

A WEEK IN *Learning*

Project Management: All Day, Everyday

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When you hear the words “project management”, what thoughts come to your mind? Speaking for myself, I automatically think of large organizations, Project Management Offices (PMO), project management practices, planning, organizing, and the dreaded, *mitigation strategies*. Any project manager will tell you their preferred methods and practices, and in essence, it probably seems scary, right? Well, I’m here to tell you that it does not have to be scary at all, and that we all project manage our lives without even knowing it. It’s true! I would like to take a moment to talk about basic project management concepts and how we use them in our everyday lives.

By definition, project management involves management of a project – a temporary activity that is designed to bring about a pre-planned outcome. If we think about projects that we manage in our everyday lives, you might consider projects such as cleaning out the garage, taking a family trip, meal planning, or even participating in your child’s bake sale for school. All of these normal, everyday activities are accomplished by applying basic project management concepts, and you might have not even known it. Let’s talk about the concepts we employ, and how they help us achieve our goal:

- **Initiating:** This is the beginning phase where you determine what your project is.
- **Planning:** In this phase, we create a plan. We develop a document that indicates resources needed to accomplish the goals of the project. This is essentially our scope of work. We will also allocate time, budgeting, and consider any issues that might arise.
- **Executing:** This next phase is where we delegate duties and account for all resources to meet our outcome.
- **Monitor/Control:** When monitoring our duties, and those executing them, we ensure communication is happening, discuss any questions that arise, and address any issues or obstacles that might stand in our way. A good project manager always has a mitigation strategy, or Plan B, ready in the event a project might become derailed.



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- **Closing:** Once the project is complete, we want to make sure that the project was executed successfully. We discuss successes, opportunities, and move on to the next project.

Now that we have a basic understanding of project management concepts, let's talk about some skills you may already possess and how they relate to project management. Time management, budgeting, and communication are key skills to a successful execution of a project. Let's break these down a little more:

- **Time Management:** Almost every task we accomplish in our personal or professional lives is driven by time. To do this, we use schedules, task lists, prioritization of daily duties, and deadlines to accomplish specific milestones throughout our day. Think of this in terms of planning your workday out from the start of your shift, to the end.
- **Budgeting:** Many things in our lives are driven by budget. We manage our monthly/annual finances with budgets so that we ensure bills are paid, our family is fed, and personal activities can commence. We accomplish budget management by using tools such as excel, or financial budget websites like Mint.com. However, a notebook will work to accomplish your budgeting needs if you are partial to the old school methods, such as myself.
- **Communication:** This is important because there are many ways we communicate daily (face-to-face, non-verbal, through smart devices, or email). Through communication, we convey our thoughts while continually practicing our skills by interacting with family, friends, co-workers, and society in general. Project management focuses on effective communication skills, something we hone every day without knowing it.

Sure, to be a professional project manager, with proper credentials, it might require some focused learning and certifications. However, if you are someone who manages multiple projects outside of work, or if you are someone who has a lot to accomplish in a short period of time, you are already implementing these basic project management concepts into everything you do - and that makes you a master planner/project manager!

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