1. I have handled projects with clear deliverables and defined start and stop points.
2. I have managed projects by structuring the work
3. I have organized, managed and motivated cross-functional teams to deliver a common goal.
4. I have worked on teams and lead them in executing component tasks, tracking and reporting progress, and making tradeoffs as conditions change.
5. planning and preparation strategies

## Ambiguous/Vague/Fuzzy Vision into Clearly defined and achievable deliverables.

We have to define very **clear start and stop points with objectives**. If I am defining a User Story I follow the Role-Action-Result/Benefit template. In defining a User Story I will write: As a ROLE, I want to perform ACTION, so that I see RESULT/BENEFIT. providing very specific information about the role, action, result and benefits.

Working with cross functional team from various domains with varied culture, putting together a team to achieve a milestone is second nature to me. I pride myself on my communication style, empathy and service leadership model to motivate people. I believe there should be a personal touch with Professional Attitude to help solve problems to build teams. My belief is your team is only as strong as your weakest player. So I take everyone together and organize various sessions, trainings and Lunch and learns to motivate and grow team. I encourage team to contribute their technical expertise by blogging about it or creating side projects which can and does benefit company overall as team starts to think for the bigger picture.

Using ADO, JIRA for managing, executing, tracking and reporting progress is my daily signoff activity so that its ready for team for next morning. If we identify any risk, making necessary changes, informing various stakeholders, trying to resolve any blockers for any issues which can be solved becomes easy if you keep your sprint board as well as Backlog organized. Sometimes we have to make tradeoffs by looking at the priority and need of the team.

Planning And Preparation Strategies:

1. Finalize Project Details. ...
2. Set Clear Expectations. ...
3. Choose the Right Team and System. ...
4. Define Milestones. ...
5. Establish Clear Communication. ...
6. Manage Project Risks. ...
7. Avoid Scope Creep. ...
8. Evaluate the Project After Completion

Balance and Prioritize Multiple Projects:

1. Communicate loud clear and often
2. Identify Project Dependencies
3. Project Priority
4. Draw A Project/Program Portfolio Board
   1. Make a list. By thinking through and writing down each item that needs completion, you can see it on paper.
   2. Mark what is urgent or essential. ...
   3. Order each task based on effort and estimated value.
   4. Consider due dates and how long it will take to do each item.
5. Meet with Program Board Team every so often to review overall workload and guide the program teams.

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| **Interview:**  Your panel is subject to change and your interviews will be over GVC (video) rather than in-person. You will have 4-5 interviews plus a lunch break.  **Interview Prep Material:**  **Program and Project Management:**   * Interviewers want to know that you have handled projects with clear deliverables and defined start and stop points managed by structuring the work, organizing and motivating cross-functional teams, executing its component tasks, tracking and reporting progress, and making tradeoffs as conditions change. * Managing programs means you’ve handled a collection of related projects, as defined above, that finish, or run indefinitely, as new projects are created within them to replace projects that are completed. This **does not mean that you need to have held a defined program manager role,** but you do need to communicate instances in which you have handled the above. * Be ready to demonstrate evidence of previous project plans and results by discussing your planning and preparation strategies for establishing a new project and the various phases of a project. * How would you balance and prioritize multiple projects of varying complexity? How do you evaluate the success or failure of a project? What are some strategies for handling competing visions on how to execute a project? * Since you are interviewing for a program manager position you should frame all of your answers and solutions as a program manager (gather business requirements, set the scope of the issue/problem/project, identify stakeholders, identify resources and get buy in from human capital, identify risk/tradeoffs/priorities/dependencies, set realistic expectations and contingency plans, budget management, set the program timeline as well as plan, design, build, test, release, follow-up). [[TOOLS]] * Be prepared to explain and justify your own brand/approach to Project/Program management.   + How do you balance process versus execution? What is an ideal balance? What are signals that too much or too little process is in place?   + How do you handle projects without defined end dates?   + **Please be prepared to delve into your approach to team engagement skills as well as your approach to change.** *Here at Google, approaching issue resolution/consensus building with an actual action plan that is objectively focused is key, rather than simply hoping it will work out.*     - Examples: Be prepared to answer questions that center on dealing with challenges such as changes in scope during design phases, disagreement between directors/teams on a proposal, sub-par performance of direct reports, etc.   **Analytical Ability:**   * The team will want to get a sense of your ability to solve problems, work out what's important, and demonstrate the ability to reason from an initial set of information to logical conclusions, including the use of reasonable assumptions. * Be prepared to work through a hypothetical scenario as if it was your first project assignment at Google. We don’t expect you to know Google internals but we do want to understand how you would apply your experience to work through the problem and develop a plan. * Be able to demonstrate your ability to handle ambiguity.   **Preparing for behavior-based interview questions:**   * Identify six to eight examples from your past experience which demonstrate your top selling points.   + A good amount of your examples should be totally positive, such as accomplishments or exceeding goals.   + The rest should be challenges you've overcome or difficult situations that started out negatively but ended positively. * Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your career. Use fairly recent examples. * Try to describe examples in story form and/or CAR/STAR.   + CAR, Challenge, Action, Result.   + STAR, Situation or Task, Action, Result. * To prep for a behavioral interview right before you're interviewed, always review your resume. Seeing your achievements in print will jog your memory. Be sure to also have things that you can discuss that are not mentioned on your resume. * If relevant, in the interview, listen carefully to each question, and pull an example out that provides an appropriate description of how you demonstrated the desired behavior.   **Question Topics:**   * **Decision Making:** Prepare examples of a time you had to make a difficult decision. Describe a specific challenge you solved for your employer. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome? Prepare examples of when taking your time to make a decision paid off. * **Initiative and Leadership:** Prepare an example of a project that could not have happened successfully without you being there. When did you influence the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role? Give an example of when you involved others in making a decision. * **Planning and Organization:** Describe a situation when you had many projects due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done? How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples. * **Flexibility:** Describe times where you were faced with stresses that tested your coping skills. Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result? * **Time Management:** Think about times when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn? Think about times when you were particularly effective on prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule.   **A few last tips:**   * Talk through your thought process about the questions you are asked. In all of Google's interviews, our engineers are evaluating not only your technical abilities but also how you approach problems and how you try to solve them * Leave your suit at home. :) We work in an open, comfortable environment. I would recommend business casual/smart casual attire. * Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand the problem or need more information. Many of the questions asked in Google interviews are deliberately underspecified because our engineers are looking to see how you engage the problem. In particular, they are looking to see which areas leap to your mind as the most important piece of the technological puzzle you've been presented. * Think about ways to improve the solution you'll present. In many cases, the first answer that springs to mind isn't the most elegant solution and may need some refining. It's definitely worthwhile to talk about your initial thoughts to a question, but jumping immediately into presenting a brute force solution will be received less well than taking time to compose a more efficient solution. * ***Positive Pitch & Tone*** - Show your excitement and passion that you have for what you do and how it fits within Google. * Don't be afraid to ask questions! |

