

Multimedia Project Planning



Title: Multimedia Project Planning

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Chapter 2 **WHO PLAN THE PROJECT?**

Learning Outcome

Objectives of this chapter are: -

- Project Management skills
- Project managers
- Roles and responsibilities of project manager
- Project manager's skills

Who Plan the Project?

The project manager creates the project management plan following input from the project team and key project stakeholders. The plan should be agreed and approved by at least the project team and its key stakeholders.

Project Management Skills

There are times when functional managers or department heads perform the duties of a project manager without ever getting the title. If you're someone setting foot into the world to know about what is project management or an accidental project manager being handed the responsibilities of one, you need to have the following set of skills to manage projects.



Figure 1 Essential skills of project managers

1. Leadership skills

This is perhaps the most important project management skill any aspiring manager must possess. There are different types of leadership styles you can adopt to lead and motivate the team. Any effective leader knows when it is time to delegate tasks to the team members and when to take control.

As a project manager, you must understand that there is a huge difference between managing and leading. Management is following certain established processes and project management methodologies and ensuring others follow them too.

Leadership, on the other hand, requires both project management skills and emotional intelligence. It is the responsibility of the project manager to empower and inspire team members.

2. Effective communication

This is another soft skill that goes 'hand in hand' with effective leadership. No matter how good of a vision you have or how much you want to inspire your team members, it will all be moot if you can't get your point across clearly.

Additionally, a large part of a project manager's time is spent while dealing with stakeholders and external parties like vendors and contractors. All of these tasks require you to be an expert at effective communication in project management. Therefore, it's important for project managers to work on enhancing their communication skills.

3. Planning and strategic thinking

This is a business management skill that is absolutely critical for any project manager. The concept of a project manager without the necessary project strategy and planning skills does not exist. All typical tasks of a project manager like organizing and prioritizing tasks, monitoring progress, and making decisions based on the situation, require a certain level of project plan.

Another critical skill that is somewhat related to planning is cost management. Every project comes with a monetary constraint. With proper planning, you can make sure that your project remains safe from unnecessary delays in project and budget shortages.

4. Team management

A huge part of managing projects requires you to stay organized at work and manage people. You must efficiently use all the resources available and your team is the best resource you have. Team management is a part of being an effective leader and how you handle this responsibility can have a significant impact on your project.

Project teams usually consist of people from different departments who hardly interact with each other. Bringing all these people on the same page and correctly assigning tasks according to their expertise is no child's play.

5. Time management and scheduling

"Time is what we want most, but what we use worst". Time management is something both project managers and non-project managers have been doing for a very long time. Even the simplest tasks require effective time management so it's obvious that your projects will also need it.

Luckily, there are several tools modern project managers have to handle this crucial task. Many project management applications come with project scheduling and tracking features.

You can perform tasks like visualizing the project, scheduling tasks, tracking progress, sending reminders, and prioritize tasks very easily which are the most important skills and competencies a project manager should have.

6. Task management skills

By now you must have realized that all these required skills are interconnected. Together with scheduling, task management is a pillar that holds the project together. You can plan as much as you want, but if your project tasks are not clearly organized, the project will either fail or take too much time.

It is your duty as a project manager to know which tasks can be worked on simultaneously and which tasks depend on each other. Recognizing these small details and coming up with the most efficient system is what distinguishes an effective project manager from the crowd.

7. Risk mitigation

Risks are unavoidable no matter how simple your project is. Many things can go wrong and a task that seemed simplistic can cause huge problems for you down the road. As a project manager, your job is to reduce the possibilities of risks while having an effective plan in case something goes wrong.

Skillful project managers can generally identify potential problems before they occur and come up with a risk mitigation strategy.

8. Expert negotiation skills

All project stakeholders have a slightly different agenda and as a project manager, it's your job to negotiate terms that are acceptable for everyone. In order to create a win-win situation for everyone, you'll have to know when to compromise and when to stand your ground.

The job requires you to constantly create situations where you get what you primarily want while making some compromises to convince the other person that they are getting something out of the deal too. You'll have to find middle ground with your company's management in order to get the required resources, negotiate achievable timelines in the project, handle other stakeholders, and expertly manage your own team.

9. Critical thinking

Critical thinking is an essential project management skill that can help you stay in the correct state of mind even when things go south. It's extremely important to have a structured approach to making important decisions. This objective way of making decision ensures that external pressures do not affect your project.

Critical thinking also makes you an adaptable and versatile manager. Even after meticulous planning, surprises can happen and it's very important that you salvage as much as possible in order to stay on track and complete the project successfully.

10. Using the right tools

Modern project management is not an easy task and it requires a combination of project management skills and the right tools. You should be able to identify and evaluate the right project management tools for your requirements.

There are numerous collaborative project management tools like Kiss flow Project that can make your job easier.

How to master the necessary project management skills?

Effective leaders and project managers are not born with the necessary skills. They invest in themselves and continuously learn the skills they need to stay in the game. If you want to master the art of project management and become a project management pro, check out some ways you can start learning the necessary skills.

