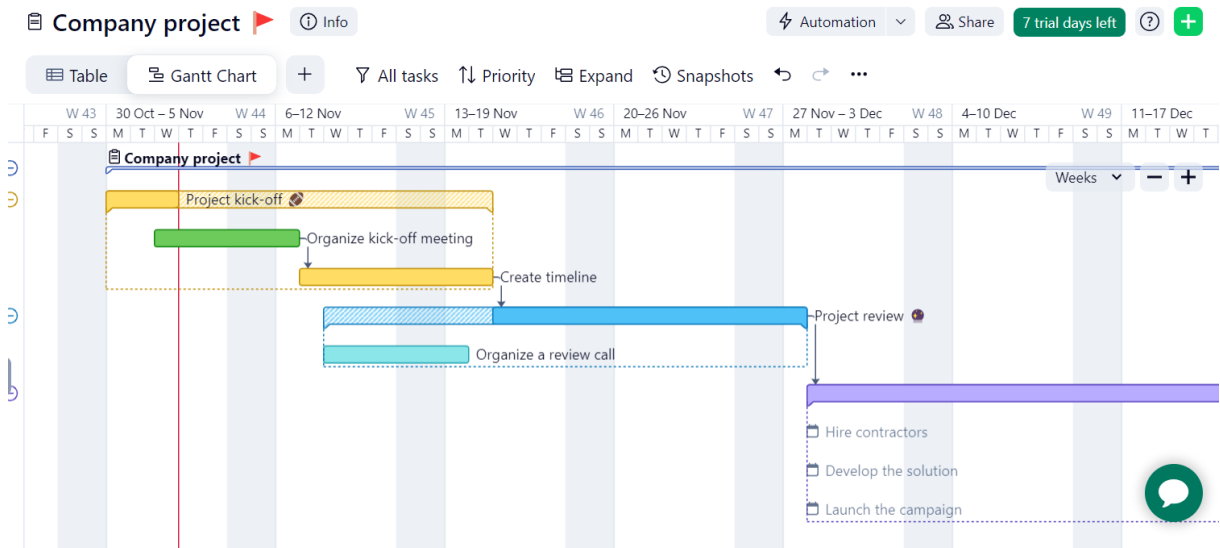
Based on the analysis, Plan 365 seems to be a practical planning tool with an intuitive interface. It seems to be easy to learn for new user. The actions can be shared to other calendars such as Google or Outlook. At the time of the analysis Team Plan for 3 users costs 45€ per month and 15€ for every additional user. Free Plan doesn't suite for controlling team since it works only on one computer and doesn't have opportunities to collaborate.

### 5.1.3 Wrike

Wrike is another popular cloud-based project management tool. It includes Gantt charts for visual project planning and scheduling. Though having some troubles being adapted to smaller screens, it has much fresher and modern user interface. Clicking on the tasks or umbrellas for the tasks in the gantt chart, it is possible to access all features related to it, change status, visual elements, add comments and be involved in chat with other team members regarding it. Elements on the Gantt chart are much more flexible and visually appealing without the negative impact on the logic side in the background of the software. An example of the gantt chart is shown in figure 7 below.

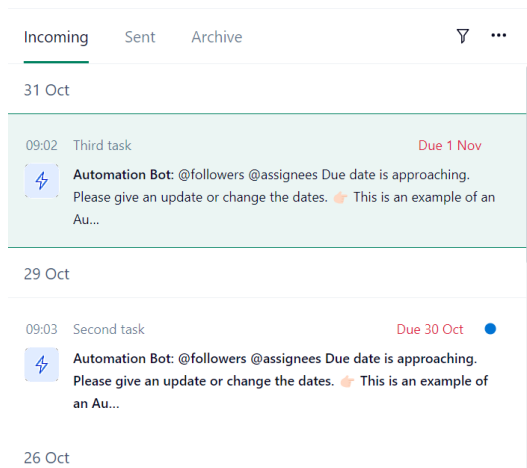


Figure 7. Gantt chart. Screenshot (Wrike, 2023)



Finally, the important feature of the tool is the AI Chatbot which provides information on the pending tasks and sends notifications to team members regarding the upcoming deadline. (Figure 8)

Figure 8. AI chatbot. Screenshot (Wrike, 2023)



The drawback mentioned though is the compatibility of the main screen with the smaller screens of travel laptops. Unfortunately, during testing, compatibility with a smartphone was not checked.