**Questions and Answers for Round 2**

1. **Tell Me About Yourself:**

**○ My name is Rahul Vats.**

**○ I am a CS graduate. I started my professional journey as a developer and worked up the ladder becoming lead developer and then finally technical program manager which is what I wanted and love.**

**○ I have been in a TPM role effectively for the last 7 years.**

**○ Right now, I am a Lead Cloud Solutions Expert at Microsoft. I am managing 3 projects in the Azure Data Lake Analytics, ADL Store and SQL-IAAS space.**

**○ At heart, I am a nerd who likes to solve problems. I am very social person and started various enterprises in my life to interact with people. For me Users and delivering value to users come first. I am data driven, go-getter who sees the big picture.**

**PAUSE PAUSE (Slower, pause at each period and love yourself as you say this. Own all of this about yourself. Enjoy saying this.)**

**● What I find the most compelling about Program management is combining two things.**

**○ One, my excitement for delivering value to the end user.**

**○ Two, my planning and technical strengths.**

**● I love how in this role, I can bring these two professional strengths together.**

**● In the last 7 years, I have seen myself in action as a TPM and I can confidently say that I have the three main skills to be a solid TPM - people management, technology management, and project management.**

**Not only that I want to continue growing these skills further and I see myself doing this for a long time.**

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| * **Clear, short sentences.** * **Pauses. What you are saying has the space to land.** * Background |
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1. **Tell me about a time when you worked on a project with a tight deadline.**

I was working on a project of moving 8000+ internal clients from one platform to another without disruption to service affecting a total of 10 Exabytes worth of data in Azure Data Lake.

Azure Data Lake is a scalable data storage and analytics service.

Azure Data Lake includes all the capabilities to make it easy to store data of any size, shape, and speed, and do all types of processing and analytics across platforms and languages.

It removes the complexities of ingesting and storing data while making it faster to get up and running with batch, streaming, and interactive analytics.

This project required us to do performance testing, integration of client’s systems, machine learning was involved, monitoring client's infrastructure's health, rollout of the software features in the new environment. This was an extremely cross functional effort.

I was responsible for interfacing with the team that was actually building, developing the software features, end of line testing the components. Heavy focus was on performance testing. The timeline was 3 months for initial set of clients move. I had to manage all of the cross functional efforts. There were various teams involved in various phases.

Actions that I took was following:

Developed A Charter: What are we doing, our aim and purpose, what does the success look like?

Identifying Stakeholders Members of team over the course of the project critical for success of the project. I had to get Leadership buy in for the use of people in various phases of the project.

