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## How to be a great Project Manager



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## Introduction

### How to be a Great Project Manager

Whether you're a novice or an expert, you can always improve the way you manage projects. The more you improve, the greater the level of project success you will achieve. To help you do this, we'll step you through the things you can do to improve the way you manage projects on a daily basis.

#### You'll learn how to:

- ✔ Set goals and achieve them
- ✔ Improve your decision-making skills
- ✔ Write great project documents
- ✔ Deliver fantastic presentations
- ✔ Manage day-to-day tasks
- ✔ Boost your personal confidence
- ✔ Improve your learning
- ✔ Get a work-life balance.

If you apply all of the tips, tricks and techniques provided in this eBook, you'll be on the right track to becoming a better Project Manager.





## Your Role as a Project Manager

You official role as a Project Manager is to deliver your project on time, within budget and to specification. To achieve this goal, you need to do these 5 things well:

### 1. Recruit the best

Great projects are delivered by a great team. Your role is to recruit the best people you can find and make sure that their skill sets are perfectly complementary so that you have all of the experience you need to deliver the project successfully.

You need to document a detailed Job Description for every person in your team so that they all know what is expected of them, every step of the way. Only with a great team and everyone knowing what is expected of them, will you deliver a great result.



### 2. Motivate and lead

Being positive and supportive towards your team, leading by example and motivating others to do the same are essential. If you want others to work hard, then you need to work harder than they do. Lead by giving them direction, motivating them to work hard and showing you care along the way.

You need to take charge so that everyone knows what is to be done and by when. You need to be strict and may need to “crack the whip” to make sure that every task is done on time and doesn’t slip. If it does slip, then you need to identify the slippage immediately and have contingency plans so you can get back on track.

### 3. Manage the finances

Every project has a budget, whether it’s clearly defined or not. You need to ensure that you don’t spend more than you’re entitled to, or your sponsor / client will be dissatisfied with the end result. Manage finances carefully by listing every expense and ensuring that they are budgeted upfront. If unbudgeted expenditure takes place, tell your client as soon as possible to avoid complications down the track. If you need more budget, then don’t be afraid to ask for it.



### 4. Control change

You need to be the one who controls all change to the project scope, tightly. “Scope creep” kills projects. Define the scope of the project upfront and then review it each week to make sure that you’re not doing unauthorized work at any time. Your customer will ask for change

throughout the project. Don't always give in. Stand your ground and when it happens, ask for more time or budget to cater for it. Remember, no matter how many changes they ask you for, they will still complain if you're late or over budget. So control change when you see it.

## 5. Communicate clearly

It's your job as a Project Manager to communicate the status of the project regularly. If people know it's on track it will motivate them. If it's running late it will give them a kick-start. But they will only know if it's on time or late if you communicate this to them.

## How to Set Goals and Achieve Them



If you want to be a great Project Manager, you need to be extremely good at setting goals and achieving them. Every project has a defined delivery date, so you need to be goal orientated if you want to deliver your project on time. Read on to find out how to do it.

### Identify what's important

In projects, everything is a priority. Take time to sit down with your Project Sponsor and identify what is really important to achieve. Ask them this question: "If there were 3 critical things that the project had to deliver, then what would they be?"

The 3 things might be "delivering on time, under budget and to specification". Or they might be producing 3 key deliverables, or even 3 major business benefits.

### Specify the goals clearly

Take these 3 important things and turn them into project goals. Remember to make your goals SMART— Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

So why only have 3 goals? It's simple. There's so much that goes on in a project that if you have too many goals, they won't be front of mind and may get diluted. It's much easier to remember and focus on 3 things long-term. That's also why you need to keep them short and simple. If you set 5 or more goals, then you'll probably forget them within a week, making them harder to achieve.

## Communicate them

Print out your new goals and put them on the wall by your desk or in another visible place. Then take your team out for lunch and tell them what the 3 goals are and why they are important to achieve.

Tell your other stakeholders about them, including any contractors, suppliers and business representatives that may be involved with the project. Make sure everyone in the project knows what has to be done and by when so you're all on the same page and working towards the same goals.

