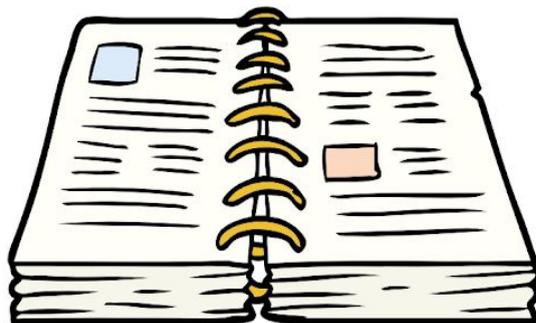




# Guide To Managing Remote Teams



# TABLE OF CONTENT

## What is covered:

### What is Project Management?

#### The importance of project management

- Strategic alignment
- Leadership
- Clear Focus & Objectives
- Realistic Project Planning
- Quality Control
- Risk Management
- Orderly Process
- Continuous Oversight
- Subject Matter Expertise
- Managing and Learning from Success and Failure

#### Project Management Methodologies

- Kanban Method
- The Waterfall Approach
- Lean project management
- Agile scrum methodology
- Six Sigma with DMAIC

#### Factors to consider when choosing a Methodology

- Scenarios 1
- Scenario 2

#### Are you a Victim of Poor Time Management?

#### Conclusion

# What is Project Management?

According to researchers,

“

Project management is the application of processes, methods, skills, knowledge and experience to achieve specific project objectives according to the project acceptance criteria within agreed parameters.

”

# The importance of project management.

Project management is significant because it guarantees what is being delivered, is accurate, and will deliver real value against the business opportunity.

## 1. Strategic Alignment

Every client has strategic goals which is why Project management is important because it ensures there's thoroughness in architecting projects properly so that they fit well within the broader context of client's strategic frameworks. Good project management ensures that the goals of projects closely match with the strategic goals of the business.

Of course, as projects progress, it is possible that risks may emerge, that turn into issues or even the business strategy may change. But a project manager will ensure that the project is part of that realignment. Project management really matters here because projects that deviate off course, or which fail to adapt to the business needs may end up being expensive and/or unnecessary.

## **2. Leadership**

Project management is important because it brings leadership and direction to projects.

Without project management, a team can be like a ship without a steering wheel; moving but without direction, control or purpose. Leadership allows and enables a team to do their best work. Project management makes available leadership and vision, motivation, removing roadblocks, coaching and inspiring the team to do their best work.

Project managers assist the team but also ensure clear lines of accountability. With a project manager in place there's no misunderstanding about who's in charge and in control of what is going on in a project. Project managers implement growth and keep everyone on the team in line. Ultimately they carry responsibility for whether the project fails or succeeds.

## **3. Clear Focus & Objectives**

Project management is important because it ensures there's a proper plan for executing on strategic goals.

When project management is left to the team to work out by themselves, you'll find teams work without proper briefs, projects lack focus, can have vague or nebulous objectives, and leave the team not quite sure what they're supposed to be doing, or why.

Project managers position themselves to prevent such a situation and drive the timely accomplishment of tasks, by breaking up a project into tasks for our teams. Oftentimes, the foresight to take such an approach is what differentiates good project management from bad. Breaking up chunks of work into smaller pieces enables teams to remain focused on clear objectives, tackle their efforts towards achieving the ultimate goal

through the completion of smaller steps and to quickly identify risks, since risk management is imperative in project management.

There are times when a project's goals will have to be changed in line with a materializing risk. Without dedicated oversight and management, a project could swiftly falter but good project management (and a good project manager) is what enables the team to focus, and when necessary refocus, on their objectives.

#### **4. Realistic Project Planning**

Project management is important because it ensures proper expectations are set around what can be delivered, by when, and for how much.

Without proper project management, budget estimates and project delivery timelines can be set that are over-ambitious or lacking in analogous estimating insight from similar projects. Ultimately this means without good project management, projects get delivered late, and over budget.

Effective project managers should be able to negotiate reasonable and achievable deadlines and milestones across stakeholders, teams, and management. Too often, the urgency placed on delivery compromises the necessary steps, and ultimately, the quality of the project's outcome.

We all know that most tasks will take longer than initially anticipated; a good project manager creates a clear process, with achievable deadlines, that enables everyone within the project team to work within reasonable bounds, and not unreasonable expectations.

