

Project Manager Roles & Responsibilities

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the roles and responsibilities of a project manager by exploring the following elements in detail:

1. Responsibilities of a Project Manager

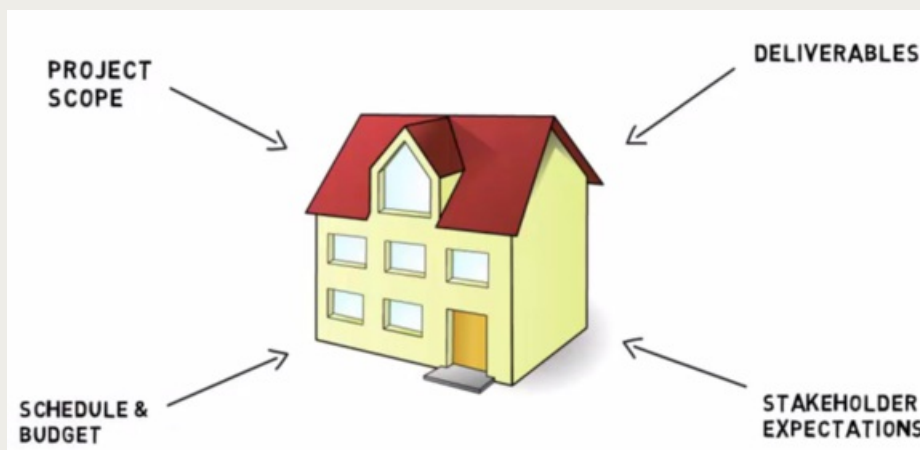
There are many responsibilities of a **project manager**. A project manager will:

- Manage expectations
- Define project scope
- Determine deliverables
- Ensure successful completion

The scope, deliverables, risks, and stakeholders must be identified and communicated.

IN CONTEXT

Imagine that you're the project manager for the construction of a home. Your first step would be to document in rough terms what the project is going to do. In this case, it's the building of a house-- hopefully completed this year for a single family. This is the scope of the project.



Details will be flushed out, later. For now, it's important that everyone agrees on the basics of the work. Now, it's important to get everyone on the same page: what type of house will this be? How

many bedrooms? How many baths? What is the square footage? What style of house will it be? In this project, the house and all that it contains is considered the deliverable.

It's the responsibility of the project manager to document the expectations of the people who want to build the new home-- the stakeholders. It's the project manager's role to manage the stakeholders' expectations. If a couple wants a 10,000 square foot house, but their budget is \$100,000, the project manager needs to explain, or help others explain, why that just won't work. Assume the type of home is agreed upon.

Next, a schedule and budget must be established with stakeholders and team members. This is a critical stage since it will be the project manager's responsibility to make sure the project comes in on time and on budget.

The more complex a project is, the more likely it is that there will be delays and additional costs. The project manager should always attempt to build in additional time and money for these unknown risks.



TERM TO KNOW

Project Manager

An individual who uses a range of knowledge, skills, and tools to lead a project to successful completion.

2. Key Skills of a Project Manager

A project manager skill set has many parts:



2a. Interpersonal Skills

During a project, the right path or decision will not always be obvious. Conflicts will happen and it'll be up to the project manager to use a decision will not always be obvious.

The project manager must use a wide variety of interpersonal and communication skills to lead the teams when a conflict occurs.



Think of a project manager as a coach. The coach works to improve skills, but they also consider how individual efforts fit into the team as a whole. A good coach, like a good project manager, understands how to bring people together.

When conflicts arise, it's important for the project manager to listen clearly to all sides since that's the key to negotiation and eventually resolution.

Often, the solution to a problem doesn't come from choosing one option or another, but by combining options and collaborating. A project manager should always consider how to help all sides benefit. More importantly, how to help the project succeed.

2b. Communication Skills

How does a project manager lead like this? It is often through strong communication. Whether speaking, writing emails, or preparing a report, a project manager needs to be clear about a project's goals and about the consequences of those goals aren't met. If a project manager hides information from team members or stakeholders, a project will suffer.

Good communication must be in place from the beginning for a project to succeed.

2c. Analytical Skills

In addition, a project manager must analyze problems as they occur, and facilitate solutions.

