

Frequently Asked Questions: Projects

How do you initiate a project?

Initiating a project refers to all of the tasks associated with defining the project and answering questions such as: what is the project, what will it deliver, what are the objectives, how does the project tie into the larger organizational strategy and determining who will be on the project team.

What is the project initiation phase?

The project initiation phase is the term used to address the comprehensive group of tasks required to define what the project is and to get the project started.

Why is project initiation so important?

Project initiation is important because it defines the project. Clearly defining the project to the project team, and organization, can reduce the level of interpretation with respect to the project activities. We need to make sure that everyone has a solid understanding of what the project is, why the project exists and how it can benefit the organization.

How is project initiation and planning different?

Project initiation defines the project (what?). Project planning determines how the work will get completed (how?). You cannot plan a project if it has not been effectively defined through the initiation tasks.

Will project management work in all companies?

Yes. And through training, education, standardizing processes and determining which project management methodology would work best for the company, all companies can be successful implementing project management practices.

Will project management be automated?

Yes, and it already is to some degree. The project management software industry has grown significantly. In 2020 the software market was estimated at \$4.2 billion and by 2025 it is estimated to be at \$5.6 billion. Project management software allows for the automation of some tasks including the development of action plans, sequencing of tasks, resource management and scheduling. But it's important not to lose sight of the human element. People are critical in getting projects completed.

How will project management help me?

Understanding and applying project management practices will help you, as an individual, succeed with the various projects that may land on your desk. This skill set is now considered a “strategic competency” which can certainly help position you for more challenging positions in your organization or give you a leg up with a new organization. Additionally, these skills are multi-disciplined – you can use them at work, at school, at home, in the community, at your volunteer organization...everywhere there is a project! Project management skills are highly transferable and once learned, can be used over and over again in various project scenarios. Lastly, projects are 2 ½ times more successful if proven project management practices are used. Don't you want to be successful?

Why is project management important?

Project management skills are important for individuals and organizations. Individuals will be able to raise their level of success with their projects by using proven project management practices and organizations will benefit in many ways!

- Projects will actually be completed instead of lingering for years
- Projects will provide increased benefits for the organization, customers and community.
- Project will help the organization achieve their strategic goals
- Check out this longer [list](#) of project management benefits.

Which project management tool is the best?

It depends on many factors. I wrote a blog posting about the project management software industry and some of the considerations that should be discussed before moving ahead with a software tool. Check out the blog [here](#) so that you can make a more informed decision on your software.

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Which project management methodology will work best?

It depends on many factors – your company, your organizational structure, your internal expertise. There are a number of methodologies that you can choose from. I would highly recommend that you research the various methodologies and determine what would be a good fit for your organization. And please keep in mind, that whatever your decision might be, everyone will need to be trained before moving forward with the project and methodology. Everyone.

What are the project management process groups?

The Project Management Institute (PMI) identified 5 process groups: Initiation, Planning, Execution, Monitoring & Control, Closing.

What is a project management process?

A project management process is the system in which projects flow in your organization. Many organizations based their process on proven best practices from the Project Management Institute (PMI) or other methodologies. The processes can be customized for the organization based on the industry, project type, deliverables, and regulatory needs. Check out this [illustration](#) of a project management process. It will help you to visualize how a project can unfold.

Who are the project management stakeholders?

A stakeholder is defined as any individual, group or organization that may be impacted by a project. A stakeholder analysis is a critical element in the overall success of a project effort. The Project Lead needs to know who will be impacted by the project, how they will be impacted, when they will be impacted and what needs to take place in order to either A) reduce the result of the impact or B) mitigate the result of the impact. The Project Lead will not be able to do this successfully without input from the stakeholders and the project team. To learn more about Stakeholders, check out this free [Stakeholder Start-Up Kit](#).

What do project management consultants do?

Many things. I have done all the following as a project management consultant:

- Led projects for clients from initiation through to closure.
- Delivered training on project management best practices to an organization, school, or business association.
- Coached new Project Leads in an organization or set up a shadowing experience for new Project Managers
- Contributed to a Project Management Office (PMO) and helped larger organizations align resources to ensure strategic success.
- Developed project management frameworks and processes for organizations.
- Establish project management templates, tools, and user guides for organizations.

Who is on the project team?

It depends. What type of project are you working on? Is it a technical project that is working with new software? Then you would definitely need to have someone from information technology including developers, testers, designers, integration analysts etc. However, if you are working on a project to update the employee onboarding program that project team would look different. You might have several representatives from Human Resources, Legal, and maybe some new employees to discuss their recent experiences. The best scenario would be to have a key representative for all impacted stakeholder groups.

Who develops the project management plan?

The Project Manager/Lead develops the plan with the Project Team. The plan should never be developed in isolation – it requires the entire team’s contributions.

What is your definition of “project management plan”?

My, personal, definition of a project management plan is an actionable roadmap that will define how the project will unfold and all the tasks required to deliver on the project objectives.

What is the definition of project management?

Project management is defined as the activity to plan, organize, and manage tasks and people to achieve the specific goals of the project.

Can project management be forced upon an organization?

Of course. But it won't work if it's forced. It certainly isn't to anyone's advantage to force someone into following a protocol or practice. Here's a better idea: the organization thinks they want to adopt project management best practices so they ask the employees for input. This is a far better approach than forcing anything on the employees. If the employees have the opportunity to contribute to an effort to identify the best practices that they have used in the organization....that input is priceless! It has been identified by the employees, tested in various projects and scenarios internally and is now being offered up as a best practice. What a great contribution to an overall project practice manual for the employees!

How can project management help a company?