Project management really matters when scheduling because it brings objectivity to the planning.

## **5. Quality Control**

Project management is important because it ensures the quality of whatever is being delivered, consistently hits the mark.

Projects are also usually under massive pressure to be completed. Without a dedicated project manager, who has the support and buy-in of executive management, tasks are underestimated, schedules tightened and processes rushed. The result is bad quality output. Dedicated project management ensures that not only does a project have the time and resources to deliver, but also that the output is quality tested at every stage.

## **6. Risk Management**

Project management is important because it ensures risks are properly managed and mitigated against to avoid becoming issues.

Risk management is critical to project success. The temptation is just to sweep them under the carpet, never talk about them to the client and hope for the best. But having a robust process around the identification, management and mitigation of risk is what helps prevent risks from becoming issues.

Good project management practice requires project managers to carefully analyze all potential risks to the project, measure them, develop a mitigation plan against them, and an emergency plan should any of them materialize. Logically, risks should be prioritized according to the possibility of them occurring, and appropriate responses are allocated per risk. Good project management matters in this regard, because projects never go to plan, and how we deal with change and adapt our plans is a key to delivering projects successfully.

## **7. Orderly Process**

Project management is important because it ensures the right people do the right things, at the right time. It ensures the proper project process is followed throughout the project lifecycle.

Many large and well-known companies have reactive planning processes. But reactivity, as opposed to proactivity, can often cause projects to go into survival mode. This is when teams fracture, tasks duplicate, and planning becomes reactive creating inefficiency and frustration in the team.

Proper planning and process can make a massive difference as the team knows who's doing what, when, and how. Proper process helps to clarify roles, rationalize processes and inputs, anticipate risks, and creates the checks and balances to ensure the project is continually aligned with the overall strategy. Project management matters here because without an orderly, easily understood process, companies risk project failure, attrition of employee trust, and resource wastage.

## **8. Continuous Oversight**

Project management is important because it ensures a project's progress is tracked and reported properly.

Continuous project oversight, ensuring that a project is tracking properly against the original plan, is critical to ensuring that a project stays on track, may sound boring but is essential.

When proper oversight and project reporting is in place it makes it easy to see when a project is beginning to stray from its intended course. The earlier you're able to spot project deviation, the easier it is to course correct.

Good project managers will regularly generate easily digestible progress or status reports that enable stakeholders to track the project. Naturally these status reports will provide insights into the work that was

completed and planned, the hours utilized and how they track against those planned, how the project is tracking against milestones, risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies and any outputs of the project as it proceeds.

## **9. Subject Matter Expertise**

Project management is important because someone needs to be able to understand if everyone's doing what they should.

With experience under their belt, project managers will know a little about a lot of aspects of delivering the projects they manage. They'll know everything about the work that their teams execute; the platforms and systems they use, and the possibilities and limitations, and the kinds of issues that usually occur.

Having this kind of subject knowledge means they can have intelligent and informative conversations with clients, team, stakeholders, and suppliers. They're well equipped to be the hub of communication on a project, ensuring that as the project flows between different teams and phases of work, nothing gets forgotten about or overlooked.

Without subject matter expertise through project management, you can find a project becomes unbalanced, the creative ignore the limitations of technology or the developers forget the creative vision of the project. Project management keeps the team focused on the overarching vision and brings everyone together forcing the right compromises to make the project a success.

## **10. Managing and Learning from Success and Failure**

Project management is important because it learns from the successes and failures of the past.

Project management can halt bad habits and when you're delivering projects, it's important to not make the same mistakes twice. Project managers use retrospectives or post-project reviews to consider what went well, what didn't go well and what should be done differently for the next project.

This produces a valuable set of documentation that becomes a record of "dos and don'ts" going forward, enabling the organization to learn from failures and success. Without this learning, teams will often keep making the same mistakes, time, and time again.

Great project management matters because it delivers success. Project management creates and enables happy, motivated teams who know their work matters, so do their best work. And that project management enabled team ensures the right stuff is delivered; stuff that delivers real return on investment, and that makes happy clients.

