

A day in the life of project managers

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A project manager's job requires a large set of both soft and hard skills, which they use in order to execute successful projects. As they are responsible for the timely and on-budget delivery of projects, it's the project manager's job to rally the troops and get workflow and morale high throughout the days, especially when there's a deadline fast approaching. Juggling team members, stakeholders, resources, and more, the project manager needs to possess the correct soft skills, such as good communication, time management, and leadership skills, paired with a working knowledge of the industry they are in to get the job done.



What does a project manager do?

A project manager's role is to ensure the delivery of projects on time and on budget. To do this, they will need to utilise a list of skills as the role itself varies so much in the duties involved. From managing people, setting up budgets, recording data, and 'putting out fires' as well as conflict resolution, a project manager needs to be fluent in their people skills as the role is largely people-facing. On top of that, a project manager needs to possess great organisational skills and have the ability to adapt under pressure, leading their team to success even when things go wrong, which they inevitably will.

Managing projects across their full life cycle, from initiation to completion, a project manager's duties include:

- Creating project plans
- Building teams
- Assigning and tracking work and resources
- Setting scopes and budgets
- Creating schedules
- Setting up workflows
- Making sure the right tools and resources are available
- Defining KPIs (for measuring both progress and success)
- Reporting

What does a project manager do on a daily basis?

A project manager's daily routine is made up of various knowledge-work and admin activities. Juggling expectations from clients and stakeholders, managing teams, organising resources and managing timelines and budgets, as well as documenting and reporting on the project process are all the project manager's responsibilities. With so many variables up in the air at any given time, a project manager needs to stay calm under pressure and possess outstanding organisational skills to keep both their projects and team members on track. But what does an average day for a project manager look like? See below for a breakdown of a project manager's daily activities:

Analyse the day

First things first, a project manager needs to analyse the day ahead of them by asking themselves questions such as:

- Which projects need attention first?
- Prioritise what needs to be done today, and what can be pushed to tomorrow in case of a hiccup.
- Has everyone got what they need in order to accomplish their tasks for today?
- What needs to be communicated to the team and/or to the stakeholders?
- Is there enough time in the day to accomplish everything you've set out?
- What are your and your team's priorities for the day?

After analysing the day before them, a project manager can then see where their and their teams' priorities lie, and can hit the ground running knowing they have everything they need in order to accomplish their tasks for the day. As a project manager may deal with multiple projects at once, it's important for them to prioritise the tasks that need to be done on a daily basis. This will ensure a smooth as can be project execution, and help keep everyone on track even if roadblocks may occur.

Check in with team members

After you've done analysing your day as well as your teams, a project manager's next step is to check in with their team members to ensure everyone is on the same page. Checking in with your team early in the day is of utmost importance in order to keep the channels of communication open and flowing and to find out about any issues that may arise early in the day so you have time to adjust your plans accordingly.

The goal of a project manager is to deliver projects on time and on budget, but they don't do this alone. They rely on their team members to deliver on their parts of the project as well as on their expertise. Involving your team and relying on their expertise will not only help a project manager execute successful projects but will also build team morale as heard, respected, and involved team members will likely go above and beyond without you even having to ask. They also offer a different point of view and may pick up issues that you may have missed due to their experience in the field, and can offer helpful alternatives to combat any issues that may arise.

Prioritise your projects

Once you've done a quick check-in with the team, you can address and resolve any issues that may have been brought to your attention. If there are no issues to resolve, a project manager can then focus on which projects require immediate attention, and which can be pushed towards the end of the day. Prioritising your projects every morning and tackling the most urgent tasks first will allow you to foresee any issues before they become a problem and leave you with time to sort any last-minute issues out, as you have managed your time effectively and can afford to squeeze in last minute changes before the end of the day, if necessary.

Prepare for meetings

A project manager's day typically involves attending and scheduling many meetings as well as being the facilitator of said meetings. As we all know, preparation is key to the success and effectiveness of any meeting, so it is of vital importance for a project manager to plan for these meetings in order to be both successful and efficient. Bringing the correct and applicable information to make these meetings as productive and factual as possible will reduce the number of follow-up tasks and extra meetings, leaving more time in the day for more productive work.

Keep track of employee and project status with timely updates

It is the project manager's responsibility to monitor and keep track of the project process and this can be done by holding regular check-ins with all team members involved in the project. It can also be done by utilising project management software and tools, as well as emails to keep the channel of communication open between all members of the team. By following up on the project process across departments, the project manager can ensure the timely execution of all the moving parts in order to deliver the project on time and on budget.

Transparency among team members is critical for accountability, keeping everyone on the same page, and working

towards the project goals in order to deliver a successful project. In order to keep transparency, project managers need to foster a work environment where team members value communication and understand the importance of it. This is done by constant communication starting from the project manager in a timely and efficient manner to ensure that it does not hinder the progress of the project.

Wrap up for the day

The last task on a project manager's list is to wrap up the day by taking a few moments to go through the work completed and what was not completed. Ending the day with a quick summary of priorities for the next day will help project managers have more successful projects in the long run as they will be aware of any red flags, or tasks taking longer than expected before they become an issue. Having the foresight to see these issues will not only benefit the project and the project manager, but will also benefit the team as a whole. Knowing what roadblocks are approaching gives you and your team the time to adjust your plans accordingly, and wrapping up the day gives you the insight and opportunity to be able to hit the ground running every morning without having your team wait for directions.

Final words

The daily life of a project manager comes with many ups and downs and requires a definite set of skills in order to successfully lead projects to completion. With so many variables up in the air, a project manager needs to be able to stay calm under pressure in order to lead their team to success. Brush up on your project management skills by signing up for a [project management online short course](#) and give yourself the tools needed in order to thrive in this exciting career path of project management.

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