The pricing policy of Wrike starts with 9,80 USD per user for the Team subscription. A team subscription in Wrike includes various tools for improving teamwork and project

management. These tools include task coordination, real-time collaboration, Gantt charts for visual planning, customizable dashboards, file sharing capabilities, time tracking functionality, workflow automation options, detailed reporting and analysis features. Wrike also integrates with third-party tools.

### 5.1.4 Monday

The Monday platform is recognized for its user-friendly and visual interface, and it operates as a cloud-based project management tool. Users can take advantage of a 14-day trial period for the Pro Plan before switching to the Free plan. However, the Free plan has restricted functionality and is limited to a maximum of two users.

The desktop interface provides a comprehensive display of all tasks, including those scheduled for the current and upcoming months. (Figure 9) Task groups' names are customizable, and new groups can be added as needed. The column layout is also flexible to accommodate specific project management requirements. In general, the software appears convenient. Monday.com offers various instructional videos that assist quick learning.

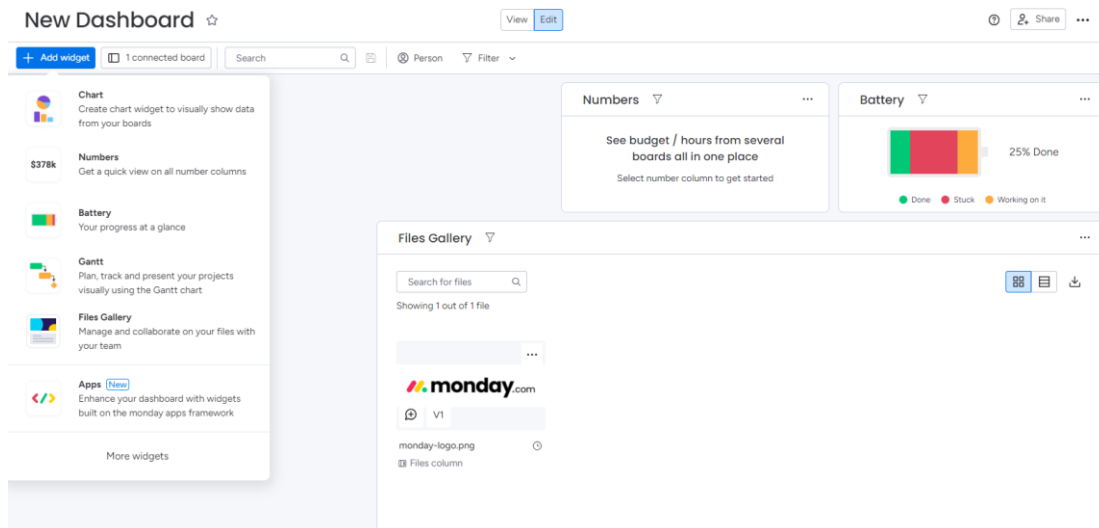
Figure 9. Desktop. Screenshot (Monday, 2023)

The screenshot displays the Monday.com desktop interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'New Task' button, a search bar, and various filters. Below this, the main content area is divided into sections for 'This month', 'Next month', and 'New Group'. Each section contains a table of tasks with columns for Task, Owner, Due Date, Status, Priority, Notes, Files, and Timeline. The 'This month' section shows three tasks: Task 1 (Working on it, Low priority), Task 2 (Done, High priority), and Task 3 (Stuck, Medium priority). The 'Next month' and 'New Group' sections are currently empty.

Task	Owner	Due Date	Status	Priority	Notes	Files	Timeline
Task 1	[User]	8 Nov	Working on it	Low	Action items	end	! 5-7 Nov
Task 2	[User]	15 Nov	Done	High	Meeting notes		✓ 2-5 Nov
Task 3	[User]	16 Oct	Stuck	Medium	Other		! 4-5 Nov
		16 Oct - 15 Nov				end	2-7 Nov

There's possibility of creating and customizing dashboards. (Figure 10) The data can be shown in different ways such as charts, Gants, numbers, battery of progress and file gallery. Dashboards can be shared with other team members and guests.

Figure 10. Dashboard. Screenshot (Monday, 2023)



Monday.com offers a mobile app for both iOS and Android, enabling team members to stay connected and manage tasks while on the move. However, for the present study, this functionality may not be essential for the controlling team.

