

# BENCHMARK IT HIRING GUIDE: Project Manager



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## SUMMARY

Recruiting a Project Manager requires a clear and thorough action plan. Our new Benchmark IT Project Manager Hiring Guide offers best practices for recruiting PMs with the right technical and communication skills.

The role of a Project Manager can vary depending on the organization. However, team collaboration, communication, and cooperation remain vital to ensure project success. Nearly [40% of IT projects fail](#) because of unclear and undefined objectives and milestones.

Candidates must multitask, manage a project team, and keep them focused on the project schedule. An effective PM is highly organized and can manage their project team to reach their goal on time and within budget.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Different industries and businesses have varying requirements and definitions of Project Managers. However, team collaboration, communication, and cooperation remain essential to any project's success. Launching and developing new services, products, processes, and applications requires strong project management oversight. Each team member must contribute individually while also working as an efficient team toward a common goal.

The Project Manager's role requires managing simultaneous activities, being organized, and keeping all team members focused on their contributions. They must visualize and communicate the project's goal and constantly determine the best approach to bring the project in successfully.

Some organizations focus on a PM's technical knowledge, while others focus on their history of successful project management or specific industry experience. Ultimately, they need to understand the big picture and marshal a team to reach the goal successfully.

The Benchmark IT Project Manager Hiring Guide includes flexible templates to help you source, recruit, and hire the right person for the job.

## II. QUICK STATS ABOUT PROJECT MANAGERS

The Project Management Institute estimates that the global economy will need 25 MM new project management professionals by 2030. That means that 2.3 million project management-oriented employees (PMOE) will need to enter the workforce each year to keep pace with the demand.



PMI research reveals three reasons for the persistence of the talent gap since they began analyzing the data in 2008:

- An increase in the number of jobs requiring project management-oriented skills
- Higher demand for project professionals in emerging and developing countries due to economic growth
- The rate of retirement from the workforce

Upskilling our workforce, and empowering a new generation of talent with the necessary project management skills, will be critical in narrowing the talent gap in the coming years.

### III. SALARY RANGE

A Project Manager's salary depends on the nature and seniority of the position, team size, and the number and scope of projects.

[The Benchmark IT 2021 Technology Salary and Hiring Guide](#) offers the following ranges for Project Management positions.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT			
<b>Project Managers</b>	<b>\$74,160</b>	<b>\$131,840</b>	<b>\$182,310</b>
<b>Program Managers</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$156,560</b>	<b>\$191,580</b>
<b>Business Analysts</b>	<b>\$77,250</b>	<b>\$105,060</b>	<b>\$144,500</b>
<b>Scrum Master</b>	<b>\$82,400</b>	<b>\$133,900</b>	<b>\$169,950</b>
<b>Product Manager</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$128,750</b>	<b>\$161,710</b>
<b>Technical Writer</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$92,700</b>	<b>\$127,720</b>

### IV. DETERMINING FACTORS, DESIRABLE PERSONALITY TRAITS, AND SKILLSETS

Successful Project Managers have the technical expertise and experience to see and understand the big picture of the project. They can simultaneously manage both short- and long-term goals to achieve project success. Based on the specific project, there will likely be many milestones to coordinate with dependencies from one to the next.

Additionally, these dependencies and milestones must be in concert and sequence with one another to ensure overall project success. Projects completed either too early or late lead to idle teams, increased costs, and other inefficiencies. Managing projects successfully requires the skill and know-how to meet milestone timelines and keep team cohesion accurately.

Successful Project Managers will anticipate the personnel and material resources required so they are available when needed. Project Managers must deal with logistics, workspaces, personnel assignments, conflicting personalities and mitigate problems throughout the project. As team captain, they must motivate the team and keep them focused on the end goal.

Today, Project Managers utilize software tools to track, measure, and assign tasks. These tools allow Project Managers to succeed from simple spreadsheets to sophisticated applications designed for specific projects in specific industries. The best Project Manager candidates should have experience with the tools and platforms your organization uses and/or implement the right tools for success

Effective project management requires leadership that is organized and has meticulous attention to detail. The ability to handle pressure and stress is a daily part of the job. Ideal candidates can manage anxiety and effectively block stress and frustration.

Candidates should demonstrate strong communication skills, leadership abilities and work with multiple personality types across business units. Project Managers generally exude confidence and a sense of purpose. The best candidates can quickly illustrate how they handle these with examples of previous projects.