Project managers often find themselves as detectives, interviewing team members about an issue before bringing together the right group of people to resolve an issue. When doing this, it's important to distinguish between what is actual evidence and what is just a guess.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If an engineer tells you that the building support will not hold a certain weight, that's evidence. If a salesman tells you the same thing, they might still be right but it's a guess until you confirm with an engineer.

2d. Organizational Skills

If this all sounds like quite a bit to manage, you'd be correct. That's why it's important for a project manager to be organized and to keep project members organized too. Documentation must be consistent and methods to distribute the documentation quickly needs to be in place.

It's also important the project manager maintains the history of the project since questions often arise concerning decisions made in the past.

2e. Expertise

The last skill is the one you are using right now. It's the skill to learn something new, to develop expertise in a new field.

Project managers aren't always assigned to areas that they know intimately, but that is not always a disadvantage.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you've never built a house, but you've been assigned as the project manager, that encourages you to ask questions of the builders with expertise.

Asking questions is a skill that all project managers use. And it's one they should practice throughout a

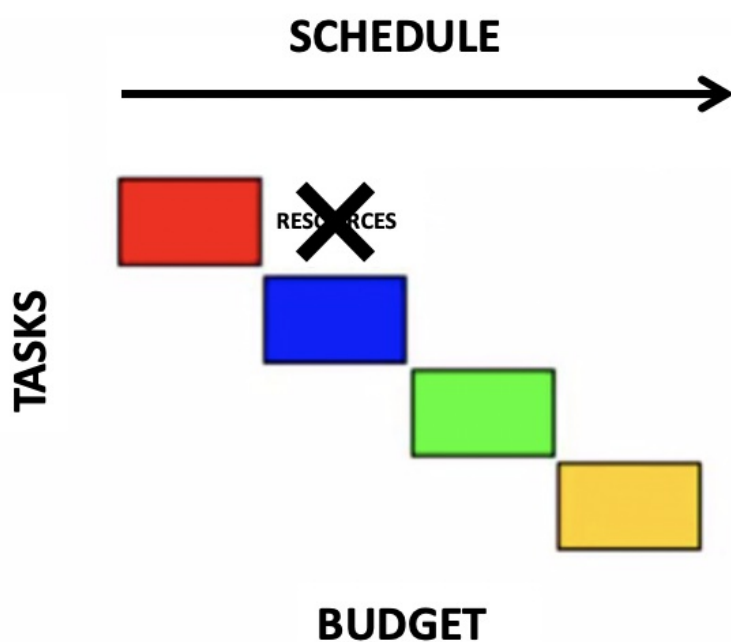
project's life cycle.

Key Skills of a Project Manager	
Interpersonal	Dealing with diverse personalities Resolving conflicts Understanding organizational and team politics
Communication	Written reports Public speaking Small group facilitation
Analytical	Ask the right questions Solve problems
Organizational	Time management Track issues Match skills to tasks
Evidence	Subject matter expert Project management experience

3. Organizational Context

Organizations will use project managers in different ways, and that will result in different levels of authority. Some project managers have full control over schedule, budget, resources, and the makeup of their project team.

Others might only oversee the schedule and tasks and not resources. In this case, team members would report to departmental or even technical managers.



Organizations may only allow project managers to make certain decisions. Sometimes the project scope or

the deliverables can only be changed after it's been approved by key executives or project committees.

These differences result in challenges for a project manager, so it's important to develop the skills needed. Communicating clearly and managing the expectations of everyone who oversees a project is part of a project manager's role too.

4. Ethical Considerations and Guidelines

Whatever aspects fall within the responsibility of the project manager, it's important to be truthful and clear about the successes and the failures of a project.



BIG IDEA

It might be tempting to hold back information, especially when project schedules start to slip. The project manager needs the trust of those who work on the project and those who have a stake in the project.

That trust is lost when issues are hidden.

Good project managers are passionate about their projects and they know that they serve as the advocate for the project and its members.

And they make decisions in the best interest of the project and they understand the value of information. They honor the need for confidentiality and they make sure all project members understand it too.



SUMMARY

This tutorial explored the **responsibilities of a project manager**, including identifying the scope, deliverable(s), and stakeholders. When conflicts in project management arise, the **project manager needs to have key skills** such as acting as a coach when determining who is the expert and who is providing opinions. **Organizational context** was provided to demonstrate how organization use project managers in different ways that may provide a full range of authority or very limited authority that requires approval at each stage in the project life cycle.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Jeff Carroll.



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