

# The 100

## Project Management Interview Questions

You'll Most Likely  
Be Asked...

And The Answers  
That Will Get  
You Hired

By John Strange



# **The 100 Project Management Interview Questions You'll Most Likely Be Asked... *And The Answers That Will Get You Hired!***

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# Table of Contents

## CLASSIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<a href="#">Please Describe Yourself and Your Background Briefly .....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Why Are You Interested In This Role? .....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Why Do You Want to Work With Us? .....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Tell me What You Know About This Company? .....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Why Did You Leave Your Last Job? .....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Why Should We Hire You? .....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Do You Have Any Questions? .....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>

## CHARACTER QUESTIONS

<a href="#">How Do You Handle Office Politics? .....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Tell Me About A Time When You Had Two Key Stakeholders With Opposing Views. How Did You Manage That? .....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">How Do You Deal With Rude Clients? .....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Have You Ever Had A Conflict With Your Boss? How Was It Resolved? .....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">What Do You Think Are Your Greatest Strengths? .....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">What Are Your Weaknesses? .....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">What Are The Three Words That Describe You Best? .....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">How Would Those You Have Worked With Previously Describe You? .....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">What Motivates You To Do Your Best On The Job? .....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">How Are You When You're Working Under Pressure? .....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Tell Us Something About Your Hobbies .....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">What Projects Do You Not Want To Work On? .....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">What Kinds Of Projects Interest You The Most? Why? .....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">What Do You Spend The Most Time Doing Each Day? .....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Where Do You See Yourself In Five Years? .....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">What Challenges Are You Looking For In This Position? .....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">For How Long Do You Expect To Stay With Our Organization .....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>

## LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

<u>Do You Prefer To Work Independently Or On A Team? .....</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>How Do You Motivate A Team? .....</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>Have You Ever Encountered Team Members Who Struggled To Complete Their Tasks? Explain How You Handled That Situation .....</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>How Do You Handle Insubordination, Team Infighting, And/or Poor Team Communication? .....</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>How Would You Describe Your Communication And Leadership Style? .....</u>	<u>29</u>
<u>Describe Your Management Style .....</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Explain How You Would Achieve Consensus While Keeping the Project On Track.....</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>Describe How You Recently Managed A Diverse Project Team Towards A Common Goal .....</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>How Do You Ensure Your Team Stays On Track To Meet Project Deadlines? .....</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>What Was Your Most Important Contribution To Your Last Team? .....</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>How Do You Evaluate Whether Or Not The Team Is On Track? .....</u>	<u>35</u>

## COMPETENCY QUESTIONS

<u>You Managed The Project Work As Per Requirements. However, The Customer Is Not Happy With The Result And Does Not Accept The Product. How Would You Convince The Customer?.....</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>How Do You Deal With Gold Plating In Your Project?.....</u>	<u>37</u>
<u>How Do You Handle Missing A Deadline? .....</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>How Would You Deal With A Situation Where Your Project Is Running Behind Because The Resource You've Booked Is Being Used By Another Urgent Project? .....</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>How Do You Turn Around A Project That Isn't Going As Planned?.....</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>When Every Task Is Urgent, How Do You Determine What To Prioritize? .....</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>How Will You Gain And Keep The Support Of Your Project Sponsors? .....</u>	<u>42</u>
<u>What Was Your Greatest Success As A Project Manager?.....</u>	<u>43</u>
<u>What Was Your Biggest Failure As A Project Manager?.....</u>	<u>44</u>
<u>What Do You Consider The Most Difficult Aspect Of Project Management? .....</u>	<u>45</u>
<u>Share A Challenging Situation That You Experienced While Working On A Project. How Did You Deal With It? What Did You Learn? .....</u>	<u>46</u>
<u>Have You Worked On A Project That Failed? Tell Me What Happened? .....</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>What Was Your Biggest Mistake? What Did You Learn From This? How Did You Make Sure It Wouldn't Happen Again? .....</u>	<u>48</u>

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

<a href="#"><u>Which Project Management Software And Tools Do You Prefer Using, And Why? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>49</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Do You Have Any Certifications That Are Relevant To This Position? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>50</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Specific Training Have You Had That Would Be Relevant To This Project Manager Job? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Are Some Of The Projects That You Handled In The Previous Job? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>52</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What's Your Approach To Managing A Project? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>53</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Describe How You Deliver and Present Results.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>54</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Are The Most Important Qualities Of A Project Manager? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>55</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>How Do You Go About Planning A Schedule For A Project? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>56</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Is Your Preference For Providing Status Updates?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>57</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Do You Have Budget Management Experience? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>58</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Tell Me About The Projects You Have Managed .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>59</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Was The Most Challenging Aspect Of Your Last Project?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>60</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Tell Me How You Schedule Projects And Establish Timelines.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>61</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Was Your Most Successful Project?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>62</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>If You Had To Rate Project Management As A Career, From 1-10, How Would You Rate It? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>63</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>How Do You Allocate Resources? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>64</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Is The Best Way To Set Up And Manage An Interdepartmental Team? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>65</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>If You Were To Pick One Skill For A Project Manager To Have, What Would It Be And Why? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>66</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Do You Have Outsourced Personnel Or Supplier Management Experience? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>67</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Do You Have An International Project Team Management Experience? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>68</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Do You Think Are The Main Causes Of Project Failure?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>69</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Have You Done To Improve Your Knowledge In The Last Year?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>70</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>How Would You Rate Your Project Management Skills? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>71</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Is The Largest Number Of Projects You Have Handled At The Same Time?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>72</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Do You Prefer Working On A Single Project Or Multiple Projects At The Same Time? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>73</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>How Do You Handle Scope Creep? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>74</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>How Do You Manage To Keep Your Documentation Up To Date Throughout A Project? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>75</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What Are The Ways A Project Time Schedule Can Be Compressed? .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>76</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>When Was The Last Time You Didn't Delegate?.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>77</u></a>

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

<u>What Type Of Contingency Planning Do You Do? .....</u>	<u>78</u>
<u>How Do You Start A Project? .....</u>	<u>79</u>
<u>How Would You Close A Project? .....</u>	<u>80</u>
<u>What's Your School Of Thought On Project Management? Are You An Agile Person? .....</u>	<u>81</u>
<u>What Are The Types Of Risks You May Encounter In A Project? .....</u>	<u>82</u>
<u>What Do You Think Is The Difference Between Projects, Programs, And A Portfolio? .....</u>	<u>83</u>
<u>What Is A Stakeholder? .....</u>	<u>84</u>
<u>What Do You Understand By Project Life Cycle? .....</u>	<u>85</u>
<u>What Do You Understand By A Project Charter? .....</u>	<u>86</u>
<u>What Are the Project Management Methodologies You Most Familiar With? .....</u>	<u>87</u>
<u>Tell Me About A Full Project Life Cycle That You Managed And What Was Included In This Project .....</u>	<u>88</u>
<u>What Do You Understand By Plan Baselines? .....</u>	<u>89</u>
<u>What Is Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) And How Does It Affect The Work Estimates Of Tasks/Activities? .....</u>	<u>90</u>
<u>How Do You Define A Milestone? .....</u>	<u>91</u>
<u>What is EVM (Earned Value Management)? .....</u>	<u>92</u>
<u>What Is The Difference Between Effort Variance And Schedule Variance? .....</u>	<u>93</u>
<u>How Do You Determine The Communication Needs Of Stakeholders? .....</u>	<u>94</u>
<u>What Is Meant By Quality Standards In Software Projects? .....</u>	<u>95</u>
<u>What Is The Triple Constraint Triangle In Project Management? .....</u>	<u>96</u>
<u>How Do You Handle Change Request? .....</u>	<u>97</u>
<u>How Have You Improved Project Management Processes At Your Previous Or Current Place Of Employment? .....</u>	<u>98</u>
<u>What Creative Problem-Solving Techniques Have You Used Before? .....</u>	<u>99</u>
<u>How Do You Monitor And Manage Risks When Working On A Project? .....</u>	<u>100</u>

## Please Describe Yourself and Your Background Briefly

This is perhaps the most common start-off question during job interviews and employers asking this want to know whether you're a good fit for the job and the company. Your answer is also a reflection of your self-perception and self-confidence; and that counts for a lot in your professional life.

**Tip #1 :** Make sure you keep the job description in mind when you are answering this question; pick the traits that fit the job right.

**Tip #2 :** Keep your answer short, straightforward and humble. Sell yourself as being a standout candidate, without over-doing it.

**Tip #3 :** You don't have to go into a lot of details or give off examples to this particular question, unless the interviewer asks for them.

### Sample Answer

"My name is John Smith. I hail from Hartford, Connecticut while I was born and brought up in New York. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Hartford. Since my graduation, I have been working as a project manager for the past eight years.

I love connecting with people; it's my favorite part of the job as a project manager. I'm often told by people that I'm a great listener, and my ability to effectively communicate is probably my best quality.

I'm a highly organized person and I thrive off of learning new things. I constantly find myself wandering off into challenging situations, and developing long-term, achievable and realistic goals for myself. I am also great at managing time, because my goal-oriented nature demands a lot of productivity from me."



## Why Are You Interested In This Role?

The interviewer wants to gauge how serious you are about taking up the responsibility, and if you know what comes with the package.

Your answer will also reveal how likely you are to stick around provided that they offer you the job. After all, there can be no long-term arrangement made for a person who is not interested in their job.

This question requires you to focus on two things:

- a) What have you done before that makes you *appropriate* for this role? (Experience)
- b) If you are moving up the hierarchy of roles within the industry, what are your skills?

**Tip #1:** Keep it short and crisp. If you have stories, skip them because the interviewer will probably be getting to them at the end of the interview –for now, just highlight, summarize, and stay relevant.

**Tip #2:** Make sure to appear enthusiastic, and genuine. Don't sound robotic, or seem as if you memorized the answers –if you are disinterested, it will show.

**Tip #3:** Even if the question is subject to you, make sure you throw in a thing or two about the company as well. Not doing so is a major red flag because it shows that you are not interested in this *particular role* for this *particular company*.

### Sample Answer

“What interested me to apply for this role, in particular, is that it would let me combine project management skill with service delivery experience and my inherent knack for software development. I think this position will really help me grow my portfolio for project management skill, which is important in this industry.

Of course, enhancing my portfolio is only part of the equation. I would love to work with a company with a standing like yours. Your goal [insert goal] is inspiring, and I'm really excited about this opportunity. “



## Why Do You Want to Work With Us?

This is one of the most frequently asked interview questions, and employers use it to gauge how genuinely interested you are about the company, which lets them know how serious you are about the job.

They want to see if the person that they are hiring has a legitimate interest in furthering their long-term career plan through their company –and is not a person who will take any job at any place.

**Tip #1:** Get a glimpse of the social media of the company, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram. This will give you a better idea of what their ‘reputation’ or economic standing is on the market, and what people think of their products and services in general.

**Tip #2:** Make a list of your own career objectives, and merge them with the companies.

**Tip #3:** Rather than focusing on how the company can help you, talk about what you can add to the company.

### Sample Answer

“I know that your company is trying its hands at global expansion. Having worked in project management for about a decade, I’m confident that I can help the company achieve that target successfully.

I wish to bring my experience and expertise to bear to help your company grow, and to achieve my personal growth goals as well. I view myself as a project manager, leading a team and coordinating different milestones for boosting overall performance”

## Tell me What You Know About This Company?

Interviewers don't want someone applying for hundreds of jobs with no end goal to pursue any of them properly, to work for them. They want someone who knows what he or she is doing, who's done their research, and has a clear idea of what to expect when they join the company.

Hiring someone who did not do their research means going through the time-consuming task of interviews only for you to find out that this company is not appropriate for you. Or that you aren't invested in it, so would not be adding anything.

Another thing that they gauge from your answer to this question is how much preparation you did for the interview. If you are applying for a couple of hundred jobs everyday and showing up for interviews in multiple companies, chances are you have no end-goal in mind and you won't be well-prepared for any of them. It just makes you look sloppy.

**Tip #1:** Do your research—and not just by visiting their About Us page. If you are in touch with someone who used to or currently works in that company, asks them what they want in employees.

**Tip #2:** Google the name of the company, and visit the pages other than their website. This includes mentions by the general public, any latest press releases, or media coverage. This third neutral party perspective will give you a better idea of the company's end goals and help you visualize your role in the future with it.

**Tip #3:** Only say what you are 100% sure about, not everything. So, even if you are applying to multiple jobs, take a few minutes to find out 3 basic facts about all of them.

### Sample Answer

"Well, I know that you are a leading project management consulting service, and were founded when your CEO realized the dearth of effective management that companies face. His commitment towards helping startups and SMEs in particular compels me to bring my skill set here to help your clients achieve their goals.

Moreover, yours is a growing company. I read that it's doubled in size since last year, and you plan on doing the same this year as well. I want to associate myself with a company that is on the ascendancy, and in the process achieve my personal career goals"

## Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?

The way and the manner in which you quit your workplace says a lot about you as a person, which is what the interviewer is trying to judge by asking the question. If you left for an odd reason, your loyalty is questioned. If you were fired, your work ethics and performance is questioned.

**Tip #1:** Before you leave a place of employment, make sure that you leave on good terms. In fact, get your former employer to write you a recommendation letter; it can go a long way.

**Tip #2:** Keep your end goal in mind during the interview, and talk about it from the perspective of starting with a new opportunity.

### Sample Answer

“I was at that company for three years, and I worked with some of the most amazing team in the industry and learned a lot. I got promoted last year as well. However, over the past few months, their sales had declined, and I was starting to fall into a routine without excitement. What appeals to me about this position is that it allows me the same job but with a bigger team, more exciting opportunities, and new challenges.

My former company recently lost one of their major clients, and that had a huge impact on the bottom-line. As a result, the company had to downsize, and unfortunately I happened to be one of them. However, I’m very proud of the work I did during my time there, and the manager is my strongest reference here.

We had some management changes in my former company, and it was clear that the new set of expectations misaligned with my strengths and experiences. I’m a major asset in the project management area, but unfortunately, that’s not what the Manager needed. “

## Why Should We Hire You?

Simply put, they're trying to see what value you have to offer and if you can communicate that value to them as well. What do you bring to the table that other candidates don't? How will you grow their team, company, and brand?

If you are confident in what you bring to the table, this will be an easy step for you to do.

**Tip #1:** Don't get too cocky, but don't be too bashful either; keep a level head and an even more level tone.

**Tip #2:** Keep it short, simple, and targeted.

**Tip #3:** Make your past experience in line with your potential employment.

### Sample Answer

"In your advertisement, you mentioned that you were looking for someone with project management experience. I think my 15 years of project management experience sets me apart from other candidates. Adding to that, I also have service delivery management skills, and I really value long-lasting relationships. I value what I do, and I do it as passionately as possible and that is what makes me a valuable addition to your team.