## Set an Action Plan

Having the goals in front of you every day will help, but you need to take them seriously and create an action plan to achieve them. Revisit your Project Plan and identify all of the tasks that will specifically help you achieve your 3 goals.

These tasks are now the “high priority” tasks for the project and together, they form your Action Plan.

Assign your best resource to these high priority tasks and make sure they have everything they need to achieve them.



## Keep an eye on progress

As a Project Manager, you can't watch everything. Focus on the high priority tasks in your plan. Track their progress daily and resolve any issues that arise with them, as quickly as possible. Personally oversee them if you need to. If they slip, then take quick action to bring them back on track. Do everything in your power to make sure that these high priority tasks are completed on time, so that you can achieve your 3 goals and lead your project to success.

## How to Improve your Decision-Making

Great Project Managers make great decisions. But how do they do it? What techniques do they use for making decisions quickly and easily? Making a decision is a process that generally starts with a problem and ends with a solution. This may surprise you, but most great leaders use the same 5 steps for making decisions. By following these 5 steps for every decision you make, you'll make better decisions faster and you'll feel good about it.



### Investigate the problem

Decisions need to be made when a problem is presented to you. Take the first step by spending time to identify its root cause and make sure it's not just a symptom of another underlying problem. Project problems are usually related to people, processes, equipment or materials. Find out when, why and how it occurred and its impact on the project.

### Prioritize it

On projects, problems occur all the time. You need to determine whether each problem needs your urgent attention or not, based on its impact on the project. If it's high impact (e.g. it's preventing your team from working) then it's high priority and you need to stop work and get it resolved quickly.

### Identify the solutions

With a clear understanding of the problem and its priority level, you need to identify solutions to address it. Then review each alternative to determine whether it:

- ✔ Solves the root cause of the problem
- ✔ Is easy and practical to implement
- ✔ Will prevent the problem from re-occurring.

### Make your decision

Now you have all of the information you need to make your decision. Don't make your decisions too hastily. Take time out of your day to carefully consider all of the pros and cons. Go for a walk, or if it's really important sleep on it so you have a clear head when deciding. Make non-important decisions quickly, but take a little more time when making decisions which are critical to the success of the project.



## Act on it

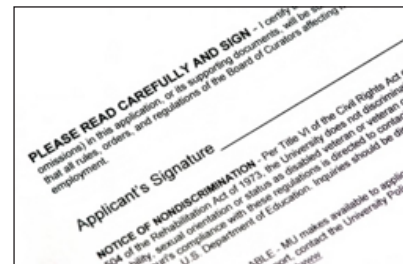
Once you have thought it through and made your decision, you need to be fully committed to implementing it. Act on it immediately by telling your team about it and then scheduling the tasks needed to make it happen. Remember, every problem affects your project in some way, so you need to act quickly once you've decided on what to do.

## How to Write Great Project Documents

As a Project Manager, you often have to write lengthy documents that are critical to the success of the project. It's important that you do a good job. Here we explain how to improve your writing skills and produce great project documents.

### Keep it simple

Great writers can cover whole topics in just a few short paragraphs. To do this, you need to remove any surplus content, clutter and jargon and write in plain, simple terms that everyone understands. That way, your documents will be quick and easy to read.



### Make it focused

To create a powerful project document, you need to focus purely on the topic. This will make your document more persuasive and inspiring to read. Think carefully about the content that your readers expect you to cover, list your topics and stick to them. Never write off the topic. If you need to go off topic, then put the content in an Appendix at the end and refer to it.

### Have a clear structure

Think carefully about your Table of Contents. Your readers need to be able to scan the Table of Contents to get a quick feel for what your document contains. The Table of Contents should be simple and easy to understand. In your document, you should also:

- ✔ Use tables to make it easier to read
- ✔ Insert diagrams to explain difficult topics
- ✔ Use short paragraphs to accentuate points
- ✔ Make use of bolding, italics and underlining
- ✔ Use bullets, as they are easily scanned.



