How to Be a Good Project Manager
Best advice from 30 TOP influencers in Project Management
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Acknowledgement

Dear reader,

The idea of this book came after reading a post that listed the TOP 123 influencers in project management industry in 2016. The first thing that I thought was that it would be amazing if I could meet each one of them and ask what would be their best advice on how to be a good project manager.

I have the pleasure to know some of them personally, but for the majority I only follow their personal website. As a project manager, it would be very interesting to know what these professionals have to share about their experience in being a good project manager. That's why I decided to contact all of the 123 project managers to ask the following question,

_in your opinion, what is your best advice to be a good project manager?

I have to admit, I was not expecting to get so many answers. However, I WAS WRONG!!! Many of them not only liked my question, but sent me priceless advice and shared some of the best of their best expertise.

IT WAS AMAZING......not only I was getting the best advice on how to be a better project manager, but also a better professional and even a better person. Words are not enough to thank all of the contributors. Thank you kindly!!!

This eBook shows not only advice about how to be a good project manager, but shows that the best way to learn is by sharing our knowledge. I hope that when you finish reading this eBook, you also decide to share your knowledge with someone. Teach someone....coach someone.... mentor someone.... add value to someone.

Knowledge should not be propriety. Knowledge should be shared to create more knowledge.

That is why I'm sharing all this information with you.... SO YOU CAN LEARN AND TO SHARE AS WELL!

If you have a feedback, please share with us. Send me your comments or go to my website and publish your experience. I wish you learn as much as I did reading this eBook.

If you have anything to share, please send me an email: contact@pmagp.com or go to our website WWW.PMAGP.COM and leave your comment.

Best regards,

PMAGP team

“My advice for those starting and looking forward to be a good project manager is to identify and analyze correctly who are the project stakeholders.

Many qualified professionals disregard this step, which is an input to the next ones to come.

Stakeholders have expectations and needs which become requirements, which in turn transform into scope, and with the project implementation, deliver products to the Organization. The correct use of these products generates benefits and the cycle then ends.

Therefore, by failing to map the stakeholders and assess their needs, you will inevitably fail to deliver to the Organization the benefit expected from the project.”

Alexandre Paiva

You will find much more about Alexandre at www.gerentedeprojeto.net.br
‘Focus on People. That is the real essence of project management. Most of the successful projects stand out for excellence in managing people. Stakeholder Management and Change Management are also hot topics to overcome this challenge.

Be flexible. It is crucial to develop a strong capacity to adapt to the different needs of each company. Not all organizations will be mature enough to incorporate the best practices you have in your mind. You must be flexible and understand organizations need time to evolve their maturity, and it needs to be respected.

Stop complaining. If you don’t have enough upper management sponsorship and support, you must understand that this is possibly not the cause of your problems but a symptom that you are not meeting their expectations. Understand what they expect regarding benefits and results and focus on them.”

Americo Pinto

You will find much more about Americo at www.pmotools.net
“Good project managers are those who balance three different elements in their management.

The first is obviously the project management skills – planning, scheduling, reporting, etc. However, those skills are fairly easy to learn and not that difficult to master so after a while they become automatic.

Secondly is an understanding of the business your organization operates in, and why the project is being done. This provides the context for the project – a project is never approved to deliver on time, on scope and on schedule, it is approved to deliver benefits to the organization and the project manager who understands that will be much better. This changes and evolves over time so needs to be an area the project manager studies regularly.

Thirdly, and most importantly, is leadership. Project management is not about managing tasks, it’s about creating an environment where your team can perform at their best. As the project manager you need to build a team of motivated and engaged individuals and then protect them from outside interference. You need to be able to explain why the project is being done and to accurately answer any questions team members may have. This is an area no one ever masters so a project manager must constantly focus on improving their leadership skills, and seek feedback from the team to help them develop.”

Andy Jordan

You will find much more about Andy at www.roffensian.com
“The best advice I can give a project manager is that time is not a pint of milk! This may sound silly but people often treat time as if we could buy more of it.

“Time is money”, “We can catch up for lost time”, “I’ll make up for this later”. Time is not milk. If one spills a pint of paint, one can always go buy another one. **Time is a non-renewable resource. If you don’t use it now, you lose it forever.**

**Start the work as soon as possible.**

**Address problems as soon as possible.**

**Come to think of it, this is not advice for project managers, it is advice for everyone!”**

*Benoit De Grace*

You will find much more about Benoit at [www.pmc.ca](http://www.pmc.ca)
“Being a good project manager is about stellar communication, follow-up, and lots of both. This list of advice was collected from project managers with at least ten years of experience, from a wide variety of fields and backgrounds when asked what advice they would give new project managers. I agree with all of these.