You can see in my resume that I have spent decades performing the project management role in different companies. I have a complete understanding of this one role in different industries including business, education, banking, and telecommunication. You mentioned you were looking for an experienced project manager and I think I have something great to add to your team keeping in mind my experience."

## Do You Have Any Questions?

This is like a feedback session at the end of the conversation, and the interviewer wants to know if you were genuinely engaged in the process and hence interested in the position or not.

Also, because this question typically comes up at the very end of the conversation, you can leave the interview on a good and impressive note. You can even use it to recover from any of the mistakes you made during the interview.

**Tip #1:** Be prepared for this question. In fact, make a list of questions during the interview. And save the mid-interview curiosities for end-of-the-talk.

**Tip #2:** Depending on who is interviewing you, your questions will change. If someone from the HR is asking you this question, you'll need to answer accordingly, and the same applies to the manager and so on.

**Tip #3:** Don't talk about salaries and benefits, especially if this is the first round of interviews –it makes you look tacky and unprofessional.

### Sample Answer

“What issues is your company currently facing?

I noticed you talked a lot about Big Data, so I'm assuming it's a priority? How is your department involved in this project? I read that [ABC] company was doing some work on it as well.

What's a typical day in this role like, and what are the everyday responsibilities?

What are your goals for the upcoming year?”

## How Do You Handle Office Politics?

When job interviewers ask this question, they are trying to assess your people skills. No one wants an employee who doesn't fit in with their colleagues, clients or blends into the company culture.

**Tip #1:** Reflect in your answers that you are not generally an easily-irritated person, because that's one of the things that the interviewers are trying to gauge.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate that when a situation of annoyance arises, you communicate and handle it with grace.

### Sample Answer

"I try to stay as far away from office politics as I can because I find that it disturbs my performance. Personally, I like people and can pretty much work with anyone. Plus, I do my best to follow directions and meet what is expected of me in the workplace –I find that the best course of action is to stay out of these internal battles.

It's rare but I get very annoyed when one person wants to take credit for something a group effort. I think credit should be given where it's due, that's how teams work. It's not just unfair to people, but also impacts the team efforts as well.

I believe in effective delegation. I assign clear roles to each member, with guidelines to ensure no one steps beyond their remit. Hence, the issue of someone taking undue credit does not arise on my watch"

## Tell Me About A Time When You Had Two Key Stakeholders With Opposing Views. How Did You Manage That?

This is a very important question, and often requires a detailed answer with a real-life situation. This helps the employer determine how flexible, accommodating and influential your personality is and what you do when a conflict arises.

**Tip #1:** Always answer in a manner that shows that you seek to understand the people, listen to them and then come to a conclusion.

**Tip #2:** Keep it positive and highlight your persuasive tactics.

### Sample Answer

“At my last job, there was a big debate among two of our executives on selecting one of the two companies who wanted to work with us. One of the companies was more well-known and budget-friendly, while the other was less known, costlier but it would get our job done in the long run. One of the executives wanted our company to work with the famous one, and the other wanted to work with the less-known company. Things got heated pretty quick, and I had to step in, call in a lunch break.

When I saw that both the parties had calmed down over a cup of coffee, I brought the situation up again and had both the executives make their arguments one by one, listed down both the benefits on a white board across from each other –and let them decide.

They ended up going with the less-known company, just by the way, and from what I hear it turned out very well for them.”



## How Do You Deal With Rude Clients?

Your interviewer wants to know and test your reasoning abilities, problem-solving skills, and how effectively you make decisions on-the-spot. This is also a test of your people skills.

**Tip #1:** Make sure that the answer that you provide is well-thought and well-constructed.

**Tip #2:** Avoid using cynical or indifferent words, or a harsh language.

**Tip #3:** Try to showcase your leadership, communication, and attentiveness to the customer as much as possible.

**Tip #4:** Don't just say any vague sentences, try to be precise and give real-life examples.

### Sample Answer

"I think complaints are unavoidable, and many people don't really handle them well. So when I see that happening, I usually let the client have their say and it's only when they stop that I gently let them know the situation. I believe clients should be treated with respect and communicated with, informed to their satisfaction because both of us want the same thing.

For example, if a client comes to us and wants to complain about a delay in delivery of the equipment they ordered, I apologize and tell them why we can't take their purchase back. Then I gently guide them towards alternatives. Of course, I want to make sure that they are heard and feel understood which usually calms people down.

I genuinely believe that, because the clients are what keeps us up and running, a dissatisfied customer is a bad reflection of the company. I make sure to hear them out, pay close attention to their concerns, and address them keeping in mind the policies of our company. "

## Have You Ever Had A Conflict With Your Boss? How Was It Resolved?

The interviewer is trying to assess your conflict management skills and their compatibility with your interaction with authority figures. They want to know if you respect your supervisors, even when you happen to disagree with them.

**Tip #1:** Keep track of incidents of conflict at your workplace that you were involved in, and how you handled them.

**Tip #2:** Don't say it out loud if you disliked your previous boss, no matter what.

**Tip #3:** Try to offer up a real-life example, because experienced interviewers can often look through made-up stories.

**Tip #4:** Talk a little about the conflict, but focus primarily on the resolution and the role you played in bringing it about.

**Tip #5:** Stay humble and considerate.

### Sample Answer

"I've been very lucky that I have had excellent, talented employers so far in my career and I have a lot of respect for them. Of course, conflicts and disagreements arise, but usually, I get along quite well with managers because I'm a very hard worker.

I did have a rocky start in the beginning of my career with one my managers, but it was primarily because I had different expectations than he had. I think keeping a steady communication channel open is necessary, and I would try and chat up every other day with him to get an idea of our goals. I ended up finding a middle ground, and it all worked out. In fact, that was the longest I had worked at a company."

## What Do You Think Are Your Greatest Strengths?

This may seem like it's an easy enough question to answer, but it can get pretty tricky for some people – particularly those who struggle with remaining modest about themselves or those who are generally anxious.

The main reason interviewers ask this is so that they can figure out if you know yourself just enough to put in your best, and if your best aligns with what the company needs as well as what the job requires.

**Tip #1:** Discuss what distinguishes you from other candidates when you are talking about your strengths –you don't just want to look good, you want to stand out.

**Tip #2:** The five big strengths that all employers look for include critical thinking, communication, dependability, flexibility, and teamwork. Align these qualities with the job posting, your experience and skill set, and you're good to go.

**Tip #3:** Don't be humble!

### Sample Answer

"I have exceptional project management skills. I have been working at [ABC] for 6 years, and in those years I have molded my management style to fit all kinds of audiences. I also have great communication abilities, which help me lead a team and keep things on track, even when handling large-scale projects.

I pride myself over my communication skills, and over the past decade that I have been working in this industry, I have practically mastered it. I've managed to exceed my personal and the company's goals in every quarter and have consistently earned bonuses annually. Add to that my organizational skills, where I can break down the project into small and more manageable chunks that helps me do the job quickly and efficiently."

## What Are Your Weaknesses?

The interviewer wants to know how much self-awareness you have about your weaknesses. Much like the question before, you have to stand out.

Interviewers want to find out if your weaknesses will be a hindrance to them, or if it is something they can work with –and then they will align it with what the company needs as well as what the job requires.

**Tip #1:** Remember to acknowledge your mistakes, realize that you are self-aware and that you are able to come out of them.

**Tip #2:** Pick a weakness that may be turned into a strength like being too picky and detail oriented.

### Sample Answer

“I have always been a very detail-oriented person, and while it can be a good thing generally, it usually takes up a lot of time. For example, in my academic life, I would do excellent work, but would always hand it in late because I spent so much time on getting it to be that excellent.

[Self-awareness] I have realized that this is counterproductive many of the times, especially when meeting deadlines because not everything requires precision. [Coming Out of The Problem] I have learned to prioritize my time better, starting off with the tougher projects first and fixing a time for every assignment. I have learned that by keeping multiple deadlines in front of me, I get the job done quicker and cover up for this weakness.”

## What Are The Three Words That Describe You Best?

This is an alternative way to ask the “What is your greatest strength?” and the purpose behind this is to understand how your personality aligns with the goals of the company and the requirement of the post.

For many people, talking about themselves is a tricky domain for two reasons; either that they are arrogant, or that they are too modest. Either they will talk too much, or they won’t be self-aware enough to know their strengths. This question, in that manner, can also be a great assessment of these qualities.

**Tip #1:** You need to pick three words that reflect your actual strengths.

**Tip #2:** Offering a generic answer will not help you to stand out in the crowd.

### Sample Answer

“The three words that best describe me are ‘methodical’, ‘innovative’, and ‘go-getter’. As a project manager, I pay attention to detail and emphasize a method-led approach rather than a person-led approach. Hence, any changes to the personnel on my team don’t affect the overall workflow and I manage to complete the work on time.

Also, I am always open to new ideas. Initially, in my career, I preferred a trial and error process for figuring out the best way to complete a project. Therefore, the approach changed from project to project. Eventually, I tried different methodologies, like PMBOK and agile, and now I stick to Agile for the most part.

Why I feel I am a go-getter is that despite believing staunchly in delegation, I am hands-on with my work. I also like to get my hands dirty and never miss an opportunity to train and educate.”

## How Would Those You Have Worked With Previously Describe You?

Interviewers ask this question to get an idea of your self-perception, compare it with your references, and try to understand where you fit into their company culture.

Like all the personality-assessment questions, these may come across as tough and tricky for many people for two reasons; that they are shy, or that they are arrogant.

**Tip #1:** Think back to incidents where your colleagues had appreciated anything that you did for them or pointed out a quality that they appreciated in you.

**Tip #2:** Read the reference letters that your managers wrote for you, your LinkedIn endorsements, and performance reviews –and try to match your answers with those.

**Tip #3:** If you are on good terms with your colleagues, ask them how they would describe your personality.

**Tip #4:** Don't ramble on, keep it short and crisp. In fact, make a bullet list and stick to it, highlighting one point at a time.

**Tip #5:** Focus on the trait that is relevant to the job.

### Sample Answer

"I've been told many times by different colleagues that they think I am good as good of a leader as I am a team player. For instance, we handled a project for a particularly demanding client. The client was adamant regarding the date of delivery. I had to delegate a number of tasks to some inexperienced members. Eventually, I had to help them execute their tasks, in addition to completing my responsibilities. Finally, we managed to complete the project on time. My coworker was impressed enough to write a letter of reference, you'll find it in the documents attached.

My co-worker once said that he admires how organized I am and that my effective time-management really helps the entire team take control of the projects more effectively."

## What Motivates You To Do Your Best On The Job?

Employers want to know about your motivations because it helps them understand how goal-oriented and driven towards success you are.

Your self-motivation means that you have priorities of a job that extend themselves past the monetary value that a company can offer because it helps them understand what would fulfill you the most.

**Tip #1:** Think long and hard about the best days that you had at your previous job, or the times that you came back from the office excited to narrate a new story?

**Tip #2:** This might take a lot of self-reflection so buckle up.

### Sample Answer

"I love a good challenge, and I often find myself trying new things and taking up projects that are different than anything I have done before. I find the learning experience to be exciting, and I often try to beat the goal I had set for myself previously.

I love interacting with people, and I find it to be the best part of my job. My goal is always to help customers, understand their needs, and solve their problems.

Another thing that motivates me is when I manage to complete a project within schedule and meeting my client's requirements. On some of the projects, the end result, whether it is a product or a service, will benefit my client tremendously. It gives me satisfaction knowing that I have contributed to the outcome."



## How Are You When You're Working Under Pressure?

The interviewer wants an elaborate incident of a pressure-inducing situation, how it affected you and how you managed to handle it. There are times that pressure actually makes things more productive for some employees, and that's another thing that they might want to know.

**Tip #1:** Avoid mentioning an incident when the stress or pressure was self-induced. For example, don't narrate a story about how you were stressed because you procrastinated, rather when you were given many tasks and you finished them on time.

**Tip #2:** Don't talk about how you were feeling just what you did to combat that feeling.

**Tip #3:** Every job has a certain situation of stress that will arise occasionally, make sure you don't say that such incidents bother you.

**Tip #4:** If stress can be a motivator and cause you to be creative, definitely throw that in.

### Sample Answer

"I think workplace pressure is inevitable, and it can get to everyone. But over the years, I've figured out how to manage it better. I find that I actually work better under pressure, like when there are a lot of assignments to do and the deadline is soon. With the end-goal in near sight, I find that I stay motivated and productive.

Of course, all of us do crumble under stressful situations, and I'm no exception but I usually manage to salvage things because I'm pretty good at multi-tasking and time-management. For example, once I had four big projects due in the same week. I created a schedule, allotted a time for each and every task and managed to stick to it."

## Tell Us Something About Your Hobbies

They want to ask what you do in your free time that may contribute towards what is required of the job. Plus, your hobbies say a lot about your personality and that counts for a lot in the workplace.

With this question, the interviewer wants to know what you are passionate about, if you are a well-rounded person or not, your health concerns, your work-life balancing abilities, and the energies with which you will interact with co-workers and clients.

**Tip #1:** Make a list of things you do when you leave the office, or during the weekends.

**Tip #2:** It's especially helpful to mention if you have hobbies related to health and exercise, volunteering and community participation, professional and educational development.

**Tip #3:** Don't mention useless stuff like how you have no hobbies, that you love to watch TV or sleep; it just comes across as impassionate.

**Tip #4:** Try to relate the hobby to the job posting or the company, and explain why you love it.

### Sample Answer

"I love reading, and I do it practically every day. It helps me relax and makes me think more creatively. I'm currently reading (insert name of the book) on my friend's recommendation. I heard that your office has an informal book club, and I love that!

One of my hobbies is soccer, I've been playing it since I was in middle school. I'm also on the local soccer ball team. What I love about this activity is that it allows me to work with others in a healthy, competitive environment –and I also get to meet new people, which is always fun!"

## What Projects Do You Not Want To Work On?

This could be a trick question because it has such a negative answer. The interviewer wants to ask if you are going to be satisfied with the job that you are applying for. Plus, if you have a weakness somewhere, and the job posting that you are applying for involves projects that require a lot of that work –the interviewer would want to know.

**Tip #1:** Don't talk about your dissatisfactions with projects, keep it honest but positive.

**Tip #2:** Talking about how you don't like mundane projects is a bad idea because most projects *are* mundane and it just makes you look like an employee who needs a lot of mental stimulation –it's hard to work with that.