## Always tell a story

Everyone loves a good story. So write each document as though it was the best story in town. Start with the beginning by introducing your topic and telling them what they are going to learn by reading your document. Then write the main body of the document and end with a conclusion.

## Make it flow

Write your document so that each section flows from one topic to the next. This way, the user never has to pause to work out where they are. Before you finish each section, introduce the next section. This helps keep the reader motivated.

## Just the right amount

Give your readers just the right amount of information needed to make a decision or take an action. Keep it short, but informative and helpful.

## Be inspiring

Great writers are passionate about what they are writing. If you are positive and inspirational about your documents, then your reader will catch the excitement and your document will be enjoyable to read.



## How to Improve your Presentation Skills

At some point in your career as a Project Manager, you will most likely have to stand up and present to a room full of people. When you do, you may find that it's not as easy as it looks. Your nerves will kick in and you'll be aware that your success as a Project Manager is being gauged for every minute you're up there.

Public speaking is one of the most challenging things to master. But if you prepare carefully, take it slowly on the day and are enthusiastic about it, then you will deliver a powerful presentation to your colleagues. To help you prepare and overcome your nerves, here are some useful tips to improve your presentation skills.

## Prepare with care

To give a great presentation, you need great preparation. Start by thinking about your topic and the audience and what they are most interested in. Then list your key points and write down the general structure of the presentation.

If you are nervous or are new to presenting, you may prefer to write down every word that you want to say and memorize it. This will boost your confidence and settle your nerves on the day. However, try not to make it sound too scripted and make sure you emphasize the key points. Experienced presenters generally don't need to write everything down but will often have a list of key points or bullets to prompt them.

## On the day

To ensure a fresh, vibrant presentation:

1. Get a good night's sleep beforehand. Eat a healthy breakfast and try to free up your schedule, so you're more relaxed going into it.
2. Spend 15 minutes going over your presentation beforehand.
3. Concentrate on your breathing for 2 minutes. This focuses your thoughts, relaxes you and gets rid of any nerves.
4. Remember, the open and close of your presentation are the most important parts. So put in extra effort here, to make it memorable.
5. If you forget something or make a mistake, don't stop to apologize, just keep going and try to relax. It will soon be forgotten.

## Body language

It's said that 80% of a successful presentation is about body language, and only 20% is about content. So use these top tips to communicate the right message through your body:

1. Make eye contact with people at all times. Never stare at the ceiling or the back of the room as you present, unless your nerves start to get the better of you.
2. Appear confident. Use an open stance, stand tall and proud. Smile and let your personality shine. Don't be overly formal.
3. Remember that relaxed body language conveys honesty and openness. Walk around a little and make use of props.
4. Vary your voice and use slow, open hand gestures. Never have your hands in your pocket or play with a pen. Move your hands to an open position and then pause for effect.
5. Speak slowly and carefully, but passionately. If you're enthusiastic about the topic, then your listeners will be as well.

## Spark interaction

Encourage interaction with others during your presentation. By having others talk for a few seconds, it takes the focus off you temporarily. This gives you time to clear your head and focus on the key points ahead.

Another trick to clear your head is to pause while your team are reading a slide or considering key points you've just mentioned.

Using role play with real examples is a great way to get audience participation and encouraging questions can make for a lively discussion.





## How to Manage Your To Do Lists

Most Project Managers have too much to do. They end up with “To Do” lists all over the place and it can be overwhelming. So how do you manage your To Do lists to make sure they get done?

To deliver your project successfully, you need to complete the right tasks at the right time. That’s why people create To Do Lists - so that they know what they have to do and by when. But it’s not that easy. You’re often adding more tasks to your lists than you are completing, and you feel like you’re not getting ahead. Here are some ways to overcome this.



### Only one list

If you have lists in your car, on your PC, in your pocket or at home, then merge them all into one list. Group the items in your list and try and put them in a logical order. As soon as you’ve done this, you’ll immediately feel like a weight has been taken off your shoulders, because everything you have to do is now all in one place. You’re ready to take the next step.

