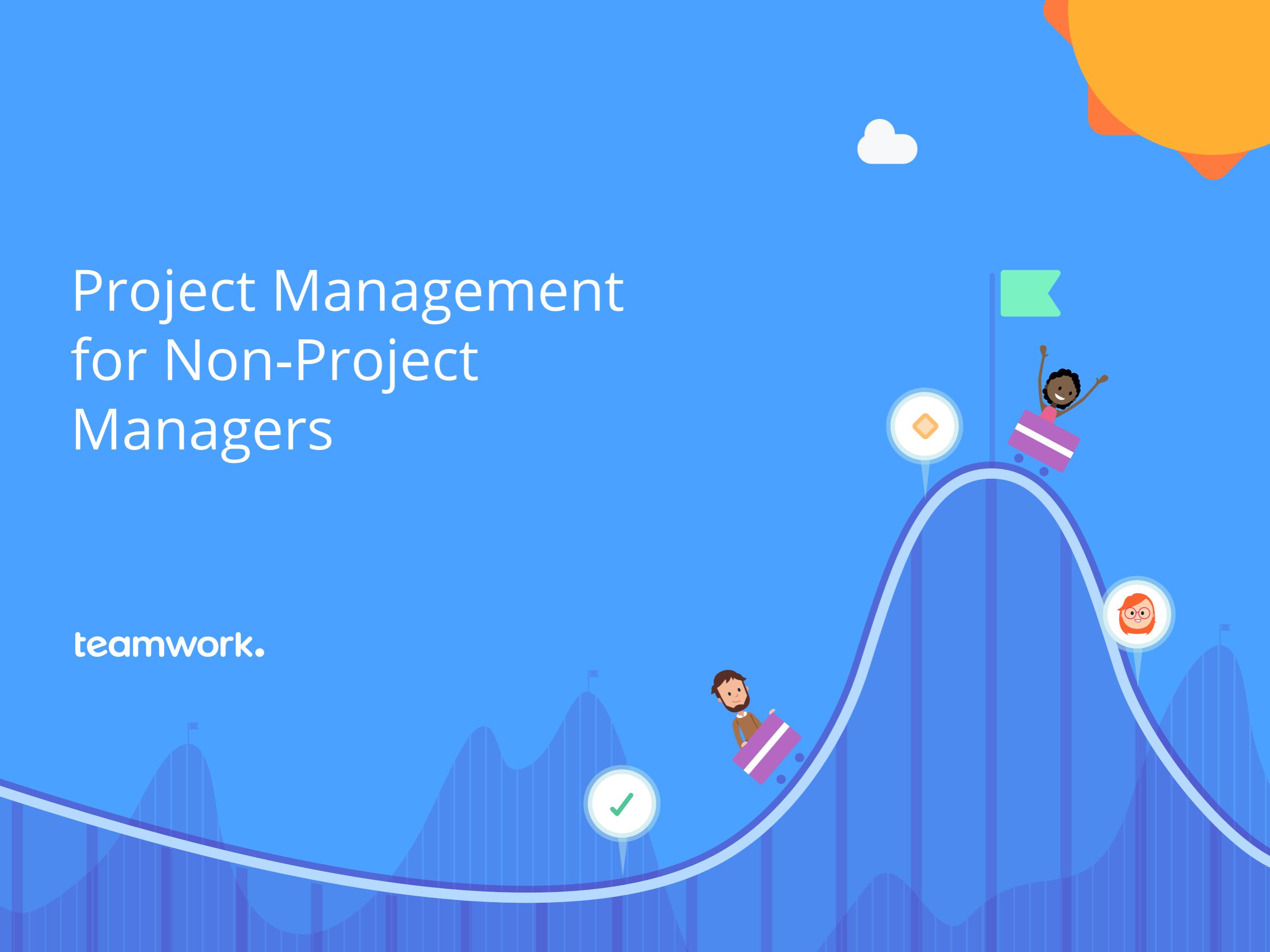


Project Management for Non-Project Managers

teamwork.



