

2) The functions of a Project Manager ("PM")

General remarks

As stated previously, **a project needs to be managed** in order to produce the expected result. The person who manages a project is the Project Manager.

In this guide I use the abbreviation "**PM**" for "**Project Manager**", but "PM" may also stand for "Project Management".

Throughout this guide, although the PM may be male or female, I use the pronouns "he, him, his, himself" instead of the more politically correct but cumbersome "he/she, him/her, his/her, himself/herself"!

On some occasions I use the pronoun "you" to address you, dear reader, and of course the pronoun "I" refers to the author of this guide ("yours truly"). 😊

A project generally involves **two main parties**: the **project owner/sponsor** and the **entity in charge of project implementation** (or project execution).

The **project owner** is the "legal entity" or "natural person" at the origin of the project who specifies its requirements. The term "**project sponsor**", which specifically refers to the person or entity that funds a project, is often used as a synonym of "project owner", and in some cases the project owner and the project sponsor may be a single entity.

The **entity in charge of project implementation** (or project execution) is the "legal entity" or "natural person" that coordinates and supervises the implementation (or execution) of the project, in compliance with the requirements, the schedule and the budget that have been specified by the project owner/sponsor, who is often referred to as the "**client**". If the execution of the project is **outsourced**, the entity in charge of project implementation is usually called the "**main contractor**". The main contractor may use the services of "**subcontractors**" for the execution of parts of the work.

From the standpoint of a contractor, for example a software development company, an "**external project**" is a project owned by a different legal entity, for example a publishing company.

If the project owner and the entity in charge of project implementation belong to the same legal entity, the project may be viewed as an "**in-house project**" or "**internal project**", although the owner and the entity in charge of project implementation may belong to different parts of a particular company or organization.

For example, a company's top management or its Human Resources department or one of its Product divisions, as project owner/sponsor, may entrust the development of a business application or website or other product to the company's IT department, which will therefore play the role of entity in charge of project implementation.

The project owner usually appoints someone as the primary interface with the project manager appointed by the entity in charge of project implementation.

In many cases, the person assigned to that key role for the project on the owner side is a "**Business Analyst (BA)**" or "**Business Expert**". The BA has in-depth knowledge of the specific business operations to be impacted by the project; he represents the project owner's interests, as well as those of the future users of the product or service to be created; he is responsible for writing the requirements specification and for coordinating and supervising the project on the owner's behalf.

The BA may actually play the role of a **project manager on the project owner's side**, who may be called "**overall project manager**". In order to make the project a success, he needs to cooperate very closely and efficiently with the **project manager working for the entity in charge of project implementation**, who may be called "**implementation project manager**".

Such a situation is often encountered with projects for which the owner needs to outsource parts of a project to external companies, because the full range of competencies required to carry out the project is not available in-house. A frequent example of outsourcing is software development.

In certain situations, a PM may have **full project management responsibility, as owner as well as the person in charge of the execution of an internal project**, under the control of his management (the project sponsor).

As will be detailed further on in this guide, projects may be divided into “**subprojects**”, each of which may be led by a “**subproject manager**” (or “**specialized project manager**”).

In addition to my main role as Director of the Multimedia Reference Products division at Hachette, I was “Project Director” for the Hachette Multimedia Encyclopedia (“EHM”), with full responsibility for the project, under the supervision of two levels of management (the GM of the Encyclopedia & Dictionaries department and the CEO of Hachette Livre) and, of course, of a financial controller. My direct reports included an Editorial Director, with the role of editorial PM for the EHM, and a Data Engineering Director, with the role of technical PM for the EHM. The development of the EHM software, for most of its versions, was outsourced to an external company, which had naturally assigned a PM to the project. Multiple relationships were thus involved: between myself and the development PM, between the specialized Hachette PMs and myself, between the specialized Hachette PMs and the external development PM.

Close cooperation between all PMs involved in a project is not always easy, but it is essential. Therefore someone has to make sure that cooperation is effective and that the project moves ahead smoothly towards successful completion. That is one of the major roles of the **overall project manager**, who should act as a true **project leader**.

