

Project manager: job description

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Project managers ensure that a project is completed on time and within budget, that the project's objectives are met and that everyone else is doing their job properly. Projects are usually separate to usual day-to-day business activities and require a group of people to work together to achieve a set of specific objectives. Project managers oversee the project to ensure the desired result is achieved, the most efficient resources are used and the different interests involved are satisfied.

Typical responsibilities include:

- agreeing project objectives
- representing the client's or organisation's interests
- providing advice on the management of projects
- organising the various professional people working on a project
- carrying out risk assessment
- making sure that all the aims of the project are met
- making sure the quality standards are met
- using IT or other systems to keep track of people and progress
- recruiting specialists and sub-contractors
- monitoring sub-contractors to ensure guidelines are maintained
- overseeing the accounting, costing and billing
- reporting to the client or senior stakeholders on progress
- evaluating the success of the project against its benchmarking and sharing lessons or best practice with other organisations or project managers.

Depending on the project, responsibilities can cover all aspects of a project from the beginning stages through to completion. Project managers

typically lead by example, so expect to be working at least the same hours as your staff. Salaries for project management jobs can be high, but will vary according to the norms in the specific industry and the project manager's level of experience.

Typical employers of project managers

A project management function, if not an actual job title, can be found in most organisations across virtually all industries. However, project management roles can be found most commonly in:

- Technology companies
- Construction and built environment companies
- Architects
- Retailers
- Engineering companies
- Manufacturers
- Public sector organisations

Qualifications and training required

There are routes into the career for experienced professionals, graduates and school leavers alike.

Many project managers get appointed to the role after having worked in that particular industry for a significant period of time, as they have lots of related knowledge and skills to bring to the project.

However, many employers run project management graduate schemes, in which graduates start out as an 'assistant project manager' or a 'graduate project manager' in order to learn the ropes of project management.

Whether you require a specific degree will vary according to the industry, employer and specific graduate scheme: for example, some engineering and technology organisations will require STEM subjects but many

organisations will accept applications from all degree disciplines.

Similarly, a few organisations – particularly in the construction, engineering and manufacturing industries – offer higher or degree apprenticeships in project management. Entry requirements vary, but typically include a minimum number of GCSEs (or equivalent) and a minimum number of UCAS points. Other organisations offer apprenticeships in various business-related roles (such as supply chain) that could eventually lead to a project management job.

Whatever stage in your career you become a project manager, you are likely to be required to pick up an industry qualification, such as those offered by the Association for Project Management (APM), the PRINCE2 or 'Agile' project management theory. It is also likely that you will need a full, clean driving licence.

You can find graduate opportunities at TARGETjobs and school leaver opportunities on TARGETcareers. The Association for Project Management and the professional bodies in the specific industries are also good sources of vacancies.

Key skills for project managers

- Organisational skills
- Analytical skills
- Well developed interpersonal skills
- Numeracy skills
- Commercial awareness
- Communication skills
- Teamworking skills
- Diplomacy
- Ability to motivate people
- Management and leadership skills

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