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No matter what your LinkedIn byline says, we're willing to bet that you're a project manager.

Maybe not a Project Manager in the official sense, but almost definitely someone who needs to manage projects on a daily basis.

When you need to coordinate work across a bunch of people to meet an ever-changing deadline, that's project management. When you need to deliver feedback from a client to your team and strategize how to implement the requested changes, that's project management. And when you need to coordinate a large-scale coffee run and make sure the right people get the right orders — well, that's not exactly project management, but it's close enough.

Projects are the future of work. We're seeing a reduction in old-school managerial hierarchies and an increase in people in mission-critical roles working together to Get Things Done.

As this current shift towards project-based work continues, the importance of skilled, competent people to manage these projects is (unsurprisingly) growing accordingly.

The Project Management Institute estimates that by 2027, employers around the world will need 87.7 million individuals working in project management-oriented roles. They also predict a potential loss of \$207.9 billion in GDP across the 11 countries analyzed if this need goes unmet.

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With a projected need to fill 2.2 million new project-oriented roles around the world annually until 2027, one thing becomes abundantly clear: there are a lot of projects that need to be managed. (Like, a lot.)

“But,” you may cry, “that’s 2027! It’s so far into the future it’s practically a Blade Runner sequel. What about the present?”

According to that same PMI report, the demand for project managers has been growing more rapidly than the demand for skilled workers in other occupations.

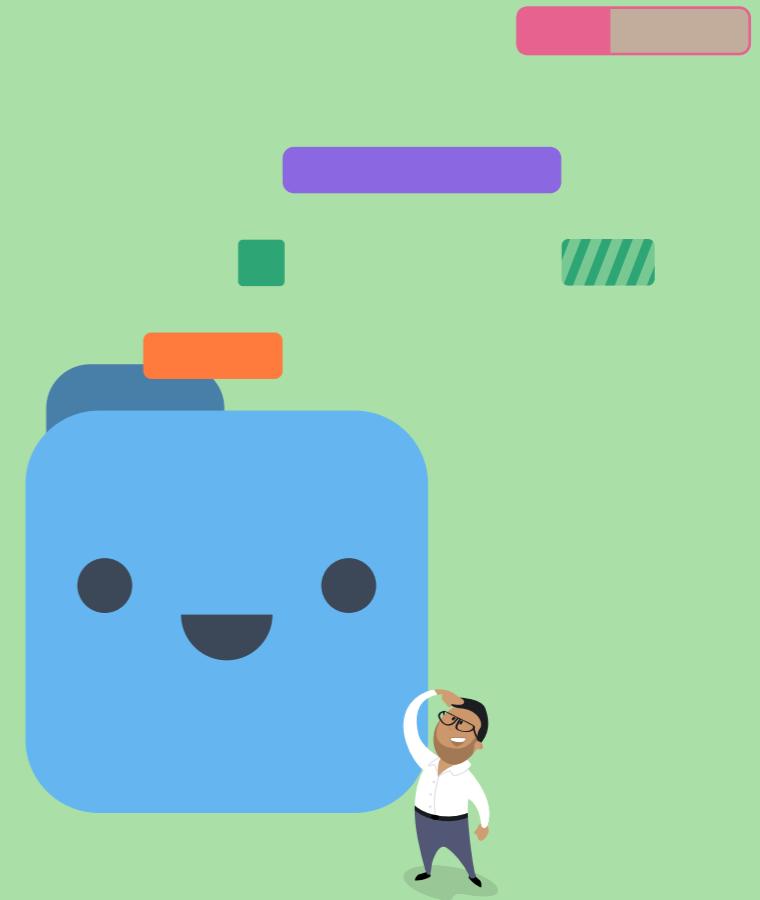
It’s no surprise that the skills that project managers bring to the table — impeccable communication, emotional intelligence, confident leadership, strategic problem-solving, and an otherworldly aptitude for organization and time-management — are in demand.

So as more and more people who never set out to become project managers are finding themselves in the business of managing projects, we wanted to know: how can you become a better project manager, even if you’re not a Project Manager?

