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unleash the
TRUE
POWER
of the
work
breakdown
structure



Josh Nankivel, BSc PM, PMP

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For Tamara, Mazaryk, Draven, and Ryker

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in one of the most fundamental project management tools, the Work Breakdown Structure.

Why Work Breakdown Structure Training?

In my career, I have seen many project managers and organizations limp along on projects in ways that were preventable with proper use of the WBS tool. I created WBS Coach to help combat this problem. In addition to this version, there are additional tutorial videos and audio resources available in the complete digital training package at <http://WBSCoach.com>. There is a discount on that course available to you as someone who purchased this book. See the final page of the book for your discount code.

I wrote this book for the new or aspiring project manager, the “accidental” project manager who may have no background of approaching project management as a formal discipline, and even the experienced project manager who is looking to enhance their ability to manage successful projects.

Why This is Not Like Other Books

Other project management “how to” books read like textbooks. My style of writing includes talking directly to you, the reader. I imagine that you and I are working for the same organization and are sitting together at one of our desks chatting about the topic. It may be helpful for you to imagine this same scenario as you read this book. I recommend you start at the beginning and read the chapters in order. Do not skip around because the lessons build on each other.

Since you have purchased this book, I will consider you my student for the time being. As such, you should feel free to contact me at josh@WBSCoach.com with your questions and feedback. It could be about this topic or project management in general. I also invite you to check out my free newsletters available at <http://pmStudent.com>. There are several to choose from and it is very likely one of them will fit your situation.

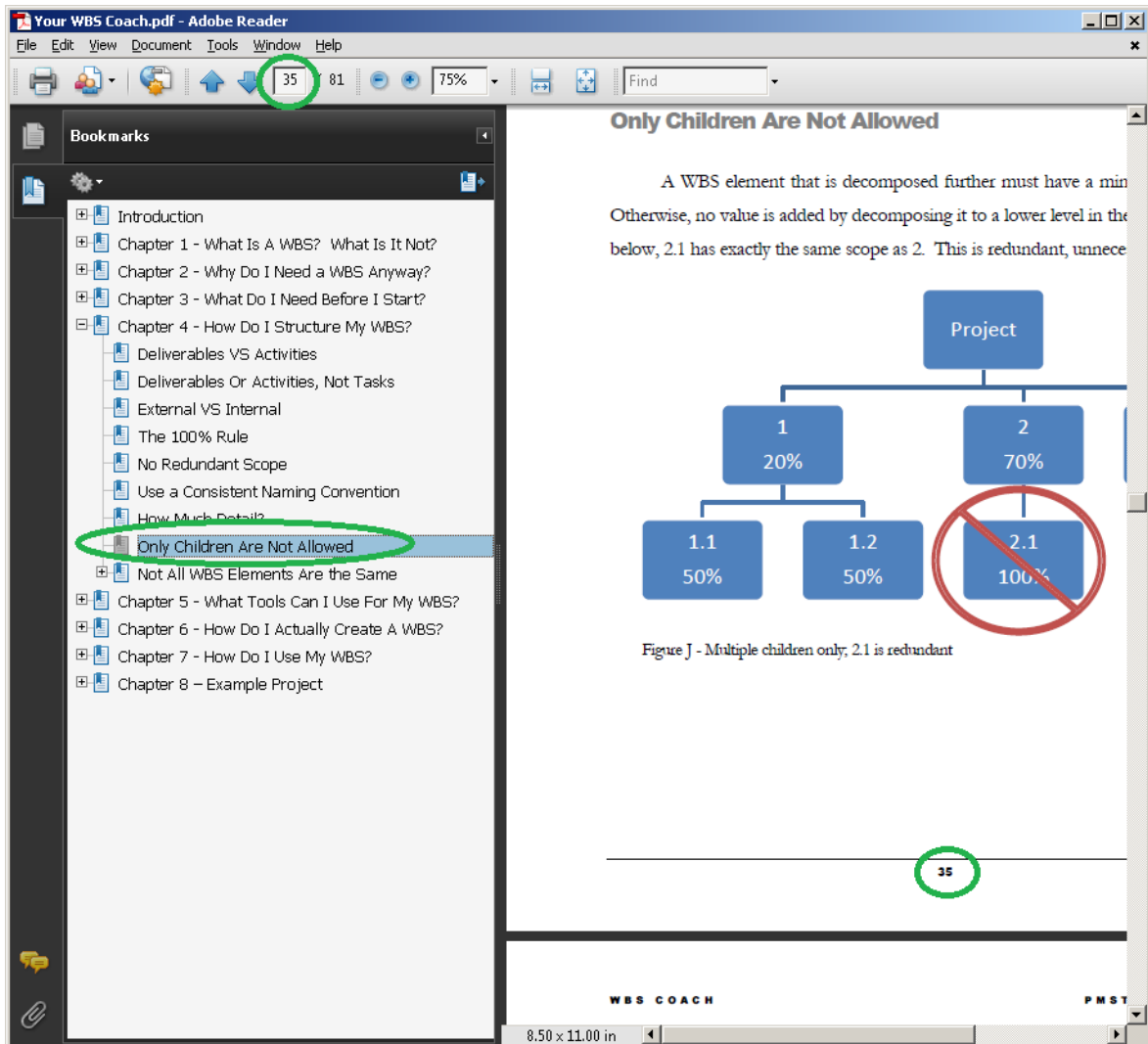
I realize that people learn and absorb new information in different ways. I have taken pains to organize this book in a manner that separate notes on your part should be unnecessary. At the end of Chapter 6 there is a WBS Checklist you can print out and use while implementing the concepts we will be discussing.