- Communication, communication, communication
- Be flexible, there’s never a cookie-cutter approach
- Rely on common sense and instinct
- You need discipline, stick it out and finish one project
- Planning, planning, planning, planning
- Daily focus on top priorities
- Take responsibility and go
- Keep a sense of humor

All of these things will make you really good. But to be an excellent, stand-out project manager I would encourage focusing on developing leadership skills. These skills include building relationships, the ability to influence others, listening intently and with purpose, nurturing trust, and knowing how to prioritize. Most importantly, **project leadership should be centered around empathy and the ability to uncover, understand, and incorporate multiple perspectives in your work, outcomes, and goals.**

The more you build your leadership skills the stronger and more effective you’ll be as a project manager.”

**Beth Spriggs**

You will find much more about Beth at [www.bethspriggs.com](http://www.bethspriggs.com)
“Actively practice empathy throughout your day.

Imagine what your executive has to deal with and how your request or meeting fits into her world.

Before you yell at a team member for being late, seek first to understand what's happening.”

Bruce Harpham

You will find much more about Bruce at www.projectmanagementhacks.com
“Beyond technical knowledge, the contemporary project manager needs to have a strategic vision and business knowledge.

It’s very important to seek and enhance developing soft skills as executive presentations, negotiation and leadership.

Above all get experiences through application of project practices also considering references as PMBOK, Prince2 and Agile methods.”

Carlos Freitas

You will find much more about Carlos at [www.caffm.com.br](http://www.caffm.com.br)
“If you wish to enter the elite group of project managers, at the top of their game and in high demand, you have to recognize the intimate connection between projects and politics.

All projects were born out of a political agenda. They also live and die in a political environment. Ignoring this fact renders many well-meaning and talented individuals impotent in the face of opposition and challenge.

Therefore, to really succeed you have to embrace this aspect of your surroundings and learn what is really going on, what drives people and how they seek to realize their agenda. Only then can you begin to engage productively with what people really want, facilitate between warring stakeholders, and fulfil your potential with the client organization.

To succeed you don’t need to play politics or manipulate people, but you must understand it well enough to land your project for your clients in a way that maximizes benefit for the right people.”

Colin Gautrey

You will find much more about Colin at www.learntoinfluence.com
“If you're serious about developing a career in project management, you need a mental model of how a project manager adds value to drive your professional development plan. While there are a number of dimensions, consider the continuum between specialist and generalist.

The specialist endeavors to become a master of the vocabulary and processes in her chosen domain. She knows every variation, can debate the pros and cons with subject matter experts, and has passionate opinions on the efficacy of most of the common processes. The specialist has great faith in both theory and practice, and has little patience with sloppy practitioners. Her professional development focus is on continually expanding her knowledge and experience in her business or technical specialty. She belongs to every professional society in her area of expertise and reads everything they publish. She'll spend much of her career consulting with a variety of organizations.

The generalist has a passing familiarity with the vocabulary and key techniques of a number of fields and how they fit together to produce a result. As a result, the generalist has a broad view of the level of effort required to produce a complex product and has little sympathy for those who ‘discover’ requirements in the middle of execution. His professional development is about breadth more than depth. He'll join a professional organization, but subscribe to The Economist and tap RSS feeds from sites representing a dozen different disciplines. He'll spend a period of years with an organization, managing a variety of projects for them, before moving on.

Once you have your model, devise a career strategy and an implementation plan. Look at alternatives and conduct your ROI calculations. Set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-specific goals. Identify the risks, talk to your stakeholders (manager, significant other), and set a budget, for both money and time. Then select your vendors, put together a work breakdown structure and set up a schedule. After all, we're project managers and our careers are just one more project we need to manage.”

Dave Gordon

You will find much more about Dave at [http://blog.practicingitpm.com/](http://blog.practicingitpm.com/)
“The main piece of advice is – **Put the business at the centre of the project.**

A project is purely a mechanism through which business value can be delivered. Project Managers must understand why the project is important to the business by finding out where it connects with business plans and the organization’s strategy and strategic drivers. While a project manager can manage and complete projects without this knowledge, having it will:

- Provide a central point of focus;
- Bring clarity to the desired outcomes and ROI;
- Add greater meaning to the work activities;
- Shift and bring greater depth to the types of discussions being had;
- Bring sense to solutions, adjustments and decisions that will need to be made as the project progresses.”