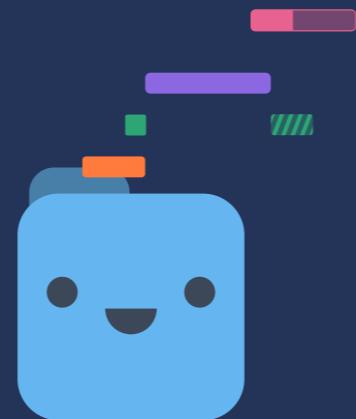
Everything You
Always Wanted
to Know
About Project
Management*

(*But Were Afraid to Ask)

teamwork.



Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Project Management



Okay, not *everything*; more like Some Things You'll Hopefully Find Helpful When You Need to Decide How to Manage a Project. There are a number of different project management methodologies, philosophies, and techniques, each with a devoted fanbase. It can be hard to know which method is right for you and your project.

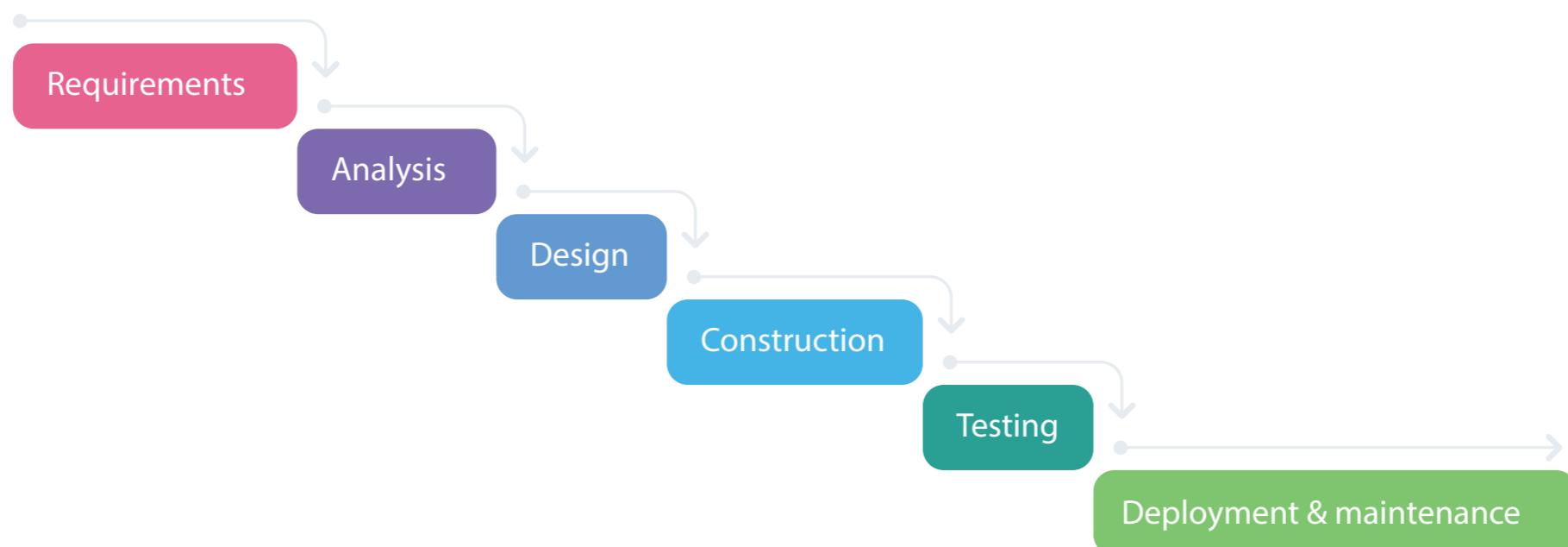
Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Project Management

- Two of the most influential project management methodologies are Waterfall and Agile. The Waterfall methodology is especially popular in long-established industries like construction and manufacturing, while Agile and other adaptive approaches have come into prominence in newer industries like software development.

Here's a quick primer, with some key takeaways from both.