**Tip #3:** Remain positive and upbeat; show that you look for the best in every situation.

### Sample Answer

"I have actually thought about this before. While there are a few bumps on the road, I have been overall satisfied with the work that I do, and the projects that I take up. I'm willing to work with all kinds of projects.

I think I don't like projects with an excessive amount of paperwork (notice the use of 'excessive' which implies that you can work with the normal paperwork) because it hinders me from doing what I love about the job: interacting with different people."

## What Kinds Of Projects Interest You The Most? Why?

The interviewer wants to know about your strengths, and if they align themselves with the role you are applying for or their company.

An alternative to this question may be them asking about your ‘favorite’ part of the job and your answer will reveal how positively you feel about what you do, and where you fit best on the team.

**Tip #1:** It may not seem like it, but this is not about your interests actually, rather the interest of the employer.

**Tip #2:** Keep it short, simple, and specific –talk about the projects that are specific to your role and the company instead of irrelevant ones.

**Tip #3:** When narrating incidents, focus on the skill sets that you have which make the projects possible and interesting to you.

### Sample Answer

“There are many things that I love about what I do, but a couple of them definitely stand out. I’m really passionate about transformation projects because they allow me to talk to people the most. I’ve been working in the project management industry for years and I find socializing with people the best part of the job because I connect with them really well and everyone has so many stories to share –it’s exciting to me!

Another thing that I am passionate about is technology. In fact, I love incorporating the latest tech and tools in the project management process. Learning about a new technology almost feels like an adventure.”

## What Do You Spend The Most Time Doing Each Day?

With this question, the interviewer wants to assess if you have the qualities that a company would want in an employee, his or her ability to micro-manage and communicate, and his or her passion. They also want to know how you generally handle the tasks that fall under your responsibility.

**Tip #1:** Keep in mind the position that you are applying for, the job listing, and the company; focus on the tasks in particular.

**Tip #2:** Keep it specific, and state real-life examples.

**Tip #3:** Don't talk about stuff that is not related to your work like lunch breaks, taking personal calls, leaving work early, or catching up with co-workers during working hours.

### Sample Answer

“During a typical day, one of my biggest tasks is to catch up on the progress of the various projects. During the first fifteen minutes, I map out my entire day based on what needs to go first, what's urgent, and what isn't.

During the middle of the day, I check in with the staff and ask them if they are having any problems with a project and if I can resolve them. If the issue is particularly serious, I take some time out during the last quarter of the day to hold a meeting and all of us brainstorm on how to fix the problem. Then we start implementing that strategy the day afterward.”

## Where Do You See Yourself In Five Years?

Of course, it's hard to predict what will happen in the coming years, but that's not the point of the question. The interviewer wants to ask about your *plans*, if you have them, for the upcoming years and how you want to meet them.

This further helps them align your long-term goals with the company's goals, and to predict for how many years they can keep you around.

**Tip #1:** Keep your answer relevant to the job application, and the company –you don't want to talk about your writing goals when you are applying for an accountancy job.

**Tip #2:** Don't be too vague, because it reflects that you have not thought about where you plan on going in the future and that is a major red flag.

**Tip #3:** Outline a career path; research well, and make a flow diagram in your head of where you plan on going with your professional life.

**Tip #4:** There are some professions like teaching, planning, counseling, and sales where there are no corporate ladders to climb up –and it's perfectly okay to not have a clear career path and just talk about the everyday mysteries of the job.

### Sample Answer

"In the next five years, I want as many opportunities to grow and learn as I can take. I see that at your company, you really value professional development and I intend to take advantage of all of the opportunities that you offer.

In five years, I see myself as one of the top-performing employees at an organization as well established as this one, and I plan on taking all the responsibilities that come my way so that I can get there. I want to add as much value to an organization as I can, but I realize that that takes a lot of years so for now, I'm working on this post to enhance my skills."

## What Challenges Are You Looking For In This Position?

Your employer wants to know how receptive you are to the idea of taking up new challenges, and how steadfast you remain when going through them.

**Tip #1:** Always have examples ready to be narrated, and make sure that their subject remains the things that you are passionate about.

**Tip #2:** Express your motivation, your drive, and your goals. Talk about your organization, and time-management skills and how you get to do your job.

**Tip #3:** Use real-life examples, instead of being vague and talk about the time that you actually did respond well to a challenging situation.

### Sample Answer

“I recently finished my degree in Information Management and I plan on applying everything that I have learned in this job. Plus, I’ve been practicing my presentation skills, and I look forward to making some compelling ones for this department at your company.

I know that your company wants people who can micromanage large teams, and I’ve been told that I’m great with not just leading teams but also working along-side them. That’s something that I really want to test out, and I see that this position is the perfect fit for me to do that.”



## For How Long Do You Expect To Stay With Our Organization

Of course, it's hard to predict what will happen in the coming years, but that's not the point of the question. The interviewer wants to ask about your *plans*, if you have them, for the upcoming years and how you want to meet them.

This further helps them align your long-term goals with the company's goals, and to predict for how many years they can keep you around.

**Tip #1:** Be as honest as you can, but also remain positive and express that you are passionate about the job.

**Tip #2:** Let the interviewer know very clearly how and why working with them appeals to you. If there are specific parts of the job that you see yourself doing for a long time, bring them up.

**Tip #3:** Try not to sugarcoat, or misrepresent the duration of your tenure. Everyone knows that people and plans change and as long as you are honest about it, it's all good.

### Sample Answer

"Currently, I'm looking for a stable job where I can be a part of the team for a long time. What I love about this posting is that I will be taking up the responsibility of project risk management and that is something that I absolutely love doing, and feel really strongly about. As long as I get to do that, I can pretty much stay for a long while."

I'll stay for as long as I can grow.

If possible, I'd prefer to stay long-term. I like that your company offers a flexible worktime and it goes really well with my other responsibilities like studies or children."

## Do You Prefer To Work Independently Or On A Team?

This is a simple enough question; the job interviewer wants to know if your strength lies in working with a team or independently. This is an assessment of your personality and the mode with which you complete a task.

**Tip #1:** Interviewers want an employee who is comfortable with both scenarios; working independently and in teams. This shows a dynamic, complex, and flexible personality.

**Tip #2:** Too much independence reveals to employers that you may not be able to work well in teams. Alternatively, not being able to work independently shows an excessive reliance on other people to get the job done.

### Sample Answer

“I’m comfortable in both situations, working in teams and independently. I think it depends on the project at hand; some require a lot of in-depth, alone time and others require multiple hands. I find that there are perks in both situations, and I’m willing to get the job done the best way possible; that’s the goal, right?”

I prefer working in teams, but I can work independently as well; both have their own value. If the task is easy enough to handle, there’s no need to join heads together, right? However, if it’s a high priority task, or requires a different perspective, I’m happy to brainstorm ideas with a team as well.”

## How Do You Motivate A Team?

Interviewers who ask this question want to assess your social skills, and how responsive you are with your coworkers. They want to know how you will work with the entire team to get a job done collectively, and what tactics you have in place for when they feel demotivated.

This also offers a glance at your leadership skills, communication and management styles.

**Tip #1:** Because every team in every industry is different, there is no right or wrong way to answer this; a real-life example would be the best way to go about it.

**Tip #2:** Narrate an incident, explain the situation, what you did, and the positive outcome

### Sample Answer

“At my previous job, there was a time when a couple of people were laid off mid-project, and it really demotivated the rest of the team. Plus, there was an extra burden of work until new people were hired and trained.

I had a one-to-one meeting with each member of the team to fix the issue. This was not just so that they could let their frustrations out in a safe space, but also so I could pick their brain on what could be the best way to manage things.

Afterward, we had a collective meeting, and I put all the things I learned from them individually all in front of them. Together, the whole team brainstormed some solutions, made a time-effective game-plan.

Although the project got delayed more than the original plan, it went by very effectively. The team worked together in a healthier setting than they would have, and I felt that they were very enthusiastic after they had that brainstorming session together.”

## Have You Ever Encountered Team Members Who Struggled To Complete Their Tasks? Explain How You Handled That Situation.

This is a fairly common issue in teams; there are times that one member won't pull their weight or collaborate. What you do in such a situation says a lot about your communication and collaboration skills, and the interview would want to gauge how passive and confrontational you are.

**Tip #1:** Narrate an incident where you were able to handle the situation proactively, and it resulted in a positive outcome.

**Tip #2:** Don't play the blame game, or speak ill about a people involved; rather your own skills that helped resolve the situation.

**Tip #3:** Talk about taking the responsibility to fix the issue yourself, rather than leaving it to a manager or other people.

### Sample Answer

"There was this one time that a co-worker was not meeting deadlines consistently, and it was really halting the progress of the project. Plus, other people were being given their extra work, and I thought that was unfair.

While I did not guilt them with the consequences of not meeting deadlines, I did have a private chat with them to ask if they were having an issue with the tasks. Turns out, it was a problem of not being trained enough in the relevant software, and that was what had been slowing down the entire project.

I'm sure no one deliberately wants to delay things, and we often have to help them fix the issues that are arising. With this person, we ended up arranging for a training and additional support program so that they could work more efficiently."

## How Do You Handle Insubordination, Team Infighting, And/or Poor Team Communication?

If you're applying for a supervisory position, the interviewer may ask this question in order to assess how you handle problem employees. Your personal skills matter, but so does your ability to bring out the best in others.

Depending on the hierarchal structure of the company, your interviewer could be looking for different traits but usually, they want a supervisor/project manager who is patient, tactful and has the perseverance to deal with all kinds of inevitable office drama.

**Tip #1:** When it comes to answering questions about teamwork, it's always better to be as specific as possible –being too vague sounds like you have no idea what you are talking about, and for employers that is an immediate red flag.

**Tip #2:** Make sure you talk about your communication skills, and that you highlighted and discussed improvement plans with the employees or team.

### Sample Answer

"From the outset, my aim is to avoid a clash of egos. To ensure this, I delegate tasks according to the capability of each team member. In my experience, a majority of conflicts arise when an employee feels he or she is given a task that is beneath their position or designation.

During my first time managing a project, the team reached an impasse of sorts. Two members working on a task together complained about each other, stating that each of them was stepping beyond their role.

I discussed the matter with each member and eventually moved one member to another task. Eventually, we were able to complete the project successfully."

## How Would You Describe Your Communication And Leadership Style?

Depending on the job posting, the interviewer could be looking for a particular kind of leader. In traditional, hierarchical companies, a strong no-nonsense leader would work far more efficiently than any other kind of passive, guidance-based leaders.

**Tip #1:** Review the job description and figure out the kind of leadership style will work for the company the best, and assess if you have what it takes.

**Tip #2:** You want to highlight your ability to lead and motivate people, provide measurable and timely goals, organize resources and assign and delegate control, reward and recognize everyone's contributions, and discipline unsatisfactory employees.

### Sample Answer

"I like leading by example. I believe in taking decisive action, assuming full responsibility for the project. I make sure that my team members escape direct censure and only receive feedback through me. In my previous job, I handled a number of projects where I was the direct point of contact between the management and my team. I feel this method of communication is most effective, as my team members can continue working without interruption while I relay feedback and messages to and from the management.

I also like taking a hands-on approach to projects. I love helping young employees out with their activities, as I feel providing guidance and direction is a key part of being a project manager. Through this approach, I am able to get the team to move in the same direction"

## Describe Your Management Style

This is an alternative way to ask the question stated previously, what is your leadership and communication style. Depending on the job posting, the interviewer could be looking for a particular kind of manager. In traditional, hierarchal companies, a strong no-nonsense manager would work far more efficiently than any other kind of passive, guidance-based managers.

**Tip #1:** Review the job description and figure out the kind of management style will work for the company the best, and assess if you have what it takes.

**Tip #2:** You want to highlight your ability to lead and motivate people, provide measurable and timely goals, organize resources and assign and delegate control, reward and recognize everyone's contributions, and discipline unsatisfactory employees.

### Sample Answer

"I adjust my management style according to the people I am managing. I'm not a psychologist or counselor (unless you are), but I understand that different tactics work for different people and I'm willing to adjust to them.

At my previous job, after I had given a presentation on a solution for project issue, the manager put me in charge of handling a team to get the job done. There were six people in that team, and we had to develop and implement a training method.

I worked with the team, communicated to them what needed to be done, assigned everyone their roles according to what I thought would be best for their working styles, and everything turned out great. The job got done on time, and we got really good feedback; I truly believe it was because of how effectively I managed to lead the team."



## Explain How You Would Achieve Consensus While Keeping the Project On Track

The interviewer is testing your conflict resolution skills and multi-tasking skills with this question. Inevitably, every project has a diverse number of people with different mindsets and end-goals; getting them on one page to achieve the same results can be a challenge.

**Tip #1:** There are three strategies to achieve consensus; problem defining, mediating or facilitating, deciding on alternative solutions. You need to showcase your expertise in all of them.

**Tip #2:** Narrate a real-life incident where you were handling or involved in a project with diverse people, and what you did to get them to see eye to eye.

### Sample Answer

“The need for achieving consensus arises primarily when there is a conflict between team members. Needless to say, even a slight disagreement can derail the project. My approach is to address the issue as soon as it comes to the fore. The process involves identifying the issue on which a consensus has to be reached.

I also engage the team members so that they can share their ideas regarding the matter at hand and even propose a solution, if required. Using their input not only helps me make an effective decision, but also makes them realize that consensus is important to move forward.

However, in my experience, there are cases where this approach doesn't yield the desired result. In that case, I repeat the process and try a different method, such as reassigning team members”

## Describe How You Recently Managed A Diverse Project Team Towards A Common Goal

The interviewer wants to assess your ability to lead a diverse team where not all members might be on the same page. It's a true test of leadership where you have to engage members and get them moving in one direction, towards a common goal.

**Tip #1:** Define your style of leadership. The interviewer will appreciate the fact that you demonstrate a leadership style that is flexible.

**Tip #2:** Explain the ways in which you provide feedback and encouragement to different members of your team.

### Sample Answer

“In my previous job, we handled numerous projects where the team assigned to me comprised of members who didn't see eye to eye. In some instances, senior employees felt their subordinates were handling the same roles as them.

My role, as the team manager, was to pacify them and reassure them that their skill set is not being ignored. Most of the time, the process was as simple as informing them of the responsibilities they had to fulfill and how they were contributing to the end goal.

Personally, I feel that directing a diverse team towards a common goal becomes easier if each member knows what he or she is contributing to the project”

## How Do You Ensure Your Team Stays On Track To Meet Project Deadlines?

The interviewer, naturally, would want to learn about your ability to keep projects on time and to ensure effective completion within the given deadline. Your answer to this question will help the interviewer determine whether you are capable enough for the job.

