A project manager's role within different organizational structures

In the last video, you learned about the way a company is arranged, which is called **organizational structure**. You also learned that two of the most common organizational structures are **Classic** and **Matrix**.

Understanding the differences in Classic and Matrix organizational structures can help you ask questions during a job interview to fully understand the role and responsibilities you are considering. This will also help you understand which skills will be most important for you to have if you get the position.

Once you are hired into a role, knowing a company's organizational structure can help you identify key points of communication and key stakeholders. It can also help you navigate within the organization when you need support or need to determine who has authority in a certain situation. Let's examine the characteristics of each of these organizational structures in greater depth so you can identify the type of structure an organization has and how to navigate it as a project manager.

Classic organizational structures

The **Classic organizational structure** is a top-down hierarchy system, where a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has direct authority over several department managers. The department manager has direct authority over several other sections of employees. This system requires communication both up and down the ladder. In a Classic structure, authority comes from the top and filters to the bottom. Frequent reporting of project status updates may be required to pass up through management levels to keep higher leaders informed.

Classic organizations are also referred to as **functional organizations** because the organization is divided into departments based on function. Each department is led by a **functional manager**, and employees are grouped according to the functions of their role. For example, the main function of Friendly Skies Airlines, an airline company, is to fly airplanes. There are typically departments logically arranged to fulfill other important company functions, such as Marketing, Human Resources, and Strategy. Employees usually have a specialty within the organization and may not work within other areas during normal everyday operations.

Managing a project in a Classic organization

Friendly Skies Airlines has a Classic organizational structure, as indicated by its reporting or "org" chart.

Classic Org Chart
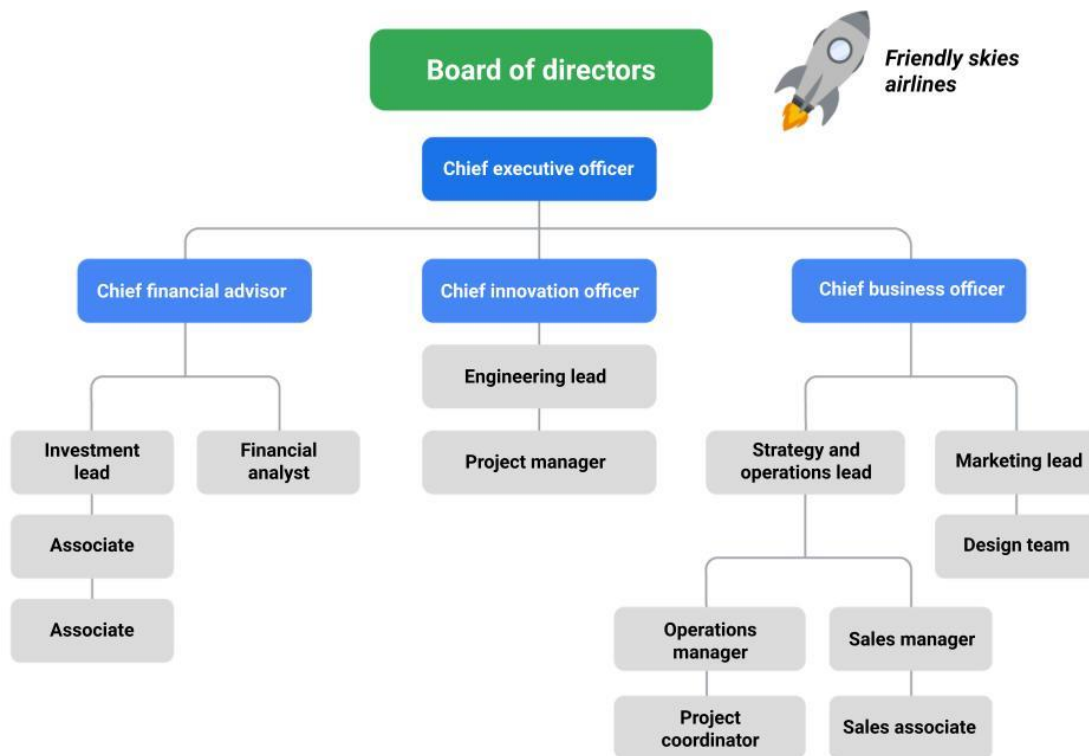
Imagine that the Friendly Skies Airlines Board of Directors approves an initiative to retrofit existing airplanes to carry more passengers. The CEO sponsors a project team to redesign the airplanes. The project will be led by a project manager from the Engineering and Innovation department and will require representatives from Finance, Marketing, Strategy, and Operations, along with several other team members from the Design department, to successfully complete the project.