## V. PROJECT MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION

*[Select or add the specific requirements of your position]*

[Your company name] seeks a Project Manager to plan, execute, and deliver projects on time, on budget, and according to business priorities. The ideal candidate possesses the leadership and communication skills to manage project teams and mitigate issues and risks.

Ongoing interaction with business leads due to the scope and complexity of the projects that are managed. This position will typically oversee several large complex projects or fewer projects which are significant in scope and size. May have project or program resources reporting directly.

### **Overall Responsibilities Include:**

- Submitting project deliverables.
- Preparing status reports.
- Establishing effective project communication plans.
- Executing project plans according to business priorities.

### **Responsibilities**

*[Modify the list to match your requirements]*

As Project Manager you will:

- Define project scope and objectives.
- Determine the required resources to reach objectives and manage them effectively and efficiently.
- Develop a Project budget based on scope and resource requirements.
- Oversee and monitor project costs.
- Develop and manage a detailed project schedule and work plan.
- Meet with [internal or external] clients to further document project details and clarify specific requirements.
- Delegate project tasks based on team strengths, skill sets, and experience levels.
- Oversee and monitor project performance.

- Manage project budget by project scope.
- Coordinate with team members to keep all parties focused on project requirements, deadlines, and schedules.
- Identify and resolve issues.
- Develop comprehensive project plans for all team members and stakeholders.
- Provide ongoing and consistent project updates.
- Manage vendor/supplier contracts and deliverables to meet expected outcomes.
- Utilize industry best practices, techniques, and standards throughout the project.
- Manage and facilitate changes in project scope, schedule, and costs while effectively communicating with stakeholders.
- Manage and mitigate project risk.
- Create user manuals, training materials, and other documents as needed. Ensure successful execution and hand-off of the process or system to the clients
- Monitor and measure project performance identifying areas for improvement.
- Attend conferences and training as required.
- Develop spreadsheets, diagrams, and process maps to document needs.
- Use and continually develop leadership skills.

### **Desired Competencies and Experience**

*[Modify the list to match your requirements]*

Successful candidates will have:

- [X+] years of related industry experience in project management.
- The ability to lead project teams of various sizes and see them through to completion.
- A strong understanding of formal project management methodologies.

- PMP certification.
- Solid organizational and attention to detail skills.
- Experience with process improvement and inventory control.
- Advanced time management and analytical skills.
- Proficiency working with {company's | operating system.
- Practical experience working with a variety of software applications.  
[List specific software]
- Practical experience working with a variety of hardware and services.  
[List specific hardware and services]
- The ability to solve complex problems with creative out-of-the-box thinking.
- The ability to perform, oversee, prioritize multiple complex tasks based on overall strategic goals.
- The proven ability to work independently and be self-motivated with minimal supervision and assistance.
- The ability to work within a fast-paced environment and be adaptable to change.
- A team player who collaborates effectively and can influence internal and external stakeholders.
- The ability to interact with multiple levels of the organization and facilitate communication across business units.
- Strong presentation and written/verbal communication skills.
- The ability to pass the background check, drug testing, and have a clean driving record.

## Education and Experience

Candidates for Project Manager must have a bachelor's degree in business management, computer science, information systems, or a similar study area. A Project Management Professional (PMP) or PRINCE2 certification a plus.

## Travel and Work Requirements

Occasional travel to other offices or educational conferences as required.

The nature of the position may occasionally require work to be performed outside regular business hours and on weekends. Employees may be allowed to work from home or other remote locations at their immediate supervisor's discretion.

## Benefits

*[Adjust for your situation]*

- Full-time position
- Competitive compensation with benefits
- Paid time off and paid holidays
- Remote friendly workplace
- Medical and dental insurance coverage
- Casual dress code
- Flexible schedule
- Free parking
- Currently operating under CDC guidance for COVID-19 risk mitigation

# VI. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND NOTES FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

## INTRODUCTION

Successful Project Managers are highly organized and meticulous in their attention to detail. They ensure that all details associated with tracking progress, measuring milestones, and achieving goals are accomplished.

The method used to track a project can be as important for some businesses as monitoring the project itself. Pressure, and the stress that comes with it, are just part of the project manager's job. The best candidates should reveal how they can, do, and will handle such stresses.

