7 skills to look for in a Project Manager

Being a Project Manager (PM) is a unique and demanding position. When recruiting for this position, the biggest challenge can sometimes be finding the right combination of experience and skills. Here are the top abilities we see hiring managers requesting in a Project Manager (in no particular order).

1. Communication skills. The Project Management Institute (PMI) says 90% of a PM's time is spent communicating. They must be able to explain a project in layman's terms and tailor the message to the audience. A solid PM asks good questions, maintains relationships with the team and ensures the team keeps business goals in mind. Remember: many projects succeed or fail based on communication.

2. Planning/organizational skills. Not only does the PM need to know *how* to communicate, but *when*. Laying out a communication/project plan and sticking to it is crucial. This entails prioritizing tasks, neatly documenting everything for future reference and ensuring information is easily accessible to everyone on the project.

3. Remote work management. A PM needs to engage with project resources, sponsors and anyone else who can contribute to the project's success. A good PM must adapt to working remotely. Video calls help to ensure people feel connected, so mastering the art of Zoom or Teams is a desirable skill. And with many organizations shifting to remote or hybrid work, this skill will continue to be relevant.

4. Project Management Professional (PMP) certification(s). For many PM roles, a PMP certification is required. Even if it's not, candidates with their PMP are masters of their trade. Per the PMI, there are almost 1 million PMP certification holders worldwide. But earning these certifications is no walk in the park. It takes time, commitment and a lot of hard work. Depending on the position, it should not be the be-all-end-all, though.

5. Agile experience. Some companies still use the Waterfall methodology to manage projects. But Agile is starting to dominate. And a myth about Agile is that it's just for software developers. Agile is all about adaptivity in a world of high uncertainty – from rapidly changing technology and increasingly complex solutions to the changing business environment. And being able to work in that type of environment is imperative for a PM.

6. Innovative thinker. Today's PM environment requires creativity and innovation to develop truly leading-edge products. An over-emphasis on planning and control can stifle creativity and innovation, so your PM can't just be a box checker. A truly good PM brings new ideas to the table, thinks ahead and can innovate, not just manage a project to manage a project.

7. Development background (in an IT environment). While not a must-have, finding a PM that has some development knowledge can be a huge advantage. In tech, a majority of projects revolve around some type of development. So, if your PM knows basic developer lingo, how the process works and basic concepts, the project will go that much smoother.