- Professional certifications: The Project Management Institute (PMI) is a global body with a branch in almost every country. They organize a lot of training and workshops for beginners and experienced professionals to brush up their management skill and competency. You can also check out some of the registered online courses being offered by many top-tier institutes.
- Books and blogs: A lot of published materials to help professionals pick the basics of project management is easily available online. You can read project management books and follow a blog like this one to learn more about project management and how to apply it in your organization.

- Podcasts: There are several podcasts of famous professionals you can use to learn from their experience. Use your research skills and start learning right from the source.

Being responsible for a project means having a lot of responsibilities at once and sometimes one can get overwhelmed. However, staying in the right frame of mind and working on enhancing the correct set of skills can make this burden a little easier to carry. We hope that this list was helpful to you and you'll use these skills to become a great project manager for your company

Who is a project manager?

A project manager is a team member in project management who is responsible for organizing the team, planning, assigning, monitoring progress, and ensuring a project is delivered successfully. A project manager is a specific person who makes sure a project's objectives are delivered on time and under budget.

Roles and responsibilities of a project manager

To achieve the very noble goal of guiding a team to success and delivering on-project objectives, there are roles and responsibilities a project manager is required to take on. These include: -

- Understanding the scope of the project to be worked on
- Estimating the time and resources required to fully deliver the targets set for the project
- Managing time and structuring work to fit into deadlines
- Breaking the project into tasks and assigning them to team members
- Managing individual team members' workloads to ensure they're not overworked
- Measuring and managing project risks efficiently
- Serving as the team's channel to higher management communicating needs and challenges
- Resolving obstacles and blockers that may hinder the team from doing the best job possible

The project manager ensures that the team is focused on delivering the objectives assigned as efficiently as possible.

Skills needed for a good project manager

Before jumping right in, handing out tasks, running retrospectives with team members, and managing deadlines so senior management doesn't chew you up, it's important to understand what it takes to function as a project manager.

Here's what makes a great project manager and the project management skills needed to become one.

Excellent communication skills

When you think of a project manager, it's easy to imagine a multi-talented geek with three degrees from Stanford, Harvard, and Columbia, who maintains complex codebases, designs complex algorithms, and wins employee of the year awards back-to-back.

At its core, project management is really about managing people. Project management entails: getting an understanding of a task to be worked on, introducing your team to it, and guiding the entire team to do small chunks of that huge task until everything is completed successfully.

Project management is a team sport and people are at its core. A project manager should be able to communicate ideas clearly and simply enough to engage the entire team and provide them the guidance they need to do the best work possible. More importantly, a project manager should learn to listen, exercise empathy, and see things from the team's perspective. And no, you don't need a degree in psychology to make that work. You can start by listening more intentionally and communicating with fewer words designed to bring the most meaning.

Communication makes work, work and as the project manager, it's your job to make communication work.

Orientation to action

It's easy to analyze all day, draw graphs, plan on whiteboards, and estimate timelines for hours. In the end, someone has to take that first step that gets everyone else rolling out into action. And that's you, dear project manager (or, rather, project manager-to-be).

In other words, project management is work, not just barking out orders. A good project manager should set the pace for the entire team by creating daily, weekly, or monthly targets, assigning tasks, monitoring performance, and tracking completion.

Most importantly, as a project manager, you should be eagerly ready to jump into the trenches and untangle any hard tasks for your team, saving their time and enthusiasm in the process.

A good project manager leads from the front, and over there in front, it's your job to get working and keep working as an example.

Enthusiasm

As a project manager, it's your job to provide some of the mental momentum your team needs to do their best work, encouraging, motivating, and being first in line showing the work can be done.

You may not always bring donuts to the office, but if you lead with a can-do-it mindset, your team will consistently outperform the highs and lows a sugar rush and crash would bring.

Problem-solving skills

As a project manager, what do you think is your job? Before you blurt out an overly technical definition or copy what I wrote above, I'll just save you the stress.

Your job is to solve problems. Take a prototype and in three months, deliver a complete product to the CEO. That's a problem waiting there. Break a project into tasks and assign them to team members. You guessed it, that's another problem. Monitor your team's performance and keep everyone on the cutting edge. Problem.

Every task in the world is a problem waiting to be solved and as a project manager, your job is to be at the forefront, clearing blockers, and fixing seen and unseen obstacles that may hinder your team from doing their best work.

Maybe you can just go ahead and give yourself the Chief Problem Solver title within your team; you deserve it.

A cool head and analytical mindset

At some point, project management may devolve into putting out fires, catching up with deadlines, and wondering how you're going to meet your targets now that one team member is on sick leave. Here's where you need a cool head on your shoulders to calm down, think, and find a way out of issues.

Are you behind your deadline? Not great, but you can meet your boss to explain why and request a longer deadline. And this time, make sure it's 1.5x long enough. Better under-promise and over-deliver.

Say, one team member took a leave just when you couldn't afford to slow down? Instead of throwing your hands up in defeat, you can meet with other departments and try borrowing a few hands to make up for the shortfall.

Remember, as a project manager, your primary responsibility is to solve problems. And to solve problems, you need a cool head on your shoulders.