The project team will typically remain in their reporting lines but act as their own assembled team. They do not fall under any of the existing functional departments. In the Classic organizational structure, the project builds from already existing departments to form teams.

If you are a project manager in this type of structure, you may need to consult with functional managers to understand your resources and the capacity of each teammate, as well as to familiarize yourself with each function's internal processes and approval structure. Your authority may be slightly limited due to competing priorities, approval chains, and other complexities, but setting expectations up front will enable you to navigate the organization and execute your project successfully.

Matrix organizational structures

The **Matrix** structure differs from the Classic structure in that the employees have two or more managers. In Matrix structures, you still have people above you, but you also have people in adjacent departments with whom you will need to communicate on your work progress. Functional

areas tend to cross paths more frequently, and depending on the nature of the work, the responsible manager for each area has the most authority.

As a project manager in a Matrix organization, a team will essentially have at least two chains of command, or managers. You can think of the project manager as being a temporary manager while assigned to the team. The functional manager is consistent regardless of the project a project manager is supporting. The visual below illustrates what the Friendly Skies Airlines would look like if it had a Matrix organizational structure.
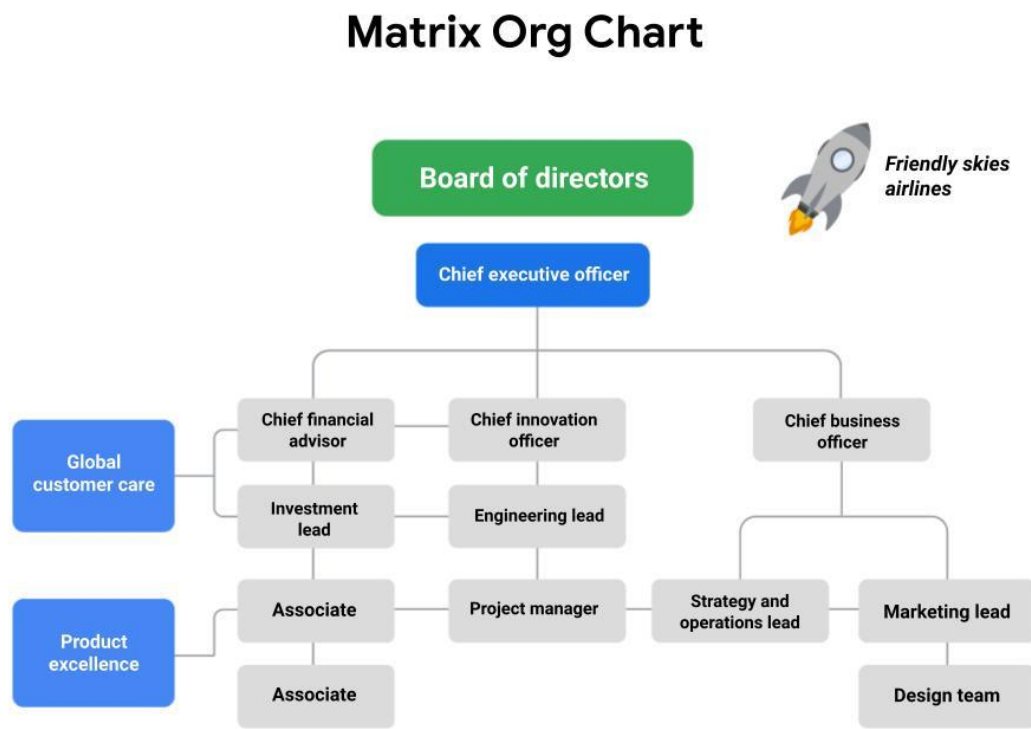
Managing a project in a Matrix organization