**Tip #1:** Provide a relevant example where you were able to complete a project within the deadline.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate how your role as a project manager was crucial to the completion of the project.

### Sample Answer

“The two key tenets of effective project management are accountability and communication. Each member of the team should have a clear idea of his or her role, as well as what the other members are responsible for.

By informing each member of their role in the project, I ensure that they are well aware of their responsibility towards their fellow members. They know that if they don't perform, the other members will not be able to complete their tasks on time.

Based on this principle, I assign tentative deadlines for each task. These deadlines are well ahead of the project deadline, leaving ample room to cover up for any issues that may arise during the course of the project.

Moreover, I follow up with each team member on a regular basis as well as offer guidance and support where necessary”

## What Was Your Most Important Contribution To Your Last Team?

With this, you need to showcase that your personality is not just another face in the crowd but something more valuable. Had you not been at your previous team, what achievement would not have been accomplished?

**Tip #1:** Make sure that the story you narrate is relevant to the job post, and the company for which you are interviewing.

**Tip #2:** If you have multiple stories, play them out and pick what will go the best with your current application.

### Sample Answer

“The company I worked at before managed to attract a huge client, who could offer us stable income for a number of months. At the time, we were ill-equipped to handle the project, and many of the employees there lacked the requisite experience. As the project manager, I took the responsibility of mentoring the team members.

I spent a week coaching the team before we started working on the project. The next step involved planning the execution of the project. I broke down the project into 21 stages, instead of the usual 8 to 10 steps we usually opted for. This enabled us to complete each task within the deadline.

There were some issues over the course of the project, including unexpected delays due to some technological problems. However, the work I put in during the initial stages enabled us to keep the project on track from start to finish”

## How Do You Evaluate Whether Or Not The Team Is On Track?

The interviewer wants not only to assess your monitoring skills but also your familiarity with the best project management tools and software.

**Tip #1:** Provide an example of the methods you use for maintaining accountability over the course of a project.

**Tip #2:** List the tools that you use for enabling you to keep track of each member's performance.

### Sample Answer

"I plan the project carefully and concisely at the start. Breaking down the project into its core stages enables me to set a baseline against which I can then evaluate the performance of my team. Since I assign each member a specific role, monitoring his or her progress is easier once I know the different goals we need to achieve.

Depending on the nature of the project, I use different tools and software. For simple projects, I stick to Microsoft Excel. The manual nature of the tool gives me a sense of being in control. I can simply update the sheet at the end of each week, or whatever period I decide"

## You Managed The Project Work As Per Requirements. However, The Customer Is Not Happy With The Result And Does Not Accept The Product. How Would You Convince The Customer?

The interviewer is trying to gauge your problem-solving skills, professionalism, and emotional intelligence when the situation gets tricky. They want to know how efficiently you express and implement the skills that you claim to possess –preferably in the form of a real-life narration.

**Tip #1:** Identify the reason why the customer is not happy with the result. If the customer is at fault, explaining the reason to him or her can be a simple way out.

**Tip #2:** In case your negligence or mistake resulted in poor performance, acknowledge your shortcomings and provide a solution.

**Tip #3:** Explain how you will convince the customer to give you a chance to rectify the issues.

### Sample Answer

“At my previous job, we received a project for developing a website for a client. The client provided us a specific set of pages. Our developers and designers collaborated on the project and completed it within the deadline. We delivered the project to the client and their feedback was positive.

However, before signing off on the project, the customer expressed displeasure that the site was not ‘dynamic’ the way his competitors’ sites are. I immediately requested the customer to come in for a meeting.

I explained to him the scope of the project, including demonstrating how the project we delivered was in line with the original brief. The client agreed that the web pages did in fact reflect the sample themes he had shared originally.

I informed him that we can redo the design to meet his new requirements, for an extra fee. The client agreed and we were able to close the project on a positive note”

## How Do You Deal With Gold Plating In Your Project?

Gold plating is essentially a metaphor for delivering in the project more than what is required, and someone in charge of the project *must avoid that at all costs*. The interviewer wants a little insight into your technical knowledge and scope management skills, including how well you handle gold plating in projects.

**Tip #1:** Focus on what you did to prevent the gold plating, not the details of the project in itself.

**Tip #2:** Be clear how your effort to prevent gold plating actually helped save cost and time.

### Sample Answer

“At my previous job, we received a project for developing a website for a client. The client provided us a specific set of requirements. Our developers and designers collaborated on the project and planned to develop the website with additional features. I immediately had a meeting with the developer, explaining the need to avoid gold plating. I also had a meeting with my entire team, explaining to them that there is no need to go the extra mile when we can fulfill the client’s requirements easily”

## How Do You Handle Missing A Deadline?

With this question, the interviewer wants to tackle your organization and productivity skills. They want to know how often you have to face a situation of missing a deadline, and what you do to cope with it.

**Tip #1:** There is *nothing* good about missing deadlines, so don't talk about how you turned around a deadline that you yourself neglected to meet.

**Tip #2:** On the flip side, acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes, and it's always best to hold yourself accountable to them rather than anyone else.

**Tip #3:** Make sure that you focus on your problem-solving skills and highlight the solutions that you offered to fix the problem, rather than anything else.

### Sample Answer

"At my previous company we would often get a lot of low-priority projects and I often go with them on the basis of their priorities. However, one month we had an exceptionally high number of these orders, more so than usual, and missed the deadline for one large project.

A few days before the deadline approached, we reached out to the client and informed them of the reasons of delay. Afterward, I spoke with my team and moved our schedule around to get the work done as soon as possible, avoiding unnecessary delays. All throughout the ordeal, we kept the client updated and sent them bits of snippets that were already done with so we could communicate that this is a genuine delay.

Now, we were able to send that to the client on the extended deadline, but I needed to make sure that it would not happen again. We assigned a team lead to every project, instead of having one large project pool and then we started making visual progress reports.

This percentage completion goal was set up on the servers online, and everyone was able to visualize how much of the project was done and stay focused accordingly. It turned out to be a very effective strategy, and we had not suffered from any delays ever since we put it in place."



## How Would You Deal With A Situation Where Your Project Is Running Behind Because The Resource You've Booked Is Being Used By Another Urgent Project?

The intention of the recruiter behind asking this question is to see how you reacted to a difficult situation in which resources were limited, and you still had to get the job done. They want to know if you can work in adversity and unpredictability, succeed in uncomfortable situations, and gauge how good of a manager you are.

**Tip #1:** There are three things that you need to focus on here: how limited was the staff, money, and time, how you renegotiated, and what solution you provided. The details of the project and the people working on it are irrelevant to your answer here.

**Tip #2:** The main solution that you can provide in a situation based on limited resources on a tight deadline; this includes smart allocation of work, catering to everyone's strengths, reassigning work, all the while increasing incentive plan for overtime.

**Tip #3:** Let them know that you are not a quitter, or slacked things off.

### Sample Answer

"I worked with a project team for a software development project and there was a tight deadline of only six weeks for system design, development, and testing. We had 10 people on our team, and all of them were also working on a couple of other projects as well, all of which were also just as urgent.

The workload was obviously too much for only 10 people, and not only was I concerned about keeping their motivation levels up because of the pressure but also that the work simply would not get done and we would potentially lose steady clients.

I rolled out an incentive plan for attendance, target achievement, and discipline to keep the staff working overtime and motivated. I was also able to chart out a plan and communicate with the clients to hand over projects a week ahead than usual."

## How Do You Turn Around A Project That Isn't Going As Planned?

This is actually a positive question despite how it may seem at first. The interviewer is not interested in your failure, rather what role you had to play in that failure, and how you managed to cope with it.

Failures are inevitable, and as a project manager, you need to have the skills to handle stressful situations, motivate people to get back on their feet during and after the issue, and to prevent similar failures down the road.

**Tip #1:** Don't ever imply that you have never had a project that went too out of scope, behind delivery, became too expensive and hence failed –that simply is not true.

**Tip #2:** Try to pick a story that had happened a long time ago, to imply that the preventative measures that you took in response to that failure have worked.

**Tip #3:** Do not cover up the failure, make excuses or throw blame, or try to sugar coat anything. Demonstrate your ability to learn from mistakes, and handle stressful situations and failures.

### Sample Answer

“One of the most stressful things that I had to go through was when I was managing a telecommunication team, and the subscribers of one of our clients could not make calls from a certain region.

Turns out, we had not properly administered all of the post-deployment tests; this was the biggest failures I had in any of my projects. It was also the most stressful ones because the client called early in the morning next day, and was letting out all of his frustrations –rightfully so because about eighty different subscribers from Kentucky had called them with complaints.

After I dispatched our entire software developer and testing engineer teams to investigate the issue, I tried to calm the customer down and keep him updated about what was happening and why. He seemed to be getting angrier by the second though because more and more calls kept coming up. It was a stressful hour.

However, we managed to locate the problem. The customized routing to the city had not been updated during the deployment testing. The update would take about 6 hours, and as soon as we had that number, we were able to calm the client down. All's well that ends well, but I made sure to have my team double check the post-deployment tests to avoid issues like this in the future, thankfully, they have not.”

## When Every Task Is Urgent, How Do You Determine What To Prioritize?

When the person is asking this question, they want to know how you handle priorities under pressure. This is a common occurrence in all kinds of jobs, there will be workload, pressure, and dissatisfied and angry clients. When such a situation arises, it becomes important to maintain your competency and prioritize the tasks.

**Tip #1:** Focus on a group activity, where you prioritized for not just yourself but for the whole team and multiple projects.

**Tip #2:** Talk about a situation that had happened, what you did to combat the situation and the results that were achieved because of it. Make your answer uniquely yours, and stand out in the crowd.

### Sample Answer

“My previous job often required my team to do multiple tasks with narrow deadlines, and prioritizing was an everyday task. What my manager and I did to help the team with this particular issue is that we assigned account managers to every project, instead of having one large project pool and then we started making visual progress reports.

The process of assigning roles involved identifying the members that can perform each activity. The next step involved aligning each member with the most appropriate role. At the same time, I made sure that the senior members of the team took on time-sensitive and urgent tasks, as well as the most crucial ones.

In addition to selecting the right person for each role, I prioritized the tasks based on the requirements. We focused on the major features first, so we can wrap the critical stages first. This process served me well on a large number of projects at my previous job, and I plan to execute it here as well”

## How Will You Gain And Keep The Support Of Your Project Sponsors?

Your interviewer is looking for essentially two things: how you define ‘project sponsors’ and how you elicit and retain information from them as a project leader.

Some people consider project sponsors to be the people who review the project while others consider them the people who hold the budget. Either way, project managers are responsible for upholding these relationships, and effectively communicating the value of the project to these people so that there is continual support.

**Tip #1:** You can use this question to talk about your supply-chain management skills, people and project management skills, negotiation skills, and your ability to responsibly deliver the financials and administrations of a project to achieve project goals.

**Tip #2:** Highlight your strong negotiation skills, and your history of building strong relationships with colleagues, and project sponsors.

### Sample Answer

“The key to keeping project sponsors is very simple: do the project on time, within the budget, and satisfy the customers. If the project goes with the minimum amount of glitches, you’ll inevitably have the support of project sponsors.

I work very hard to keep the projects I’m involved in on track. I informally interfere with customers and sponsors if I sense things are going south, I conduct regular formal meetings with all team members to keep track of and resolve arising issues, I am wholeheartedly open to solution suggestions, I keep the customers informed at every step of the way, I continuously communicate with the higher-ups of the project and I take all concerns and requests very seriously.

This obviously requires a lot of communication and negotiation, but it keeps the project running smooth and that’s all that the sponsors eventually care for.”

## What Was Your Greatest Success As A Project Manager?

This is another one of the behavioral questions that are bound to come up during the interview. Your answer will help the manager know where your expertise lies, what you excel at, and how much passion you have for the role that you are applying for.

**Tip #1:** You have to be as specific as possible, without going into irrelevant and unnecessary details.

**Tip #2:** Because this question targets your experience, and the complexity of a project, talk about the challenges you had to overcome –because those are exactly your greatest successes.

### Sample Answer

“My greatest success as a project manager is perhaps when I was involved in this very complex assignment of implementing new software into the IT department. The insurance Company A had bought an automated testing tool but the testing had been done manually, with no documentation; consequentially, there were a couple of quality defects, and they resulted in a couple of customer complaints as well.

There were many challenges I had to overcome, the software did not compute our system’s programming language, some team members had to be trained to learn the testing tool, and the extensiveness of the project in itself required a time period of more than 6 months.

All of this took a lot of time and efforts, but the benefits were almost immediate as soon as the setup was complete. Because of the new software, we were all able to provide positive customer satisfaction and improve our productivity as well. The success of this project is probably the highlight of my project management career.”

## What Was Your Biggest Failure As A Project Manager?

This is actually a positive question despite how it may seem at first. The interviewer is not interested in your failure, rather what role you had to play in that failure, and how you managed to cope with it.

Failures are inevitable, and as a project manager, you need to have the skills to handle stressful situations, motivate people to get back on their feet during and after the issue, and to prevent similar failures down the road.

**Tip #1:** Explain the reason for the failure clearly.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate how you overcame the failure.

### Sample Answer

“Complacency can be the undoing for any project manager. I learned this the hard way at my previous job. We were working on a project for an existing client, for whom we had completed multiple projects. The agreement was to submit 30% of the work by the end of the first week.

Since we were handling a large workload at the time, I pushed this project to the backburner. Eventually, I presented the client with just 10% of the work by the deadline, and the client cancelled the order on the spot.

The incident hit home hard, and from that day on, I realized that as a project manager, taking things easy is not an option”

# What Do You Consider The Most Difficult Aspect Of Project Management?

Project management comes with many challenges all of which are a different level of difficulty for every manager, depending on their temperament and their strategies.

By asking this question, the interviewer gets an idea of your managerial tactics, what aspect of your job is the most challenging for you, and what you do to meet those challenges.

**Tip #1:** The answer to this question varies from person to person, but there are five items that almost every project manager has had difficulties with. These include the project budget, change control, team conflict resolution, keeping track of important paperwork, and the dreaded status reports.

**Tip #2:** Pick one of the things from the aforementioned list that you find to be the most challenging, and elaborate in the answer why.

**Tip #3:** Make sure that you also highlight the way you cope with this challenge because the interviewer does not want to hear a weakness that you don't know how to deal with.

## Sample Answer

"Status reports are the most challenging part of project management for me. Although they are absolutely necessary to keep the players motivated and the stakeholders updated, I sometimes find them to be a major distraction in getting the project done. Many times, status reports get redundant and it's very hard to please all of the people all of the time with feedbacks and updates.