**Next, Project Management  
methodology**

# Project management methodologies

While using individual methods can work, having a system that the entire team uses over and over again is helpful for several reasons:

- ❖ It saves time upfront since every member already knows the basic process and steps involved
- ❖ It makes results more uniform and predictable
- ❖ It allows the team to refine its system over time as they become aware of its strengths and weaknesses
- ❖ It lets employees reuse some of their work

A methodology will ultimately save your company time, money, and resources. But that hinges on one crucial decision: picking the right methodology.

## Kanban method

Kanban is a project management method that uses visual workflows to keep tasks organized and moving forward. It originates from Toyota's "Just-in-Time" production system, where the goal was to do only what's needed when needed, and in the amount needed.

Here's an example of how it can be used.

Imagine you're renovating your house. There's no way you can accomplish everything in one fell jump. Instead, you start work in the kitchen, then do some updates in the master bedroom, then go back to the kitchen once your new granite has come in... You get the drift.

With Kanban project management, projects are still broken into pieces, but each piece can be worked on throughout.

There's not really a defined workflow — it's essentially ongoing.

**Benefits:** When your team is in-sync, Kanban can work like a charm. People can work fairly independently; plus, you can easily get an overview of the project's status at any given moment.

**Drawbacks:** If your team isn't highly unified, or its members need a lot of oversight, the project will struggle. Furthermore, it's not well set up for projects with a high number of dependencies.

## The Waterfall approach

The waterfall approach is a method that requires the team to start with their end goal, then map out every stage of the project needed to achieve that end goal — all before any work happens.

One of the first systems to emerge, Waterfall is also one of the most famous. It's highly likely you use a version of Waterfall in your own life without realizing it. Think about the last time you decided to, say, cook dinner.

You probably thought about all the steps involved — picking a dish, figuring out which ingredients you needed, going to the store, and actually preparing the meal — and then performed those steps in sequential order.

That's the Waterfall method.

Once the project starts, you go by your results, rather than the clock. If you're supposed to conduct 30 user interviews in phase one, you can't move on to phase two until all 30 are finished — even if that means you'll spend more time than you allotted.

**Benefits:** If you're dealing with an incredibly complex product, having this much structure will keep your team members focused and motivated. Waterfall is also extremely fault-tolerant; if you need a "perfect" product (like a car or an aspirin bottle), it's ideal.

**Drawbacks:** Tight deadlines don't mix well with Waterfall. There's no way to adapt this system to unexpected delays. Some people also dislike how rigid it is, saying this stifles creativity. It's usually not the optimal choice for software products or creative work, as they often change on a dime.

## Lean project management

Lean project management is a method that aims to deliver more value for less waste and originated from the manufacturing sector. However, in the past decade, the number of startups branding themselves as "lean" has exploded — especially in the tech world.

Software and industrial companies may seem pretty different on the surface. But every type of business can benefit from the methodology's core goal of high value and minimal waste.

The "build-measure-learn" feedback loop is at the center. Essentially, you build the most basic version of your product (or a subset of your product). Then, you test your idea (ideally by taking it to your actual users or the closest possible approximation). Finally, you use the results of your testing to either continue on the same path or chart a new course.

**Benefits:** Lean teams can react and adapt to change without slowing down. They tend to produce extremely cost-effective results, which is obviously key when you're strapped for cash.

And since lean requires you to gather feedback at every stage of the process, there's very little danger of creating a fantastic product that no one wants.

**Drawbacks:** Unlike other project management systems, lean is pretty bare bones. There aren't a ton of rules or formal processes to follow.

You'll need to develop your own way of doing things, which isn't always productive. Lastly, lean's obsessive focus on cutting waste isn't always great for team morale. After all, employee happiness should probably rank above the bottom line most of the time.

## Agile scrum methodology

First, a clarification.

Agile methodology is a framework based on 12 principles known as the Agile Manifesto. The thinking is to make incremental, continuous improvements.

When you want to apply this framework to your organization, you may do it through Kanban project management (as described above) or with Scrum.

Scrum methodology is a subset of Agile (and some would say the most structured). There's some pre-work planning, during which you carve up your end goal into mini-goals. Each mini-goal is assigned a one to four-week period, also known as a "sprint."

Teams are expected to make progress on their sprint goal every day. At the end of every sprint, instead of immediately transitioning into the next one, everyone participates in a reassessment. They might decide to mix up the order of the sprints or change the end goal entirely.

**Benefits:** Scrum's emphasis on constant reassessment makes it optimal for iterative projects. In addition, its focus on relatively short time periods helps keep the project interesting and dynamic.