Imagine that Friendly Skies Airlines is organized in a Matrix structure. Their Product Excellence team develops a new amenity kit for long-haul flights. They ask the Project Manager to help gather marketing materials that present research data about how this product fulfills passenger desires. The Project Manager is working on behalf of the Product Excellence team, but they are able to work in partnership with the Marketing team to create these materials.

You can read more about an overview of Matrix organizations in this PMI article.

The role of a Project Management Office

In this lesson, you are learning about different types of organizational structures. Project managers serve key functions in both Classic and Matrix organizations. Within both of these types of structures, there is sometimes a group devoted specifically to program management with the organization: the **Project Management Office.** In this reading, we will discuss the purpose and functions of a Project Management Office.

What is a PMO?

A Project Management Office, or PMO, is a group within an organization that defines, sets, and helps maintain project management standards and processes throughout that organization. It often acts as a coordinated center for all of the organization's projects, helping them run more smoothly and efficiently.

An organization's project managers may operate within the PMO itself or within other departments. At Google, for example, there are project managers who work in a PMO focused on operational excellence, but there are numerous project and program managers in other departments throughout the organization, as well.

What are the functions of a PMO?

PMOs offer guidance and support to their organization's project managers. They share best practices, project statuses, and direction for all of the organization's projects while often taking on strategic projects themselves. The main functions of a PMO include:

Strategic planning and governance

This is the most important function of a PMO. This involves defining project criteria, selecting projects according to the organization's business goals, and then providing a business case for those projects to management.

Best practices

PMOs help implement best practices and processes within their organization. They also share lessons learned from previous successful projects. They help ensure consistency among their organization's projects by providing guidance about processes, tools, and metrics.

Common project culture

PMOs help set common project culture practices by training employees about optimal approaches and best practices. This helps keep project management practices consistent and efficient across the entire organization.

Resource management

PMOs are often responsible for managing and allocating resources—such as people and equipment—across projects throughout the organization based on budget, priorities, schedules, and more. They also help define the roles and responsibilities needed on any given project. PMOs provide training, mentoring, and coaching to all employees, but project managers in particular.

Creation of project documentation, archives, and tools

PMOs invest in and provide templates, tools, and software to help manage projects. They also play an important role in maintaining their organization's project history. Once a project closes, they archive all of the documents created during the project for future reference and to capture lessons learned.

Learning about an organization's culture

It is important to learn about the culture of the organization where you work or want to work. Understanding the company's culture can help you navigate your team through a project. Consider this quote from Peter Drucker, an expert on management: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." Drucker is implying that the culture of a company always influences its success, regardless of how effective the company's business model may be. Organizational culture is critical to the health of a company, the people who work there, and the customers it serves.

The importance of organizational culture

- **Identity:** An organization's culture defines its identity. Its identity essentially describes the way the company conducts business, both internally and externally. A company's values and organizational culture go hand-in-hand; its values are part of its identity. You can almost think of an organization's culture as its personality. That is why it is important to learn your company's (or target company's) mission and value statements. The mission and value statements will help you understand why the company exists and will give you insight into what the company believes in and how it will behave.
- **People:** Strong, positive organizational culture helps retain a company's best employees. People who feel valued, engaged, and challenged are more likely to give their best and want to drive for success. An organization's culture can help keep talented employees at a company, and it can attract great people too! On the other hand, a toxic culture can have the opposite effect. It is important to find an organization with a culture that fits your personality. One way to find out more about an organization's culture is to talk to the people who work there. You can also take note of the current employees' attire, expressions, and overall behavior.
- **Processes:** Organizational culture can have direct impacts on a company's processes, and ultimately, its productivity. The organization's culture is instilled throughout the company— from its employees to how its employees do their job. For example, a company that values feedback and employee involvement might have that reflected in their processes by including many opportunities for employees to comment. By allowing employees to feel their voices are heard, this company is adhering to its culture.

