Micro-Tips for Project Managers

# My Draft: Mini POAP (Plan On A Page)

Every project manager has a kit of trusted techniques and tools, they have adapted to suit their style. Sure, we’ve all learned about the big methodologies such as PRINCE2, PMBOK, SCRUM, SAFe, and many others. We all have to use the big systems our clients or PMOs tell us to. But on a day to day level, there are the things we do to plan, organize, record, review, communicate and problem-solve. This the first in a series of posts where I intend to share one tip or tool that has worked for me over my career. I appreciate leaving a comment if you have found something useful or even that works better for you.

It goes as no surprise that a PM can be called into a meeting at short notice, whether with a sponsor or business owner. ‘Always be ready to give an answer’ is an old saying. Many of us are simultaneously managing multiple projects. As I don’t have an eidetic or photographic memory, I have found it useful to have a mini plan-on-a-page in my notebook or tablet that I can refer to before heading into a project conversation. This is not a replacement for a status report. It is a cheatsheet of sorts. Some ideas to include:

* Top 1-3 risks and their mitigation
* Next 2-3 milestones + the expected Live/Delivery date as a list or mini-gantt
* 2-3 key activities in motion
* 2-3 key dates such as next steering meeting, next sprint review, next vendor meeting
* Budget amount, actual spend to date and if on-track
* FAQ
  + Is the budget on track?
  + Is the schedule on track?
  + Do we have enough resources?
  + How is the team feeling, their level of confidence?
  + How well are we aligned with the business?
  + How is the comms – what does the stakeholders reflecting back about the project

This is fairly generic. You can write it as a list, a mind map, a simplified status report. There is no right answer, it is all up to what works for you. Think about what your stakeholders are most likely to ask about.

It can be good to glance at it once a day and update it when you are producing a status report. One of the benefits of doing this I found is that it helped to create a simplified model of the project in my head and therefore talking about the key points became easier.

As PMs we live and breathe our projects. That doesn’t mean we can hold all the details in our heads. Sometimes a cheatsheet like a mini-POAP can help us in those moments when stakeholders get curious how things are going.

# ChatGPT: Boosting Project Management Efficiency with Mini POAP (Plan On A Page)

Intro:

As project managers, we rely on a repertoire of techniques and tools to streamline our work. While we're familiar with the prominent methodologies like PRINCE2, PMBOK, SCRUM, SAFe, etc., our day-to-day activities often require personalized planning, organizing, recording, reviewing, and communicating. In this series of posts, I'll be sharing valuable tips and tools that have proven effective throughout my career. Whether you find them useful or have discovered better alternatives, I encourage you to leave a comment and contribute to the conversation.

Body:

One thing all project managers can relate to is being called into a meeting at a moment's notice, whether with a sponsor or business owner. As the saying goes, "Always be ready to give an answer." Considering the juggling act of managing multiple projects, I've found it immensely valuable to maintain a mini plan-on-a-page (Mini-POAP) in my notebook or tablet for each one. The key intent is to keep it simple and to one page.It should serve as a quick reference guide or cheatsheet before diving into project discussions. Let me share some ideas on what you can include:

1. The key objectives
2. Any key constraints
3. Top two or three risks and their mitigation strategies (keep it brief)
4. Next two or three milestones along with the expected Live/Delivery dates (you can present them as a list or a mini-gantt chart)
5. Two or three key activities currently in motion
6. Two or three important upcoming dates, such as the next steering meeting, sprint review, demo or vendor meeting
7. Simple budget overview, including the allocated amount, actual spend to date
8. FAQ section covering common project-related questions, such as:

* Is the budget on track? (perhaps use traffic light symbols)
* Is the schedule on track?
* Do we have sufficient resources?
* How is the team feeling in terms of confidence?
* Are we effectively aligned with the business objectives?
* What feedback are stakeholders providing regarding the project (are comms working?)

Remember, these suggestions are adaptable and can be presented in various formats, such as a list, mind map, or simplified status report. Choose the approach that suits your style and addresses your stakeholders' anticipated inquiries. You should be able to load most of it into your short term memory with a quick skim read.

Consider glancing at your Mini POAP once every day or so (Has anything changed?) and updating it when preparing a status report. One of the key benefits I've discovered is that it helps create a simplified mental model of the project, making it easier to articulate the essential points during conversations.