Let me count the ways...projects are 2 ½ times more successful when proven project management practices are used. That statistic, alone, sums up why companies and organizations should use some type of project framework to get the job done! Other benefits include:

- Maximizing resources.
- Consistency in practice
- Reduction in the number of unfinished projects.
- Clarity in roles and responsibilities.
- Transparency of project activities, budgets, and resources

You can read a more comprehensive list of benefits [here](#):

What can project management lead to?

Anywhere you want it to lead to. If you have project management skills then you should be communicating that fact with employers, colleagues, education providers, recruiters, volunteer organizations...these skills can lead you to new opportunities that were not available to you in the past. Project management skills are highly transferable. I have worked in 11 different market segments and have led project team members based in 5 different countries. Go for it!

Where can project management take you?

Where do you want to go? Understanding of how projects unfold, the key elements included in project activities, how to lead a project or be part of a project team are all skills that are in demand today. Everywhere. Globally. Look around and you will see people in all types of roles, positions, companies, organizations and non-profits working

on projects. Project management skills have been identified by [McKinsey](#) as one of the Top 5 skills set for the future of work. Now is the time to get on board!

Where can I find a project management glossary?

You can find the glossary that I created [here](#). Having a glossary of terms is very important for the entire project team. It's important to make sure that the project team is using the same definition of terms, acronyms, and phrases to help increase the level of understanding by everyone on the team. Use this glossary as a foundation and add your organizational terms, phrases and don't forget the acronyms!

What are the roles and responsibilities associated with a project team?

There are various roles associated with the project team. You should have a Project Sponsor, Project Manager/Lead, Key Stakeholders, and depending on your project – technical team members (developers, testers, designers), legal, human resources, marketing, logistics, customer service, administration...the project team should be made up of the people who represent the skills needed to deliver on the project objectives. If you are looking for an example of roles and responsibilities, I have posted them [here](#).

What are lessons learned and why are they important?

Typically, project teams will review the project activities and discuss what went well and what could have gone better. Or, what can be improved upon for the next project. The lessons learned can be an incredible learning experience for the entire project team. By taking a birds-eye view of the project activities and efforts, the team members can take an objective approach to discussing process improvements for future project work. However, I would suggest that you don't wait until the end of the project for the lessons learned activity. In my experience, this discussion is more meaningful when the activities are fresh in everyone's mind. Therefore, you can schedule these discussions throughout the project lifecycle.

Are project management skills transferable?

Yes. These skills can be learned once and used in various industries. I, personally, have worked on projects in 11 different industries. Although the industries may have additional protocols or use different methodologies, the foundational understanding of project management practice remains the same. If you're looking to read more check out this article in the [Seattle Times](#).

Who is considered a Stakeholder?

By definition a Stakeholder is an individual, group or organization that may be negatively, or positively, impacted by a project. Keep in mind that the impact can happen at any point during the project lifecycle – not necessarily at the end of the project with the deliverable.

Why are Stakeholders important?

Stakeholders are important for many reasons including:

- The Stakeholders are the individuals, groups and organizations with the subject matter expertise relating to the project and the deliverables.
- The Stakeholders are the individuals involved in contributing to the project activities.
- The Stakeholders are also the end-users of the product, service or result of your project. In order to be successful, you need their input, up front. E.g. Requirements gathering.
- The Stakeholders' acceptance of the project deliverable(s) can significantly impact the success of a project.
- For more information, check out the free [Stakeholder Start-Up Kit](#) on my website.

How do we identify the Stakeholders?

- A Stakeholder identification discussion with the Project Team will help in the development of a list of potential Stakeholders.
 - Suggestion: At the project kick-off meeting, have an agenda item for Stakeholder Identification. This agenda item will trigger a discussion about who will be impacted by the project. A question that is often used is “Based on your experience, who do you feel might be impacted by this project?”
- Based on the discussion with the Project Team, document the following information:
 - Names of the potential stakeholders
 - Their role and how they might be impacted by the project
 - Email address – which will be helpful for the communication activities relating to the project

How do I manage the Stakeholders?

- Once you have identified and documented the potential Stakeholders, you will need a plan to manage the Stakeholders which will include communication planning.
- Communication planning will include identifying the needs of the Stakeholders. Stakeholder needs will change based on how they are impacted by the overall project. For instance, some Stakeholders may only be interested in the schedule for delivery. Others could be interested in the budget or training on the deliverables. You will need to determine what information would be most valuable to your Stakeholder groups.
- Consistency is critical and important to Stakeholders. As a Stakeholder they are going to want to be informed of the progress, challenges, and overall status of the project on a regular basis. Establish a communication schedule that is sustainable for both you and the Project Team while also delivering value to your Stakeholder community.
- Stakeholder Tips:
 - A review of the project deliverable(s), and the changes that may occur based on those deliverables, is a good starting point to help identify Stakeholders.
 - Communication is vital to getting Stakeholder buy-in and support for the overall project. Examples of communication activities can include:
 - Providing status reports
 - In-person meetings
 - Webinars/videos of the project progress

- FAQ document (Frequently Asked Questions from Stakeholders)
- Online forum for Stakeholders to see updated information
- Point of Contact for Stakeholders if they have questions or comments.
- Consistency in communication is critical – with respect to timing, format, and style.
- Important: Stakeholder management is not static. Stakeholders can, and will, change throughout the lifecycle of a project. I suggest a monthly review of the Stakeholder management plan to ensure that it adequately reflect the needs of the current Stakeholders.
- Looking for more information? Check out my [podcast](#) on Identifying Stakeholders:

Looking for additional information on Project Management? Don't forget to check out my website for blogs, podcasts, products and free project management tools and templates.

<https://www.mbiconsults.com/>

Do you have another question about projects or project management that is not listed here? [Send me a note](#) and I can include it into the next version of this FAQ. Thanks!