### Targets and dates

Sit back and think about what you have to achieve and by when. Write down your targets and deadlines. If you’re unsure what these are, speak to your boss and get them to list the top 5 things they want you to do and by when. Write them down and try to get your boss to prioritize them, so you know which items are critical.

### Set clear priorities

Type your list into your PC and prioritize it based on:

- ✔ The targets and dates set
- ✔ The amount of work each item will take
- ✔ The complexity in completing the task
- ✔ The importance of the task to the project
- ✔ The deadlines for completion.

## Define the critical path

On many projects, not all tasks get done. There simply isn't the time. You need to identify the "critical path" tasks which are those that simply have to be done to complete the project. The question you must ask yourself is "if this task is a week late, will the overall project slip by a week?" If the answer is yes, then that task is on the critical path to success. You need to complete these critical tasks as a higher priority than others.

## Manage your lists

The next step is to set target completion dates for your critical tasks. You then need to do everything in your power to make sure that these dates are met. Don't worry about setting dates for non-critical tasks. It takes too much time and things change anyway.

As the project evolves, tick off the tasks as they are completed. And when new tasks arise, decide whether they are critical or not and if they are, then set targets dates for them as well. Always keep your list up-to-date, as it will help you complete the right tasks at the right time.



## How to Boost your Self Confidence

To be a great Project Manager, you need to have a high level of self-confidence. If you're not 100% confident, then it will impact on your ability to achieve success.

For some people, confidence comes naturally and to others, they need to work at it. There are some golden rules that will help boost your self-confidence.

## Look after yourself

Confident people look and feel great. The first step towards boosting confidence is to start with your physical and mental state. Try to eat healthy foods, reduce junk food and drink plenty of water during the day.

Do a little exercise every day. It'll work wonders. Go to the gym or take up a sport. Get a new haircut, buy some new clothes and shout yourself a gift that you'll value. If you look and feel fantastic, then you'll start each day feeling wonderful.

## Set simple goals

When you get to work, set simple and achievable weekly goals. On Friday night when you leave work for the weekend, you'll feel great that you've done what you set out to achieve. This will give your confidence a great boost. Make sure you tell people about the goals you've set, and when you achieve them. Never make your goals too hard or too easy to

reach. And each week, stretch yourself a little more so that you're constantly performing at higher levels.

## Get a mentor

Find someone who is honest, wise and that you can trust, and ask them to be your mentor. It might be a family member, friend or colleague. Meet with them monthly to talk about the goals you've set and what you've achieved. Get their feedback and advice on any problem you're experiencing. Their feedback and support will boost your confidence even further.

## Ensure a work-life balance

To be at the top of your game, you need to have a great work-life balance. This means juggling your work and personal time evenly. Be aware that if you overwork, then tiredness and stress will knock your confidence. Limit your work hours and make the most of your personal time by doing things you enjoy. If you get the most out of life, then your confidence will grow each day.

## Get back into learning

When you started your career, everything was new and exciting. But now, you probably don't learn as much as you used to and this will take some of the excitement away from the job.

So get back into learning new things through reading, online research and meeting people to learn from them.

Try and learn something new each day. This will not only improve your performance at work but it will give your confidence a great boost because of the extra knowledge you're gaining.



## How to Get Reward and Recognition

Great Project Managers get rewarded and recognized for their performance on a regular basis. If you don't feel like you're getting the reward and recognition you deserve, it may be that you're so focused on your projects that you haven't had a chance to tell others about the value you're providing.

To be seen as a successful Project Manager, you need to boost your personal brand so that others see you in the same light. Remember, reward and recognition go hand-in-hand with success. So it's up to you to show others why you're successful and deserve reward and recognition for your efforts. Here are 10 sure-fire ways to help you get the recognition you deserve.

### Form the right relationships

The first thing to consider is from whom do you want recognition? Whether it's your manager or CEO, you need to build your relationship with them, ideally on both a personal and business level. Make them aware of your role, how critical it is to the business and why they should care.

### Set expectations

Tell your manager why your deadlines are hard to achieve and how limited your resources are. Make them know that the only way you can deliver your projects is through long hours and hard work. Only then will they truly understand the challenges you're faced with.