**Drawbacks:** Since it's relatively easy to add or change goals, you might find a project ballooning in scope or veering off in the wrong direction. Plus, some work really needs more than a month to be done well.

## Six Sigma with DMAIC

Six Sigma is a highly disciplined, data-driven process that aims for near-perfect business performance and services. DMAIC is an important part of Six Sigma, and stands for: Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control.

To understand if Six Sigma is right for your organization, take a second to visualize what a "successful" project looks like to you. Is it virtually error-free? Or is it a minimum viable product (MVP)?

If you chose the first option, then Six Sigma may be the best methodology for your team.

Traditionally, Six Sigma practitioners use the DMAIC approach to problem-solving. Six Sigma teams also focus on three main ways to bring down costs without reducing quality: defect prevention, cycle time reduction, and cost savings.

**Benefits:** When a product has a "Six Sigma" rating, it's 99.99966% error-free. When you have an extremely low tolerance for defects, therefore, this is a solid choice. In addition, Six Sigma's focus on statistics and analysis can work well for quantitative thinkers.

**Drawbacks:** The majority of teams prefer to follow a "done is better than perfect" philosophy. Six Sigma is also pretty inflexible, which might cause some or all of your team members to feel creatively stifled.

# SO

## How to choose a project methodology

According to a popular article, one should focus on the most important factors when choosing the best project methodology.

You should reflect on these crucial points before you decide which methodology to use:

- ❖ Goals and core values
- ❖ Obstacles and limits
- ❖ Risks
- ❖ Participants
- ❖ Complexity
- ❖ Project scope and budget

## Scenario #1

It is said that back in 2012, the Basecamp team decided to create a new "Everything" page for their software.

This page would serve as the gateway for a team's projects, meaning that when a user logged in, it would be the first place visited before navigating to a sub-page.

The team wasn't sure what the layout should be, what content would be included, and how this update would impact the navigation.

In other words, there was a lot of uncertainty involved.

They also wanted to move fast. This project wasn't going to be a long, multi-stage one: it had to come together all at once.

With these inputs in mind, choosing an Agile model with an iterative approach definitely made sense.

According to Chuck Cobb, author of *The Project Manager's Guide to Mastering Agile*, "Projects with a high level of uncertainty where business results are more important than predictability lend themselves to a more adaptive (Agile) approach and projects with a lower level of uncertainty and with a need for predictability lend themselves to a more plan-driven approach."

## Scenario #2

According to researchers, Commercial software provider Vertabase was working on a project for a new client.

They were initially leaning toward their usual approach: Agile.

However, while "this works great for a tightly defined set of deliverables and a client who has done software before," Vertabase principal Mark Phillips said, this project and client didn't fit the bill.

"More than building features, this client is interested in having us take care of them. They are new to technology. They have a great idea, an understanding of their target users and the enthusiasm to stick with the project," he said. "In their case, we are providing a full service consulting and execution experience."

For that reason, the team pivoted to Waterfall.

They decided to solidify the client's vision, write an in-depth specifications document, launch an alpha, incorporate the client's feedback, iterate on the alpha, release a beta, do three stages of bug testing and fixing, and finally, go live.

Pretty extreme, but clearly a good fit for the project.

# How to determine if you're a victim of poor time management

Do you feel like your workday is a huge ball of chaos? It might be that you're trying to handle way too much at one time. Then again, the problem might also lie in the way that you organize your time and the way that you plan (or fail to plan) your tasks.

It's useful to regularly take a minute and assess the state of your time management.

There are a couple of factors you can check that will give you an idea of where you're standing. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I often interrupt working on a task to answer emails, calls or chats?
- Do I often feel like I don't know where my day went?
- Do I get negative feedback on my recent projects?
- Do I often miss deadlines?
- Do I feel overwhelmed by the number of pending tasks?
- Do I feel like I'm losing control over my workflow, or even my life?

If you have more than one yes, then there's a big chance that you're not handling your time management in the best way possible. The good news is that there are ways to fix it...

There is a lot to learn when it comes to **Managing Remote Teams** as it has become a norm for most businesses and firms to **transition** from a traditional office to working from home or **anywhere in the world.**

Educate yourself today. Stay tuned for the release of our future guides.

We are already getting ready to release our guide on **Time Management.**