However, I understand that status reports are important so I've crafted a middle-ground plan to make it work for myself. I create a usable and informative dashboard for everyone, particularly for sponsor and senior management. This dashboard contains everything, from the accomplished percentage of the project, a timeline of remaining tasks, the budget health, and the stakeholders and customer side high-level players.

Instead of splitting the task up into different status reports for different levels of the organization, I create a one-size-fits-all approach and save everyone the time, effort, and energy."

## Share A Challenging Situation That You Experienced While Working On A Project. How Did You Deal With It? What Did You Learn?

Things don't always go to plan. You know this and so does the interviewer. The reason he or she is asking you this question is not to learn about the challenges you faced but rather to find out how you dealt with the situation.

**Tip #1:** Be straightforward about the situation, and don't attempt to sugarcoat it.

**Tip #2:** Focus on what you learned rather than the failure itself.

### Sample Answer

"Once I make a commitment to my client, I stick to it. However, in one case, I came close to failing to meet my commitment. The project involved customizing 35 pieces of equipment for a client and delivering them to their warehouse.

Due to inclement weather, we were unable to receive the parts we needed to finalize the equipment for delivery. We had two weeks to complete the order but eventually, were running against the clock. As per our agreement, failure to deliver would mean a cancellation.

Rather than wait for the supplier to send over the parts, I sent two people from our team to pick them up and bring them over. This gave us an extra 24 hours, and we were able to complete the delivery on time.

A key part of the process was that I informed the client that there could be a delay due to the weather. Hence, when the client received the order on time, he was more than satisfied and even gave us a generous bonus.

The main thing I learned from the situation was to be proactive. In both sending my team members to pick up the parts and calling up the client, I was proactive, and these two steps contributed massively to the successful completion of the project"



## Have You Worked On A Project That Failed? Tell Me What Happened?

Here, the interviewer is testing your resolve. Most people fear failure and are not open to talking about it. By answering this question candidly and honestly, you can win the interviewer's confidence and trust, and improve your chances of success.

**Tip #1:** Don't narrate a minor setback during a project. The question is about a project that failed and you should answer accordingly.

**Tip #2:** Explain why you feel the project was a failure on a personal level, and not just for the client or company.

### Sample Answer

"During my early days as a project manager, we received a huge project from an important client. In my zeal to prove myself to my new employers, I ended up taking on most of the tasks associated with the project. I had the option to pick the team of my choice but I did not exercise it.

A few weeks down the line, I realize that I had bitten off more than I could chew. By that time, it was too late to rectify the situation and we ended up missing the project deadline. Eventually, I had to seek help from other project managers to complete the work. From that day onwards, I made delegation my mantra for success, and it has served me well so far"

## What Was Your Biggest Mistake? What Did You Learn From This? How Did You Make Sure It Wouldn't Happen Again?

The interviewer wants to test your ability to be forthcoming about your shortcomings. Providing an honest and clear answer is the best approach here.

**Tip #1:** Admit to the mistake you made. Don't try to beat around the bush.

**Tip #2:** Pick a mistake that you are certain you will not make again.

### Sample Answer

"The biggest mistake of my career has been taking decisions in the heat of the moment. During a project, I reassigned a crucial task to an employee who clearly lacked the experience to pull it off. My belief was that I would be able to provide the guidance and assistance necessary to complete the task.

Over time, I realized that mentoring the team member will not be possible, given that I had to take care of my own responsibilities with regards to the project at hand. Instead of enlisting the help of other experienced employees, I tried to manage things myself.

However, I had to relent and get an experienced employee on board to assist the rookie. Since then, I have been conscious about assigning roles according to the experience level and capability of the employees available for a particular project"

## Which Project Management Software And Tools Do You Prefer Using, And Why?

Project management software makes up for a major aspect of the project management industry, and interviewers want to know just how skilled you are at using them.

You need to showcase not just your formal skills of project management frameworks like Lean, Agile, and Kanban but also how you use them for the project management software.

**Tip #1:** Before stepping in for the interview, look up the project management tools and software that the company is familiar with.

**Tip #2:** Talk about the software that you have used previously, where your expertise lies, and how you apply such frameworks practically.

**Tip #3:** Use terms like “baseline” and “issue log”, as any manager with project management software will use.

### Sample Answer

“The first thing I do is create the baseline of the project, and mark the milestones. I use this baseline to compare the project progress and values and foresee the remaining costs and time period every few weeks.

I keep a log of the project using Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Project for crafting a project plan and a Jira software tracking tool to help me micromanage the process, and see how much percentage of a task has been completed.

With Jira, I have the option of customizing my dashboard for each task and that helps me report it to the person working on it every week, and to update them if they are getting urgent.”

## Do You Have Any Certifications That Are Relevant To This Position?

There are many software, tools, and programs being invented on the regular in the project management industry, so it becomes important to stay relevant and up to date.

Added certifications may not be obligatory but they are a sign of how serious and invested you are in your job, and companies want employees that are fully invested in what they do.

By asking this question, the interviewer gets a better idea of your area of expertise and where your passions lie.

**Tip #1:** You can also bring up your interactions with other project managers in the industry, as it shows that you are in touch with what is on the go.

**Tip #2:** If you have a career plan as a project manager over the next couple of years and it involves getting new certifications, be sure to bring that up.

### Sample Answer

“I intend to apply for PMP certification. I definitely see myself proceeding with the course within the next few months. I want to move up the ladder, past project management and onto program management and various other opportunities.

I am planning on taking ITIL foundation certification to add to my IT service management skills and a PMI-ACP certification to add to my agile project management skills. I believe that constantly enhancing my skills and applying for new certifications will hone my abilities to manage projects.”

## What Specific Training Have You Had That Would Be Relevant To This Project Manager Job?

The interviewer wants to learn about the training you have received over the years, which enable you to perform better as a project manager.

**Tip #1:** Provide a specific example of any training course you underwent prior to becoming a project manager.

**Tip #2:** Keep your answer concise, i.e. highlighting how your training helps you as a project manager.

### Sample Answer

“My educational background is in electrical engineering. Over the course of my education, I became adept at planning research and other projects. This basic training enabled me to break down a project into different stages to ensure I could complete it on schedule.

I have also completed a few certification courses in different disciplines of project management. A large part of my project management training has been on the job, working on a wide range of projects. I have handled projects ranging from software development to creating websites for clients.”

## What Are Some Of The Projects That You Handled In The Previous Job?

The interviewer wants you to highlight the critical points of your career as a project manager so that they can fit you into their company and job position more appropriately. You are only going to get the tasks that you have absolute expertise in, so this is another self-promoting option.

An experienced professional will be able to answer this question with the right keywords that match with the job description.

**Tip #1:** Because you are going to be talking about multiple projects to answer this question, keep it short, crisp, specific, and relevant. Avoid talking about tasks, chores or menial work; highlight the main responsibilities and save every person's time.

**Tip #2:** Make sure to highlight the parts of your project history that is relevant to the industry to which you are applying. If you are applying for an IT company, highlight a technology-based project that you have previously worked on.

### Sample Answer

"I have worked on all sorts of projects over the past decade of my career as a project manager. The subjects may be different, but I believe all projects have the same few procedures that a manager has the responsibility to pass them through.

There was one project that had a lot of paperwork and narrow deadlines, so I had to learn how to prioritize like never before. We assigned account managers to every project, instead of having one large project pool and then we started making visual progress reports. This percentage completion goal was set up on the servers online, and everyone was able to visualize how much of the project was done and stay focused accordingly. It turned out to be a very effective strategy, and we had not suffered from any delays ever since we put it in place.

I had another project in the same year where customers and their requests were more of the focus, and the paperwork was almost negligent. I ended up learning a lot about how to patiently deal with difficult customers and what their expectations out of the company were; the knowledge helped with future projects immensely."

## What's Your Approach To Managing A Project?

The interviewer wants to know what your management process is like so that they have a better idea of where you fit in with the company. Your answer will also reveal how you rank people, process, and product in terms of importance as well as your communication skills.

**Tip #1:** Talk about a project that you have worked on previously, the system you used for it, and how it works for you and your team members the best.

**Tip #2:** Try to showcase that you are a team player as much as possible because most companies want an interactive, motivating manager instead of a one-man show.

**Tip #3:** It's wise to express that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to projects and that you apply different proven project management methodologies according to the demands of a particular project.

### Sample Answer

"Generally, I have a very systematic approach to projects because I have a very disciplined nature. I record every detail, keep an eye out for all kinds of predictable errors, and have a visual target set so that everyone can see how much of the end-goal is covered.

I create dashboards for waiting time, project assignees, time left, budget left, and the project codes. All of this helps me visualize the expected result better, which eventually means better monitoring and better project forecast."

## Describe How You Deliver and Present Results

This is a little bit of a trick question because every project requires the application of different tactics for an effective result; there is no one way to deliver and present the results of a project.

What the interviewer is looking for in a project manager by asking this question is if they have enough experience to say, “Well, I know all the tactics theoretically, but the practical life is much more intricate.” – and then explain how.

**Tip #1:** Talk about your personal experience, and share real-life, concrete examples of successful projects that you have done in the past.

**Tip #2:** Highlight the techniques and methods that you used in the projects. Don’t stick to just one; showcase that you know them all and are willing to be flexible.

**Tip #3:** Talk about your ability to understand the unique aspects, demands, and risks associated with the project and analyze for a tactic that works the best for it –rather than saying you approach everything the same way.

### Sample Answer

“Every project has a different set of demands, risks, and unique aspects and so the delivery process needs to be customized every time. There are many things to keep in mind, like the client’s personal preferences –some want quality and don’t really care for deadlines while others just want a set number of things done by a certain date.

If I have multiple projects on my hand, I usually prioritize projects based on their delivery date and spend more time on the ones that require more refinement than the rest. I keep my clients informed, and I find that most of them are flexible and accommodating if you communicate with them. I deliver everything on time, and clients are usually satisfied with my work.”



# What Are The Most Important Qualities Of A Project Manager?

Interviewers ask this question because it makes the candidate pick the qualities that they think every project manager should have. Because there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, the answer will also indirectly reflect your experience, abilities, and priorities as a project manager.

**Tip #1:** Don't be vague and try to skitter around the question; list down three concrete qualities that you think are the most important in a project manager.

**Tip #2:** Ideally, the qualities that you list down should be the ones that are some of your greatest strengths. Team building skills, project scheduling, flexibility; whatsoever is at the top of the list of your skills are what *you* think are the most important qualities of a project manager.

**Tip #3:** Talk about how the skill is crucial to project management and relate it to the benefit it can have for the company for which you are interviewing.

## Sample Answer

“Project managers need a diversity of skills to do their job efficiently, but I would say that by far the most important is the ability to be flexible. All kinds of projects with different requirements pop up, you have to work with a whole array of personality types that often clash with each other, and more often than not the schedules, deadlines, and budgets are tight. A project manager needs to be quick on their feet, think strategically, and be flexible to adapt to a different tactic according to the circumstances.”

## How Do You Go About Planning A Schedule For A Project?

Setting the schedule for a project is a critical step. As a project manager, you have to be able to plan a project perfectly, and execute it as per the deadline. Hence, the interview will want to learn how you organize a project from the outset.

**Tip #1:** Cite an example of a project where you set a schedule from the start and how your team adhered to it until successful completion.

**Tip #2:** Provide an overview of the frequency at which you are able to lead projects to timely completion, with a focus on effective scheduling.

**Tip #3:** Name scheduling software or tools that you rely on.

### Sample Answer

“At my previous job, I had to deal with new projects on the basis of the priority. I had to schedule the projects according to the deadline for each one, assigning team members and defining their roles and responsibilities.

The first step for scheduling a project is breaking it down into a number of steps or phases. For example, I tackled a project where we were developing software for an airline. The deadline was three weeks, with an additional week for revisions.

I broke the project down into specific stage, including initial pitch, proof of concept, design, development, presentation, and final changes. I assigned two days each for the first three steps, and four days each for the remaining three stages. Hence, I scheduled the project to be completed in 18 days, when we had 21, and potentially 28 days.

Leaving some wiggle room and breaking down a project into manageable chunks is my modus operandi when it comes to scheduling.”

## What Is Your Preference For Providing Status Updates?

With this question, the interviewer wants to assess your capacity for accountability. Providing regular status updates means that you are taking responsibility for the timeline established at the start of the project. Failure to provide a satisfactory response can hurt your chances of impressing the interviewer.

**Tip #1:** Explain the frequency at which you provide status updates.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate whether you provide status updates voluntarily or upon questioning.

### Sample Answer

“Submitting regular status reports can be a challenge for most project managers. In fact, in my experience, I personally know a few project managers who consider status reports a distraction. Personally, I have no issues with providing constant status updates.

I have a specific approach to this process. I create an online dashboard where I input all the information related to the project. These include the different stages I break the project down into. Moreover, I mention the expected time of completion for each stage. Hence, every person involved in the project can simply view the dashboard at any given time to get a clear idea of the status of the project.

While I prefer sticking to the dashboard, I am open to adapting new methods or tools for submitting status updates, depending on the client or my employer”

## Do You Have Budget Management Experience?

Budget is probably the most important part of a project, and therefore budget management skills may make or break the hiring chances of a project manager.

Ideally, project managers are responsible for the negotiation, managing, and utilizing the allocated budget efficiently –and the interviewers want to know just how well-versed you are at these skills.

**Tip #1:** Focus on the fact that you have good budget management skills, then highlight those skills with a narration to cement the fact that your tactics actually work.

**Tip #2:** If you have good negotiation skills, throw in the fact that you can ask for additional funding if necessary.

### Sample Answer

“I have handled the budgets of quite a few of the projects I was assigned, but I think the highlight was when this one project had a very high budget of about 40 million dollars. It was a huge number for me compared to my previous experiences, and I was in charge of approving the expenses and procurements in every phase of the project.

The numbers made me a little nervous but I was particularly good at communicating with vendors and finance department of the company directly, so any issues that came up were often minor and resolved themselves quickly.

In case additional funding was needed, I could very easily organize a meeting with the sponsor and present the case. This project ended up costing us an extra million dollars, but it all went by very smoothly.”

## Tell Me About The Projects You Have Managed.

The interviewer wants to learn about the type of projects you have experience of managing, as well as your approach to managing each project.

**Tip #1:** Avoid rambling on and on about different projects. Stick to the most successful project you worked on and demonstrate how you managed it.

**Tip #2:** Make sure you highlight your project management approach, but without focusing on it.

### Sample Answer

“Over the years, I have handled a variety of projects. My initial job was for a software development company, where we mainly focused on creating software and applications for different clients. I was in charge of managing execution of the projects from start to finish.