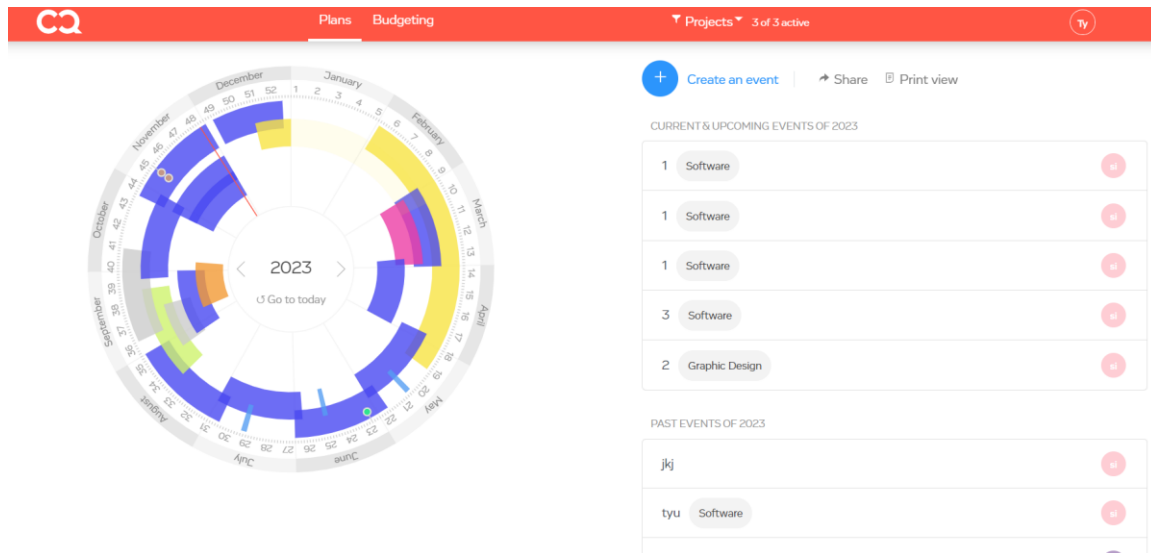
The pricing structure for Monday.com consists of three tiers: Basic, Standard, and Pro. The minimum team size for paid subscription is 3 individuals. Unfortunately, price of the subscriptions works per group of seats not per seat. As a result, at present the target team can subscribe for a plan with 5 seats. However, if the team expands to 6 members, they will be required to pay for 10 seats due to Monday.com's predefined team sizes of 3, 5, 10, 15 etc. For the team size of 5 seats the most popular plan is Standard with a price of 10€ per seat per month.

### 5.1.5 Cloqqa

Cloqqa is a free cloud-based tool for annual marketing planning and budgeting. This software was included in the research due to its potential use as a simple method for visualizing events throughout the year.

The user designs projects and assigns team members with permissions to make modifications. The desktop provides a yearly overview of current and upcoming events. (Figure 11) The number of displayed projects can be sorted, along with details about the activities involved in each project and their tags.

Figure 11. Overview. Screenshot (Cloqqa, 2023)



When creating a new event, the user has the option to customize the duration, colour, attach files, and add notes. (Figure 12) An event may not exclusively belong to one project but could be associated with multiple projects. The tool provides a pre-defined list of tags that cannot be customized. These default tags may not align with the tasks and activities of the control team.

Figure 12. Creating an event. Screenshot (Cloqqa, 2023)

The screenshot shows the 'Create an event' form. It has a text input field for 'Name this event'. Below it is a 'Projects' section with a red circular icon and a blue '+ Add projects' button. The 'Tag' section has a dropdown menu with 'No tag' selected. The 'One day event' section has a toggle switch that is currently turned off. The 'Date' section has two dropdown menus, both showing '29.11.2023'. The 'Repeat' section has a dropdown menu with 'No' selected. The 'Attachments' section has a blue '+ Add an attachment' button. At the bottom, there is a text area for 'Add notes'.

The tool's free availability can be highlighted as an advantage. However, during testing, it was observed that the tool operates at a slow pace with delays. Additionally, there are limited customization options available which may not fulfil the team's requirements.

## 5.2 Comparison and choice on the software

The previous section outlines the project and time management tools selected by the author. This upcoming chapter will evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of these tools, ultimately leading to the selection of the most suitable option for the controlling team.