Identifying Milestones: Monitoring Milestones

1. **How do you Influence others without authority or management?**

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| Three Key Things:  Now when you are trying to influence other, things can be in your favor or not in your favor.  When situation is favorable – it’s easier and its more about orchestrating everything and bringing people on the same page.  When not favorable, then I lean very heavily on three things:  **Power in Numbers and Actions:** Information  **Subject Matter Expertise:** Knowledge Worker Hierarchy  **Relationships:** Lateral Leadership  Showing facts, numbers, data and take actions rather than just talking about a plan.  In a situation when I was working at Food for Life, The stakeholders were concerned about loss of inventory and tracking the precise location of where and how the inventory was moving. I suggest an Idea using tablets enabled with GPS technology installed with app and code where tablets moving with the inventory will constantly submit the location to app server hosted in cloud which will then emit notification to stakeholders' cell phone. Idea was met with a lot of resistance, pushback due to various factors. I heard their concerns, realized that their concerns could be address by a POC, act on my SME, bought some tablets out of my budget and funding and implement proof of concept application which enabled the stakeholders to see the value of my proposal and addressed their concerns around cost, safety and training of the taskforce and I was able to get their buy-in.  Now I had to authority over the owners of the company but with me sharing knowledge, information, data and a POC and building a trusting relationship with the stakeholders I was able to influence their decision. |

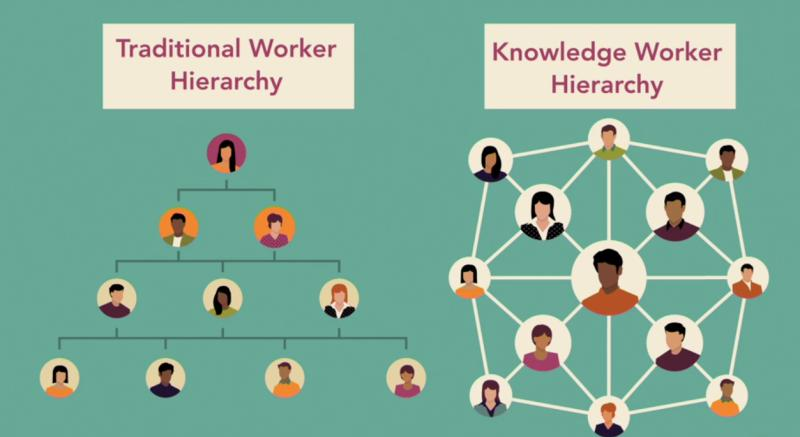
In order to influence others without having the authority there are three things which matter the most according to me:

* Information: Information is most powerful when shared. Influence others by sharing the information you know regularly, clearly and concisely. As a project manager, you have objectives and timelines. In complex work groups, roles and responsibilities can be confusing. Information is a two-way street. Don't forget to gather it as well as share what you already know. Stakeholder knowledge is key information that project teams need to bear in mind about the primary sponsor of the project.
* Knowledge Worker Hierarchy: Knowledge Worker Hierarchy builds on the Information sharing between every member in the team. It is built on knowledge being constantly transferred in the team. One needs to cultivate a broad network of relationships with the people inside and outside your company whose support you need to carry out your initiatives.
* Lateral Leadership: Lateral leadership is among a manager’s most essential skills, and comprises a constellation of capabilities—from networking and coalition building to persuading and negotiating.

1. **Why do you want to change jobs when you have a wonderful role at Microsoft?**

Google is my dream company. Google for me is the first company which became a verb. I became a passionate software developer with the advent and rise of Google. In algorithms one of the key concepts is searching and Google is the company which became synonymous with searching. I am very fascinated and curious about all the processes that go on behind managing the heavy expectation and doing searches helping serve billions of people around the globe. I want to contribute, learn, become and make products at Google better. I am solving some similar problems at Microsoft however I am working as a contract consultant due to Covid. One additional reason for the switch is impact as I will make in getting my contributions delivered to the customers as a FTE vs Contract Consultant.

1. **What kind of communication style do you have? How do you define your style of communication? (Convert to Star)**

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I have had the honor of leading many global cross functional teams up to the size of about 180 people.The Communication Culture that I encourage people to use within my team is based on Knowledge Worker Hierarchy. For knowledge workers I strongly emphasize on the fact and I am speaking with my experience that knowledge workers perform best when empowered to make the most of their deepest skills. I consider every member in my team to be a valuable knowledge worker and encourage them to openly exchange knowledge, information and data with anyone and everyone in the team. All nodes of the team should have a direct connection with every other node in the team.

For status reports I prefer to follow the communication methodology of scrum agile with daily standup of direct close knit teams together depending on team size. Being in the technology field I also enjoy the use of real time collaboration tools like slack, teams, wiki and cloud based docs like Google docs to keep the information and communication flowing across the team in a collaborative manner.