I also have experience of working for a marketing company. There, I tackled a variety of projects, from basic advertising to running entire campaigns on Facebook. The projects comprised of three people to a team of two dozen people working in tandem. Hence, I have sufficient experience of handling projects of different scopes with different personnel requirements.”

## What Was The Most Challenging Aspect Of Your Last Project?

The connotation of this question might be negative, but an impressive can help you clinch the interview. The interviewer doesn't want to learn about the challenges you faced, but rather how you dealt with them.

**Tip #1:** There is no right or wrong answer to this question. However, you have to provide an example of a project where you faced a genuine challenge.

**Tip #2:** Providing context is important, but you cannot just keep talking. Therefore, rehearse the answer and shorten it till you get to the core.

**Tip #3:** Focus on your contribution to the successful completion of the project.

### Sample Answer

"The last project I worked on was creating a payroll program for an MNC. The company has hundreds of employees in different regions of the world. My experience has mostly been with SMEs, and therefore, the sheer scope of the task was something new for me.

My focus was on learning as much as possible about the company and their specific requirements. However, that meant dealing with different managers and personnel from the company. In short, I had to talk to everyone in charge of a team, and hence was somehow responsible for the payroll.

I had to schedule online meetings with 12 different people, spanning 20 to 30 minutes each, over the course of a single day. Suffice to say, I haven't talked so much in a single day since the start of my career. However, the effort was well worth it and we were able to complete the project successfully."

## Tell Me How You Schedule Projects And Establish Timelines.

The interviewer wants to learn your ability to schedule projects effectively. Companies live and die by deadlines, and hence they seek project managers who can get work completed on time.

**Tip #1:** This question is similar to the question about scheduling above, but the focus here is on timelines rather than the method you use.

**Tip #2:** You have to demonstrate that the timelines you establish contribute to successful completion of the project.

### Sample Answer

“The key to meeting project deadlines is managing the scope and the schedule. While the scope is beyond our control in most projects, the schedule is right in our grasp. Hence, I focus on establishing some time management processes from the outset. The key is to complete each stage of the process on time.

The next step is to create a detailed schedule where I give a timeline for completion of each part of the project. The key to making this work is leaving some wiggle room, to adjust the schedule as per the needs of the project.

I also keep a close eye on the progress of the project, and identify potential obstacles. This enables me to update the schedule over the course of the project, while ensuring we can complete the project on time.”

## What Was Your Most Successful Project?

This is a behavioral question that your interviewer is likely to ask. You need to define the reason why you considered a project the most successful. More importantly, you need to show that your contribution was significant.

**Tip #1:** Keep your answer specific to the project you are talking about. Provide the important details and context.

**Tip #2:** Highlight how complex the project was and why you considered it challenging.

### Sample Answer

“At my previous job, I had to work on a project involving multiple stakeholders. My role was to not only manage the team but also coordinate with each stakeholder. I had to define each specific stage of the project and then work backwards to determine who to communicate with at any given point.

My main concern was that the scope of the project could keep me from doing my job effectively. Hence, I focused on defining the possible risks that might arise. Therefore, I left some room in my schedule so that I could spend extra time, if necessary, coordinating with the stakeholders.

Thankfully, I did, because eventually I had to talk to each stakeholder multiple times before we could clarify the scope of the project. This is my only experience of working on a project where I had to be directly involved in defining the scope, rather than just working off a brief that I receive from a client.”



## If You Had To Rate Project Management As A Career, From 1-10, How Would You Rate It?

Rating your own self is a good measure of your own passion for your career as a project manager; if you're genuinely passionate about it, you'll go up on the scale. Interviewers look for this quality because they want to hire employees who will stick around, rather than bounce jobs because they don't 'feel' it anymore.

Asking people to rate their own skills is also a great measure of your self-confidence; no one wants to hire a person who isn't exactly sure about where they place themselves.

**Tip #1:** Ideally, you should rate yourself somewhere between 7 and 9 on a scale of 1 to 10. Anything below means you are not confident in your own skills enough to be hired for the job that you are applying for.

**Tip #2:** You can definitely rate yourself a solid 10 – it's a thin line to walk on, but if you say it with confidence enough and back it up with your experience, you can make it work.

### Sample Answer

"Keeping in mind by the fact that I have a decade of experience as a project manager, a couple of certifications, and a work experience of managing projects in three different industries; I would rate my career in project management at 9 on the scale.

I plan on taking it up to 10 in the coming years with the experience I hope to get at this company, and the certification courses I plan on signing up for soon."

## How Do You Allocate Resources?

Project management is not just about ordering people around, but also about managing often scarce resources according to the needs of the project. By asking this question, the interviewer is testing the extensiveness of your theoretical and ground knowledge as a project manager.

**Tip #1:** Talk about allocating, as well as relocating sources –being flexible with the sources is what is being tested here.

**Tip #2:** The most important resources that can be allocated and relocated are time and budget. This requires you to showcase your organization skills, time management, and communication and negotiation skills as well.

### Sample Answer

“I think allocating resources entirely depends on the project more than anything, so an experienced project manager would probably not have a specific manner in which they do the job.

Personally, the first thing I do is analyze the needs of the project and what resources are required to achieve it. I then identify the sources we have and compare them with the project that needs to get done. More often than not, there are multiple projects going on at the same time and they require sharing of the resources, so you have to be really creative with what you are given, and be good at managing time as well.

The next thing I do is after the project has initiated is to create a usable and informative dashboard for everyone, particularly for sponsor and senior management. This dashboard contains everything, from the accomplished percentage of the project, a timeline of remaining tasks, the budget health, and the stakeholders and customer side high-level players.

In case additional funding is needed, I simply organize a meeting with the sponsor and present the case. This sounds a little technical, but micromanaging time is a really effective strategy for managing resources because everyone stays focused and productivity increases.”

## What Is The Best Way To Set Up And Manage An Interdepartmental Team?

If you have more than a couple of years of experience as a project manager on your resume, then you must have had to set up and manage a cross-departmental team. With this question, the interviewer wants to know the extensiveness of your experience, what it was like, and your contributions and skills in setting up and handling such diverse teams.

**Tip #1:** Highlight your communication skills, negotiation skills, and motivation skills; these are the main things that can get an interdepartmental team up and run efficiently.

**Tip #2:** Talk about how you used the aforementioned skills to *successfully* manage interdepartmental teams, and got the project done efficiently and on time.

### Sample Answer

“Interdepartmental teams are very diverse and need a lot of communication to set up and manage; so I have a system in place to make it work. The first thing that I do is get an idea of all the people and teams involved, how they work best, their strengths and weaknesses –understanding them gives me a better idea on making a baseline to getting them all to work together as a macro-team.

The next thing I do is hold a focus group meeting with different individuals from all the departments. In this meeting, I highlight and outline what needs to be done by every member to work with other departments and make sure to explain it with examples relative to the departments. I feel that this phase is the most important because helping everyone understand each other’s weaknesses and strengths really goes a long way in aiding teamwork.

I craft an action plan including a priority list of tasks and actions that need to get done. I assign the tasks to the teams as an initiation plan, making sure to distribute the workload cross-departmentally, and then I schedule a follow up meeting every 40 days.

As the teams start working together, I regularly check in and keep track of their progress. This includes making a list of problems that may have occurred, and teams that do not work well cross-departmentally; I try some conflict resolution by effective communication tactics here as well.

I make sure that the teams meet frequently in addition to the 40 days meeting, and continuously improve the teamwork. I have not met with any flaws in this system as of yet, so I’m hoping to continue with it for a long time.”

## If You Were To Pick One Skill For A Project Manager To Have, What Would It Be And Why?

The interviewer wants to learn about the skill you give most value to as a project manager. You have to back up your answer with an example.

**Tip #1:** Mention a skill that you strong at. There's no point going off about a skill that you cannot prove yourself adept at down the line.

**Tip #2:** Keep your answer to the point. You simply have to name the skill and the reason you think it is crucial.

### Sample Answer

“As a project manager, I value communication over everything else. From a technical standpoint, I know the people working with me are skilled, or else they wouldn't be on my team. From my own experience, I know I can organize a project well and ensure timely completion.

The ‘X factor’, in a manner of speaking, is communication. Maintaining effective communication with each party involved in the project, from the client to my team, is the key to keeping things on track. Moreover, through timely messages, I make sure that no one presses the panic button at any stage”.

## Do You Have Outsourced Personnel Or Supplier Management Experience?

The interviewer wants to learn about any experience you have of working with outsourced personnel or suppliers. The question is straightforward and relates clearly to your practical experience.

**Tip #1:** Your answer should be on the dot. You only have to relay your experience of working with outsourced personnel or suppliers.

**Tip #2:** Provide examples of projects where you worked with outsourced personnel or suppliers to add value to your answer.

### Sample Answer

“During my first job, I handled a software development project for a client. The scope of the project meant that my existing team would not be able to handle the workload and deliver it within the given timeframe.

Based on recommendations from our lead developer, we outsourced 25% of the work to an outsourced team. I learnt that effective communication could become an essential tool in handling outsourced personnel. We not only managed to complete the project but used different tools and software to correspond on a frequent basis.”

## Do You Have An International Project Team Management Experience?

You are likely to have worked with an international project team if you have been working as a project manager for a number of years. The interviewer wants a clear-cut answer.

**Tip #1:** Your answer has to be short. However, a Yes or No answer won't suffice.

**Tip #2:** Offer a basic overview of the project where you worked with an international team.

### Sample Answer

"Managing an international team proved a significant challenge for me. I worked with a team on creating a website. The client required us to provide the functionality of the site in multiple languages and hence, we had to seek help from developers based overseas to 'localize' the site.

The major hurdle was communication, as the team we were working was on a different continent and in a different time zone. For the duration of the project, I assigned my subordinate the responsibility of handling correspondence.

He had to change his shift timings to accommodate the requirements of the project. The key takeaway for me is that we had to rely on online tools. There, I realized the importance of documenting each step of the project. I also explained the process to the international team."

## What Do You Think Are The Main Causes Of Project Failure?

With this question, the interview can assess what your priorities during a project are, and what plans you have in order to make sure that the project does not fail.

Failures are inevitable, and as a project manager, you need to have the skills to handle stressful situations, motivate people to get back on their feet during and after the issue, and to prevent similar failures down the road.

**Tip #1:** Some of the main reasons behind failures of projects include inadequate risk management, improper use of formal methods and strategies, poor management of expectations, failure to track requirements, failure to track progress, cultural differences particularly in international projects, and ineffective leadership.

**Tip #2:** Try to pick a story that had happened a long time ago, to imply that the preventative measures that you took in response to that failure have worked.

**Tip #3:** Do not cover up the failure, make excuses or throw blame, or try to sugar coat anything. Demonstrate your ability to learn from mistakes, and handle stressful situations and failures.

### Sample Answer

“Lots of things go into making and breaking a project, but if I had to pick one it’s the inability to be flexible. When you aren’t accommodating, you will have issues with communication at all levels. This, in turn, leads to ineffective leadership, failure to keep track of time because you get too caught up in the details, you may have cultural differences especially in international teams, and just an overall lack of tracking project progress because of the inflexibility of timing, budgeting, and scheduling.

I think it’s important to keep an open mind and a level head when approaching a project and leave room for little ups and downs –which are a normal part of everything that you do.”

## What Have You Done To Improve Your Knowledge In The Last Year?

This question is a good measure of your own passion for your career as a project manager; if you're genuinely passionate about it, you'll be learning something new just about every other year. Showing that you are open to learning will impress the interviewer.

**Tip #1:** You don't have to refer to any specific training or education you may have received. You can even narrate your efforts to conduct online research to improve your skills.

**Tip #2:** You have to prove that your efforts to improve your knowledge enabled you to execute projects successfully.

### Sample Answer

"I am an avid reader. Over the past year, I have read three books on project management, which helped further my knowledge. I recently read the A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, the sixth edition of which came out in 2017. Though I am familiar with the PMBOK methodology, the book helped me learn a few new things.

I also branched out in my previous job, taking on projects of larger scopes than I managed before. Luckily, I managed to complete the first project successfully. Thus, I learned to manage large-scale projects, which I hadn't done before."



## How Would You Rate Your Project Management Skills?

The interviewer wants to learn about your assessment of your abilities as a project manager. Keep in mind that the answer relates strictly to project management.

**Tip #1:** Modesty won't serve any purpose here. Giving yourself a 'high rating' can show your confidence.

**Tip #2:** You have to back your assessment with evidence. Hence, provide an example of the way your skills come to the fore for successful completion of a project.

**Tip #3:** Rate yourself from 1 to 10, to make it easier for the interviewer to understand your rating.

### Sample Answer

"On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate my project management skills at 8. The main reason for not giving myself a full 10 is that I have worked on a limited range of projects so far and I want to broaden my horizons, which is one reason why I applied at your organization.

My strongest suite is project organization, where I break down the project into manageable chunks. It helps me align the strengths of my team to the timeline we need to follow for successful completion. I also pride myself on efficient and timely communication, apprising every party involved in the project about each stage we accomplish."

## What Is The Largest Number Of Projects You Have Handled At The Same Time?

The interviewer wants an idea of the workload you can manage. Keep your answer to the point, as you only have to provide facts here.

**Tip #1:** Provide a concise answer. However, you cannot just say '10' and move on.

**Tip #2:** Offer some insight into the type of projects you handled.

### Sample Answer

"As a project manager for an IT firm, I handled 5 projects at a time. The expectation was to deliver an update to each client on a daily basis. Of course, I had to expedite projects with shorter timelines. In my experience, managing 5 projects during an 8-hour workday is feasible.

I do recall a time during my earlier job where I had to take over the project load for a manager who quit out of the blue due to personal reasons. My involvement was as a stopgap, and I handled 9 projects for a couple of weeks. Hence, I do have the capacity to increase my workload, as and when required, without hassle."

## Do You Prefer Working On A Single Project Or Multiple Projects At The Same Time?

The interviewer wants to know your ability to handle projects, and whether you will be able to manage multiple projects. Since you are unlikely to be familiar with the company's requirements, it is best to keep your answer open and explain that you are flexible in your approach.

**Tip #1:** Focus on explaining your approach to project management and how it enables you to handle multiple projects simultaneously.

**Tip #2:** Quote an example where you worked on multiple projects at the same time and completed them successfully.

### Sample Answer

"My approach to project management makes streamlining multiple projects simple. Hence, I am fully capable of working on multiple projects at the same time. I don't view the entire project as a single process. I break the project down into a number of stages.

Based on the breakdown, I assign roles and responsibilities, while being responsible for keeping things on track. The approach remains the same, regardless of the complexity or scope of the project. I am adaptable to the needs of the organization, and can tackle multiple projects, if necessary."

