

10 Tips for Getting a Project Management Job

On average, over 250 people apply to each corporate job opening. Wow! Don't get discouraged, though. We prepared these tips to move your resume "up the stack!"



1. Get a PMP® or CAPM® certification.

To be competitive for today's project management jobs, it is critical to have a PMP® or CAPM® certification. If you already have several years of project management experience (even if your title wasn't "project manager"), go with the PMP®. If not, choose the CAPM®. Regardless, for free exam prep materials (including cheat sheets and practice tests), visit projectprep.org. We have lots. Also, if you want to boost your resume further, consider getting a Lean Six Sigma certification. It will pair well with your PMP® or CAPM®. If you are interested, our sister organization, sixsigmasociety.org, offers a free Lean Six Sigma "White Belt" certification course.



2. Learn to use project management software.

On most job postings, companies ask for candidates that are familiar with one or more types of project management software. The most common being Microsoft Project and Jira. As you look through jobs openings that interest you, identify the software tools that are being requested. Select one or more to download and spend a weekend to learn them. (Many software companies offer free trials.) Then, on your resume, you can say that you have "experience" or are "familiar" with those tools. Obviously, you wouldn't say that you're an expert, but you would feel comfortable using them.



3. Become an expert job hunter.

Finding the right job can be tough, especially if you don't have lot of experience. Many of the students that we teach often say: "Every job I find requires 5 or 10 years of experience. What should I do?" We will tell you the same thing that we tell them. When you search for project management jobs, use *Indeed* and filter the job results by the "entry-level" option in the "Experience Level" section. You may also consider searching for something like "associate," "junior," or "entry-level" project manager. Also, we recommend only applying to jobs in your regional area. Employers may ignore candidates outside of it.



4. Ask project managers to review your resume.

There are two important reasons to ask project managers for feedback on your resume: (1) they will have good ideas about what you should add or update, since they already have a job in the field, and (2) they may know about employment opportunities. After they provide feedback, you should always express your thanks and ask, "do you know anyone that could use an entry-level project manager?" You never know – this may provide you with additional contacts that lead you to a job.

5. Seek a job referral from inside the company.



Without question, the best way to get a job is to have someone within the company refer you. Companies love referrals because it reduces the risk that they will get a “bad” employee. *LinkedIn* can help as you seek these referrals. (If you don’t already have an account, create one and connect with your family, friends, and past and present co-workers.) When you identify job openings that interest you, search *LinkedIn* to see if you have a first or second connection that works at those companies. When you reach out and seek the referral, be sure to clearly articulate why you are a good fit for the position so the person referring you knows what to say.

6. Study agile project management.



Agile project management is here to stay, and many employers are demanding these skills. To put it simply, agile involves delivering projects (usually software) in small increments. Having frequent deliveries builds momentum and morale. We recommend reading a book on agile, and if you have the money available, consider getting a ScrumMaster certification. (There are other agile certifications, but this is the most common.) You want to be able to say on your resume that you are “familiar with agile project management methodologies (including scrum),” even if you haven’t actually managed a project using it.

7. Read and write articles about project management.



It is important to study project management. It gives you something to talk about when you interview or network with project managers. You can discuss what is being done at other companies that could potentially work for them. You will show that you know what you are talking about and that you could add value. In addition to studying project management, you should consider writing articles about it (“guest blogging”). There are many blog editors that are hungry for content, and you don’t have to be an expert to write about it. Having a published article can be something that sets you apart.

8. Master your elevator pitch.



Having a great resume and a referral don’t get you a job; they get you an interview. If you want the job, you need to ensure the interview goes smoothly. As you prepare, take plenty of time to craft a great “elevator speech,” a 30-second statement that quickly and clearly articulates why you are the best fit for the position. After you write it, practice it out loud and share it with a friend. The pitch should be crisp and clear and have impact.

9. Consider a temporary contract position.



If you are having trouble getting hired, consider working for a contracting company; where you go into an organization for a short period of time, help them complete a project, and then move on. These positions are harder to fill so contracting companies may be more willing to take a chance on entry-level employees. Also, as a contractor, you can gain a variety of experiences within a short period of time, which is a great way to start your career. To find these jobs, within Indeed, filter search results by the “contract” option in the “Job Type” section.

10. Exercise, get enough sleep, and eat healthy.



Trying to find a job can be a stressful experience. It is emotionally, physically, and mentally exhausting – especially if it is taking longer than you planned. To keep yourself from breaking down, remember to exercise several times a week, get plenty of sleep, and eat healthy. (Cut back on hamburgers; focus more on salads.) You should also remember to have fun. Plan something special after each interview. It will give you something to look forward to, which may make the interview go smoother.