I believe that the key to success for any projects reside in 3D - Determination, Dedication and Discipline and in 3C - Communication, Clarity and Collaboration.

1. **Tell me about a time when the goals you were given were ambiguous. What did you do? (Craziness of the project sanity check)**

About time will be difficult. It happens all the time or at least most of the time. Business usually defines or gives us a problem statement. As a program manager/ team lead it then becomes my job to add details to the problem. One specific example that I want to give is of a project whenI had just started my career. I was developing an iphone app for the Non GMO shopping guide. The only problem statement I was ever given was we need an iphone app. I collaborated with all the stakeholders, did surveys to see what people would like to see in terms of features in the app, came up with UI, Rest APIs to deliver the data to the app. We navigate through the murky waters by collaborating on various details that were needed to get to an app live on apple store within 3 months from business statement to the initial app. More and more features were added subsequently to make it better.

Having the ability to take action without having each and every detail is a key component in dealing with ambiguity. When presented with a situation or problem to solve, it is rare that you will be given all of the details up front. It is crucial to avoid becoming paralyzed by the lack of detail or information. We could potentially be waiting for a piece of information that may never come. It is certain that somewhere along the way we may make mistakes. For this reason, it is important that you are able to make a confident decision, take calculated risks without the whole picture.

I believe in delivering constant manageable chunks of value deliverables in short sprints and getting constant feedback by bringing it to the use of stakeholders early and getting early feedback. Then iterate over the process and add more and more features to make a robust product and at times removing a feature which is no longer needed.

1. **Tell me about a project you were managing where a dispute between stakeholders threatened the success of the project, and what did you do?**

In one of the projects I was working on the difference of opinions on scheduling, deliverables and an issue which was perceived as a security threat to company’s confidential and proprietary recipes for product became very volatile.

Conflict was on the task of rolling out a software solution written for the cloud which was perceived as a threat to the company’s private information.

Over the years working I have seen that summarizing conflicts in writing is a good way. As a project manager I met with all the concern parties both in a closed room and in an open meeting to all stakeholders involved. I diligently took time to write everyone's point. Everyone was given a chance to speak in various settings helping develop the trust. I helped contribute with a team of independent third party moderators on creating action items to resolve the conflicts.

The bulk of the conflict situations I've seen result from a miscommunication -- a misinterpretation of someone's intent or even their words. It's amazing how when I've abstracted what was meant from what was said as a mediator, that the conflict melts away.

1. **Give me some examples of ideas you've presented that required you to get your team's buy-in.**

The best way to get a team to buy into your vision is by asking for their help in crafting the vision, idea, product.

Moving on to the software world I have had various times where I presented the idea to the team to the stakeholders on introducing a new tool, a new development idea, a new programming language and I have had to get team’s buy in.

One instance is when I recommended my team to start using more python for doing development work and integrate it with the software that we had already in place. In order to get the buy in I showed them examples of how we will benefit by using python for some of the tasks we were trying to solve. People liked the examples, the fact that the code was so much easier to write, test and put to production.

One instance is when I was working at Food For Life. The stakeholders were concerned about loss of inventory and tracking the precise location of where and how the inventory was moving. I suggest an Idea using tablets enabled with GPS technology and writing a code where they will constantly submit their location to a server which will then emit notification to stakeholders' cell phone. Idea was met with a lot of resistance, pushback due to various factors. I did a proof of concept application which enabled the stakeholders to see the value of my proposal and addressed their concerns around cost, safety and training of the taskforce and I was able to get their buy-in.

1. **Tell me about a time when you disagreed with the project direction and what you did about it?**

When I was working at Cyxtera - AppGate Cyber Security, On one of the projects that I was working on I disagreed with the direction that project/product was taking in deciding where to keep the source of truth about where to keep authentication details. The Enterprise architect was recommending keeping it with the client which could lead to creation of multiple sources of truth and he was convinced that it would not happen. I wanted to keep it on the server. I suggested that we implement both approaches, try them out and look at the numbers and test results. He agreed it was a good idea. We did and it turned out that it was better to keep the source of truth on servers as we began running on multiple sources of truth on 3% of our testing environment which was high enough to not get buy in from all the stakeholders.

1. **How do you distinguish a group from a team? How do you make a group a team?**

In one word vision. In a group people can have different vision, different goals. In order to make a group a team they need to have a common vision and one common goal and that is what I bring to the table as a team leader. I like to set the team vision and goals upfront so that everyone is aligned from the beginning and work towards achieving them.

1. **What do you like about being TPM?**

I am not only diving into Technical as a TPM. I like to think higher level, bigger picture. Is this the best thing long term? I like to find the best balance business and technical decisions. I come from a software engineering background so engineer likes working with me. I like to work with people, find their problems and then work with SWEs to solve those problems.

Algorithms

Software Technical Design

Program Management

Most Difficult Problems

Success and Failures

Who What Why When Where