## How Do You Handle Scope Creep?

This is an inevitable part of projects and most of the time the clients are not at fault either. It is a project manager's duty to handle the redefined requirements and ultimately say yes or no to requests. Your negotiation and communication skills count for a lot here.

**Tip #1:** Talk about your personal experience, and share real-life, concrete examples of successful projects that you have done in the past.

**Tip #2:** Highlight the techniques and methods that you used in the projects. Don't stick to just one; showcase that you know them all and are willing to be flexible.

**Tip #3:** Talk about your ability to understand the unique aspects, demands, and risks associated with the project and analyze for a tactic that works the best for it –rather than saying you approach everything the same way.

### Sample Answer

"I make the project requirements and costs clear from the very beginning to the client, and when I feel a scope creep coming up I review the goals and objectives of the work at the initial planning stages. I ask myself how the changes will be done and who will do them, and address the process of getting additional payments for scope creeps.

Online software tools are also important in managing such projects and getting an idea of the changing schedule and work tasks. Of course there are times where you just have to say a straight forward, gentle and simple, "No."

## How Do You Manage To Keep Your Documentation Up To Date Throughout A Project?

The interviewer wants to learn about your ability to manage documentation, which is an area project managers often ignore.

**Tip #1:** Be honest about your approach to maintaining documentation over the course of the project. Some project managers consider it a distraction, and hence, explaining your viewpoint is important.

**Tip #2:** Express your willingness to cooperate with the company and clients to maintain effective documentation for each project you work on.

### Sample Answer

“I am generally a very organized person and I can’t imagine going through a project without organizing and micro-managing the records. I find that record management needs to be continuous, consistent and so I use all the offline and online tools available to create and store project documents, and papers.

I make sure that every document has a scanned copy of it stored in the office directory and every online transcription has a printed version stored within the documents as well. All of this makes the projects more efficient, saves times and efforts, and reduces space costs as well.”

## What Are The Ways A Project Time Schedule Can Be Compressed?

Schedule compression is an important skill for project managers. Knowing how to cut down a schedule you created enhances your ability to improve the efficiency of your project teams. The interviewer wants to learn your ability to compress a schedule.

**Tip #1:** Learn about the different ways to compress a project time schedule, including the technical terms you should use.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate your experience of compressing a schedule and how it helped you complete a project successfully.

### Sample Answer

“Compressing a schedule requires achieving a tricky balance. Being in complete control of the project is important. You need to learn whether it is possible to assign more resources to the project. In that case, crashing is the ideal technique to use. I have worked on projects where the clients changed the scope of the project midway through and I had to bring on more people to expedite the process.

In my experience, fast tracking is a more effective method. My technique involves breaking down projects into manageable chunks. Hence, fast tracking without allocating additional resources is possible.”

## When Was The Last Time You Didn't Delegate?

The interviewer is testing your honesty by asking you this question. Generally, when delegation goes wrong, project managers don't like talking about it. Hence, answering this question is important for the overall success of your interview.

**Tip #1:** Narrate an incident where you refrained from delegating. Explain the reasons why you didn't delegate.

**Tip #2:** The question is straightforward, i.e. you have to tell the interviewer about the 'last time'. You don't have to go into details of all the projects where you didn't delegate.

### Sample Answer

"As a rule of thumb, I believe in delegation. I feel that assigning roles and responsibilities to a team is a more effective way of completing a project than micromanaging or having too much on your plate. In my early days as a project manager, I used to handle most of the legwork myself.

During a project, a team member made a major error, which affected the quality of the final output. The error required considerable reworking. Rather than delegate the revision to that member or any other member of the team, I chose to work on it myself. I got the work done but had to sacrifice my weekend, which I could have spent relaxing.

Since then, I always delegate, even on projects where the workload is small. My approach is to delegate effectively to complete the work as quickly as possible."

## What Type Of Contingency Planning Do You Do?

Contingency plans are often widely ignored by many managers with the presumption that big disruptions are rare and often unpredictable. Ideally, though, managers should stay prepared and always have an on and off-site, widely disseminated contingency plan.

An interviewer asking you this question wants to know how proactive you are in the short term and how prepared you are for the long-term operational setbacks, and if you are able to gather up and invest enough time and resources to recover from potential setbacks.

**Tip #1:** Talk about risk assessment, defining actionable goals, tactics for restricting resources, creating and maintaining the drafted plan, and distributing it widely.

### Sample Answer

“I believe that each project brings along a different set of risks and challenges. Hence, I adopt a contingency planning approach based on the scope of the project. For projects involving multiple teams, I nominate a shadow team that only has an overview of the project and is ready to step in if the need arises.

I also encourage my employers to invest in backups for all the technology we use. For example at my previous job, I had my boss arrange for multiple servers when developing software. Hence, we had multiple copies of the deliverable, ready to go. Again, the contingency plan will vary from project to project.”



## How Do You Start A Project?

With this question, the interviewer is looking for your theoretical knowledge of project management. They want to know how you craft a project plan, how you explain it to key stakeholders, discuss its components with everyone involved, define roles and responsibilities, develop a baseline, scheduling, costs baselines, develop the staffing plan and analyze the risks involved.

Answering this question will reveal how you approach projects, what your priorities are, and how you manage and motivate a team of people working towards the same goal.

**Tip #1:** Walk the interviewer through the major steps of the project initiation with a real-life example. Some of these steps include crafting a project plan, sharing it with key stakeholders, discussing its components in details, defining baselines, roles, and responsibilities, developing scope statement, scheduling the cost baselines, and analyzing the project risks.

**Tip #2:** After talking about crafting the project plan, make sure that you talk about communicating the importance of its contents with the people involved.

### Sample Answer

“Initiation phases of a project are one of the most important steps, and I make sure that everything is planned well. I micromanage the entire project plan, sharing it with key stakeholders, discussing its components in details, defining baselines, roles, and responsibilities, developing scope statement, scheduling the cost baselines, and analyzing the project risks.

After I have crafted the plan, I make sure to communicate their importance with the people involved. This includes review and approval of the plan and changing its contents before explaining the responsibilities to the key stakeholders and employees in the next few phases.”

## How Would You Close A Project?

Every project that is initiated needs to come to an end, and the project manager has the responsibility of finalizing all the activities, phases, and contracts of the projects.

When interviewers ask you how you would close a project, they want a rundown of the obligations you fulfill after a project has come to an end, including assessing weaknesses, measuring future risks, and satisfying the stakeholders.

**Tip #1:** Focus on how you satisfy the stakeholders. Do you keep them updated all through the process? Do you document everything to be shared afterward? Do you value their input and administer their requested changes?

**Tip #2:** Always talk about passing your finished or unfinished projects through measurable criteria *objective* in nature, rather than subjective –the latter means your interpretation of the risks is lacking and incomplete.

### Sample Answer

“I usually begin the wrapping up of the project in the second last phase, rather than leaving it at the very end –this helps me prioritize things better. Depending on the nature and industry of the project, some of the things to be considered are compiling documents, audits and drawings, charting up a final report, providing people training, updating the risk registers and financial systems, rechecking and settling the warranties, returning the hires and borrowed equipment, and jotting down the lessons learned in a document.

After all of that is done, I chart up a post-project evaluation review or post-project evaluation report, where I list down an overview of the entire project; what went wrong, and what needs improvement. People often dismiss this as unnecessary but I find that it’s helpful in the long run to ask yourself if you know where you are going, if all the stakeholders are in agreement, if we are getting the results that we are expected to get, if we have the appropriate skills, tools, and techniques, how prepared we are for future challenges, and if the clients were objectively satisfied.”

## What's Your School Of Thought On Project Management? Are You An Agile Person?

There are different schools of thoughts of Project Management, each of which has their advantages and disadvantages. Depending on the nature of the project, you may choose to follow either and the interview would want to know which is your pick generally so they can fit you in their team.

**Tip #1:** You have to justify the school of thought you follow. Hence, your answer should reflect your methodology and practices.

**Tip #2:** Provide a short, to-the-point answer.

### Sample Answer

“My school of thought with regards to project management is the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) Methodology by Project Management Institute. The school of thought succinctly defines the different stages of executing a project. Adhering to the steps provided by the methodology has enabled me to execute a wide range of projects over the years.

Yes, I am an Agile person, and I adhere to Agile practices when managing projects.”

# What Are The Types Of Risks You May Encounter In A Project?

The interviewer wants to test your knowledge of project management. Even if you have practical experience as a project manager, being familiar with the specific types of risks is important.

**Tip #1:** Read up on the four main types of risks in project management. Brush up your knowledge and think of examples that are relevant to your experience.

**Tip #2:** Relate the types of risks to projects you have worked on previously. A bookish or purely technical answer will not impress the interviewer.

## Sample Answer

“In project management, there are four types of risks that a project might encounter. First is scope risk, where the scope of the project changes once we start working on it. Some clients are particularly fond of changing the scope, and this does make it harder to keep the project on track.

Next is technological risk, where the tools and technology we plan to use for the project develops a defect or just refuses to operate. I cannot recall the numerous times an online tool decided to not cooperate right in the middle of a project.

Scheduling risk is another issue that I have experience of dealing with. Once, we were working on developing software for a client, which required us to install a program from a third-party vendor. The vendor faced some technical issues and delayed the delivery by a week, which threw our schedule off-kilter.

Lastly, resource risk can arise when the personnel working on the project face any issues. I have had associates resign in the middle of a project, to quote an example.”

## What Do You Think Is The Difference Between Projects, Programs, And A Portfolio?

This question is to test your ground knowledge on the subject of project management, and most project managers find it hard to distinguish between them.

Additionally, your answer will also be reflective of the extensiveness of your experiences as a project manager. Every manager has worked on projects, but only the really experienced ones have worked on enough of them to handle programs and create portfolios.

**Tip #1:** The best way to go about answering this question would be with a concrete example. You don't have to narrate theoretical definitions, rather illustrate them with your experiences.

### Sample Answer

“Projects are temporary journeys that have one or more certain goals, and programs are larger initiatives that are split into multiple-projects with one central goal. In a program, projects are interrelated and coordinated.

Portfolios, on the other hand, are large collections of projects, which may or may not be interrelated, centrally coordinated or have the same goal. They are simply a showcase of an organization's work from a certain perspective, let's say managerial or planning.”

## What Is A Stakeholder?

There are many stakeholders in the project including the project leader, testers, customers, resource managers, senior management, project team members, consultants, and even contractors and subcontractors.

With this question, the interviewer wants to know what your definition of a stakeholder is, and which of them do you consider most important. Your relationships, negotiation, and communication levels all matter in a project, particularly with stakeholders.

**Tip #1:** Focus on all groups of stakeholders, rather than on one.

**Tip #2:** Every group has a different set of importance, priorities, urgencies, proximities, and power; talk about the “Stakeholder Circle”

### Sample Answer

“The person, entity, or organization which is directly affected by a project is the stakeholder. Such an effect may be positive or negative but the party involved has influence over the project, which is why it is important to involve them and keep them updated through all the phases of a project; planning, execution, and closing.”

## What Do You Understand By Project Life Cycle?

With this question, the interviewer wants to assess your ground and theoretical knowledge about the tools and templates of project management, and how you apply them to your practical professional life.

**Tip #1:** Explain the five stages of the project life cycle in brief detail.

**Tip #2:** Don't provide an elaborate answer. Stick to the point and try to reference a project where you followed the project life cycle.

### Sample Answer

"A project has five distinct phases, including

1. Initiation
2. Planning
3. Executing
4. Monitoring & Control
5. Closing

All of these have a different set of activities and so the manager has different obligations during each phase.

In my experience as a project manager, a project life cycle starts with initiation. At this point, we initiate ourselves with the details of the project and the client's requirements. During this stage, we conduct a lot of communication, understanding the teams to get them on the same page, and preparatory organization. This step helps with the planning phase. Once I have all the details on hand, I can break the project down into the next three stages and make plans accordingly.

Then comes the duty of 'executing' the project, which means everyone starts doing their assigned jobs. Next, I have to keep checking in with the members, resolve any issues, and foresee future risks and conflicts, which is the monitoring stage.

The next phase is control, ensuring that each member follows the defined process. Lastly, we enter closing, where the work is completed on time while maintaining effective communication with the stakeholders, and documenting the work before handing over the final deliverable."

## What Do You Understand By A Project Charter?

The interviewer catches a glimpse of your organization and documentation skills as a project manager, both of which can play a significant role in making or breaking a project.

**Tip #1:** Express your knowledge about the importance of having a project charter, it's used for project approvals, references and organization strategies.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate how you use a project charter for successful execution of a project.

### Sample Answer

“The authorized document required to initiate a project is called the project charter. It has the goals, outcomes, and top-level requirements of the project as seen by the stakeholders. And of course, it grants me as the project manager the authority to utilize all the organizational resources to perform all my duties.”



## What Are the Project Management Methodologies You Most Familiar With?

The interviewer wants to learn about your technical understanding of project management and whether or not you stay up to date with the industry best practices.

**Tip #1:** Only mention methodologies you have experience of working with. The interviewer might ask a follow-up question based on your answer.

**Tip #2:** Read up on the project management methodologies you are familiar with. This will help you articulate your answer.

### Sample Answer

“The two main methodologies I have firsthand experience of using are Agile and Scrum. Personally, I prefer Agile, but that is mainly due to the nature of projects I have worked on over the years. A majority of the projects I managed at my previous job entailed picky clients who loved following up. Hence, with Agile, I was able to provide timely updates and maintain effective communication with them.”

## Tell Me About A Full Project Life Cycle That You Managed And What Was Included In This Project.

The interviewer is putting you to the test here by asking a follow-up question to your answer about your understanding of a project life cycle. Hence, your answer has to relate to the earlier answer you provided.

**Tip #1:** Provide examples of how you broke down a project into the different stages of the life cycle.

**Tip #2:** While you have to focus on a specific project in your answer, make it clear that you are adaptable. You would be open to changing your approach to suit the requirements of the project.

### Sample Answer

“The role of the manager evolves with each stage of the project life cycle. I once worked on a project where we were developing software for an accounting firm. During the initial stage, I consulted with the client directly. The purpose of this exercise was to get an idea of their requirements. Once they provided their requirements, I put forth a pitch and based off that, created a project plan, which is the second stage.

During the planning phase, I also picked my team. I assigned roles to each member and explained to them their contribution to the project, along with providing the desired timelines. The software team developed the product during this stage, i.e. execution.

The next stage was monitoring & control, where I ensure that all the teams are on the same page and working at the same quality level. Then, the project enters closing, the final stage, where I initiated the testing process, as well as documenting the processes to hand over to the client.”

