

Functional Management

While project management is a great career, sometimes it's good to get some experience outside of a project environment to better understand how the business works and to broaden your exposure to different teams. Taking a functional job is one way to do this, especially if you don't have line management experience – it's a good way to get some experience of what being a line manager is like. It's a very different role to project management, but it can be very rewarding. You'll be involved with sorting out daily issues, staff satisfaction, and the 'admin' that comes with running a team such as organizing vacations, dealing with staff sickness and performance appraisals.

Essentially, you'll be doing a 'business as usual' job that doesn't have a start, middle and an end like a project. It's a different business environment with different demands, but that doesn't make it less valuable to the organization. In fact, it's a good idea for everyone to get some experience outside of projects at some point in their career as it helps you appreciate other business challenges.

Remember, if you want to return to project management, you can always do that afterwards.

Additional Training



If you aren't quite ready to change your job, what about taking on some additional training or studying for a project management credential? This can be an equally valuable way to increase your marketability and to show your employer that you are serious about committing to project, program or portfolio management as your career.

There is a whole range of project management qualifications to choose from, covering everything from entry level certificates to specialist management credentials in risk or scheduling. And of course, there are also many general business qualifications and degrees available to you, like a Bachelor degree or an MBA.



Training is great as it keeps your skills up-to-date and is also a good way to recharge your batteries outside of the office. You'll meet new people and hopefully come back to work fully energized and ready to put your new skills into practice.

What is the course content is going to cover? This is probably the most important criteria, as you really need to find a course that matches your requirements. There is no point sitting through a general project management course if you particularly want to brush up your risk management skills. Look at the course outline and see if you can talk to other delegates about what they learned when they attended.

Also consider what resources you will have in the classroom. For example, if you are learning about scheduling or expense management, will they have the best project management software for the job available for you to use to practice on?

Finally, consider whether the course will lead to a qualification or credential. Some won't and you'll learn the course content and go home. Some will give you their own certificate of attendance, which can be a useful way to claim professional development units (PDUs) to keep your professional credentials up- to-date.

Build Your Self-Confidence as a Project Manager



Having a bit of a crisis of confidence? It happens to us all, especially when we start out in our careers. Project management is a very challenging job at all times, and it often involves working with people who are a lot more experienced and expert than you are. So it isn't surprising that sometimes project managers feel as if they don't know what they are doing and that they don't have confidence in their own abilities.

While you might not be able to help feeling like that, you can do something about it! Here are some tricks to build your self-confidence as a project manager.

Know the Facts

One of the things that make you feel less confident is being caught off-guard when someone talks to you about the project. "How's the budget performing?" they say, or: "Do you believe you'll deliver on time?" That's a lot of data to hold in your head, and you'll feel more confident if you have the facts about your project at your fingertips. Then regardless of what someone asks you, you'll have the information available.

The smartest way to do this is with a project dashboard as this gives you a visual, real-time view of what is happening on the project. You can see everything from one screen so it's easy to check each morning. Make it a habit and you'll soon find that you can memorize a lot of project data which will help when your project sponsor asks for an update.

Practice!



Sometimes lack of confidence comes from lack of skills. The more you practice risk management, for example, the better you will feel about doing it. So don't put off the more tricky aspects of project management because you don't believe you can do them properly. Make time in your day (and give yourself extra time if you think you'll need it) to work on those areas that you are least confident in.

Another reason to practice is because not preparing enough for meetings and presentations can also leave you feeling out of your depth. If you are going to a project team meeting or project board meeting make sure you have reviewed the agenda, planned what you are going to say, know where you are going and who is going to be there and have a template available to capture the minutes. The more preparation you do, the easier you will find it. And next time it will be easier still!

Use Confident Body Language

Have you heard the phrase 'fake it till you make it?' It doesn't mean pretend to be someone else, but it does imply that there are some things you can do to convince others that you are more confident than perhaps you feel inside. And once you have put on that cloak of confidence, you'll come to believe it yourself as well!

Body language is a good way to start. Sit up tall, don't fold your arms, smile and use the body language that a confident person would (look at other people who you admire at work and see how they hold themselves for a few tips). Eventually, you'll feel more confident just because you are standing and sitting in a more confident way.

Sort Out Your Wardrobe

Don't be undermined by the clothes you wear. The general rule is to dress for the position you want, not the position you are in, so make sure that your clothes are in good repair and suitable for your workplace environment.

If you turn up to a meeting in tatty jeans, a T-shirt with a slogan on and sneakers, you are bound to feel less confident if the rest of the room is made up of smartly dressed people.

Set Achievable Goals

GOAL SETTING

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Timely



Your confidence can take a knock if you are faced with a massive task, especially if you don't think you can do it. Build your confidence slowly by breaking the task down into smaller chunks. Make each one of these a small, achievable goal. As you complete each one you'll feel more confident in your abilities. And you will slowly be working towards completing the big, overall task as well.

Keep a task list of what you need to do – it's really satisfying to be able to tick things off and know that they were completed efficiently!

You Are Not Alone

Remember, you are not alone – everyone has dips in their self-confidence from time to time. If you don't believe me, look for others in the same situation as you. Online forums are great for this, especially if you would rather confess your worries anonymously. Find a group where you can share your professional concerns. It's often easier to talk to people outside your current company as then you don't have to worry about gossip getting back to your project team and sponsor.

Find a Mentor

A mentor is another good way to boost your self-confidence. They can work with you on areas where you feel particularly weak (both personal skills and technical project management skills). Having someone to talk to is a huge advantage and will really help. If your company has a formal scheme, sign up to that. Otherwise check out professional groups in your area or ask around internally for someone who could mentor you on a more information basis.

Project management is a worthwhile and rewarding career, whatever level you are at and whatever your current experience. There are plenty of opportunities for career growth, whether that is through study, taking on more responsibility at your current company or moving firms to a new role elsewhere. Only you will know where you want to be in 5 years' time and what the best options are for you, but no one else will manage your career. So it's down to you to work out where you want to go next and once you've done that – go for it!

Md Kamal Hossain, IEng (EC, UK) | MIES, MRINA, SNAMEs, MIMarEST

DME 21st Intake – BIMT | SMENA – Singapore Maritime Academy | B.Eng. (Hons)-UGS, UK

Project Manager - Global Offshore & Marine, Singapore | enr.kamal@ies.org.sg

©www.kamalhossain.net