

Project Management Series

SPOTLIGHT ON PM IN SMALLER COMPANIES



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Education: MBA (2018), iBBA (2015) – MUN

Experience: Laura has held roles in technical support, information technology, client success, business analysis and quality management in the telecommunications, oil and gas, and technology industries. She has worked in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, and has been responsible for projects involving software development, IT infrastructure and process changes, customer implementations and improving corporate systems and processes. Laura received her PMP certification in 2019 and recently completed her Lean Six Sigma Black Belt certification.



LAURA TURNER, MBA, PMP.

LET'S TALK ABOUT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Tell me how you first got involved with project management. What was your first impression?

My first involvement was about 15 years ago when I was a technical resource for projects at the telecom where I worked. I admired the project managers and thought it would be a cool job because you get to be involved in so many different things in the company. I eventually moved into the role of technical business analyst and then an IT change manager, where I began managing projects on a small scale, and my responsibilities increased from there.

What do you love about being a project manager? What parts of project management do you find challenging?

I love working with so many people from all the different functional areas. There is a lot of variety and a lot of different people to talk to and work with. You can see how the tactical work of the project directly contributes to the strategic organizational objectives, which is very motivating for me.

One thing that is challenging for me is when the resources on my project do not report directly to me, then I do not have control over their time allocation. It can be difficult trying to deliver on a project with a matrix-leadership style because you have to negotiate with the other functional managers and advocate for your project's objective. It can be done, absolutely, but it can be a bit tricky and challenging.

How important is project management to radiant360? What role does it play?

At radiant360 there are project managers who deliver projects directly to clients, and project managers who are overseeing

operational or infrastructure advancements. In my role, managing corporate quality, I manage continuous improvement projects. These roles are very important to radient360. There is no official Project Management Office (PMO) function, and that is common in smaller companies, but project management is an absolutely critical part of the radient360 business model.

In your opinion, what does the future of project management look like?

I think project management will continue to be integrated into other functions within the organization. As many of the tech startups continue to mature, they will want to embed more continuous improvement structures into their operations and the skills of a project manager are going to be essential. I think project management abilities are important at all levels of leadership, and that these skills will be desirable when recruiting for all levels of management.

What would you say to someone who is considering pursuing a career in project management?

It is a useful skill to develop because there are so many applications of project management skills in so many roles. To qualify to sit for the PMP exam, you need to demonstrate that you have experience as a project manager. This experience can vary, which I think is an important message; projects in your personal life like volunteer work or experience on project teams, even without the title of project manager, are considered applicable by PMI. I have never actually held the title of project manager, even though I have fulfilled that role in many of my positions. So I would say, go for it, there is a lot of flexibility and it is absolutely attainable.

THE FIVE PROCESS GROUPS OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

“When you have a loosely defined project management office, it is even more critical to have project management skills.”

1. Initiating:

In bigger companies where there is a formally defined PMO, you may have an office or director to go to, but in smaller companies, when you may not have the title of project manager, you may have a harder time defining your project charter and getting clarity on strategic objectives for your project. You may need to seek expert judgment from people

who know your organizational strategy and who can help you develop some measurable objectives and success criteria for your project, using negotiation and documentation skills to form a charter. Leadership skills are very important in these roles that are more loosely defined.

2. Planning:

In many situations, there may be a set tool like Microsoft Project, but in other cases, there is not. You need to think about how you are going to do a work breakdown structure. There are free tools out there like GanttProject, and you can use them to build your skills. If you have an opportunity in your personal life, like a project for a charity or sports team, you can try out these free tools and build your skills.

3. Executing:

I mentioned the matrix style earlier, and how important leadership skills are. When you are directing and managing project work, leadership is even more important when the project is loosely defined. You need to use them to keep your project team motivated and actively contributing.

4. Monitoring and Control:

Regular communication is important, even when there is no defined structure for it, so you need to build good communication skills.

5. Closing:

Documentation and being able to demonstrate that you have met the success criteria is sometimes tough with informal structure, but always important.

“Work on these skills, get experience and practice when you can. take some courses. look to your network and community for tips. make your own project plan to be a pm – you will get there!”

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