### Potential Interview Questions for Project Manager Candidates and Notes for the Interviewer

1. Can you tell me about a previous project you managed in our field/industry?
  - a) *Demonstrates the candidate's experience*
  - b) *Is experience in your industry essential for project success?*
  - c) *If they lack experience in your industry, can they describe how their experience transfers to your role?*
2. Tell me about the biggest mistake you ever made on a project?
  - a) *Mistakes are bound to occur, and every project has problems. How did the candidate rectify the problem?*
  - b) *What is the mistake?*
  - c) *Equally important, how did they correct the mistake?*
  - d) *Additionally, what did the candidate learn from the experience?*

### 3. How do you delegate team tasks?

- a) *For large projects, project managers could be working as part of a team, with work delegated across the team.*
- b) *Some projects require work to be delegated across cross-functional teams.*
- c) *How does the candidate determine who does the work? What is the priority? Which technical skills are needed? Who is most dependable? Personality fit? Team cohesiveness? Creative thinking?*
- d) *NOTE: What aspects are the best fit for your organization?*

### 4. Tell us about the most difficult ethical decision you have made on a project?

- a) *Demonstrates the candidate's experience*
- b) *Indicates awareness of the PMI Code of Ethics*
- c) *Look for references to responsibility, respect, fairness, and honesty.*
- d) *What was the ethical question, and how was it resolved?*

### 5. According to you, what is an essential skill for a Project Manager's success?

- a) *No correct answer, but several wrong answers.*
- b) *Look for references to leadership skills, communication skills, or time management skills.*
- c) *Strong candidates should be able to support their solutions with solid reasoning.*

**6. How do you start a newly assigned project?**

- a) A good project manager will first assess the project's goals before they do anything else. What is the purpose?*
- b) Then they will consider the best approach to completing a project.*
- c) They should examine personnel considerations after the first two steps.*

**7. How have you handled challenges to your decisions by either your colleagues or your manager?**

- a) Most experienced project managers have been challenged at some point. It is bound to happen during a project.*
- b) Consider "no" answers with skepticism.*

**8. How did they handle the situation? Were they able to take constructive criticism?**

- a) Did they stand up for themselves?*
- b) Did they share any frustration?*
- c) How did they resolve the situation?*

**9. How do you monitor and track project timelines?**

- a) Completing a project on time and budget is the primary responsibility of the Project Manager.*
- b) Be sure to note how the candidate monitors progress. They should always be measure progress against the plan.*
- c) How has the candidate handled project discrepancies?*
- d) How often does the candidate assess progress?*

**10. Can you give an example of how you communicated a failure to your team, manager, and customer?**

- a) Demonstrates the candidate's experience. At some point in a career, a project manager will fail to deliver a project on time and/or on budget.*
- b) The best way to communicate in these situations is in an in-person meeting or via teleconference.*
- c) The communication should be calm and systematic, expressed without panic or accusation of wrongdoing.*
- d) Communication should be based on finding solutions. Strong candidates should consider alternative paths or ideas to keep or get the project back on track.*

**11. Describe how you motivate the project team?**

- a) Learn about the candidate's people management skills.*
- b) Team motivation can be the key to the success of a project.*
- c) How are milestones noted? Public recognition? Team-building or social events?*
- d) Is extraordinary performance noted and celebrated? Bonuses? Incentives?*
- e) Is project performance reflected on annual employee evaluations?*

## VII. JOB AD: PROJECT MANAGER

[*Employer Branding*] Your ad should use language that describes your company culture and employer branding. Think about what would attract your ideal candidate. Develop benefit statements that emphasize why people want to work for your company. Focus on “What’s in it for them” so your ad stands out from the clutter.

[*Your company name*] seeks a Project Manager to plan, execute, and deliver projects on time, on budget, and according to business priorities. The ideal candidate possesses the leadership and communication skills to manage project teams and mitigate issues and risks.

Responsibilities include:

- Submitting project deliverables.
- Preparing status reports.
- Establishing effective project communication plans.
- Executing project plans in accordance with business priorities.

**Responsibilities [Modify this list to match your requirements]**

**The Project Manager will:**

- Define project scope and objectives.
- Determine needed resources to reach objectives and manage resources effectively and efficiently.
- Develop a budget based on project scope and resource requirements.
- Oversee and monitor project costs.
- Develop and manage a detailed project schedule and work plan.
- Meet with internal clients to further document project details and clarify specific requirements.
- Delegate project tasks based on the team's strengths, skill sets, and experience levels.
- Oversee and monitor project performance.

