

E-BOOK PRINCIPLES OF A PROJECT MANAGER

*Uncover knowledge from
real life experiences*



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT YOU WILL UNCOVER IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES



Changing careers is something exciting. You start a new chapter in your life, looking forward to the possibilities that only such a moment brings. Nonetheless, to go through such a change requires determination, adaptation, resilience, and humility. This last attribute is essential because if you're not willing to accept that there are a lot of people in your working environment who can teach you things, especially the ones you are supposed to lead, you aren't ready to become a project manager.

This e-book is primarily focused on project management. While I'll be addressing things related to the position, if you're not in the field, don't worry. This material can still be valuable to you. What is mandatory is that you're about to occupy a leadership position and need clarity on making such a transition.

We are going to explore the early responsibilities of management and the weight that comes with the job. Collaborating with the members of your team, and understanding their peculiarities, will both be addressed. I'll use personal experiences from my first year as a project manager, detailing some memories of my daily routine, and the abilities required for the job.

If you are going to be a manager in another area, some of my experiences may still be valuable to you as insights into what to expect in your future role. This e-book can serve as a practical example, helping you to better prepare for your new role.

I hope you find this content rewarding.

Enjoy the read.



ASSET 1



THE ABILITY TO ASK QUESTIONS

Practical insight

Nobody starts doing something with complete mastery. You must gauge success to become good at something. You must develop confidence on the job by not being afraid of making mistakes. It will happen, eventually, and more than we would like to admit. Nonetheless, mistakes are great opportunities for learning something about yourself, and your job. It gives you the chance to correct the course and become better.

When I started managing projects in 2021, there wasn't a day I hadn't done my very best. Working long hours when necessary, doing the unpleasant part of the job with precision, always catching opportunities to implement actions, and delivering results. In time, I gained the respect of my team.

Reaching the point where I had a holistic view of every project I managed wasn't easy. And in such a

process, I eventually made some bad decisions, which were part of developing myself at the job. One key asset at the beginning of a career in project management is the ability to ask questions. To accomplish that, you must first understand that the people in your team are specialists in what they do. They possess a deep understanding of the processes they are responsible for. You, as a project manager, must have proximity to each member of the team, knowing them well and earning their trust and respect. Asking questions about their jobs is then important to understand everything related to the projects you manage, every operation, every technology used, and every process to be implemented.

Theoretical perspective

The ability to ask the right question is often cited as a critical leadership skill. According to *The Art of Asking Questions* by Marilee Adams, Ph.D., inquiry-based leadership helps create a culture of curiosity and continuous improvement. It's a tool to uncover insights and foster collaboration. The best project managers are those who aren't afraid to ask questions, even if it reveals their own uncertainties. This transparency can help to build trust within the team and promote a learning environment.

Consider the case of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner project. In its early stages, the project faced significant delays and cost overruns, partly due to communication breakdowns within the team. Managers were reluctant to ask hard questions, which allowed small issues to escalate into larger problems. When a new project manager took over, their first step was to gather the team and ask fundamental questions about processes, challenges, and goals. This open dialogue uncovered root causes of delays and allowed for corrective actions, leading to the successful completion of the project.

ASSET 2



TAKE NOTES, BE METHODICAL

Practical insight

I can't stress this enough, taking notes is one key asset on your journey as a project manager. You will deal with a mountain of information, sometimes it will be extremely difficult to keep under control. Therefore, taking notes, as well as being methodical, will help you to keep things under management, giving you space to think and act on it.

Theoretical Perspective

Methodical organization is essential in project management. According to the PMBOK® Guide (Project Management Body of Knowledge), one of the critical knowledge areas is project integration management, which includes keeping track of all project components, ensuring that they work together efficiently. Taking notes, creating process roadmaps, and maintaining thorough documentation are practical ways to achieve this integration.

In the case of the construction of the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, methodical organization was key. The project involved coordinating thousands of workers, suppliers, and engineers from all over the globe. The project manager used a detailed project plan, with every task and milestone meticulously documented. This methodical approach ensured that even as challenges arose, there was a clear reference point to adjust timelines and resource allocations, leading to the successful completion of the tower.

ASSET 3



KNOWING HOW TO DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY

Practical insight

Everybody has to deal with uncertainty at times. When starting a new project, for instance, much of its implementation is unknown to you. Only basic project management steps can be replicated to start to create a roadmap in this case, so talking with people in your team who have had experience in a similar project can add clarity to your vision and make it easier for you to calibrate the next steps.

Theoretical Perspective

Dealing with uncertainty is a fundamental aspect of project management. The concept of risk management in the PMBOK® Guide highlights the importance of identifying, assessing, and controlling risks. The uncertainty inherent in projects can be mitigated by creating risk management plans and developing contingency strategies.

This theoretical approach supports the practical need to be adaptable and resilient in the face of unforeseen challenges.

Case Study

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ASSET 4



MANAGING YOUR ROUTINE

Practical insight

Prioritization has become a key aspect of my career as a project manager. I have learned that dividing my day into blocks of time and deeply focusing on only one thing in each of those blocks has given me the power to be efficient with the use of my time.

Theoretical Perspective

Time management is crucial for project managers. The Eisenhower Matrix, a time management tool used to prioritize tasks by urgency and importance, can be an invaluable resource. By focusing on high-priority tasks and delegating or delaying less critical ones, project managers can ensure they are working on the most impactful activities at any given time.

Case Study

Steve Jobs was known for his rigorous time management practices. During the development of the first iPhone, Jobs focused intensely on specific tasks, often dedicating entire days to solving a single problem. By prioritizing his time and energy, Jobs was able to drive his team toward the successful launch of a revolutionary product. This method of managing one's routine by focusing on high-impact tasks can be applied to any project management role.