The table below provides an overview of the tools described in previous chapter. In this work the author chose modern project management tools that are easy to get online.

Table 1. Comparison of software

Qualities	Visma Plandisc	Plan 365	Wrike	Monday	Cloqqa
<b>Visual appearance</b>	Annual wheel	Timeline	Gantt chart	Table of tasks	Annual wheel
<b>Easy to learn</b>	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+
<b>Customization</b>	+	+	+	+	-
<b>File attachment</b>	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Dashboards</b>	-	-	+	+	-
<b>Customer experience</b>	+	+	+	+	-
<b>Price per user</b>	≈26€	≈15€	≈10USD	≈10€	Free

In this research these software were chose for comparison: Visma Plandisc, Plan365, Wrike, Monday and Cloqqa. All of them are cloud-based time management tool. All of the tools were tested by the author of this work for better understanding the abilities of the tool.

During the testing Plan 365 and Cloqqa seem to be easy to learn how to use, while Visma Plandisc, Wrike and Monday might require more in-depth learning to be able to use all of possible features.

All tool excluding Cloqqa have various options of customization, allowing team to adapt platform to their unique project management processes. User can create different labels, tags, other colour codes, which can be helpful for visually distinguishing between different types of tasks or phases within the project. Customizing user roles, permissions, and access control is a critical aspect of project management tools. Teams can tailor these settings to ensure that each team member has the appropriate level of access.

The tools meet the requirement that team members mentioned regarding the need for a file attachment feature.

Dashboard is a visual representation of data that provides an overview of key performance indicators (KPIs), metrics, and other relevant information. Dashboards use charts, graphs, tables, and other visual elements to represent data. Dashboards are designed to allow users to monitor, analyse, and understand complex data sets at a glance. (Microsoft, n.d.) Wrike and Monday dashboards view with different type of widgets that team can add for better monitoring the process. Other tools unfortunately don't have such a feature.

In addition to over comparison points, it was also very important to look at them from the end user perspective. Some of the solutions were smooth and were intuitive for the final user of it. On the other hand, some of the solutions mentioned in the table above were less comfortable and while testing them, certain performance issues were noted. Taking into consideration the fact that the final users are not involved directly with IT and need the easy solution to work with on the tip of their fingers, ones whose performance was not up to the high standard had to be excluded.

Finally, the cost parameter had to be taken into consideration as well, because it was mentioned on the interview stage of the research that such parameter is playing the crucial role for the decision making. According to cost analysis, Monday.com offers the price of 10€ per person per month. However, it should be noted that purchasing several points of access or "seats", as Monday.com defines them themselves, as a package may increase overall costs. Cloqqa provides a free tool, while monthly Wrike charges 10 USD per person and Plan 365 asks for 15€ per person. Visma Plandisc is the most expensive option at around

26€ per person per month. Unfortunately, at this stage, while being a suitable solution by other parameters, Visma had to be excluded from the choice as well.

The goal of this work was to find a modern solution for project planning for controlling team. After analysing the needs and requirements of the controlling team and testing various time management tools, one tool stood out in comparison to others. Wrike appears to be optimal software for efficient time management within controlling team. It has all the basic features that team need, such as task scheduling, role allocation, and dashboard creation for tracking the team's status. Additionally, it offers a user-friendly interface at a budget-friendly price point that aligns with the controlling team's financial resources.

All of the solutions chosen provided a different view on the solution to the problem needed. All of them had the basic set of project management techniques implemented, which would have solved the case in question. That's why the final decision on the solution of the choice was up to additional parameters, which were outlined in the table above. After comparing the advantages and disadvantages of all the shortlisted tools, and comparing them to the requirements of the team, the author believes that Wrike as a time management tool will improve controlling team performance. It will add the transparency between team members as well will have positive impact on the employees' well-being.

## **6 Conclusion and recommendations**

In the conclusion of the thesis, it is important to glance at the analysis performed and whether the questions raised by the thesis were answered and the solution to the case found.

In the theoretic part the importance of planning in advance to achieve a successful project result was learned. It answers the main research question: How can the efficiency of time management be enhanced within the controlling team in Save the Children Finland? Theoretical base confirms that a clear and structured plan provides employees with a roadmap, outlining their responsibilities and priorities. This clarity reduces uncertainty, allowing employees to approach their work with confidence and a sense of purpose.