> See the following site for **more information about Project Management and Business Analysis**:

>> <https://pmhut.com/the-yin-and-yang-of-project-management-and-business-analysis>

What does a project manager actually do?

This section describes the functions of a hypothetical **overall project manager** who has full responsibility for leading a project.

Metaphorically, the PM should “inhabit” the project, consider it to be his property, virtually on a 24/7 basis (to carry things to extremes). Conversely, the project inhabits the PM!

The PM is the master of the “**Project Office**” specific to his project. The Project Office is the main place of work where project management is performed; the project team members may however be distributed over several locations.

In large organizations there may be a “**Project Management Office (PMO)**”, namely a department which provides project management standards, guidelines, advice, training, documentation, etc. to project managers throughout the organization.

The **PM’s basic role and goal** (in his professional life) consists in making every effort, with the means at his disposal, to **achieve the objective** that has been set for a project, which may be summarized as follows:

- **successful completion of the project in compliance with its scope, schedule, budget and quality requirements, in order to meet customer expectations.**

By the way, any objective should be “**SMART**”, ie:

- **Specific**: well defined, clear (as opposed to fuzzy).
- **Measurable**: tangible, with quantifiable results expected.
- **Attainable**: achievable, reasonable (given the constraints).
- **Realistic** (as opposed to utopian or wishful thinking).
- **Time-bound** (with at least a deadline for completion).

This is true for objectives set for a project or for a person (in particular the PM).

The **PM** is not necessarily the initiator of the project, but he **should preferably be involved at the earliest possible stage of the project and take full responsibility until its completion** (a change of PM in the course of a project is not desirable, but it may happen, and it is sometimes even necessary...).

The **PM** is not necessarily a product designer, but he **should actively participate in the product’s functional design review**.

The **PM** is generally neither an editor, nor a developer nor a marketing expert, but he **should be familiar with the functions** of the various contributors to the project, and speak (or at least understand) their **specialist languages**!

A project may be compared to a work of music. The **role of the PM** is comparable to that of a **composer and conductor**: the PM writes the score and ensures that it is executed harmoniously by all the players. A good project manager is also a **true leader**.

Keywords

Here are a few **keywords that characterize the actions of a PM**: imagine, evaluate, anticipate, devise, plan, write, organize, coordinate, mobilize, motivate, supervise, monitor, control, measure, react, arbitrate, resolve, participate, ensure, negotiate, decide, interface, communicate, manage, direct, head, lead.

Those keywords are grouped by **skill sets** in the following diagram.



As a project manager, you will need to...

- **imagine** what the end result of the project will be and how to get there;
- **evaluate** the resources that are necessary for the execution of the project, for each of its phases;
- **plan** the project as a whole as well as each of its subprojects;
- **anticipate** risks, obstacles and problems that might occur, and **devise** appropriate contingency plans;
- **write** (or participate in writing) the requirements specification and **participate** in developing and/or reviewing the functional design specifications;
- **organize** the project, the project office, the project team, and divide up the work;
- **coordinate** all the players and their contributions;
- **mobilize** all contributors and **motivate** the project team members;
- **supervise** and **monitor** the work of all contributors;
- **control** and **measure** the progress of the various tasks and the progress of the project as a whole, as well as any possible deviation from the project's scope, schedule, budget and quality requirements;
- **react** as quickly as possible to any deviation (or other problem) by taking adequate corrective **action**;
- **arbitrate** disputes, **resolve** conflicts and **manage** the resolution of problems;
- actively **take part** in the testing of the product at each stage of its development, in order to **ensure** its quality, of which you, the PM, are the **guarantor**;
- **negotiate**, if the need arises, with the project owner/sponsor, with suppliers, service providers and contractors, as well as with your management and your financial controller;
- **make decisions** as required throughout the duration of the project, within the limits of your delegation of authority;
- **interface** between the project team and the "outside world";
- **communicate** information on a need-to-know basis to all parties concerned, at each stage of the project;
- **manage (direct, head, lead)** the project!

Note that the word "**lead**" is underlined above (and here!), because **leadership is an essential function of a PM**.

The various functions of a PM, which will appear in their full context in subsequent chapters of this guide, are performed throughout the life cycle of a project, an overview of which is provided in the following chapter.