3 Ways to Boost Your Project Management Skills

A Guide for Confidently Managing Your Projects and Leading Your Team

Top 3 Project Management Skills

Whether you've been working as a project manager for some time or just starting your career into project management, there are some actions you can take right now that bring your project management skills to a higher level.

You probably experienced it yourself or heard stories from others about new product development projects that take a lot of time and energy and frustration of the project team.

In this guide you'll learn the top 3 skills that help you confidently manage your project and lead your project team. You'll feel confident and in control without the overwhelm of organizing your projects.

If you feel you can make some improvements in your daily project management activities or you're a newbie, please continue reading this guide.

Sending you all my best,

Marie-Louise Anthonissen
Founder of Bureau Flo

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Skill 1 Organizing your projects and your project team

There are a lot of moving parts in new product development. It's impossible to keep up with every action, setback, and discussion without organizing your project and managing your project team.

As a project manager you need to keep everyone involved and aligned, chase open actions, and guard the project planning and the project budget. You need to have a helicopter view and **proactively steer the project and team members** to keep everything on track.

> Schedule **weekly core project team meetings**. Plan these meetings ahead in your calendar and invite your project team members as well.
> Make this a **recurring meeting** for the total estimated length of your project.
> So, if you expect the project will take a year, schedule this meeting for the whole year, every week.
> It will be much harder to get everyone present in your meetings, if these time slots are not booked in advance.

> During these meetings, discuss the **progress** of the project, define a**ctions, responsible persons and deadlines** for these actions. Also note down any important decisions that have been made.

> Make sure to also schedule regular meetings with suppliers, agencies and other third parties working on your project to align on project progress and decisions.

By checking in on the status of your new product development on a weekly basis, you're more in control because you're on top of things and can quickly intervene when things are moving in the wrong direction.

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Skill 2: Structuring your work and your project

After you've organized your project team meetings and invited your team members it's crucial that you provide structure for everyone working on your project.

You'll bring clarity and overview by creating and updating the project documentation. Make sure to store all project documentation safely and have back-ups created. Discuss the project documentation regularly and makes sure all team members understand it and are aligned.

> **Always make meeting minutes and send these around or make them available on a shared drive for your team.**
> Use a spread sheet and define the open actions, allocate who is responsible and set a deadline.
>
> Also indicate if an action is open, started or finished.
> This prevents that everyone walks away from the meeting, continues with their daily tasks, and completely forgets the action points from your meeting.

> **Create a separate project checklist** of all the actions that need to be done to develop your new product idea.
> You'll be able to tick these actions off when they are completed, and you and your team can focus on the remaining open points.

> Create structure by organizing the project documentation on a shared drive. **Create a logical folder structure** for each project that enables you and your team members to find documents easily.

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Skill 3 Planning your projects and your own calendar

By making a detailed planning of all the activities needed from product idea, through definition, development, manufacturing, and introduction, you'll be able to micromanage your project and be fully in control.

You'll not be surprised by actions or deliverables that are overlooked and cause cost increase and delay further down the road. They are all included in your planning and you've allocated time for them to be handled.

> **Create a detailed project planning** for every new project and discuss this planning weekly in your core project team meeting.

> A project is not static, setbacks and new insights will always influence your planning. In order not to delay the project, it is important to anticipate on these changes quickly.
> When you **review your planning regularly with your team** members, you will be informed timely on issues that have impact on your planning. The team is able to figure out a solution to win back this delay elsewhere in the planning.

> Next to your project planning, you also need to **plan and manage your own daily activities careful.** Avoid stress and burnout by scheduling time blocks in your calendar. Assign time to prepare for your project team meetings, to get actual work done and to do your emails. Don't let yourself get distracted by emails popping up all the time.
> Give these time blocks different colours in your calendar to create clarity and overview.

You can find more tips on creating a realistic project planning on my blog, click here.

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