When interviewing a Project Manager, it's important to set up the discussion for the first couple of minutes in an open dialogue. Talk about the project involved and how you plan to measure and monitor performance. Be open and honest about key performance indicators. Explain the work environment and deliverables for the project. Describe any special conditions that might be unique to the project. Mention details such as travel requirements, unique risks, whether it's a high pressure job, etc.

This guide will assist with the second portion of the interview. It will help you understand the candidate's skills and experience as a Project Manager. Pick and choose the questions that make the most sense based on your requirements.

INITIAL QUESTIONS to start the interview

- What type of projects have you managed? Were they product- or service-based projects?
- Describe the nature, scope, duration, and size of budget of the largest project you managed.
- Have you managed a product-based project and a service-based project? What were the distinct challenges and complexities in each context?
- Highlight one of the projects you are most proud of.
- How did you celebrate accomplishing a milestone with your team?
- What was the last course taken or certification acquired pertaining to project management?

PRE-PROJECT DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Do you have experience on pre-project approval documentation? If so, what type of documentation (statement of requirements, scope statement, business case, feasibility study)?
- Have you been part of a project or managed a project, in which the statement of requirements was ineffective or incomplete? How did you handle this situation? What was the result?
- What steps have you taken to make requirements and scope more explicit to all concerned from the outset?
- Were you involved in preparing the cost benefits analysis, total cost of ownership (TCO), benefits realization and return-on-investments portions of the business case?
- Were you successful in garnering support and approval for the project?
- How do you work with your sponsors and senior-level executives?
- What is your engagement, communication and reporting style?

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ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCES

- What types of project organization have you worked on (functional, weak, matrix, balanced matrix, strong matrix, project-based, etc.)?

- What were the challenges and how did you overcome those challenges?

- What was the structure of the organization you worked for? How many departments and / or management team members were involved in the project you managed?

- What impact did corporate culture have on the projects you managed?

- What impact did the physical environment play (i.e. open concept vs. individual offices)? Please explain.

- Describe how accurate the following statement is "People don't like to be managed, they like to be led".

STAKEHOLDERS

- A project manager should manage the influences of the various stakeholders in relation to the project requirements to ensure a successful outcome. How do you manage stakeholder expectations?

- How have you handled competing expectations?

- Stakeholder identification is critical to the success of the project. How have you successfully identified these stakeholders without having late recognition that can lead to project issues?

- Has there been a time where a stakeholder would not approve a deliverable? How was that handled and resolved?

GOVERNANCE

- What is your familiarity with governance?

- How did you align your last project with the business strategy?

- Do you have experience developing a project governance framework on any of your projects?

- Have you used Gating Methodology? Please explain the process and how many gates were used?

- How did you manage projects where the governance role is shared by multiple stakeholders?

- As a PM, please explain each of the three integrated elements including oversight, operational management, and operational control.

- Was a governance committee used to manage the change control process?

PROJECT APPROVAL DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Have you been part of the project approval process prior to the kick-off of a project?

- Have you developed a full project charter? Were you part of the development?

- What elements do you typically include within the project charter?

- What are some of the success metrics you have detailed within the project charter?

- Have you developed or are you familiar with Agreements, i.e. MOUs, SLAs, Letters of Intent?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Have you developed a project management plan?

- Can you tell me about a project you managed that consisted of multiple work streams? Please describe the work streams.

- Please cite a project where the Project Management Plan consisted of multiple work streams, and please describe the various work streams. (Note: Project management in itself is a key work stream in a successful project)

- Did you use the PMBOK to guide the process for development of these plans?

- Did your Project Management Plan include subsidiary plans? If so, which ones did you develop?

- Did you include Baseline Plans (Scope, Schedule, Costs) as additional subsidiary plans?

SCOPE MANAGEMENT

- What type of tools and techniques do you have experience using to collect the requirements and scope of a project (focus groups, interviews, facilitated workshops, etc.)?

- Did you utilize a Requirements Traceability Matrix? Why or why not? If you didn't, how did you ensure requirements were delivered at the end of the project?

- How did you verify that the elements included in the Statement of Requirements were successfully achieved? How did you ensure that the scope of the project delivered what was intended?

- Have you created a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)? Did you also develop a WBS Dictionary?

COST MANAGEMENT

- Did your projects include baselines for costs and schedules?

- Please explain what critical path means and why it's important?

- Do you have experience with the Critical Path Method or Chain? If so, please explain how you designed and interacted with it.

- Please explain resource levelling, and why it is important.

- Did you utilize resource levelling? How did this impact the outcome of the project?

- To your knowledge, how are critical path and resource levelling linked?

- Has lack of funding or lack of personnel had an impact on the critical path?

- What type of reports did you use to provide status updates to project stakeholders (bar charts, network diagrams)?

- Were you responsible for estimating costs and determining the budget as part of the cost management plan?

- What are some of the tools and techniques you used to control the costs?

- Are you familiar with forecasting and utilizing the common methods and formulas (i.e. Estimate at Completion or Budget at Completion)?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTINUED...

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- As part of Quality Management, what are the quality tools that you have experience using on projects (e.g. cause-and-effect diagrams, flowcharts, Pareto diagrams, control charts, etc.)?

- What are some of the tools you have used in performing quality assurance? (e.g. Affinity diagrams, tree diagrams, activity network diagrams, etc.)

- Have quality audits been performed on any projects you have worked on? Were they conducted internally or externally? Were the findings favourable? If not, was there a breakdown in a process? Was there an oversight on your part?

- As part of quality management, did you implement a formal change-control process on your project?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- What are the elements of a successful Performance Management Framework?

- Using a project you have worked on, explain the difference between performance targets, measures and indicators.

