

# A Very Useful Application of the Hammock Task

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(This is the second post on Hammock Tasks).

**Applicability:** all versions of Microsoft Project

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In many situations, you want to charge a resource across working days but you want to charge his/her expenses across calendar days.

**Example:** We have an engineer working for 8 days, starting on a Monday. The engineer will be staying in a hotel where the cost per night is \$200.

During this period there is one weekend. However, if the engineer starts work on Thursday, we will have 2 weekends. Secondly, the duration of his/her work might change, so the number of weekends cannot be known in advance.

- If we use Material or Cost Resources for Hotel Nights, these will be charged for 8 days only. Remember both Material and Cost Resources do not have calendars, so we cannot force weekends upon them.
- If a parallel Task is created to which we assign Material or Cost Resources, we can use elapsed duration. Two problems with this approach. First: we have to specify the duration of the parallel task which defeats the purpose of our work. Second: Microsoft Project will charge 24 hours per day and for 8 consecutive days.

There is no direct way to force Microsoft Project to charge Hotel Nights across the calendar period.

## Using the Hammock Task, you can easily do it:

We will try a false start to identify another problem. We will then repair it:

1. Create a new project and save it under any name.
2. Create Task A with 8 days duration.
3. Create a Work resource called **Engineer** at the standard rate of \$100 per hour
4. Here is the trick: create **HotelNights** as a Work Resource and not as a Material resource. Let it have a standard rate of \$200/day and not per hour.
5. Create a new calendar where there are no days off and no weekends: all days are default working days. Call the Calendar: **NoDaysOff**.
6. In the Resource Sheet, let the Resource HotelNights work as per the NoDaysOff Calendar. (Keep the Engineer working under the Standard Calendar)
7. Assign both Engineer and HotelNights to Task A in full.

All goes well until you realize that Microsoft Project will respect the duration and HotelNights will be assigned to 8 consecutive days. Hence, these do not cover the full stay of the engineer. That is not what we want.

**Solution:** we create a **Hammock Task**:

1. Remove both assignments from Task A (press OK to confirm the removal).
2. Re-assign the Engineer to Task A.
3. Create a task and call it **Hammock**.
4. Copy the start date of Task A and Paste Link it (Paste Special) into the start date of the Hammock Task.
5. Copy the finish date of Task A and Paste Link it into the finish date of the Hammock Task.

This task will have an elastic duration and will expand and contract as the duration of Task A. If Task A changes duration, Hammock will follow.

6. Assign HotelNights to Hammock and you will get ALL the calendar nights charged.
7. Now change the start date of Task A to start on a Thursday. You will now have two weekends. The Hotel Nights will be correctly charged.

The following capture shows 1 week only:

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
8h	8h	8h	8h			
\$800.00	\$800.00	\$800.00	\$800.00			
8h	8h	8h	8h			
\$800.00	\$800.00	\$800.00	\$800.00			
				8h		
				\$800.00		
				8h		
				\$800.00		
8h	8h	8h	8h	8h	8h	8h
\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00
8h	8h	8h	8h	8h	8h	8h
\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00

If you have many Tasks with the above condition, you might find yourself doing too much work. Suggestion: create a macro to create a Hammock Task just below any of your tasks.