

Don't forget to land: Measuring project success

In this lesson, you are learning to distinguish the difference between a project launch and a project landing. Let's focus here on the difference between launches and landings and how to ensure that your project will be completed successfully.

You will often hear companies celebrating the launch of a new product, service, or initiative, and it is important to remember that even when your project is out in the world, your work isn't complete. When working on a project, the goal isn't simply to launch it, but to land it. Landings occur once your project achieves a measure of success. As project managers, landings are what we strive for and what we celebrate. They are the ultimate reward for all of our efforts.



Launching vs. landing a project

In project management, a project “launching” means you have delivered the final results of the project to the client or user. You can’t solely base project success on when the client accepts the project, though. Your work on a project won’t be complete until you “land” it by thoroughly measuring the results. This is when the **success criteria** and the metrics you defined initially when setting SMART goals will come in handy. Teams should be clear on what they are trying to accomplish, beyond just launching something to users. Will your project increase retention? Will your project speed up a product feature? Depending on the product and situation, the answers will differ, but it is important that your team aligns and works toward the same measurable goal.

Launch first, land later

Let’s consider an example: imagine you are a project manager for an eco-friendly organization. Your organization asks you to create a training program for middle school students in your county to teach them about the impacts of recycling. The county’s goal is to increase recycling by 20% over the next five years. You gather your team and start developing the learning content to build out this training program. It takes you and your team one year to complete the research, development, and production of this training. When you hand over the training to the school district, you are launching the project. In order to know your project actually landed at the intended goal, you need to check back in periodically over the next five years to see if the training program is on target to produce a 20% increase in recycling in the county.

Launch and forget

A common mistake of many project teams is to “launch and forget” the results. This happens when a project manager delivers the project to the client and the client accepts the project delivery, but the project manager doesn’t assess if the project deliverables satisfy the customer or user. In the example above, if you didn’t check back periodically over five years to assess the results, you would have only launched—but not landed—the project. Launching and landings work in tandem to ensure true success.

A project landing shouldn’t create more hurdles. If done correctly, a landing creates greater alignment within the teams on the end results you all desire, and it gives everybody on the team better visibility on how to achieve success.

Key takeaway

Launching your project to the client can be a very big moment for you. You handed over the project to your client and now you can take a step back and breathe. But make sure you land your project, as well. Look over your notes, talk with your team, meet with the client, and remember to return to your intended deliverables and metrics to help you measure success.

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