### Show how hard you're working

Every boss expects their team to work hard. You need to show them you're going the extra mile and why you're different than the other Project Managers in the organization. Make them know that you have challenging targets to meet and you're giving it your all.



### Shout out your successes

Don't wait until the project is finished to promote it. Take a small success and tell people about it. Even if your project is delayed and the team is under pressure, shout out about any small successes you gain to make your managers know that you're doing a good job.

### Report progress

Report your project's progress as frequently as you can to show it has got momentum and give your managers the feeling that you're progressing well.

### Focus on what's ahead

Even if the project is running late, don't dwell on the current state instead focus on the work



you're doing to get it back on track. Always communicate the positive side of the situation to your manager, so it looks to them like you have it all under control. And if you don't have it under control, then ask for support.

## Ask for support

Don't ever be afraid to ask for support from your manager and to tell them the absolute truth. You might need more time, people, equipment or even advice from them. By getting their support regularly, you're actually getting more buy-in from them for your project. And it's another chance to use the tips above to show them how hard you're working.

## Give a "heads up"

Keep your manager informed regularly by giving them a "heads up" when critical issues come up. Never let them wait to read about issues in a Project Status Report or meeting. Tell them early about any news, so they have time to digest it before you seek their feedback.

## Celebrate big wins

Great, you've delivered on time and under budget, or at least one of the two. Celebrate it celebrity-style. Throw an office party, shout morning tea or at least take the team and your manager out to lunch.

Promote it in your company newsletter, take photos and consider a press release. It's time to shout out your success from the rooftop, instead of just getting caught up in the next project.

Remember, people only get reward and recognition for successes, if they are visible. The more visible they are, the greater the reward and recognition you'll receive.



## Be direct

After your celebrations, take those you want recognition from out for lunch. Tell them how hard the targets were to meet and what you've achieved. Tell them what it took to do it. Then tell them about your next project and get their support for it. This ensures you get their continued buy-in, and should spin off the reward and recognition you deserve.

## How to Achieve a Work-Life Balance

Do you ever feel that your projects are beginning to take over your life? It's quite a common feeling because Project Managers and teams usually work long hours on a project to ensure its success. Work becomes everything and as a result, your personal life becomes secondary. Believe it or not, as a Project Manager you can have a great working life and personal life at the same time. It's called having a good "work-life balance" and you get it when you prioritize your life as highly as you do your work.

What is a work-life balance? It's about getting the maximum enjoyment from your work time and personal time, every day. This means really enjoying the time you have at work, and the time you spend after hours so that you're getting the most out of what life has to offer. The reverse of this is not enjoying your job, and not having a personal life. If you're in that camp, apply the following 10 tips to get back on track.

### Prioritize

Sit down with a nice warm drink and ask yourself if you had to review your adult life to date, then what would you say about it and what would you wish you'd done differently? Think long and hard about this question, and then write down your answer. Now set out a clear vision for what you're going to do differently from this point onwards. You may not need to make radical changes to improve your life. It's usually just about prioritizing. Write down a new set of priorities for your life, ones that mean the most to you.

### Set goals

Now you need to set yourself 3 personal goals to help you get the maximum enjoyment from your work time and personal time every day. For example, your goals might relate to your physical health, your personal time or the way you approach your work. Together the goals must help you to achieve your perfect work-life balance.

### Watch your hours

It makes sense that to achieve a perfect work-life balance, you need to enjoy both your work and your personal life. If you work around the clock, then you may not get the time to have a personal life. Try and balance your work time, family time and personal time, so that you actually make time to achieve your goals.

### Socialize

We're not all "social butterflies" but it's a well-known fact that socializing with good friends is a great way to reduce stress. Make a special effort to make a new friend sometime soon. It may sound corny, but new friendships often add spice to life.

## One a week

What do you have a passion for? Is it arts, sciences, sport or something wacky? Whatever it is, try your upmost to make it happen once a week, every week. Tell yourself “this is the one time in the week that it’s my time” – then stick to it. You’ll find it incredibly rewarding. In fact, you’ll start looking forward to that activity each week because you know you’ll have fun doing it.