Understanding an organization's culture

As a project manager, it is important to understand your company's culture, especially because it could affect the projects you work on. Some aspects of an organization's culture that are directly related to how you will manage projects are communication, decision-making, rituals, previous

management styles, and values. To learn more about a company's culture and how it applies to you as a project manager, you can:

Ask questions

You can learn about an organization's culture by asking questions of management and peers. It can be helpful to ask these questions in the interview phase to better understand the company's culture before accepting a position. You might want to ask questions about:

Atmosphere

- What is the company's dress code?
- How do people typically share credit at this company?
- Is risk-taking encouraged, and what happens when people fail?
- How do managers support and motivate their team?
- How do people in this role interact with customers and users?
- When and how do team members give feedback to one another?
- What are some workplace traditions?
- What are some of the ways the company celebrates success?

Policies

- What are the policies around sick days and vacation?
- Does the company allow for employee flexibility (e.g., working from home, flexible working hours)?
- What policies are in place that support employees sharing their identity in the workplace?

Processes

- What is the company's onboarding process?
- How do employees measure the impact of their work?

Values

- What are the company's mission and value statements?
- How might the person in this role contribute to the organization's mission?
- How does the organization support professional development and career growth?

Listen to people's stories

Listening to what current employees have to say and how they portray the company will give you great insight.

- What were employees' experiences with similar projects in the past?
- What can they tell you about key stakeholders and customers?

Take note of company rituals

Rituals can be powerful drivers of culture. They engage people and help instill a sense of shared purpose and experience.

- How are birthdays and holidays celebrated?
- Do employees generally eat lunch at the same time and in the same place?
- Watch employee interactions: Observing how employees interact can help you tailor your interaction style to the company norm.
- Are employee interactions more formal or informal in nature?
- Are ideas solicited from employees in different roles?

Understand your impact

As a project manager, you become a **change agent**. Remember: a change agent is a person from inside an organization who helps the organization transform by focusing on improving organizational

effectiveness and development. When you begin a new role, sit down with management to better understand what is expected of you and how you can make the most of the opportunity.

Sharpen your communication skills

Interpersonal communication skills are a major part of project management. How a company communicates is directly tied to its organizational culture. You will most likely have interactions with various departments and management levels while executing projects. To communicate effectively, you will need to understand how to navigate the different channels in your company. Ask questions about communication practices when you start a new role such as: Is it customary to sign emails from the team rather than from you individually? Should presentations include team members or be solely presented by the project manager? This can help you make sure you are adhering to expectations.