Conclusion:

As project managers, our projects consume our thoughts and efforts. However, it's unrealistic to expect ourselves to remember every minute detail accurately all the time. That's where a Mini POAP can come to our rescue when stakeholders inquire about project progress. It empowers us to confidently address their questions and provides a tangible reference to ensure project management efficiency.

Feel free to share your thoughts and experiences with Mini POAPs in the comments section. Together, we can refine our project management practices and drive success.

# ChatGPT: Boosting Project Management Efficiency with Mini POAP (Plan On A Page)

Introduction:

As project managers, we employ various techniques and tools to streamline our work. While we are familiar with well-known methodologies like PRINCE2, PMBOK, SCRUM, SAFe, etc., our day-to-day activities often call for personalized planning, organization, documentation, review, and communication. In this post series, I will be sharing valuable tips and tools that have consistently proven effective throughout my career. I invite you to leave a comment, sharing your own experiences or suggestions, and contribute to the conversation.

Body:

Every project manager can relate to being called into a meeting at a moment's notice, whether with a sponsor or business owner. As the saying goes, "Always be ready to provide an answer." Given the challenges of managing multiple projects, I have found tremendous value in maintaining a mini plan-on-a-page (Mini-POAP) for each project in my notebook or tablet. The primary goal is to keep it simple and concise, fitting within a single page. It serves as a quick reference guide or cheat sheet before engaging in project discussions. Allow me to share some ideas on what to include:

1. Key objectives
2. Significant constraints
3. Top two or three risks or issues and their mitigation strategies (keep it brief)
4. Next two or three milestones, including the expected Live/Delivery dates (you can present them as a list or a mini-gantt chart)
5. Two or three key activities currently in progress
6. Two or three important upcoming dates, such as the next steering meeting, sprint review, demo, or vendor meeting
7. Simple budget overview, including the allocated amount and actual spend to date
8. Your view as a PM – is it going well? What concerns or blockers do you have if any?
9. FAQ section covering a few common project-related questions:

* Is the budget on track? (consider using traffic light symbols)
* Is the schedule on track?
* Do we have sufficient resources?
* How is the team's confidence level?
* Are we effectively aligned with the business objectives?
* What feedback are stakeholders providing regarding the project, especially regarding communication?

There are plenty of other ideas. I would keep it to things that matter most to you or your stakeholders to start with. These suggestions can be adapted and presented in various formats, such as a list, mind map, or simplified status report. Choose an approach that aligns with your style and adequately addresses the anticipated inquiries of your stakeholders. With a quick skim read, you should be able to load most of the information into your short-term memory.

Consider reviewing your Mini POAP once a day or periodically to check for any changes and update it accordingly when preparing a status report. One of the significant benefits I've discovered is that it helps create a simplified mental model of the project, enabling easier articulation of essential points during conversations.

Conclusion:

As project managers, our projects demand our attention and efforts. However, expecting ourselves to accurately remember every detail all the time is unrealistic. That's where a Mini POAP can come to the rescue when stakeholders inquire about project progress. It empowers us to confidently address their questions and provides a tangible reference to enhance project management efficiency.

I invite you to share your thoughts and experiences with Mini POAPs in the comments section. Together, we can refine our project management practices and drive success.

# ChatGPT 50% word count reduction: Boosting Project Management Efficiency with Mini POAP (Plan On A Page)

Introduction:

As project managers, we employ techniques and tools to streamline our work. In this series, I'll share tips and tools that have proven effective. Your comments are welcome!

Body:

Being called into meetings at short notice is common for project managers. To stay prepared, I've found value in maintaining a mini plan-on-a-page (Mini-POAP) in my notebook or tablet. It's a concise reference guide that includes:

1. Key objectives
2. Significant constraints
3. Top risks and mitigation strategies
4. Next milestones and delivery dates
5. Key ongoing activities
6. Important upcoming dates
7. Simple budget overview
8. FAQs covering budget, schedule, resources, team confidence, alignment, and stakeholder feedback.

Adapt the format to your style. Review it daily and update when needed. The Mini POAP simplifies project discussions and improves communication.

Conclusion:

Project managers can't remember all details. That's where Mini POAPs come in, empowering us to address stakeholder inquiries efficiently. Share your experiences in the comments. Let's refine our project management practices together.