I have also tried to make it easy to refer back to this eBook when you need to. Have you ever noticed how many PDF files have a mismatch

between the page numbers at the bottom of the page and the actual page of the file? If you want to go to page 112 and just type that into the page navigation box at the top, you end up on page 111 or 115. In this eBook, you will get to the right page by typing in the page number.

Additionally you can use the bookmarks toolbar to navigate through the chapters. I have structured this file so that all chapters and subheadings show up as bookmarks to make it as easy as possible to navigate.

See the image on the next page for an example of what I mean. It is a screen capture using Adobe Reader. I circled in green the various ways to navigate through the file. I especially like navigating via the bookmarks pane. You can open this by clicking the icon on the left that looks like a ribbon bookmark hanging over a page. Or you can use the top menu by clicking **View >> Navigation Panels >> Bookmarks**.



The next section is a little about me. Use this to get into that mindset where you and I are sitting at a desk having a discussion. It is important for you to be aware of my background so that we can have a good conversation throughout this book together. It will help you remember my lessons learned and the concepts we will discuss.

About Josh Nankivel, BSc PM, PMP

I have been managing IT and non-IT projects in Computing, Financial Services, Telecommunications, and Aerospace for over a decade. I have also been a team member on projects in both technical (as a database developer) and non-technical capacities, and I have been a project sponsor. I have worked on projects with a Waterfall approach, Scrum Agile, and various mash-ups including some elements of Critical Chain project management.

A major theme throughout my career is process improvement projects. My passion for processes has led me to lead many automation and organizational process initiatives. I initiated a sizeable chunk of these, as a sponsor or just a “concerned citizen” wanting to make things work better. That passion also makes me constantly evaluate my own project management processes and improve them on a continuous basis.

I was a professional trainer for several years before managing projects, and I love to teach. While working for Gateway computers I earned several internal technical training certifications and awards as a trainer before making the career switch to management and project management. My academic background includes a Bachelor of Science in Project Management and I am PMP certified.

I love to write and speak about project management. My blog at pmStudent.com has the goal of helping new and aspiring project managers learn about project management and reach their career goals. You can find my publications and interviews on dozens of sites and print publications. I am an avid volunteer for several project management organizations including the PMI New Media Council, past Vice Chair of Special Projects for the Students of Project Management Specific Interest Group (PMI). I speak from time to time at both large conferences and local events on various project management topics.

I live in Sioux Falls, South Dakota in the United States with my wife and our three sons. Oh, and I am a science & technology geek too!



Here we go!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JN', written in a cursive style.

Josh Nankivel, PMP
Project Management Best Practices Instructor
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Chapter

1

Chapter 1 - What Is A WBS? What Is It Not?

Remember a time when you had to do something that was so huge, so complex that you did not know where to start?

Many projects are exactly like this at the beginning. You only have a vague idea of what you are actually supposed to produce, and what it will take to make it happen. The Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) is essentially a special kind of outline, one that you use to plan and execute your project.

Have you ever started working on something and then kept having to change your plans repeatedly because of all the things you forgot you had to do?

Scope changes WILL occur on your projects, and you WILL forget to plan for activities and realize it very late. A WBS helps minimize these problems, and makes them easier to deal with when they occur.