

5 steps to become a successful project manager

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Project managers handle a lot of responsibility. They're in charge of selecting and leading teams, managing budgets, and if the project is a failure, the project manager takes the heat.

You'll find project managers in many different industries, from construction to music, because wherever there's a project, a manager is sure to be there.

But becoming a successful project manager requires determination, hard work, and several vital skills. Here are the necessary steps to begin your successful career in project management.

1. Get ready to study

You can apply at a college or university to obtain a degree in project management. Or you could do a training course to get a certification. And if attending a traditional university is not possible for you as of this moment, you can still take project management courses online. Which road you decide depends on your needs.

A college or university degree looks good on a resume when applying for jobs. And you'll have the opportunity to network with alumni. Building relationships in the project management field can help you land a job after graduation.

On the other hand, a training course or certification takes less time than studying in a university. You can also do it online. And in some cases, a certification is enough in the eye of employers. At least, so long as you do step 2.

2. Get hands-on project management experience

Studying alone doesn't prepare you for project management. Managing projects does. Nothing will ever beat real life, hands-on experience.

It proves you can use the skills and information you've learned to execute and deliver a successful project. If you have experience, employers will be thrilled.

But how do you get the experience?

If you're in college, you can join a club and offer to manage projects, like group events. If you're learning from home, you can join a club or even a non-profit in your area and help them run fundraisers or rallies.

It's possible to build experience while doing something you love. A win-win-win situation: You get firsthand experience as a project manager, you enjoy the group you help, and they get the tools to expand.

Additionally, you automatically move to step 3.

3. Time to work on your people skills

Project managers have to talk to people. It's inevitable. You'll be managing teams and communicate with company stakeholders regularly. Sometimes it'll be on the phone and the computer, but most times it will be in person.

This is one of those things they mention in your courses but impossible to practice until you're on-site.

When you get hands-on experience, you'll be delegating tasks to your team and coach them when they don't know what to do. You're going to be their
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primary point of contact. So knowing how to communicate effectively is crucial to the job.

4. Learn the tools every project manager needs

Technical skills are essential for project managers. You'll be using software and tools when working on a project. The software typically helps project managers communicate effectively with team members, including assigning tasks, taking notes, and passing them along to the right people.

The software can also help with budgeting and scheduling. It's what keeps everyone on track. Popular tools used by project managers include:

- Basecamp
- Aha!
- Evernote

You'll probably use multiple tools for a single project. You'll be expected to know them inside and out, so play around with them before starting a project.

5. Certification time

If you go to school, you'll get a degree. At that point, you may think, "What's the point of being certified?" Well, it never hurts to have certifications.

The Project Management Professional (PMP) certification is the most widely recognized. Although it's typically taken by project managers with tons of experience, it's possible to get even if you're just in the beginning stages.

And there you have it. Becoming a project manager requires plenty of time, dedication, and learning. You'll need soft and technical skills, hands-on experience, and passion for knowledge to succeed.

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