## What Do You Understand By Plan Baselines?

The interviewer wants to assess if your idea of a baseline plan has different start and completion dates as well as duration measurements depending on the number of stages or levels in the entire project. Although they are just estimates – they are important because as a project manager you need to ascertain whether or not your employer can afford it in terms of time and actual chronology.

**Tip #1:** Relate the concept of plan baselines to your experience. There is little value in offering a generic or purely technical answer.

**Tip #2:** Reference an example where you had specific plan baselines at your previous job and you managed to complete the project successfully

### Sample Answer

“A baseline plan is essential for effective project management. It is vital that you should integrate at the start of every project. A baseline plan effectively defines what you hope a particular project will look like.

It includes essential elements such as the cost of the project throughout the lifecycle, the goal-factors and the time required for successful completion. It is an approximate attempt of placing forth reasonable estimates.

In simpler terms, you can just say it is a roadmap for the entire project. When you have a skeleton of the project at hand – any chinks or wrinkles in the processes or a red light can be fixed before things get out of hand. Baseline plans are more commonly used for a project where you have worked against the clock.”

## What Is Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) And How Does It Affect The Work Estimates Of Tasks/Activities?

The interviewer wants a clear idea of your knowledge of Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), and how you use it to complete projects successfully.

**Tip #1:** Throw in the benefits of the WBS system which include enhanced communication, increased creativity, the vision of the project is maintained at the forefront, organization and structure of details, mitigates future complications and project management issues, the precise collection and organization of key data and ideas, risk management, streamlined allocation of tasks.

**Tip #2:** Refer to the implementation of the WBS system in your previous jobs, highlighting a relevant example.

### Sample Answer

“Sectioning and allocating work and resources to effectively manage and ensure the project is completed on time requires a key project deliverable – which is where a WBS comes into play. Using this hierarchical deliverable for project orientation clearly defines what needs to be executed by whom and in how much time.

The fundamentals of a work breakdown structure visually elaborate the total scope of the project, slicing them into manageable pieces that you and your team can comprehend and integrate. Each WBS deliverable will provide you with comprehensive details and definition of each task/activity.

And because the true nature of a work breakdown structure is purely hierarchical – you are going to have options and components that you will be able to include to make individual milestones easier to manage.

Some of the successful elements of WBS include stated vision of the project, the phases or stages of the project – these vary as per the size and scope of the project, deliverable that your team can complete every step of the way, individual and groups tasks that can be managed and completed throughout the project’s lifecycle.”

## How Do You Define A Milestone?

There is no point in giving the green light on a project unless you don't have any deliverables to measure the progress of the different stages of that particular project's lifecycle – that is where you need milestones - they are one of the most critical aspects of any project.

**Tip #1:** Regardless of your experience with milestones, you have to show that you are onboard for setting milestones for each project.

**Tip #2:** Provide an example of a project where you completed the work according to the milestones provided to you.

### Sample Answer

“Milestones are just like signal posts for a project's start date and final completion. Some of the most important factors that go into creating milestones include detailed overview, review and input, external review, budget checks and balances, timely submission of major deliverables along with many more. Of course, milestones have a fixed date – but there is no time duration between deliverables.

There is no question that milestones can enhance the value of project scheduling. You can integrate milestones with some vital scheduling strategies such as PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) or the CPM (Critical Path Method).

Milestones enable the team to precisely identify whether or not every process or activity is being completed on time. By locking in the dates connected with each milestone, a critical path for the project can be made for vital scheduling intervals in addition to the overall scope of the project.”

## What is EVM (Earned Value Management)?

You can use EVM on the total cost of the project as well as on schedule control – and it can be a very important element in forecasting the project itself; the interview may try to test your knowledge on this subject because of this.

**Tip #1:** There are a lot of reputable and prominent organizations that use Earned Value Management – some of which include: PMI (Project Management Institute), NASA, Defense Acquisition University, Federal Acquisition Institute, Acquisition Management (UK).

### Sample Answer

“The best way to perform a precision based measurement of how the project is coming along is through Earned Value Management. EVM is a streamlined and systematic process that integrated to identify variances in different projects stipulated on a comparison of the number of hours invested, the work planned and work performed.

You can use EVM on the total cost of the project as well as on schedule control – and it can be a very important element in forecasting the project itself. One of the most essential components of any EVM for any project is a project baseline. And that serves as a benchmark for future EVM-intensive tasks. As a project manager – you need quantitative data to make accurate and sensible decisions.

EVM has three fundamental metrics that make up the building blocks for the methodology. Those are EV (Earned Value), AC (Actual Cost), and PV (Planned Value).”

## What Is The Difference Between Effort Variance And Schedule Variance?

The interview will try to test your knowledge about the theoretic of project management with this question. Both effort variance and schedule variance are critical values that the top dogs in the corporation want to see in any big or small project. These factors will help them evaluate and analyze the total performance of the project.

**Tip #1:** The question is of a technical nature and hence you should keep your answer to the point.

**Tip #2:** This tip is pre-interview, but nonetheless important. You have to brush up on your knowledge of effort variance and schedule, along with the other technical project management concepts so that you are ready to answer articulately.

### Sample Answer

“Schedule Variance – After you’ve determined the estimated time of starting the project and the end dates (this includes all the tasks), the next step is to variance calculation. The difference you see between your estimated end date and the real end date is known as Schedule Variance.

For instance, if an action for the project is estimated from January-22nd-2018 to January-27th-2018 (six days), but the activity was performed at January-24th-2018 to Feb-1st-2018 (eight days), the actual variance is four days because the vital tasks are being pushed forward by four days each.

Sometime the project may be delayed by any number of days, but if the overall project was completed within the due date – the variance is calculated as zero.

Effort Variance – EV can be estimated by identifying the difference between the hours determined to complete a task and the real number of hours spent to complete it. For example, if a task is scheduled to be completed in 50 hours and is completed in 70 hours – the effort variance is 20 hours.

So in terms of percentage – 50 hours is 100% and 70 hours is 130% - so the percentage variance of that particular task is 30%.”

## How Do You Determine The Communication Needs Of Stakeholders?

The interviewer wants to assess your ability to communicate with different stakeholders over the course of a project. Your answer should tie in with your answer to the earlier question of who is a stakeholder.

**Tip #1:** Explain how you value the role of each stakeholder.

**Tip #2:** Demonstrate your process for maintaining effective communication with each stakeholder.

### Sample Answer

“All stakeholders are important – no matter how minor or major their role is. Even small time stakeholders exhibit the potential to quickly rise up and become hefty investors. And if they lag behind schedule, it will affect your overall critical path.

That is primarily why every stakeholder involved in a project must be kept in the loop through a streamlined communication process. As a project manager, you have to be proactive and ensure every stakeholder is part of the project no matter what, through a different channel of communication – direct and indirect.

When formulating your project communication strategy – it is vital to have two plans. One plan should just be a simple overview of the communications strategies you are going to use and the other one should be a more comprehensive and in-depth communication plan.

However, for smaller, not so complex activities and projects, a brief overview of the plan will suffice. But remember that the primary objective of any communication plan is to build effective and consistent communication with the stakeholders. You have to successfully manage their perceptions concerning the progress and productivity of the project.

You have to create your communications plan in tandem with your entire team – and not just individually. Concentrate your plan on the needs of the stakeholders. And remember, your communications will evolve prior to the projects, its start and throughout its launch, progress and completion.”



# What Is Meant By Quality Standards In Software Projects?

There is no question the quality of software has drastically enhanced over the past couple of decades. One of the more driving reasons for that is the fact that organizations have incorporated newer, better technologies in their developmental phases – for example, most businesses integrate object-oriented software development, case tools and more.

By asking this question, the interviewer wants to know if you are up-to-date with the ground knowledge of the job that you are applying for.

**Tip #1:** There are three fundamental checkpoints in making sure the software quality is up to par and expectations of the client – make sure you talk about them:

- SQA (Software Quality Assurance) – this is where you need to ascertain all the right organizational procedures and quality standards.
- SQP (Software Quality Plan) – this is where you must choose realistic and implementable procedures and quality standards for any specific project and be able to modify those standards.
- SQC (Software Quality Control) – this is where you have to diligently ensure all quality standards are being followed and nothing steers clear of the procedure.

## Sample Answer

“When it comes to ensuring software quality, putting it mildly, you need to ensure the software is bug-free, developed and launched on time and within the stipulated budget, meets all the client’s specifications and requirements, and is maintainable.

The three checkpoints in making sure that the software quality is up to par are SQA, SQP, and SQC. There is no question the quality of software has drastically enhanced over the past couple of decades. One of the more driving reasons for that is the fact that organizations have incorporated newer, better technologies in their developmental phases – for example, most businesses integrate object-oriented software development, case tools and more.”

## What Is The Triple Constraint Triangle In Project Management?

The interviewer wants to determine if you are familiar with the concept of Triple Constraint Triangle. Lack of knowledge on this subject can cost you.

**Tip #1:** Keep the following theoretical concepts in mind. A TCT is basically a model highlighting three fundamental constraints inherent in any and every type of project. These are:

- Cost – This is the budget of the project.
- Scope – This comprises of all the tasks and project deliverables that must be completed to meet the goal of the project.
- Time – This is the end schedule of the project and the hours needed to complete it.

### Sample Answer

“Simply put, the Triple Constraint Triangle stipulates that the productivity and success of any project are affected by these above-mentioned factors. As a project manager, you have to be diligent and meticulous enough to play with all three factors and trade between them. However, remember that eliminating any one of the elements can adversely affect the other two.

While it is a truism that the TCT is a vital part of any project, keep in mind that it does in no way determine the success of the project. You can think of these constraints as a framework that you can work within – it enhances creativity and is made up of points that are clear to your team. They will be able to work within the boundaries of the project.”

## How Do You Handle Change Request?

Change is an ever-present factor of any project – you would be remiss if you neglected the possibility that your client will request changes and amendment to be made throughout the lifecycle of the project.

By asking this question, the interviewer wants to know how prepared you are in the event that a change request happens, and what you do to handle it efficiently.

**Tip #1:** While change can either lead to positive or negative outcomes – what you need to focus on is the number of change requests that aren't effectively approved, implemented, communicated or requests that can lead to significant complications – plunging the project and organization into an out-of-control spiral.

### Sample Answer

“The best way to handle change request is to first identify the scope of the change required. You have to determine whether the change request related to the business, the requirements of the project or the stakeholder. You need to validate change requests and communicate them with all the stakeholders involved.

Identifying the scope of implementing those changes is the second most important factor. Once you have a full grasp of the proposed change and its significance to the project, you will have to convene a meet with your team and brainstorm ideas to formulate an executable plan.

Once you have the change request approved by the higher-ups, you have to notify your team and update all vital project deliverables.”

## How Have You Improved Project Management Processes At Your Previous Or Current Place Of Employment?

The interviewer wants to learn about the processes that you implemented to improve project management at your previous job. Provide specific examples to make sure you stand out.

**Tip #1:** There are some simple yet powerful ground rules to improve the processes involved in a project. First, nothing is more important than establishing a daily habit for all the members working on the project. Logging in and staying up to date on even the minutest of details will ensure no one lags behind.

**Tip #2:** Moving on, refraining from over complication factors in your project is a big no-no. You have to make sure that your team can easily break down, process, comprehend and navigate through each task and milestone of the project no matter how big or small it – how easy or complicated it is.

**Tip #3:** Accountability also plays an instrumental role in improving the project management process. You have to hold your team member responsible for updated all the work. What this does it trickles down responsibility on every group and everyone will willingly and generate accurate reporting.

### Sample Answer

“At my previous job, I adapted the best practices from different project management processes, including the PMI and PMBOK methodology. All the flow charts and templates for the processes follow the PMBOK practices.

I set up a Project Management Office (PMO) to monitor the workflow and implement each process as decided. An integral part of the approach is providing training to each member of the project team so that they can adapt to the new processes.

Lastly, I ensure frequent monitoring and audits to ensure that each team member follows the process to the letter.”

## What Creative Problem-Solving Techniques Have You Used Before?

With this question, the interviewer wants to know about your personal experience and real-life, concrete examples of successful projects that you have done in the past.

They want to know if you have the ability to understand the unique aspects, demands, and risks associated with the project and analyze for a tactic that works the best for it –rather than saying you approach everything the same way.

**Tip #1:** Although there are plenty of techniques you can use to propel the efficiency and operational productivity of a project – the trick and genius are to mix and match the best strategies and establish a workable solution.

**Tip #2:** Highlight the techniques and methods that you used in the projects. Don't stick to just one; showcase that you know them all and are willing to be flexible.

### Sample Answer

“The best way to overcome a complex problem and to ensure that operations don't veer off-track, nothing can be more important than to draft compelling questions. Instead of how “how” questions – replace it with “what if” – you need to engage your team to project a variety of scenarios, driving the project well into the future.

For example, what if we can do this – or what if we could bend a few rules – or break them – are there are any assumptions we can sack. What if we picture everything backward? These compelling questions drive creativity and a positive response. You need to think out-of-the-box and be unique in the face of adversity.

Next, identify your center. A majority of complications surface due to nothing but inner confusion, communications problems and not being up to date. Moreover, these are times when we tend to be hijacked by a variety of notions – conflicting wants and perspectives. You need to think objectively and have a clear perspective to make the right decisions.

Another method that I use is the fishbone diagram method and the root-cause analysis method. I feel it's important to determine the root cause of a problem before deciding on the appropriate action.”

# How Do You Monitor And Manage Risks When Working On A Project?

During the interview, the interviewer wants to assess your ability to perceive the concept of risk and how it relates to project management. Demonstrating your capability to monitor and manage risk can make you a strong candidate for the position.

**Tip #1:** Handling an elusive factor such as risk in the project is vital to the success of the project. However, the best way to manage is to establish a comprehensive risk management plan. This is something you have to brainstorm and not just write ballpark points. Like everything else, it is all part of the process.

**Tip #2:** Talk about risk identification, risk prioritization, and risk monitoring.

## Sample Answer

The best way to manage risk is to first identify it – resolving something you don't know anything about is hardly the best way to go about it. There are a variety of components that can help you identify the risks associated with your project.

The structure is important here – you need to analyze the risk first and once you fill the risk register with all the risk potentials the next step is to determine how likely it is for the risks to surface.

After you identify the risks, the next step is to prioritize those risks. Remember, no two risks are equal. You must analyze and evaluate them to know what type of resources you will need to tackle those problems.

It is important to monitor these risks over the duration of the project, while also adding new risks. The process for this involves regular risk assessment meetings with the team members working on the project. These meetings take place frequently, usually once a month.”