PROJECT MANAGER CAREER ROADMAP

See links for helpful supplemental resources

STAGE 1 — Project Coordinator, Project Analyst, or Your Current Job (Year 1–2)

Master the Essentials (Months 0–6)

- Learn how to run meetings, take clear notes, track tasks – How to Take Notes During Meetings
- Practice building simple schedules. Understand what needs to get done and work with your teammates to sequence these activities and estimate how long they'll take. – Five Key Activities to Create a Project Schedule
- Take courses on Leadership – Leadership for Project Managers
- Learn how to identify risks and maintain a risk register- Fundamentals of Project Management
- Volunteer to lead coordinated efforts to accomplish a goal. This can be done while you're still in college or at your current job role – How do I Become a Project Manager
- Learn Project Management tools such as MS Project, SmartSheet, Trello, ClickUp, or JIRA. Understand that Project Management is about leading more than knowing tools.
- Study for the PMP Certification or equivalent. Ensure you take practice tests as part of your studies.

Start Taking Ownership (Months 6–12)

- Ask to manage a workstream or a larger project than the one above. Leverage your previous success above as proof that you can do this.
- Understand how to manage a project from start to finish – How to Manage a Large Project
- Maintain a diary as to how you are LEADING on projects and any improvement opportunities. Schedule retrospectives for yourself as you would schedule a meeting with your teammates. Identify someone as a mentor to help you become a better Leader.
- Build "project on a page" status reports – How to Create a One Page Status Report
- Get into the habit of identifying risks EARLY and maintaining the risk register. Make sure you're communicating with stakeholders as to these risks. Do NOT be shy and wait because "bad news ages badly." - Seven Tips for Shy Project Managers
- Take the PMP Exam or Equivalent

Begin Your Project Manager Job Search (Months 12–18)

- Save copies of any project deliverables or materials to create your portfolio. Ensure you change sensitive corporate information and company logo's.
  - Understand your organization's terms on sharing proprietary information. Be careful of this because you are accountable.
- Create a free website (www.wix.com) where you can post your portfolio. You want to do this so that you have a sharable link when applying to jobs
- Ask for LinkedIn recommendations from managers or your teammates. Update your LinkedIn profile.
- Start understanding how Project Management Interviews are done – Project Manager Interview Success
- Look at job descriptions and see what companies are looking for. This will help you identify what skillsets you need to improve on. Complete another retrospective on yourself.
- See if there are project management roles within your company and apply.

Sharpen Your Skills (Months 18–24)

- Continue searching for a PM job
- Brainstorm which skills you need to work on. Make arrangements with your management to attain training
- Take a look at Project Management job descriptions that are appealing to you. Make a note of what the hiring manager is looking for and ensure you are doing these activities now. If not, approach your management to volunteer to do these activities.
- If there are no formal projects that you can work on, approach your management to talk about what projects you can work on to help them accomplish their goals.
- Understand how to deal with Software Development Vendors, they are NOT your friends – Project Manager's Guide to Vendor Management

STAGE 2 — Project Manager (Years 3 – 4)

Run Projects & Plan Your Career

- Manage projects at your new job or in your current company as a Project Manager
- Continue to perform retrospectives for yourself and your projects. Set a recurring time frame to do this such as weekly.
- Think about what position you want to move into in Year 4. Below is a sample career progression
  - Project Analyst -> Project Manager -> Program Manager -> Portfolio Manager -> PMO Director
  - If you have other roles in mind this is fine. Make sure these roles are on your roadmap

- For the future roles you have selected, make sure you understand the job roles and that you're doing that type of work now.
  - For example, if you want to be a Program Manager, do the associated work now as a Project Manager.
  - In future roles you hold, make sure you do work related to the next role you want to have
- Make sure you are looking for a new job in the next role that you want every 2 years. For example…
  - 2026 – Project Analyst
  - 2028 – Project Manager
  - 2030 – Program Manager
  - 2032 – Portfolio Manager / PMO Director / Other Type of Senior Management role
  - Until age 50 – Continue working in Senior Management roles and build "income while you sleep." Prepare to retire by age 50 because **ageism is real**. By then, you should have a steady income from your side-gigs or consulting services.
  - Again, if you want to do other types of management roles, this is fine but set 2-year targets. Your goal is to move into a new role every 2 years (if you can do this sooner, better for you).
  - **Do NOT concern yourself being "faithful" to your current company or position. ONLY be "faithful" to your career.**

Teach What You Know – Start a side-gig

- As you learn about Project Management through **practical experience**, think about how you can teach this to other prospective project managers. Ideas can include: a website, online courses, books you can publish, or collaborating with project management influencers.

- It is critical to have a side gig nowadays that earns passive income. This is because companies are consolidating and laying off. Also, Unemployment Insurance typically lasts only 6 months (research the state or country that you're located in for details). Nowadays, you may be laid off for up to a year and you need your own "insurance." Unemployment is like the flu – **anyone** can get it.

- Manage your time wisely and, in your spare time, create the assets mentioned before that will earn you "income while you sleep."

Start to do Program Management work (Year 4)

- Ensure you are managing multiple projects at the same time. Understand your division's strategy and how all the active projects fit into that strategy.

- From this point forward in your career, understand the company's corporate strategy as it relates to the projects in your department's pipeline.

- Understand how to financially manage a project – [IT Project Budget & Cost Management]

- Learn how to create status dashboards that senior leaders actually care about. Reach out to senior leaders and find out the statistics they're actually interested in.

STAGE 3 — Program Manager (Years 5 - 6)

- Perform your program management duties and seek senior managers as mentors
- Network with other senior leaders either through your company, past colleagues, LinkedIn, PMI Networking events, etc.
- Sharpen your Leadership, Negotiation and Emotional Intelligence skills.
- Your mindset now is that you're a business owner leading many people. Continue to take training in Management.

Start to do Program Manager / PMO Director / Other Management work (Year 6)

- Ensure you are doing work where you are involved in strategic planning.
- Take a look at Portfolio Management or PMO Director job descriptions that are appealing to you. Make a note of what the hiring manager is looking for and ensure you are doing these activities now. If not, approach your management to volunteer to do these activities.
- You now must think like a director or executive and network accordingly. You may do this on LinkedIn, join executive networking groups, look at management associations in your town or area and join.

STAGE 4 — Portfolio Manager / PMO Director / Other Type of Senior Management role (Year 6 and beyond)

- Execute your duties as a Portfolio Manager or PMO Director. Mentor your teammates
- Strive to set up your side gig with a goal of replacing your current income (income while you sleep)
    - Understand how much money you need per month to cover for expenses and savings. Put together a personal budget that accounts for spending and savings.
    - This amount will become the monthly take-home income you need from your side gig to walk away from your job.
- Consider doing consulting work where companies hire you on a retainer specifically for your expertise. This can be your own business.
    - Combine the income from this gig with your other side gig above to supercharge your income
- **By age 50, you want to be in a position where you won't depend on working for companies.**