**Deanne Earle**

You will find much more about Deanne at [www.deanneearle.eu](http://www.deanneearle.eu) and [www.unlikebefore.com](http://www.unlikebefore.com)
“I thought of all manner of things such as:

- Make sure you know what really constitutes success (for the person wanting the project)
- Rookies define scope by what’s included, great PMs define scope by what’s not in
- Always do a plan from the end back to the start
- Never work for dual sponsors on the same project – you’ll regret it
- If you don’t have regular and useful access to the real sponsor, disengage
- Pay particular attention to the people with the power to say no
- Never accept responsibility without authority
- Always manage people ahead of process (seriously, it’s magic) people work for people and people deliver projects
- Make sure the sponsor will have your back. You’ll need it and it’s bloody hard work when you need it and you look around and there’s no one there
- Document decisions – there’s power in this and it’s not about covering yourself
- Tell the truth, they might not like it and it may be hard – do it anyway
- Decide whether to be the best project manager in terms of keeping all the records straight, or being able to drive and deliver – the skill sets are quite different, rarely found in one person, and their application results in very different project outcomes
- It’s not about you. It’s about the people around you.

However, if I could give only one piece of advice it would be:

**Expose, communicate, test and document assumptions – yours and everyone else’s.**
Assumptions are beneath every single one of the points above. They are the power of great project managers and the destruction of all others. It’s not easy, it’s often uncomfortable, but it’s the secret to success on all projects.”

**Diane Dromgold**

You will find much more about Diane at [www.rncglobal.com](http://www.rncglobal.com)
“In my opinion, to be a good project manager it is of utmost importance to have a bigger picture in mind, so not only focusing on delivering the intended result, but also to make sure that the intended result delivers the intended benefits.”

**Dino Butorac**

You will find much more about Dino at [www.project-management-mentor.com](http://www.project-management-mentor.com)
Personal reflection and applying the insights you gain is key. Understand your own natural style before trying to engage with others – this will help you identify differences in style and expectations and allow you to modify your approach.

Consider the makeup and diversity of the team and what individually and collectively they need from you to be effective e.g. more direction or support?

Reflect on how your style impacts the way you lead projects and consider is this appropriate for the type of project, the context within which it is being delivered and culture of the organization. Similarly consider how you perceive, adopt, encourage others to use and practice project management – although the frameworks are generic different people apply them in different ways.

Applying the insights you will gain from personal reflection will have a positive impact on the performance of projects you manage. Try it and take your leadership skills to a new level.”

Donnie MacNicol

You will find much more about Donnie at www.teamanimation.co.uk
“First advice: Make sure to follow documentation best practices. In the current and future world collaboration is key. Using tools like SharePoint, Project Online and Office365 make it very easy too. Having templates for your documents is also quite easy. Just look at Office.com and search templates related to project management.

Second advice: Baseline your schedule at every formal (new) agreement on additional work or budget. Don’t fear scope change, but manage it by making it transparent. The reason for this is linked to the first advice. People (CXO’s for instance) need to know if you are on track with your work, compared to the budgets. That can only be done if you as a PM or scheduler track that information.”

Erik van Hurck

You will find much more about Erik at www.theprojectcornerblog.com
“My best advice to any project manager in any domain working on any project is to start with credible answers to five questions:

1) What does Done look like in units of measure meaningful to the decision makers?

2) What’s your plan to reach Done, with the needed Capabilities, at the needed time, for the needed cost?

3) What resources do you need to perform the work?

4) What impediments will you encounter along the way to Done and what are the mitigations for those impediments?

5) How are you going to measure progress to plan in units of physical percent complete?”

Glen B. Alleman

You will find much more about Glen at herdingcats.typepad.com
‘Read and practice! Read every day, not just about project management, but about every related subject you can find.

When you find a book you like, look up the books in the reference section, and read them too.

Every piece of knowledge you want to use must be practiced.

Practice on yourself, your friends, and (willing) colleagues.

When you can’t practice on people, set up simulations, and practice with those.

Remember, your job is not to make it easy for yourself, but to enable the people working for you to do their best.

This may sound like an inordinate amount of work, and it is.

Building skill takes a lot of work, both acquiring knowledge, and learning how to apply it.”

**Henrik Mårtensson**

You will find much more about Henrik at [kallokain.blogspot.com](http://kallokain.blogspot.com)
“Be ready to replan.

Every project, regardless of its duration or risks will have problems.