Approaching projects differently from how similar projects were managed in the past may be met with some resistance. Although some projects may call for you to break the status quo, when you show an appreciation of your organization's culture, you may help your team members accept any improvements you are implementing.
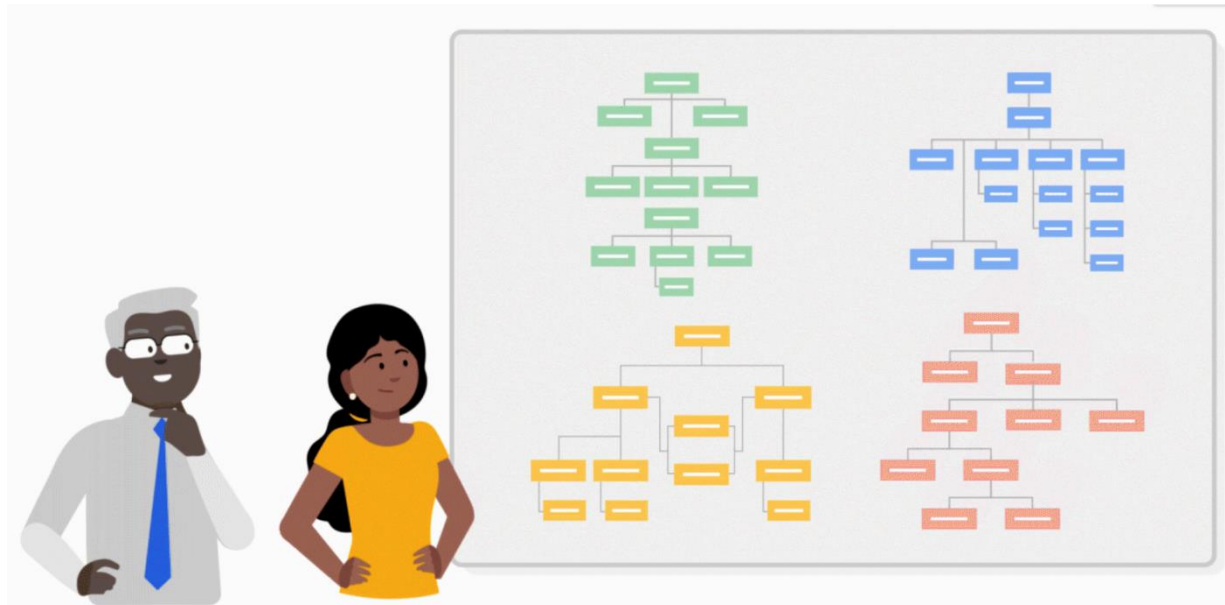
A project manager's role in change management

In this lesson, you're learning about how to support the **change management** process for your project. To review, change management is the process of delivering your completed project and getting other people in the organization to adopt it. In this reading, we will discuss strategies for approaching change management as a project manager.

Your project's success depends on the adoption and acceptance of your project—whether that entails the launch of a new external tool or a process that will change operations at a production facility. In both cases, the greatest impact of the change will be on the people who use and interact with the product or process that is changing.

For example, if your website's user interface changes, the major impact of that change affects the user. The user must learn how the website has been reorganized and adapt to the new way to navigate it. If part of the website's interface update includes a new brand logo, the major impact of that change impacts your organization's employees. They must be made aware of the new logo and measures must be taken to ensure that all company communications include the new logo, not the old one.

You can help ensure your project's success by embracing changes as they come and by convincing the wider audience, whether that is the end user or members of the organization, to embrace changes, too. When you implement a careful approach to change management, you can address issues that might occur in the later stages of your project.

Integrating project management and change management

Change management is a major undertaking and a project in and of itself. When it comes to change management, you may not always be responsible for leading and planning the entire end-to-end process. There will be times when your manager, a team member, or another senior leader might be responsible for taking on that transition and successfully implementing the changes. However, just because you're not the one directly leading the change, there are still ways in which you can support and participate in the successful adoption of your project.

As a project manager, you can think of change management as necessary for the successful outcome of your project. Both change management and project management aim to increase the likelihood of project success. They also incorporate tools and processes to accomplish that goal. The most effective way to achieve a project goal is to integrate project management and change management, and it is your responsibility as a project manager to do so.

When you are thinking about change management as it relates to your project, begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- How will the organization react to change?
- Which influencers can affect change?
- What are the best means of communication?
- What change management practices will lead to the successful implementation of my project?

The answers to these questions will help you prepare for a variety of possible scenarios and allow you to craft solutions to effectively support the adoption of your project.

Let's look at some best practices for approaching change management on your projects:

Be proactive. Proactive and inclusive change management planning can help keep any potentially impacted stakeholders aware of the upcoming changes.

