Mini-guide to Progress Reporting

No one enjoys surprises, which is why an effective PM understands the necessity of keeping stakeholders informed and up to date. Building consensus is essential for making the difficult decisions often required to maintain steady progress. Therefore, dedicate time to crafting a clear, concise, and informative regular progress report, and ensure that each report is discussed with key stakeholders.

Be clear, honest and insightful

A great progress report should not just be a list of completed tasks. It should tell a story supporting the outcome of the project or programme, giving the context and clarity of any directional steers needed. Be comfortable delivering honest, insightful and tough messages when needed.

Its a fundamental delivery discipline

The discipline of writing a regular progress report is fundamental to successful programme or project delivery. It forces the PM to take a step back, think hard about what is going well and - more importantly - what is not going so well, and define appropriate remedial actions.

Sample page 1

<<Project / Workstream Name>> Progress Report – Week Ending <<Date>>

Legend:
- Completed (blue)
- On plan (green)
- At risk (yellow)
- Delayed (red)
- → RAG unchanged this report
- ↗ RAG upgraded this report
- ↘ RAG downgraded this report

Key stakeholders

PM: <<Name>>	Sponsor #1: <<Name>>	Sponsor #2: <<Name>>

RAG status

Schedule	Budget	Scope	People	RAID	Overall
Green →	Yellow ↘	Green →	Green ↗	Red ↘	Yellow →

Management summary

- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3

Key issues or risks for escalation

Reference	Date Raised	Description	Update	Score

Concise summary with informative details

The first page states the RAG status overall and across other important dimensions, includes two or three top issues - or risks if there are no issues - and most importantly summarises the key messages from the rest of the report.

Further pages

The second and subsequent pages cover each project or workstream or other major component to be reported on.

Where necessary, be clear about the challenges and the actions to be taken to resolve them and regain a green RAG status.

<<Project / Workstream>>	RAG status	Progress this report	Path to green / Next steps
<<Project / Workstream #1 >>	Yellow →	• Progress point 1 • Progress point 2 • Key challenge or concern	• Planned action 1 • Planned action 2
<<Project / Workstream #2 >>	Green →	• Progress point 1 • Progress point 2 • Key challenge or concern	• Planned action 1 • Planned action 2
<<Project / Workstream #3 >>	Red ↘	• Progress point 1 • Progress point 2 • Key challenge or concern	• Planned action 1 • Planned action 2
<<Project / Workstream #4 >>	Green ↗	• Progress point 1 • Progress point 2 • Key challenge or concern	• Planned action 1 • Planned action 2
<<Project / Workstream #5 >>	Green →	• Progress point 1 • Progress point 2 • Key challenge or concern	• Planned action 1 • Planned action 2

Helping to tell the story

Illustrations - especially graphs of key metrics over time - really help tell the story. For example, it's clear from this graph of active priority 1 and 2 defect totals that these type of defects are being raised more quickly than they are being closed.

Graph (values 0–200, months Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr): Dec ~10, Jan ~120, Feb ~185, Mar ~175, Apr ~180.
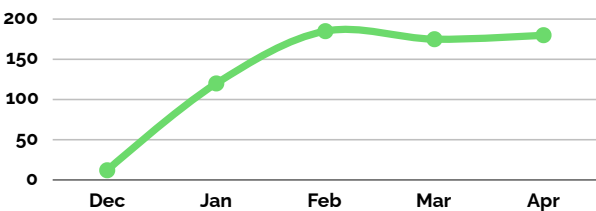
Free download

Click on the button to download a copy of the report shown here, for you to adapt, customise and use.

PowerPoint Progress Report Template