Those problems will require a replan.

If you are ready to replan when you start, you will be able to manage the problems and risks that occur.”

Johanna Rothman

You will find much more about Johanna at www.jrothman.com
“Any effective project manager should follow a set of 7 good habits:

1) Commit yourself to meet the project goals
2) Continuously plan what is going to happen next week, next month, at project closing, etc.
3) Control your project measuring and adjusting in 2 levels – project baselines and team member tasks
4) Face conflict and negotiation with a win/win attitude
5) Be a good listener
6) Be a servant leader
7) Continuously learn in order to perform better the next project.

These habits are based on an adaptation I made in 2012 from the book “The 7 Habits of Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey, and are deeply explained in my book “The Habits of Effective Project Managers.”

Jose Barato

You will find much more about Jose at jose-barato.blogspot.com.es
“My best advice for being a good project manager is to focus on business value.

Too often project managers get caught up in trying to satisfy scope, schedule and cost (iron triangle or triple constraint) baselines and lose sight of the fact that projects are an investment made to achieve expected business outcomes.

Just as surgeons can perform a successful operation but have the patient’s quality of life suffer immensely as an outcome, if meeting the triple constraint results in a reduction in benefits overall for the organization, then we have optimized a part but sub-optimized the whole.

It is critical for project managers to be aware of the business value expectations of their projects and to influence and recommend decisions which will support realizing that business value.”

Kiron Bondale

You will find much more about Kiron at kbondale.wordpress.com
“The best advice I can give to anyone who are just starting out on making the journey in project management is, do everything possible to find out and understand what it really means to be a project manager in today’s business world and really think about which industry you will be best suited for.

That means a lot of reading, research, meeting people, working out the best questions to ask to get the real inside picture. Do this first before setting off down a path of education or training.

I’ve always found that the Project Managers that really do a great job have excellent relational or behavioral skills – but I guess you knew that! The specific relational skills are the ones which enable them to work upwards, downwards and sideward in the business – aim to be a Project Manager that gets on well with senior managers; the project team; the PMO and the other departments that have an impact on your project.

Last point – your success will depend on how well you play the office politics – it’s a tough one, and it brings so many relational skills together, but you can guarantee you’ll be using them throughout your career.”

Lindsay Scott

You will find much more about Lindsay at www.arraspeople.co.uk
“Understand the value of planning and understand that plans will change. Know that you do not create a plan and then refuse to update it. You create a plan so that when things change and they will, you can assess the impact of those changes. A good plan allows for a clear understanding of what it will take to reach successful project completion.

Really get to know project management best practices and understand why they are considered best practices. If you ever find yourself doing something just because it is in a book or on a checklist, stop! Step back and consider how this particular tool or technique can help your project. How can you use this to communicate to others about the project? How can you use this to increase the likelihood that your project will succeed? Use project management tools and techniques to your advantage.

And… be kind to others!”

Margaret Meloni

You will find much more about Margaret at pmStudent.com
"Best advice? That is a very difficult thing to do, since projects are very complex organizational structures. But I suppose if pressed, I would waver between the importance of people and the importance of a business focus. But in the end, even business focus serves purpose only within the context of the people who grasp it.

**People**
Projects are initiated by people in the business to accomplish business goals. They impact stakeholders within the organization and sometimes outside the organization in various ways. They are planned and executed by the project team, comprising both technical and business people. **The people on the project and the stakeholders associated with the project are paramount to success. It's all about the people.** I believe this is one reason Organizational Change Management is on the rise, and rightly so.

**Business focus**
Understanding the goals of the business in initiating the project, the role the product(s) of the project will play in the business, and making sure every member of the team keeps their "eye on the ball" is also critical to project success. Remember the NASA janitor who in 1962 in response to Jack Kennedy's question about what he was doing, said, "I am helping put a man on the moon."? Project teams with people and stakeholders who understand the ultimate business goals have a much higher probability of success than those who don't.

*It is easy to focus on methods, processes, methodologies and tools. But those who do this at the exclusion of a people and business focus are destined to fail."

**Michael Frenette**
You will find much more about Michael at [ProjectManagement.com](http://ProjectManagement.com)
“The biggest challenge for a project manager is the twin priorities for balance and focus. If you don’t balance your attention among the hard technical aspects of the discipline and the soft people-related concerns of leading your team and engaging your stakeholders, your project will suffer. But it is also true that success requires focus.

So my advice is to do two things for each project you start.