- Incorporate change management into your project management steps. For example, you can schedule time during team meetings or create a feedback document to ensure that your team members know there is a place to voice their suggestions and concerns.
- You can also plan steps towards the end of your project to introduce the deliverable to stakeholders in the form of demonstrations, question and answer forums, or marketing videos. You can factor all of these decisions into your plan so that any potential changes are less likely to impact your timeline. If these steps have not been built into your plan, you can escalate and stress the importance of a change management plan to your stakeholders.

Communicate about upcoming changes. Communication should occur regularly among impacted stakeholders, the change management team, and the project team. Check in and communicate throughout the project about how the changes will provide a better experience for end users of the project deliverables. In this way, you support the process by providing everyone with the information they need to feel prepared to adjust to changes once the project is ready to launch.

Follow a consistent process. Following a clear change management process helps maintain consistency each time there is a change. The change management process should be established and documented early on in your project to guide how the project will handle change. Your organization may also have an overarching change management plan that can be adopted for your project. This may include when the promotion of the change should happen, when training should occur, when the launch or release will occur, and corresponding steps for each phase of the process.

Practice empathy. Changes are inevitable, but we are often resistant to them. By being empathetic to the challenges and anxiety change can bring, you can support the process in subtle ways.

Use tools. Incorporating tools to assist in the adoption of a change can be very helpful. Here are a few examples you can use on your next project:

- **Feedback mechanisms**, such as surveys, can capture input from stakeholders.
- **Flowcharts** can visualize the project's development process.
- **Culture mapping** can illustrate the company's culture and how the company's values, norms, and employees behavior may be affected by the change.

As the project manager, you are responsible for successfully delivering projects. As you hone the skill set you acquire throughout this program, you will find that change management is essential to your projects' success.

For more on how to participate in the change management process, check out the following resources:

- Change Management at the Project Level
- 5 Steps to Successful End-User Adoption
- Change Management Framework

If you don't have a Google account, you can download this file directly from the attachment below:

Corporate and project governance

Governance in business is the management framework within which decisions are made and accountability and responsibility are determined. In simple terms, governance is understanding who is in charge. In this reading, we will discuss corporate governance and project governance. It is important to learn how corporate and project governance are related since you may have to speak about governance in an interview. Additionally, you will need to understand how your project relates to the governance structure of the organization.

Corporate governance

Each organization is governed by its own set of standards and practices that direct and control its actions. Those standards and practices are called **corporate governance**, and they will influence your projects. Corporate governance is the framework by which an organization achieves its goals and objectives. Corporate governance is also a way to balance the requirements of the various corporate entities, such as stakeholders, management, and customers. Corporate governance affects every part of an organization, including action plans, internal and external controls, and performance measurements.

Governance and change management go hand-in-hand. Think back to the previous videos on change management. To successfully implement change management, it is essential that you understand the structure and culture of the organization. Effective governance in change management provides clearly defined roles and responsibilities during change. This enables the people within the organization to have a precise understanding of who makes decisions and of the relationship between those managing and participating in the change management process.

Another example of governance within an organization is the creation and use of **steering committees**. Steering committees decide on the priorities of an organization and manage the general course of its operations. The steering committee essentially acts as an advisory board or council to help the project manager and the company make and approve strategic decisions that affect both the company and the project.

Project governance

As a project manager, you will be responsible for **project governance**. Project governance is the framework for how project decisions are made. Project governance helps keep projects running smoothly, on time, and within budget. Project governance involves all the key elements that make a project successful. It tells you what activities an organization does and who is responsible for those activities. Project governance covers policies, regulations, functions, processes, procedures, and responsibilities.

How project and corporate governance intersect

Project governance needs to be tailored to your organization's specific needs. These needs will influence how you implement and monitor the governance framework on your project. Project governance concerns those areas of corporate governance that are specifically related to project activities. Effective project governance ensures that an organization's projects are aligned to the organization's larger objectives, are delivered efficiently, and are sustainable. This includes:

- Considering the long- and short-term interests of your organization
- Making thoughtful decisions about which projects to take on and avoiding projects if you do not have sufficient resources
- Providing timely, relevant, and reliable information to the board of directors and other major stakeholders
- Eliciting the input and buy-in of senior managers since they are the decision-makers
- During the initiation phase, prioritizing clear, reachable, and sustainable goals in order to reduce confusion and conflict
- During the planning phase, assigning ownership and accountability to an experienced team to deliver, monitor, and control the process
- During the execution phase, learning from mistakes and adapting to new or improved knowledge

Corporate governance can involve clearing many hurdles before making decisions. These decisions can influence not only a single project, but the entire corporation.