## One a day

In addition to the “one a week” activity above, kick off a “one a day” activity as well. Make it something small to ensure you find the time to do it. It could be spending 10 minutes reading a magazine, going for a walk or calling a friend. As long as it’s enjoyable, then make it a regular time in your daily schedule. This is the hardest tip of all to stick to, but the most beneficial in the long run. If you’re serious about your work-life balance, then you will be able to find 10-15 minutes every day to do this. Oh and remember to make it fun!

## Find a peer

Nothing beats having a peer to do this with you. Find someone who wants to get the same out of life. Open up to them and tell them what you want to achieve. Then work together to motivate each other to achieve the personal goals you set.

Meet bi-weekly to talk about what you’ve struggled with and what you’ve achieved. Advise each other on what can be done to improve.

Peers can provide the support you need to make a real difference in your life. So choose your peer wisely and work together to achieve your joint goals.



## Rewards

While peers can motivate you, true motivation comes from within. To help you meet your goals, set yourself a reward for achieving them. The reward doesn’t need to cost a lot, for instance it might be taking two days off work to spend with your family. The most important thing is that the reward is something that means a lot to you and is worth fighting for.

## Feeling proud

If you can achieve your goals or even get half way there, then feel proud about having done it. It takes a lot of effort to make a change in your life so feel proud about what you’ve achieved. This sense of pride will show in your work and your personal life. And guess what? You’ll have gained new enjoyment from life, so it has to be good.

## How to Improve your Learning

Great Project Managers are constantly learning new things to improve the way that they manage projects daily. To become a great Project Manager, you need to be learning something new every week. Don't take it for granted that you know everything about managing projects. Things are constantly changing; the culture of organizations, technology and the economy to mention a few. With all this change happening, you need to continue learning how to adapt to it and how to apply the latest techniques to managing projects successfully.

### Get serious

Whether you're a beginner or a novice, you need to invest in formal training to boost your skills. So get serious and take the first step. Either enroll in a formal training course or use learning tools so that you can learn from home when it suits you. Set aside two hours every week to sit down and read books, materials, articles and white papers about projects. By immersing yourself in the topic, you will spark ideas for your own projects that you can use to improve your success.

### Widen your scope

Don't just stick to the classical theory of project management. Instead, widen your scope by reading materials that also cover managing people, money and equipment, as well as suppliers, procurement and communications.

### Write it down

If you're reading late at night, much of what you read will go in one ear and out the other. So every time you think "That's a good point!" write it down. Create your own Learning Guidebook and in it, record every tip that you've learned along the way. Then you can read your own guidebook as a refresher. Even better, you can use it to impart the knowledge you've gained to your team. Who knows, you could even publish it as a book!

### Get specific

When you've spent a couple of months improving your knowledge of project management, you're ready to get specific. Write down the areas that you're weak in and get detailed materials on those topics. Remember that Project Managers are generalists. They need to know a lot about all management topics. So if there are topics that you're weak in, learn more about them.

### Reward your efforts

By writing down your learning along the way, you'll quickly realize how valuable that information is to you. Feel proud of what you've learnt by rewarding your own efforts. Go out for a meal with friends, buy new clothes or do something special. Rewarding your efforts will reinforce how important learning is to you and it will motivate you to continue learning more each week.



# You can do it!

Becoming a great Project Manager is no easy task. You need time, patience, experience and the right approach. By following the tips and ideas outlined in this eBook, we hope we've pointed you in the right direction.

Just to recap, to become a great Project Manager you need to set very clear goals and achieve them. You need to perform at a high level by constantly improving your decision-making, written documentation and presentation skills. You also need to manage your day-to-day tasks and constantly give yourself a confidence boost to ensure you're always performing to the best of your abilities. If you can do all of this while delivering your project and achieving a work-life balance at the same time, you're well on the way to becoming a great Project Manager if you're not already there.

Of course great Project Managers use great [Project Management Software](#) to help them manage projects. Take a free trial of [ProjectManager.com](#) and see why it's the best way to manage your projects online.