First **continually assess what are the primary levers for the success of this project.** Different projects in different contexts will have their own answers to this, whether it’s risk management, allocating resources, monitoring delivery, or communicating with stakeholders.”

Second, **think of the different aspects of your role as each having its own hat for you to wear. Be deliberate in choosing what hat to wear and always wear just one at a time. Change hats after 60 to 120 minutes. This way, you get the benefits of balance and focus.”**

**Mike Clayton**

You will find much more about Mike at [https://onlinePMCourses.com](https://onlinePMCourses.com)
“If you want to become a good project manager to get successful projects, always focus on people!”

Pablo Lledó

You will find much more about Pablo at www.pablolledo.com
“In my research, I have identified 7 core behaviors that are key to high performance in project management. However one of these is fundamental to all of them: **self-awareness**.

This is the art and the discipline of thinking about your thinking. For example, in my book, "Leading Yourself" I explain a practice I use called "the Daily Heads-Up", which reminds me to reflect on how well yesterday went or not, and why. Using this routine, I am continually reviewing my personal organization, workflows, and practices, as well as my priorities. As a result, I focus on the most important aspects of project management, stakeholder engagement, and change leadership. I believe I continue to get better at these.”

**Patrick Mayfield**

You will find much more about Patrick at [patrickmayfield.com](http://patrickmayfield.com)
“Project Managers must understand that any project is executed by people with conflicting interests (client = product / contractor = profit / team = salaries) and the project manager should be the cornerstone to the relation that must be built within all people involved and must develop soft skills for this part of his job, keeping in mind a win-win situation to all stakeholders involved.

However, any project is constituted by a set of processes that must be executed to transform certain inputs into outputs and therefore PMs cannot excuse themselves of developing hard kills of planning and controlling, including proper scheduling, active risk management and the continuous respect for time, as any project that is delayed an entire year got late one day at time.”

Peter Mello

You will find much more about Peter at www.gestaodeprojetos.com.br
“Communication remains the number one focus for good project managers.

I was taught a truth in my early project management days: reporting is not communicating! The fact that the critical facts and important truths are buried somewhere in a beautiful 16 page report that the right people may be in possession of does not, in any way, mean that they have received the message.

I have also learnt that to waste time and effort in ‘defensive’ and ‘offensive’ communication – typically email these days – is truly pointless and will distract the project manager from the real issues. I know that building an email trail which, to put it bluntly, ‘covers your ass’ is easy to do but far better results can come from directing those same efforts into really effective communication.

Effective communication is about isolating the critical information, utilizing the optimum communication method for the person (or people) that you need to communicate with, and delivering that information at the appropriate time.

I would also add that in order to ensure that you receive the right information back; you need to educate people on what information you need, how you would like to receive that information and when.

So remember: Right Information, Right People, Right Time, Right Way.”

Peter Taylor

Find out more about Peter at [www.thelazyprojectmanager.com](http://www.thelazyprojectmanager.com)
“Have you ever tried to bake a cake, assemble a bike or put together an Ikea chair without a picture: not easy. Blue Apron is a meal delivery service where, every week, one gets ingredients for meals delivered to the doorstep. What make this even DO-able for me are the clear 1-page directions with a BIG picture of what the finished meal looks like.

That is your job one as a project manager: paint a picture of done and how to get there. For everyone. How you get there (agile, waterfall, hybrid) are but the tools to help you and your team execute.”

Sean Hull

Find out more about Sean at www.mundaellc.com
“Project Management is about people - building relationships, sharing ideas, seeing what excites and motivates them and finding ways to harness that energy.

The very best Project Managers understand that changes are not delivered by schedules and budgets, but by people. Sure, spreadsheets and budgets have their place, BUT the real power comes when we grab our stakeholders and connect with them - engage them, immerse them, make that emotional connection so that they can SEE what we are building and FEEL how their lives will change.

Connecting people. Sharing a vision. Understanding what matters most. Helping people improve the way they live and work.”

Tony Adams

Find out more about Tony at www.tonyadamspm.com
“Deadlines everywhere!"

An undefined deadline has a very good chance of becoming a non-deadline, or an urgent one.

Overall Project plans can’t be trusted if any part of it is undefined.

Balance the need for defining strict deadlines, challenging deadlines, and adding contingency on your final plan.

Be very aware of Parkinson’s Law: "The amount of time that one has to perform a task is the amount of time it will take to complete the task.

Get the experts define these deadlines and make the team commit to them.”

Victor Alonso Lion

Find out more about Victor at www.victoralonsolion.com