At the same time, corporate governance can help support project governance, as it provides oversight on compliance and mitigating risk and offers guidance and direction for project managers. Good corporate governance can also help project managers secure resources, get issues addressed, avoid delays in decision-making, get buy-in from stakeholders, and achieve visibility for projects on the executive level.

How to uncover job opportunities

Starting a new career means not only developing a new skill set but also learning how to relate your previous experience and skills to the new role you're pursuing. If you're ready to start your journey on a new career path, this reading will help you position yourself for success in your job search. You'll learn how to understand what your potential employer is looking for and how to connect your background to their needs. The strategies outlined below are designed to help you become a strong job candidate, even if you don't have directly relevant experience.

The first step is to fully understand the role you're targeting.
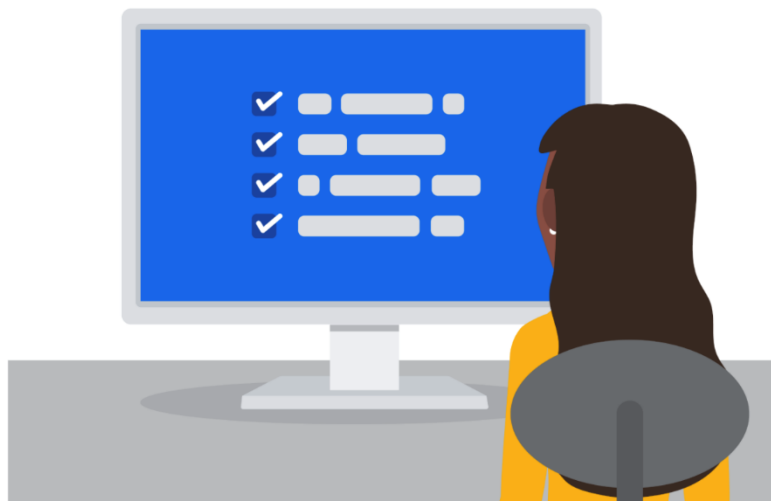
Understand your target role

One of the primary challenges for anyone looking to launch a new career is how to stand out against candidates who already have experience in the field. Overcoming this challenge begins with developing a comprehensive understanding of the role you're targeting. You'll need to understand the role in the context of any company you're applying to, and more broadly as well. Having a holistic understanding of what it takes to succeed in your target role will help you determine your suitability for the role, and identify any steps you can take to improve your chances of getting hired.

To understand everything from minimum must-have requirements to skills that might help you stand out from the crowd, you can begin by researching and analyzing job descriptions across different organizations.

Below you'll find our recommended strategy for how to approach this process effectively.

Analyze job listings

The first part of the process is to gather information from multiple job listings:

- **Pull up ten job descriptions for your target role**. To do this, you can use job boards like Indeed, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn. Make sure the roles you select come from different companies, share similar titles, and are roles you would actually apply for. In each job description, you should be able to identify a section listing requirements for the role.
- **Combine all the job requirements**. To do this, create a new Google document and copy over all the required responsibilities from all ten job descriptions.
- **Order requirements based on appearance frequency.** Certain requirements will likely appear in multiple descriptions. The more commonly they appear, the more likely it is that they're essential for the role. Put the most frequently appearing requirements at the top of your list. For example, a requirement that appears in all ten descriptions would go at the very top.

