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The ability to deliver projects on schedule, on budget, and aligned with business goals is key to gaining an edge in today's highly competitive global business environment. This is where project managers come in. Project managers have an incredibly complex assignment, one that blends organizational skills, an analytical mind, and adept interpersonal abilities.

2)

The most common way to plan out a project is to sequence the tasks that lead to a final deliverable and work on them in order. This process is also known as the waterfall methodology — the traditional method for managing projects and the one that is simplest to understand. You have to complete one task before the next one begins in a connected sequence of items that add up to the overall deliverable.

3)

Regardless of what kind of project you're planning, every project goes through the same stages. Although each project will require its own set of unique processes and tasks, they all follow a similar framework. There's always a beginning, a middle, and an end. This is called the project lifecycle. The project lifecycle provides predictability and gives the project manager a way to tackle tasks in distinct phases.

4)

The critical path method of project management was developed in the 1950s, based on the idea that there are some tasks you can't start until you finish the previous one. When you link these dependent tasks together from start to finish, you plot out your critical path. Identifying and focusing on this critical path allows project managers to prioritize and allocate resources to get the most important work done and reschedule any lower priority tasks.

5)

A key factor that distinguishes project management from just 'management' is that it has a final deliverable and a finite timespan, unlike management which is an ongoing process. Because of this, a project professional needs a wide range of skills: often technical skills, and certainly people management skills and good business awareness.

6)

Projects are separate from business-as-usual activities and occur when an organisation wants to deliver a solution to set requirements within an agreed budget and timeframe. Projects require a team of people to come together temporarily to focus on specific project objectives. As a result, effective teamwork is central to successful projects.

7)

Project management is not just about being organised. The personality traits of a senior project manager are similar to those of a successful entrepreneur: they take responsibility, they lead and they drive a team to achieve success. Not everyone makes a good project manager. However, there are many different roles within project management that will suit most people.