Waterfall methodology

- The Waterfall method is a traditional approach to project management.
- In it, tasks and phases are completed in a linear, sequential manner, and each stage of the project must be completed before the next begins.
- The Waterfall stages would generally follow this sequence:



Progress flows in one direction, like a real waterfall.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Project Management

- Also like a real waterfall, though, this can quickly get dangerous. Since everything is mapped out at the beginning, there's a lot of room for error if expectations don't match up with reality. There's no going back to a previous stage once it's completed (just imagine trying to swim against a waterfall — not fun).
- This also means that costs can quickly spiral if you hit unforeseen circumstances or delays. And even if the project was perfectly mapped out and executed according to plan, if a client changes their mind during the process — or is unhappy with the finished product — it's often too late to course-correct.

The rigidity of the Waterfall methodology is a large part of the reason why its popularity has waned in recent years, particularly in favor of more flexible Agile methods (more on them shortly). But there are still a number of benefits to the Waterfall method.

- Here are some of the reasons people choose Waterfall:

It's structured and logical

The Waterfall method gives you a clear path from A to B to C. Its sequential nature means it's intuitive and easy to follow.

It's well thought out

Because it begins with extensive and thorough planning, the Waterfall method can preempt problems before they become problems, helping you to avoid any nasty surprises and saving you time and money down the line.

It emphasizes process rather than people

Since your project needs to be highly structured and thoroughly tracked, the Waterfall method requires clear guidelines and documentation. This means that it's easy to loop in new people at any stage as necessary, which is particularly useful in the case of new team members or key employee turnover.

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Try Waterfall if:

- The end goal of your project is clearly defined.
- The client knows exactly what they want, and isn't likely (or able) to change their mind mid-process.
- Your project is consistent and predictable.
- You're working in a regulated industry that needs extensive project tracking or documentation.
- You might need to bring new employees into the project midway through.

Agile methodology

- The Agile method came from a growing dissatisfaction with the linear approach of Waterfall. Frustrated with the limitations of a project management schema that couldn't adapt with a project as it progressed, the focus began to shift to more iterative models that allowed teams to revise their project as needed during the process instead of having to wait until the end to review and amend.
- One of the key elements is that teams should be small (maxing out at 8-12 people) and self-organizing, with a leader (or "Scrum Master") who helps to facilitate the project and liaises between internal and external stakeholders.
- The Scrum Master (who is not the same as the Project Manager) is decided based on the individual project at hand and the assembled team members' skill sets, and changes with each project.
- The team also includes — or has access to — a key decision maker, so that no time is lost waiting for projects to move through lengthy approval processes. Instead, the team is empowered to make their own decisions where possible.

- The main reasons people opt for an Agile approach are:

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It's collaborative

Agile teams work in small, self-organized groups and rely on continual communication to foster productive collaboration. Usually, teams will have a quick daily stand-up meeting (also known as a “daily scrum”) where each team member reports on their progress and sets goals for the upcoming day. Having these tighter-knit, more communicative teams empowers each team member to feel like an active participant in the process — not just a drone following orders.

It's quick

The project is split into short cycles, or “sprints.” These are defined time periods (usually 1-2 weeks) in which to accomplish a pre-planned chunk of work. At the end of every sprint, the team reviews their performance before starting the next sprint with any necessary changes in place. This means that decisions are made rapidly, tested immediately, and reviewed quickly, with any learnings reflected in future iterations.

- **It's open to (data-driven) change**

The Agile method prides itself on getting feedback at every stage of the process. One way this is done is through constant dialogue with the client, which allows them to ensure the project is meeting their expectations and gives the team scope to course-correct if needed.

Another way of getting feedback is through frequent testing. As well as giving the team concrete data about what's working and what's not, this also means that any unforeseen issues can be caught early, instead of unearthing a huge problem at the very end of the project and struggling — too late — to amend it.

- Try Agile if:
 - Your project is liable to change.
 - You're not sure at the outset what the solution will look like.
 - You need to work quickly, and it's more important that you see speedy progress than perfect results.
 - Your client needs (or wants) to be involved at every stage.

