**11 Key Project Management Skills**

*You'll want to have a basic understanding of project management principles to be a good project manager, but workplace skills are just as important.*

Project management requires a combination of technical and workplace skills for managing teams and projects. The demand for project managers is expected to grow 33 percent 2017-2027, so having key project management skills can open up opportunities in this growing field. A Project Management Institute (PMI) report found that there will be a demand for 25 million project management professionals globally by 2030. That translates to roughly 2.3 million new project management positions a year.

That’s good news for people looking for jobs that allow them to interact with people, solve problems, and put their organizational talents to use.

**Technical project management skills**

**1.** **Project management approaches and methodologies**

Project management methodologies are the specific rules and procedures that determine how you manage a project. Different project management methodologies are suitable for different situations. Being familiar with the basic differences can help you pick the best one for a project. Although some companies might want you to stick with one approach, knowing about others can give you better context for what you’re doing, and why.

Some common approaches to project management include **Waterfall**, a traditional, sequential approach,and**Agile**,which prioritizes adaptability. Within these approaches, there are several methodologies. For example, Scrum is the most commonly used Agile methodology. Others include Lean, Kanban, and XP (Extreme Programming).

**2.** **Project initiation**

The start of a project—when much of the project is planned—is often critical to its success. And though it might sound simple, there are many moving pieces to think about in the initial phase of a project. Initiating a project includes setting achievable and specific goals, picking a team, determining resources, and holding a kickoff meeting.

**3.** **Budgeting**

Most projects will have budget constraints. Knowing where costs might pile up, and how to prioritize tasks and delegate resources is often an important part of making sure a project doesn’t go over budget.

If you’re working on a large project or for a large company, you might not be the primary person responsible for managing the budget. But it’ll still be good to know what elements can add to a budget, how to decrease costs, and when you need to increase it.

**4.** **Risk management**

No project comes without potential risks. As a project manager, you’ll want to be able to identify when and how unexpected events that could derail your project might happen, how to decrease the chances of them happening, and how to respond if they do. How much of a time buffer should you add to unpredictable projects or tasks? If something goes awry, how would you adjust your scope or resources? Having an eye for potential risks and how to mitigate them can ensure smoother project delivery.

**5.** **Project management tools and software**

Technology has made sharing findings, schedules, and communications across teams and stakeholders convenient. As a project manager, you’ll often be expected to know how to use collaboration and communication software, and to take the lead in managing them.

Some tools you might be expected to use include:

* **Collaboration tools** like Google Sheets, Google Drive, and Dropbox
* **Work management tools** like Asana, Trello, Jira, and Smartsheet
* **Scheduling tools** like digital calendars and Gantt charts
* **Communication tools**like email, chat, and video conferencing software

**6.** **Industry knowledge**

Project management professionals can work in many different fields, including IT, health care, and construction. Sometimes hiring managers will prefer candidates who have academic or professional experience in the field. If you’re looking to switch careers to become a project manager, it can be worth looking for opportunities within an industry you have knowledge in.

**Workplace skills**

**7.** **Communication**

Communication is a key skill for project management professionals to have. In fact, insufficient communication is often cited as a reason why projects miss deadlines, go over budget, or otherwise get derailed.

Good communication doesn’t just mean being able to speak well in front of people—though that’s important too. Project managers should know whom to communicate with, when, and how often. This might mean setting up expectations in the beginning of a project about how often communications will happen.

**8.** **Organization**

Organization is crucial for project managers. Coordinating timelines, meetings, and efforts with different teams, contractors, or even other companies means having the discipline to stay on top of communications and tasks.

**9.** **Flexibility**

Even with a perfectly planned project, problems arise. Deadlines might be missed, bad weather can derail construction, people get sick or change jobs. If you’re a person that can deal with unexpected changes, your job as a project manager will go more smoothly.

**10.** **Leadership**

Leadership can help make all the disparate parts of a project team come together and work as a unit to get things done. Leadership includes influencing decisions without being overtly authoritative, knowing how to motivate team members, and balancing the needs of your team with the needs of the project.

**11.** **People skills**

Your role as a project manager is to complete projects successfully. And while sometimes that means staying organized and communicating with the right people, it can also mean motivating your team, fostering a culture of collaboration and openness, and resolving potential conflicts. Understanding that different people have different work styles, motivations, strengths, and growth areas will allow for more effective teams and more successful projects.