



6 Characteristics of a Modern Project Manager

Today's leading project managers (PMs) are expertly innovating within project teams to improve outcomes and maximize business impact. PMs are stepping up to the helm as change managers, cross-functional team managers and digital strategy enablers, to help guide a workforce that can successfully adapt, pivot and adjust course in the face of new technologies.

Successful PMs possess these 6 characteristics:



1. EXPERT COMMUNICATOR

The role of a project manager has evolved to that of an expert communicator. PMs must be clear, concise and effective in communicating technical information to both cross-functional team members and senior leadership. Being an expert communicator is especially important in today's diverse workplace—PMs often have to coordinate and engage people from all walks of life and cultures, so the ability to communicate with diverse groups is invaluable.



2. MASTER COLLABORATOR

Collaboration remains at the heart of effective project management and leadership. Successful PMs are skilled at collaborating with cross-functional teams, which leads to a better understanding of what ideas, products/processes are resonating in the organization. In decentralized organizational models, PMs have become especially valuable as they have the autonomy to voice their recommendations to upper management, ultimately guiding teams to better outcomes.¹



3. SUPERIOR LEADER

The leadership component of the PM role is vitally important as "strong effective leadership creates a cooperative team environment in which employees are encouraged to participate, grow, learn, and work together to reach the ultimate goal of a successful project outcome."² PMs are responsible for guiding productive teams and fostering positive working relationships. They moderate conflicts, manage expectations, inspire confidence and build trust. Programs and projects derail when internal and external stakeholders aren't working towards a mutual goal. Leadership experience and training are essential to develop competencies that enable PMs to effectively lead their project teams.

¹ "When to Decentralize Decision Making, and When Not To." Herman Vantrappen, Frederic Wirtz, *Harvard Business Review*, December 26, 2017.

² "Leadership and Its Role in the Success of Project Management." Bianca Novo, Eric A. Landis, Mary Lewis Haley, *Cumberland University*, 2017.



4. DATA ANALYST

As PMs take a more data-driven approach to work and integrate the tenants of big data and data analytics, they are able to weave these actionable insights into the fabric of their project management strategy. The data can be used to develop new protocols for improved planning, management and execution of projects, and can be analyzed to mold the future of the project ecosystem within the organization.³ Data insights enable a PM to gain clearer visibility into projects, promote a better understanding of how to align projects with business objectives, and offer improved monitoring of project status.



5. DIGITAL INNOVATOR

Technological skills support the core competencies needed to ensure the success of the project. Disruptive technologies are changing the way organizations conduct business on individual, team and organizational levels. However, not all organizations are successful in capitalizing on this disruption. Today's PMs need to be innovators within their organizations by incorporating technological advances in their project management processes.



6. LIFE-LONG LEARNER

PMs need strong business skills to maintain project momentum, spur team engagement, overcome conflict, be decisive and ultimately bring projects across the finish line on budget, on time and within scope. Life-long learners are naturally curious people who continually seek out opportunities to advance their expertise. Furthermore, they must continuously improve their existing hard and soft business skills and integrate those skills into projects in a timely fashion.

To encourage these qualities, organizations need to invest in the ongoing learning and development of PMs to promote an agile mindset and develop the right balance of technical and people skills required to ensure successful project completion.

Create Change Managers, Not Just Project Managers

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³ "What role does Big Data have in shaping future of Project Management." *International Project Management Association, July 19, 2017.*



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 866-757-3177