Hybrid methods

- Since there are pros and cons to both traditional and adaptive approaches, many project managers choose to adopt elements from both methods to suit their own requirements. This can take the form of using different techniques within different departments, or perhaps at different stages of progress, or maybe one method is snuggled inside another, like nesting dolls.

For example, your overall project might be loosely planned using Waterfall, but the software development component of your project might use Agile. Or maybe you might decide to incorporate continuous testing into your Waterfall process.

Purists often suggest that you need to fully commit to one method or another, instead of muddying the water with partial adoption. But the reality is more complicated. It depends on a number of factors, ranging from company culture to the specifics of the project to the team involved.

Things to consider when choosing how to manage your project

- There are lots of factors that will impact which method of project management is right for your project. Here's a quick reminder of some of the key considerations that can help you decide:

- **Cost and budget**

On a scale of \$ to \$\$\$, what sort of budget are you working with? Is there room for that to change if necessary, or is it essential that it stays within predetermined limits?

- **Team size**

How many people are involved? How many stakeholders? Is your team relatively compact and self-organizing, or more sprawling, with a need for more rigorous delegation?

- **Ability to take risks**

Is this a huge project with a big impact that needs to be carefully managed in order to deliver Very Serious Results? Or is it a smaller-scale project with a bit more room to play around?

- **Flexibility**

Is there room for the scope of the project to change during the process?
What about the finished product?

- **Timeline**

How much time is allotted to deliver on the brief? Do you need a quick turnaround, or is it more important that you have a beautifully finished result, no matter how long it takes?

- **Client collaboration**

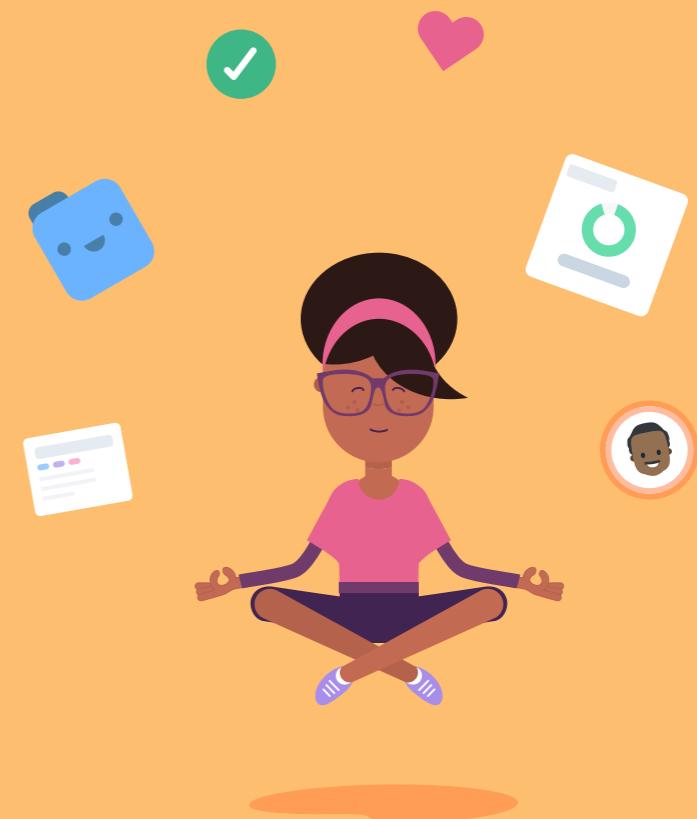
How involved does the client need — or want — to be in the process?
How involved do you need — or want — them to be?

Once you've decided on the best way to manage your project, the next step is to manage it in the best way. And for that, we need to borrow some tips from the pros.

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The Traits of Great Project Managers

teamwork.