### **Successful candidates will have:**

- 5+ years of related industry experience in project management.
- The ability to lead project teams of various sizes and see them through to completion.
- A strong understanding of formal project management methodologies.
- PMP Certification.
- Solid organizational and attention to detail skills.

### **Education and Experience**

Candidates for Project Manager must have a bachelor's degree in business management, computer science, information systems, or equivalent area of study. Project Management Professional (PMP) and/or PRINCE2 certification is a plus.

For more information and to apply for the position, read the full job description.

# VIII. RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST



## 1. Kickoff: Define the position and process

- **Kickoff:** Set meeting or call with hiring manager and all internal and external stakeholders to fully understand the job and types of candidates desired.
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## 2. Update Job Description and Job Ads

- **Job Description:** Create or update description and ads, including remote work, safety, and benefits changes due to coronavirus. Incorporate your employer branding, including style and voice.
  - **“WIIFM?”:** “What’s in it for me?” Be very clear with candidates so your ad will stand out in the clutter of thousands of IT employment posts.
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## 3. Source candidates

Ensure you have a dedicated internal talent acquisition team or agency partner with the experience and time to focus on the IT position.

- **Source Passive Candidates:** Ads are not enough. Have a defined plan to source and engage passive candidates who are not looking at job ads.
  - **Reach Out to Previous Applicants:** Remember that #2 candidate, or the one who previously turned down the job?
  - **Use your employee referral program:** Tap into your existing workers’ networks. Make sure you have a robust incentive and process program in place if you want it to succeed.
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## 4. Screening and interviewing candidates

The tech market is still hot, and top talent won’t wait around to hear back from you. Most hiring breaks down because of delays in the interview processes and incomplete communication between the hiring manager and recruiting partners. Follow these tips:

- **Candidate Portal software:** Some applicant tracking systems have this built-in, and some recruiting partners (including Benchmark IT) can set up a portal for their clients. This keeps all candidates organized in one place online and avoids lost emails and delays.
- **Online Application:** Have a quick online application process that does not deter candidates.
- **Video Interview Tip Sheet:** Distribute helpful video guidelines and tips to internal managers and candidates to prepare for the best experience possible.
- **Standardize Interview Questions:** The nature of video interviews makes it difficult for both parties. Standardizing interview question enables you to compare apples to apples in the decision process, especially if various team members will be interviewing.
- **Schedule Feedback Session:** Verbal, prompt, and constructive feedback is KEY to filling a position quickly with a minimum of interviews. Schedule a feedback session with your TA/Recruiting team for the same or next day to promptly collect feedback.



## 5. Work with candidates throughout the process.

When conducting interviews, the number one rule is to respect the candidate and make sure they have a good experience, even if they aren't right for the role. Here's how to do that.

- **Be organized:** Interviews are as much about the candidate interviewing you and deciding if they want to work for your company, as it is about you choosing whether they are right for the role. You need to make a good impression.
- **Ghosting Not Allowed:** Don't interview a candidate and then never speak to them again or wait three months to get back to them. Actively stay engaged with top candidates as your interview process continues. Let them know if you're not ready to make a decision or requirements have changed. If you don't, not only will the top candidates have already taken another role, but they'll also likely tell people to avoid your company.



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## 6. Make an offer

Finally, you've got a winner. Now you have to make them an offer. Don't drag this out. These tips can help you stay organized and get your new hire on board as quickly as possible.

- **Present your complete compensation package:** Including cash and non-cash compensation and benefits. Be clear about your current and post-covid remote work opportunities.
- **Negotiate:** Be prepared for some back and forth before you agree. Leverage the experience of your TA professional or external recruiting partner who has been working most closely with the candidate.
- **Include employee onboarding information:** When making an offer, send some company information, such as the [employee handbook](#), schedule, and company culture. Make sure all information is updated and reflects current company COVID-19 policies and health safeguards.
- **Have a backup:** It might not work out with your first choice, so you need to have someone else in mind for the position. Keep the "next up" candidates apprised during the process. They will respect you for this. If you don't, they'll likely be gone or less interested, and you'll need to start the process all over again.