- How do you see Quality Management as different or the same as Performance Management?

HUMAN RESOURCES

- What does the acronym RACI mean (responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed)?

- Are you familiar with the use and development of a RACI Matrix? Was it used on your project?

- What is a RACI chart and how have you relied on this in the past?

- How have you found RACI contributed to project oversight, management and control?

- What elements do you consider when building a team for a specific project? How do you determine the number of resources required?

- Have you ever encountered a need to add additional resources mid-way through a project? If so, how did you integrate them into the team and catch them up on the project's status.

- Have you had to deal with conflict and how have you managed the conflicts? What methods have you used with your team to reduce or manage conflict?

- When managing a project, how have you had success transferring your knowledge with regards to the methods and techniques used? What projects required particular knowledge transfer, and what methods or techniques did you rely on to make this happen?

ISSUE & RISK MANAGEMENT

- Do you have experience with issue and risk management on a project? How would you differentiate the two?

- What was your role in identifying the issues / risks and performing the analysis?

- Describe a project that had high risks and how you offered a strategy to minimize those risks?

- Did you have a separate Risk Manager on your project? If so, how did you discuss issues / risks?

- Who was responsible for controlling the issues/risks?

- Issues and Risks are birds of the same feather, and yet not quite the same. What do you see as the difference, and how did you manage each one separately?

  Risks are things that could potentially/probably occur; so we need to put in place strategies/plans to mitigate or eliminate the potential risks as they arise.

  Issues are risks that we KNOW will occur (i.e. 100% probability); therefore, we need to deal with them immediately and not wait for them to happen.

PROJECT LIFECYCLE

- Have you managed a project throughout its full lifecycle from beginning to the end?

- Enumerate the projects you managed from start to end? Which one was most successful? Which one was least successful and in what regard?

- Did you bring samples of your work, templates or plans that you completed in your last assignment? Have you written any publications or samples of templates for things that you have done?

PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT

- As the project manager, were you responsible for procurement? If so, what aspects? What role did you play in procurement on your projects? What was being procured?

- Have you prepared a Statement of Work for technical resources that were used in procurement solicitations with the purpose of utilizing contract resources to support the project?

STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

- What are the tools and techniques you have successfully used to manage your stakeholders expectations?

- What roles have stakeholders held when developing a governance framework?

- How have you overcome resistance?

- What is your communication style with stakeholders that is most effective?

- How do you perform effective stakeholder engagement?

IT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Explain your experience in managing server consolidations?

- Explain your experience in planning and managing data center migrations or consolidations?

- What were some of the challenges your project team encountered and how did you work around them?

- Explain your experience managing projects involving server consolidation where physical servers were converted to a virtual platform?

- What virtualization platform was used and how were the hypervisor servers configured for high availability?

- What type of shared storage was used?

- Explain your experience handling the refresh of an applications stack from the application down to the infrastructure? For example: refreshing the hardware, operating system, middleware and reinstalling and configuring the application. How did you plan this?

- What were some of the challenges?

APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

- Why is the Software Development Life Cycle important?

- Describe your background in AGILE or other SDLC methodologies.

- Do you prefer the Agile or waterfall methodology? Why?

- What does project velocity mean?

- What PM tools were used on your project?

- What would you do if you found a major glitch in the development cycle during the testing phase?

- Describe how to modify a design that requires rewriting your initial thoughts on how a program would run.

- Are you responsible for delivery and financials or just the administration of the project? Tell me about your recent project's goals and results.

- How would you manage one element of a project being late and resulting in another element being delayed?

- Did you utilize a formal gating methodology to move through the different phases of the project? How many gates were used? Explain your views on the gating process.

PMP VS PRINCE2

There are many different Project Management Certifications that can be attained. Two of the most popular are the PMP and the Prince2 from the Project Management Institute. What are the differences?

The **PMP** certification is based on the PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) Standard and is not a methodology.

The **Prince2** certification is a methodology with a detailed process model and templates. It uses step-by-step guidance on how to organize and run a project.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- **COMMUNICATION:** Communication is identified as one of the single biggest reasons for project success or failure. What tools / strategies do you apply for effective communication with your project team, other managers, stakeholders, etc.?

- **LEADERSHIP:** Effective leadership is critical in achieving a high performing team. How do you effectively focus a team's efforts towards a common goal? What is your style of leadership? For example: trust and respect vs fear and submission, etc.

- **TEAM BUILDING:** The result of good leadership and team building is teamwork. What type of activities and/or how have you managed the team environment to obtain team commitment and quality performance?

- **MOTIVATION:** A project team's commitment is related to motivation. What type of strategies have you used to keep motivation throughout a project? What did you do with a team member or subordinate who was plainly not motivated? How have you been able to get team members to cooperate towards common goals?

- **DECISION MAKING:** There are four basic styles: command, consultation, consensus and random. How many of these styles have you had to use and what success have you had or not?

- **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:** Managing conflict is one of the biggest challenges a PM faces. For example: competition for resources, breakdowns in communications, etc. How have you managed conflict?

- **COACHING:** Coaching is used to aid team members in developing or enhancing their skills or to build new skills required to enable project success. How have you, as a PM, been able to help the team address poor performance, recognize their potential, etc.? How have you mentored a junior team member with less experience working on a project? Please explain your approach.

- **NEGOTIATION:** Negotiating is integral to PM and increases the chances of project success if done well. What has worked for you in the past?

- **POSITIONAL BARGAINING:** Do you have experience with positional bargaining, and if so, what strategies have you used? What do you see as the difference between "negotiation" and "positional bargaining"?

→ Positional bargaining is based on a 'quantitative value', it's a number with no principal.

→ Negotiation includes a set of qualitative principles including the best interest of the group.