The Traits of Great Project Managers



Being a great project manager is about more than just having the right certifications. Having a project management qualification like PMP or PRINCE2 is great — and clearly reflects the time, commitment, and dedication someone has given to their profession — but, more and more, the emphasis is shifting from qualifications to skills and experience. **Here are three traits that successful project managers have in common, and what you can learn from them.**

Emotionally intelligent

- Managing a project, by its very nature, is always going to involve managing people. (At least until the robots take over.) And managing people is complex. That's why emotional intelligence is one of the most important traits a project manager can have.
- Emotional intelligence is more than just people skills. It's about correctly understanding and managing emotions — both your own and those of others — and treating those emotions with significance and value.

In this way, people with high emotional intelligence (EI) can use their ability to read, harness, and interpret emotions to cultivate better working environments, clearer communication, and more empathetic relationships.

This is a huge benefit when managing a project, a process which relies heavily on navigating complicated interpersonal dynamics. Successful project management has elements of team-building, relationship management, conflict resolution, facilitation, and negotiation, all of which require empathy, compassion, and emotional perceptiveness.

The Traits of Great Project Managers

- The good news is that emotional intelligence is something that can be constantly improved. There are lots of ways to do this. One way is to try to tune in to your feelings without judging them. How do you really feel right now? Can you pinpoint any external or internal reasons for feeling that way? Do you notice that you behave — or communicate — differently when you feel a certain way?

Your emotions can affect your decision making, so being conscious of your own emotional state helps you to make more deliberate choices for your project.

It may sound simple, but taking a moment to honestly engage with your emotions without judgement can be incredibly enlightening — and radically transform how you work with others.

Your emotions can affect your decision making, so being conscious of your own emotional state helps you to make more deliberate choices for your project.

Great communicators

- Being emotionally intelligent is one thing, but you also need to be able to translate your understanding of emotions into language that makes everyone feel heard and respected. That's why great project managers also need to be great communicators.

Good communication is essential no matter what business you're in, but as a project manager you'll need to connect with multiple people every day, at different levels of your organization, and with varying levels of involvement (and let's be honest, maybe even interest) in your project.

That means that you need to be able to communicate effectively in a multitude of different ways and media, depending on what the situation requires. On any given day, you might be informing authoritatively, explaining clearly, listening empathetically, brainstorming strategically, mediating compassionately, praising thoughtfully, or any other number of present tense verb + adjective combos.

Communication can often feel like a skill that you either have or you don't, but just like EI, it can be built up over time. Strategy Execution, a company that specializes in organizational training, [breaks good PM communication down](#) into four levels: content; procedure and structure; interactions and behavior; and feelings and emotions.

The Traits of Great Project Managers

- Content is the topic of your communication, e.g. the facts and tasks that need to be done.
- Procedure and structure is the process of how the project will get done, such as the time and sequence of how things will work.
- Interactions and behavior is about setting the tone for how team members work together.
- Finally, feelings and emotions bring in the EI we just talked about, and make sure that your team feels supported.

To be a truly great project communicator, you need to hit all four levels.

Plot twist!

What you say is only one aspect of how you communicate; how you say it is just as important. [One study by the PMI](#) notes that only 7% of our communication is comprised of “content,” while the other 93% is made up of factors like vocal delivery and body language. So be conscious of how your body talks — even when your mouth is closed.

Organized and adaptable

- Project managers seem to have a preternatural ability to stay on target, on track, and on top of everything. The level of organization required can seem daunting if you're not the kind of person who organizes their personal bookshelf using the Dewey Decimal system (albeit thrilling if you are).
- Luckily, there are a lot of techniques and tools out there to help you manage everything each step of the way.

Unsurprisingly, using project management tools can dramatically improve your project management (who knew!), by streamlining communications, providing transparency and accountability, and helping you to break your overall strategy down into achievable tasks and milestones.