Efficient planning also aids in time management, helping employees allocate their time effectively to meet deadlines and achieve goals. This minimizes stress and prevents the feeling of being overwhelmed by tasks. It also helps to create a productive work environment for the whole team. Well-structured plan often leads to a smoother workflow and collective

productivity. Moreover, such a plan would ensure the clear distribution of responsibilities, leading to more transparent control over performance of the tasks and clearer understanding of the progress of the project overall. Finally, the structured planning will positively impact the controlling team by providing clarity, reducing stress, improving time management, fostering teamwork, and aligning tasks with individual skills, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction and overall well-being. Thus, usage of the suitable project management solution improves the time utilisation of the employees, while improving the communication within the team as well as between different teams. And that would answer another secondary question listed in the introduction of the thesis.

Coming to the main question of the research, the theoretical and the practical part of it proved that efficiency of the time management can be indeed improved with the introduction of the suitable project management tool, which would answer to the challenges created by the environment of the Save the Children area of work. Throughout the analysis basics of the project management has been analysed with accent on the well-being of the employees and the time management. Then, in the practical part of the research the main challenges to the controlling team of the organization were formulated through the series of the interviews with team members.

The controlling team required a development in managing working tasks. By conducting interviews for each team member improvement points were found. Team members have many parallel projects going on, and currently the one common project tracking tool is missing. Even though most of the work tasks within the controlling team are successfully being done on time, the need of the time management tool was clear. By implementing the tool, the team aims to improve time management, work quality, employee well-being and task structuring.

After that, different tools for project management were looked into and compared against each other and against the current challenges faced by the controlling team. The one solution which fits all the sides was chosen and provided as a recommendation to the controlling team of the Save the Children Finland based on this research.

It has been proven and decided that a suitable solution for project management would indeed solve the issues mentioned by the controlling team and increase overall efficiency of time management and that such solution is Wrike project management tool.



## 7 Reflection

The thesis has clearly answered all the questions stated in its introduction. It helped the author a lot to understand on a deeper level the challenges related to the project management within organisations like Save the Children Finland, not to mention the broadened understanding on the concepts of project management in general. The solution which would have improved the internal processes was found and suggested has been offered to the team.

However, there is still room for further improvement on the topic. Firstly, it is related to the nature of the practical analysis of this thesis. Currently, the controlling team doesn't use internal time management tool. Thus, their expectations on the system may be vague or in real life unnecessary and maybe adjusted as soon as they start using a suggested tool. The employees would grow into this solution and figure out whether it indeed answers their challenges. Should that not be the case, the author would be glad to engage in further analysis with the controlling team to understand their adapted wishes regarding the system and implement the analysis again based on the new parameters. In that way, to a certain extent it is the never-ending work towards the constant improvement of the internal processes. Moreover, the time limits imposed on the tasks may have deprived the author from getting even deeper into the analysis in the task of finding the ideal solution for the team, but that would only mean that such work will continue even outside of the framework of the given thesis.

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## **Appendix 1. Data management plan**

Data that gathered from interviews have been exclusively used for thesis research without any disclosure or utilization elsewhere.

The interview procedure followed ethical guidelines for research by protecting the confidentiality of participants. Before conducting the interviews, every participant provided their informed consent. The personal information included in this thesis was obtained with explicit permission from the participants, specifically for its utilization in academic research.

Interview notes are stored privately by the author this work and ensured that answers are not going to be published or utilized outside of this research.

Upon completion of the thesis work, detailed responses are kept in a confidential manner. The author of the thesis securely retains the material for a period of one year from the date of thesis acceptance. This is done to ensure that the thesis results can be verified if needed. Afterward, the material is appropriately disposed of.

## **Appendix 2. Interview questions**

- 1 How currently does the controlling team monitor the project process?
- 2 How many ongoing projects do you usually have at the same time?
- 3 Do you have a clear picture of your “to do” during the project?
- 4 Do you feel your role in the project is clear?
- 5 How clear is communication between teams during the project?
- 6 How do you feel about the quality of the project result?
- 7 How do you feel about your well-being and work? Do you think an annual activity clock will help you with work quality? if yes how?
- 8 How important for you is the visual aspect in the software?
- 9 What are the main features you would like to have in project planning software? What are your expectations from the annual activity clock?
- 10 How do you hope the annual activity clock will benefit you?
- 11 What budget could be assigned for the future time management software?