Introduction

At this we will discuss managing other people, the common mistakes that come up and how to avoid them.

Mistakes in managing people and tasks

You might be thinking that people aren't really part of project management. But projects are essentially tasks and people combined, therefore, to effectively manage projects, you have to manage people. When we were talking about scrum, I mentioned how the role of the Scrum master is different from the role of the project manager: the latter has additional people management duties. As a freelancer, you might not need to manage people but it's very likely that it will come up eventually especially as you grow in skill. As you grow in skill and as you become more reputable and people want to hire you for more senior positions, it's likely that you'll come in working on a project and have people under you doing more junior tasks

Bad communication

Mistake number 1 is **bad communication**. We have already talked about this a lot in this course. This is a huge theme on project management because, since people are part of what makes up projects, you have to be able to communicate effectively. At the previous step we already discussed managing email and feedback.

When you're delegating your tasks, especially if you're doing this via email or in a project management tool, try to foresee the questions that someone might have and answer them. For example: "I need you to do this by this date; in case you're wondering what the settings should be when you download this data and send it to me, it should be set to this and this".

Another thing you can do is reading your emails out loud and help you clarify them. Sometimes we just write something and then hit "send", without really thinking about how it sounds. See how your letters sound, what could be confusing and what's not. Pretend that you're explaining it to a fifth grader, make it impossible to misunderstand. I'm not saying that you should treat everyone else on the project as idiots. I want to say that when you're trying to explain things via written communication, it may be difficult at times. You need to make sure that you have it as simple as possible. Just think would a ten year old kid be able to follow these instructions and not be confused? If the answer is no, then you probably want to try and finesse it a little bit more before you send that email.

Not having any documentation

Mistake number 2 is **not having any documentation**. Explaining how to do things over and over again will try your patience and it will waste your time. Instead create "how-to" documentation. You can either write it down and then share it in Google Docs, or you can use free tools.

- Skitch by Evernote is used to take screenshots and then mark up those screenshot, which is also good for commenting on website or mockup feedback.
- Jing has a similar idea except it allow to produce screencasts of up to five minutes.

Both of those are free and easy to use.

You just record yourself accomplishing some task while you're narrating it. This video will be only a couple of minutes long and still very useful. So, make sure that you have documentation for your clients, that you send it when you assign tasks to people, and this is also really good if you start working with an assistant inside your business. Just go through and record the administrative task.

Being unclear or not breaking tasks

Mistake number 3 is **being unclear in tasks** or **not breaking tasks down enough**. This is basically mistakes 1 and 2 as applied specifically to talking about tasks. A **task** is something that you need someone to do. Therefore you want to make sure that you're communicating it really clearly, that they have documentation for how to do it, that everyone is on the same page with these tasks.

Not breaking the tasks down enough is especially common with people who aren't used to managing projects. You tell someone to do something but it's not actually a task, it's more like a miniature project. On contrary, a task is one thing. For example, "configure all of the settings for a project, which involves

uploading files to some place, changing the settings in this screen, and then entering in this data in that screen" - that's more than one task, and you don't want to assign someone that as a task because it will make them overwhelmed and confused. They also might underestimate the amount of time that's going to take to accomplish it. So make absolutely sure that you're clear when you assign tasks and provide your tasks' descriptions, and that you are breaking it down into what is actually a task.