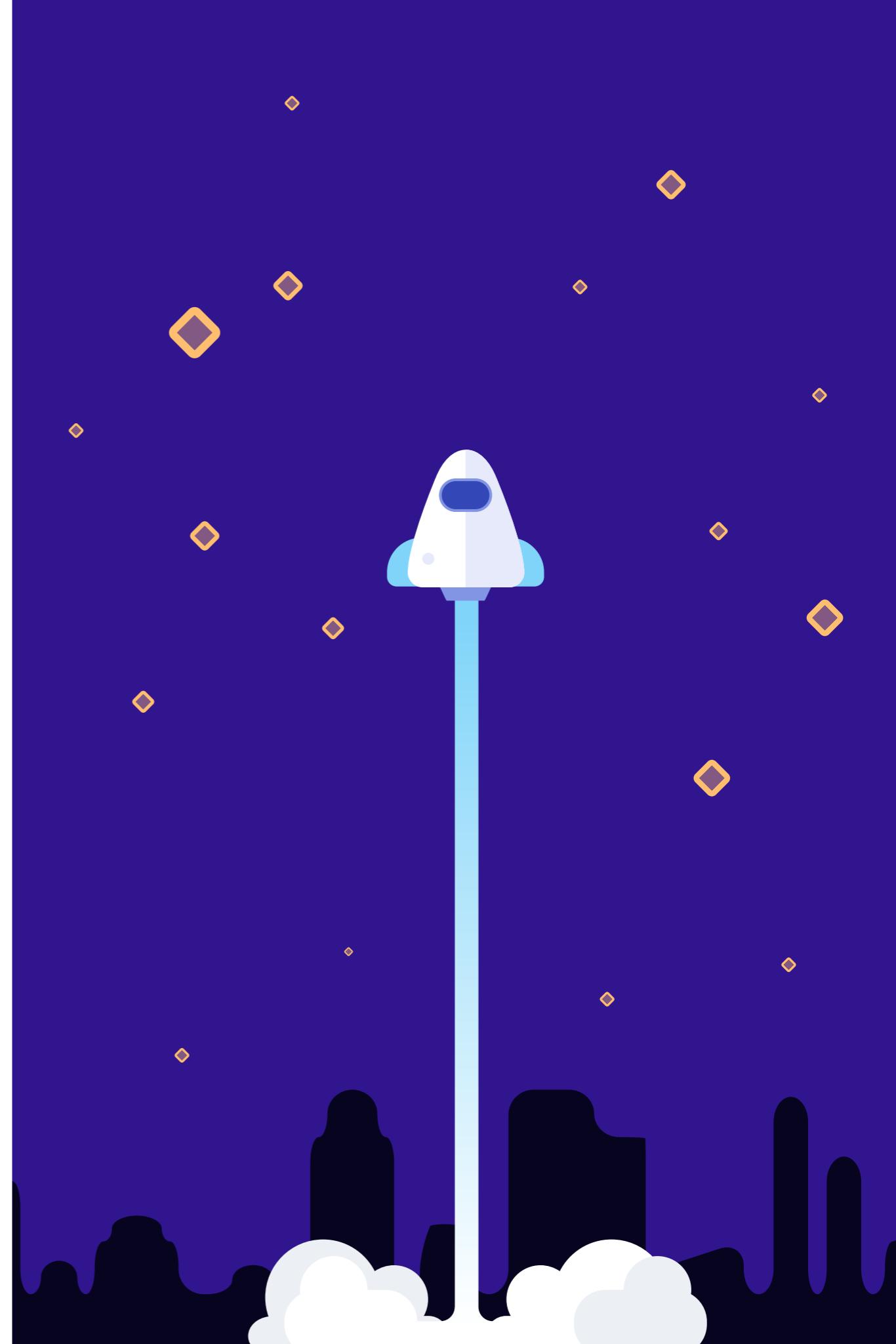
Having one central hub for all of your team's work also means that nothing falls between the cracks. It gives you full visibility of your upcoming deadlines and each team member's workload, which further helps you to preempt any roadblocks before they happen.





The Future of Project Management

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The Future of Project Management



We can't predict the future. (We know; we're disappointed in us, too.) But, as the field of project management continues to change, we think there are a few things to start thinking about now that will give you an edge later (and now).

