

The Role of the Project Manager

The Project Manager, sometimes referred to as the Project Co-ordinator, is generally defined as the person who has the overall responsibility for the successful planning and execution of a project. However, the roles and responsibilities can vary between different companies.

Essentially, a project manager is responsible for ensuring the successful delivery of the project aims. To do this, he or she must have a sufficient level of authority to manage members of the project team, who may be drawn from different parts of the business, or from outside. He or she must also have the authority, and possibly a budget, to request information or action from people outside the project team.

The Project Manager's responsibilities normally begin by ensuring that there is a clearly defined scope and set of deliverables for the project and also a project schedule setting out the key milestones and a target completion date.

The framework for the project may be set out in a 'Terms of Reference' or 'Project Charter' document, agreed by all stakeholders, which can define the authority of the project manager, the overall objectives, scope of the project, the participants, individual roles and responsibilities, anticipated risks, project methodologies, budget, etc.

There are various project management software packages, such as Microsoft Project, which can be used to help in identifying tasks and time sequences, highlighting dependencies, and also record estimates of the human resource required.

During the course of the project, the Project Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the following actions are covered by the project team:

- Identification and resolution of issues and risks, that may affect the achievement of the project aims.
- Ensuring that all relevant information is passed to stakeholders.
- Managing the project scope to ensure that resource and effort is not diverted from the agreed deliverables, unless changes to the scope are agreed by all stakeholders.
- Managing the individual project tasks to ensure that work is assigned and completed on time and within budget.
- Agreeing measurements or progress reviews to demonstrate how the work of the project is progressing, and to ensure that the output at each stage is satisfactory.

Some ideal attributes for a Project Manager:

- Process and analytical skills.
- People-management skills, including individual motivation and follow-up, team-building and co-ordination, and the ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts.
- Verbal and written communication skills, and also listening skills.
- Commercial and budget-management skills.
- Ability to multi-task, especially when managing more than one project.