ASSET 5



HAVE A MENTOR, YOU MUST HAVE SOMEONE TO TALK TO

Practical insight

There wasn't a day during my first year as a project manager that I didn't doubt myself. When making decisions, leading a team, or reporting to your superior, especially when starting a new project, having someone to talk to is invaluable.

Theoretical Perspective

Mentorship is widely recognized as a critical factor in professional development. According to Harvard Business Review, mentoring provides guidance, support, and feedback that can help professionals navigate challenges and accelerate their careers. For project managers, having a mentor can be particularly beneficial in gaining insights into complex projects and developing leadership skills.

Case Study

Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, has often spoken about the importance of mentorship in her career. During her early years at Google, Sandberg was mentored by Eric Schmidt, who provided her with invaluable guidance. His mentorship helped her navigate the complexities of a rapidly growing tech company, eventually leading to her role at Facebook. This case underscores the importance of finding a mentor who can provide the wisdom and support needed to excel in your career.

ASSET 6



DO NOT ACCOMMODATE

Practical insight

To constantly work on your craft will guarantee you are valuable to the company you work for. In today's world, learning has become so vast, with an infinite number of courses you can access through the internet. To choose the right knowledge to gain, you first need to understand what skills you want to improve in, and what new skills can be of value to you.

Theoretical Perspective

Continuous learning and professional development are essential in today's fast-paced business environment. The concept of lifelong learning emphasizes the ongoing pursuit of knowledge and skills throughout one's career. For project managers, staying up-to-date with the latest methodologies, tools, and industry trends is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge.

Case Study

The transformation of IBM from a hardware company to a cloud computing and AI leader was driven by a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation. Employees were encouraged to reskill and upskill through various learning programs, which allowed IBM to remain a leader in the tech industry. This example illustrates how a commitment to never accommodating can propel both individual careers and entire organizations forward.

ASSET 7



BE HUMBLE ABOUT YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Practical insight

In project management, your results will primarily depend on the clarity of your communication, which is translated through the tasks you collaborate to deploy. The team will count on your leadership, and how fast and how easily they will execute the tasks depends on how organized is the information they have for each task.

Theoretical Perspective

Humility in leadership is increasingly recognized as a key factor in effective management. According to research published in the Journal of Management, humble leaders are more likely to empower their teams, leading to higher engagement and better performance. By acknowledging that success is a team effort, project managers can foster a culture of collaboration and mutual respect, which ultimately leads to more successful outcomes.

Case Study

Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, is often cited as an example of a humble leader. Under his leadership, Microsoft has experienced a renaissance, driven by a culture of empathy and collaboration. Nadella's approach has been to credit the success of the company to the collective efforts of his team, rather than his own leadership. This humility has not only improved morale within the company but has also driven innovation and growth.

ASSET 8



KPI (KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR)

Practical insight

Perhaps the most important thing while managing a project is to guarantee that your team understands the KPIs that must be monitored. Without it, the team cannot have clarity on the work being done and how effective it is proving to be.

Theoretical Perspective

KPIs are fundamental tools in project management. According to the Balanced Scorecard approach by Robert Kaplan and David Norton, KPIs help organizations translate their vision and strategy into actionable objectives. They provide a framework for performance measurement and are essential in ensuring that projects are aligned with business goals. For project managers, KPIs serve as a way to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and drive results.

Case Study

In the development of the Toyota Production System, KPIs played a crucial role in improving efficiency and quality. By closely monitoring performance metrics such as cycle time, defect rates, and inventory levels, Toyota was able to continuously refine its processes, leading to its reputation as a leader in manufacturing excellence. This example underscores the importance of defining and tracking KPIs to ensure the success of any project.

ASSET 9



USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Practical insight

Project management is a growing field. In such growth, many online platforms came along the way to provide project managers with the right tools to perform at their best. This means organizing projects in a visual and engaging way so the team can work with maximum performance.

Theoretical Perspective

The right tools can make or break a project. According to *The Project Management ToolBox* by Dragan Z. Milosevic, selecting the appropriate tools is crucial for project success. Whether it's project scheduling, resource management, or communication, tools like Trello, Asana, and Microsoft Project can significantly enhance a project manager's ability to deliver results. The key is to select tools that align with the specific needs of the project and the team.

Case Study

The success of Spotify's Agile development process can be attributed in part to the effective use of tools like Jira and Trello. These platforms allowed Spotify's teams to manage their workflows efficiently, track progress, and collaborate across different departments. The result was a highly adaptive and efficient development process that supported Spotify's rapid growth and innovation. This example illustrates how the right tools can empower teams and drive project success.

ASSET 10



BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH PEOPLE IN YOUR FIELD

Practical insight

You never know what exciting things you can learn from people in your field. A great way to do that is by using LinkedIn, a social network focused on career information and other related topics. There you can follow key figures in your field, and even stay in touch with professionals you met along your journey.

Theoretical Perspective

Networking is a powerful tool for career advancement. According to research published in the Harvard Business Review, professional networks provide access to information, resources, and opportunities that can significantly enhance one's career. For project managers, building connections within their field is crucial for staying informed about industry trends, sharing knowledge, and finding new opportunities for collaboration.

Case Study

Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn, is a prime example of the power of networking. His ability to connect with other entrepreneurs and investors was instrumental in the success of LinkedIn, which has since become the world's largest professional network. Hoffman's story demonstrates the importance of building and leveraging professional networks to achieve career success.

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**DAVID R. WALTRICK
CERTIFIED AGILE PROJECT MANAGER
PMI - ACP**