Integrating change management

- So you have a project. It goes beautifully.
Woo! What next?
- Managing a project can be a bit like baking a cake: you bring all of the ingredients together, mix them up, and create something new, using science or witchcraft (experts still don't understand how baking works).
- Projects involve change. Historically, project management has focused on the status of the project as it moves towards completion. Change management, on the other hand, is about empowering people to adapt to, and with, the changes brought about as a result of your project or other organizational change. That is, if project management focuses on the what, change management focuses on the who.

It makes sense that the two would go hand in hand. That's why the best project managers think ahead to prepare and empower those whose daily work will be affected by the outcomes of their project.

Successful change management will assess the readiness of the organization for the incoming change, organize training and development where necessary, coordinate uptake at a leadership level, handle resistance, and positively reinforce the change overall.

- So how can you begin to integrate change management into the way you manage your project?
- Start by making it clear that the change is necessary, and then outlining the benefits of the change — as well as the risks of not implementing it. Make sure that you provide clear information that explains the whys and the hows of the incoming change. This transparency is critical, as misinformation can become one of the biggest sources of resistance.
- One of the most important steps you can take is identifying who will be most affected by your project and in what ways. Once you've done this, you can then build the necessary support for them into your Big Picture Plan for your project. This might include specialized training, workshops, mentoring programs, coaching, or building out a library of resources.
- Make sure to check in with those most affected often throughout the process. Support isn't just organizational — by providing emotional support too, you can help to ease adoption and reinforce the change, resulting in a smoother process for everyone.

Managing remote teams

- As we begin to branch out and terraform other planets, remote teams will become ever more normal. Whereas just a decade ago, having even one remote team member was unusual, now it's not uncommon to have to manage fully remote teams across different time zones, countries, or even continents.

Working with remote employees has heaps of benefits. It allows you to source the best talent no matter where in the world they're situated; bring together different viewpoints, which adds diversity and helps you to localize for specific markets; and provides more flexibility.

But managing remote teams also comes with its own set of challenges. It can be hard to get team members engaged and build their trust. Communication and conflict resolution can be more complicated. And, in terms of the actual project deliverables, it can be difficult to monitor progress on the work that needs to get done.

It's nothing that a thoughtful project manager can't take in their stride. There are a few key things you can do at the outset to help build team morale and keep everyone on track.

If you can bring everyone together to meet face to face at the beginning of the project, excellent! If not, using video calls to communicate (instead of simply audio or text) helps everyone to get to know each other better and eases conversation.

- It's also important that you set up processes at the outset and stick to them as much as possible. When you're working with remote team members, building a reliable routine is essential.
- That's why you should have regular team meetings and check-ins at least once a week, all with set agendas. This can be as simple as a 15-minute "stand-up" every morning in which each team member updates the team on what they're working on and their goals for the coming day. Giving team members an insight into what their colleagues are working on helps to keep the team in sync, and gives everyone an opportunity to ask for input if they're struggling.

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The Future of Project Management

- As the project manager, it's just as important that you consider the individuals as well as the team. At the beginning, try to get to know each team member personally, so you can get a sense of their strengths and how they like to work.

This will be invaluable down the line when you're assigning tasks or resolving conflict. You might find that one person on the team might need more encouragement, while another might get stressed if they're given last-minute deadlines. Knowing in advance helps you to plan efficiently.

Finally, to help your team collaborate effectively, you need the right tools. Everyone needs to have access to the right data to empower them to work independently. The last thing you want is for someone to have to wait 12 hours every time they need information because the only person with access to it is on the other side of the world — or for them to embark on a task using outdated information.

Using project management software means that everyone has access to the resources they need, and provides clarity and transparency on key decisions by keeping them all in one place.

Once you get your remote team on the same page — literally and metaphorically — you'll be able to work better, together.

Go forth and manage projects!

- So there you have it. Even if you're not a Project Manager, borrowing from project management to help you manage your projects is a no-brainer.

- By adopting the skills, techniques, tools, and approaches outlined here, you can transform how work gets done, all while creating a productive, happy working environment for your team (no matter where in the world they're located).

Here's to beautifully-managed projects!

teamwork.

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