After completing these steps, you should have a clearer picture of which requirements are most common and important for the role. You may also have questions:

- **Why do requirements differ across job descriptions?** One of the most common reasons for this has to do with overly general job titles, or job titles that don't necessarily communicate the specific scope of a given role at a particular company. For example, a program manager at one company might be focused on customer management, while at another company, the emphasis might be on project management. A Data Analyst might primarily use SQL at one company and Python at another. Because of these differences, it's important to look beyond job titles. This is why we recommend the process outlined above—to help ensure you're targeting the exact roles that are right for you—and that you understand the requirements for those exact roles.
- **Why are some requirements higher on my list than I thought they would be, while others I expected to see barely show up at all?** If you're surprised by your results, you may need to spend more time learning what the role really entails, as you may have some preconceptions about the role that require adjusting. You might also need to do additional research to ensure you're targeting the right roles in your job search.
- **How do I know if I'm really right for my target role?** It's perfectly normal to experience self-doubt at this stage of the process. Remember, this is a new career for you. You're not expected to know everything about the role, and it's likely that your existing skills and experience won't line up perfectly. The more you learn about the role, the better you'll understand what's required for success, and the more you'll know about how to prepare yourself for that success.

Create your professional inventory

For this next step, you can temporarily set aside the master list of role requirements you previously created. The focus here will be on your existing professional qualifications, and any other skills or experience you possess that might be relevant to your target role and of value to a potential employer.

To begin, assemble a comprehensive list of the following:

- **Technical (hard) skills**. These are skills relating to a specific task or situation such as programming, technical writing, project management, and more.
- **Non-technical (interpersonal) skills.** These are the skills that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. They include skills like communication, leadership, team management, and more.

- **Personal qualities.** These are positive attributes and personality traits such as being honest, having a good sense of humor, and being dependable. You can also include your professional interests on this list.
- **Education.** This includes any post-secondary education, certifications, or independent classes completed online or offline.

Tip: You do not need to limit your professional inventory to skills and qualities developed through professional experience. Consider any volunteer, extracurricular, or personal experiences that might help a hiring manager understand your capabilities.

Once you've created your inventory of skills and experience, you're ready to line these up against your requirements list.

Match your profile to the job requirements

The concluding step in this process is to match your profile to the job requirements. The goal here is to make it easy for any hiring manager to see why you're a great fit for their role. You'll accomplish this by learning what to emphasize and focus on in your search, on your resume, and during interviews.

To begin, go through your professional inventory of skills and experience, highlighting each item in green, orange, or red, depending on its relevance to your target role. Relevance is determined by whether a given skill appears on your role requirements list, how high it appears on your list, and how directly it aligns with your list.

For example, let's say you're interested in a program manager role. If you're skilled at using project management software, and project management software skills are high on your job requirements list, then highlight that item in green. If you have some experience with tools that do not consistently show up on job descriptions but could still be relevant, highlight these skills in orange.

- **Green** should be used for skills that are directly relevant to your target role. You should look for roles that emphasize these skills. You should also highlight these skills on your resume, and be prepared to discuss them in an interview.
- **Orange** should be used to identify those skills and experiences that are relevant for the role but not necessarily in a direct way. These are generally your transferable skills—skills that you bring with you from past experiences that can help you succeed in your new role. Plan to have to explain these to recruiters and hiring managers, as their relevance may not be immediately evident.
- **Red** should be used for items that are not relevant for your job search. De-prioritize these skills, and steer clear of highlighting them on your resume and focusing on them during interviews.

Of these three categories, the orange items are where you'll need to focus extra attention. When it comes to transferable skills, you have to do the convincing, as you can't count on a recruiter or hiring manager making the connection. For example, no job description for a project manager role calls for waitstaff experience. However, that project manager job description will likely mention excellent communication skills—which you would have developed during your hospitality career. When applying for the project manager role, make sure your resume specifically mentions excellent communication in addition to listing "waiter" or "waitress" as your previous occupation. Once you've categorized your skills and experience based on how well they align with the requirements for your target role, you're ready to move your job search forward.