

# 121 Essentials of Construction Project Management



**Duration:** 30 hours of work, at your pace and schedule with no time limits

**Credits:** approved by PMI (Project Management Institute) for 30 contact hours

**Prerequisites:** none

**Designed for:** people who are new to managing construction projects or those who want formal training

**What you will learn:** the fundamentals of a step-by-step construction project management methodology and Microsoft Project® software skills to manage projects with consistent success

**Textbook:** *Essentials of Project Management*, 8.5" by 11" spiral bound, 97 pages, 2007 6th edition

## 5-Step Project Methodology including Tools & Templates



## Overview

Working with a PMI®-certified instructor, you'll learn a 5-step construction project methodology and practical skills. You'll have textbook readings and lectures on CDs that explain all the concepts. Then you'll practice every step by managing a remodeling & service improvement project. You'll receive personal mentoring & written feedback from your instructor on each assignment, and you can call or e-mail them with questions as often as you wish. You may work on the course at your pace whenever it fits your schedule. There are no time limitations or expiration dates. You will practice all the techniques for: planning a project, executing the plan, tracking in Microsoft Project®, problem solving, and reporting status.

## Module 1. Project Planning

**Reading Assignment:** In your textbook, you'll learn how to start a project the right way and what questions to ask the customer to clarify exactly what business result the project should produce. You'll read examples of meetings where PMs ask sponsors the right questions to define the how they will measure if the project is a success.

**Lecture:** The lecture expands on the reading with a discussion of techniques to clarify what the boss wants and deal with department managers in the early stages of a project. These techniques will help you define exactly what deliverables your project has to produce. You'll watch a movie of a project manager meeting with a difficult sponsor, handling the situation and starting the project the right way. You'll also see a "Best Practices" video of an experienced project manager providing advice to a newer PM on how to develop a project scope that accomplishes exactly what the boss wants. You may ask your instructor any questions and you will always get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** In this case study, you have just joined Vailcrest Corporation as their first project manager. Vailcrest is a rapidly growing organization located in Vail, Colorado, and your new boss is concerned about customer service slipping. He assigns you an important project to solve these facilities and working condition problems, using sub-contractors and internal craft people. You learn about some of the personality problems that could affect the project and the conflicts that exist between departments. Using the techniques you learned in the reading and lectures, you will ask questions of your boss to identify exactly what he wants the project to deliver. Your instructor will role-play the boss and answer your questions, then give you feedback and coaching on how you handled the meeting. Next, you'll write a proposed project scope statement and present it to the boss for approval.



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## Module 2. Gathering Requirements

**Reading Assignment:** In your textbook, you will learn how to gather requirements from the people who are affected by the project. Then you'll learn all the steps in building a network of measurable achievements that will be the backbone of your project. These achievements are the check points you will use to control the project and assess progress.

**Lecture:** The lecture explains the techniques for unearthing requirements from department managers and explains how to convert their wishes and wants into clear outcomes your team must deliver. You also watch a video of a project manager meeting with department managers to get their requirements so you see how to do it successfully. In addition, you will see a "Best Practices" discussion between a new PM and an experienced PM on how to determine what level of detail needs to be included in the project plan. Ask any questions of your instructor and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** In the case study videos you meet more of the people who work at Vailcrest and hear their complaints about the facilities, systems and people they work with. Most of them support your project and they explain the challenges they have to overcome to improve service. There is some finger pointing at other departments and you discover that the operations, marketing and technical departments do not cooperate very well. You meet with department managers and professional staff and ask them questions about the performance issues their departments face. Your instructor role-plays with you, answering your questions as you gather the project requirements. You'll learn to overcome the challenge of working with stakeholders; some of them define project goals with "wish-lists" of details and others avoid committing to an end-result. You submit your project requirements to your instructor and get feedback and coaching on your work.

## Module 3. Project Plan and Charter

**Reading Assignment:** In your textbook, you'll read how to concisely organize the key components of the charter into a 1-1½ page document that includes the resources and support you need to manage the project. You'll see examples of how to put it all together and make an effective presentation of the information.

**Lecture:** Your lecture explains how to concisely describe all the project elements like risks and the resources you need. You'll see practical techniques for making an effective presentation of the project plan to get the support you need. You also watch a movie of a project manager presenting the charter to the sponsor. In the "Best Practices" movie, you'll listen in as the experienced PM discusses how to handle changes that people want to make to the plan. Ask your instructor any questions and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** The boss is eager to start work on the project but you know there are issues of cooperation between other departments that need to be straightened out to insure a good start. The boss schedules a meeting where you will present your plan and answer questions from other managers. In your first live online simulation with your instructor, you'll prepare and present a short PowerPoint presentation of your project, applying what you have learned about communicating with stakeholders. The presentation must clearly communicate what the project will and will not achieve and outline the key support and staffing elements you need to succeed. Your instructor will play the role of the project stakeholders and ask questions so you get live experience answering managers' questions. At the end of this 20 minute simulation, your instructor will send you feedback and coaching on how you handled the stakeholders' questions.

## Modules 4-5. Work Breakdown Structure and Task Listing

**Reading Assignment:** Your textbook reading teaches you the basics for managing the project in Microsoft Project® software. You'll learn a simple, straight-forward way to build your project schedule in just minutes using only one screen display. Then you'll learn how to structure the tasks in your project and how to craft the "right size" assignments for each team member.

**Lecture:** Your lecture explains the tools and techniques of building a project schedule and crafting crystal clear team member assignments. You'll also see step-by-step instructions that show you how to use Microsoft Project® software. Then you watch a movie of a project manager meeting with the sponsor about the project schedule and determining the level of detail needed for the right-sized assignment for each team member. You will also see a "Best Practices" video where an experienced PM discusses the level of detail at which the new PM should schedule the project. Ask your instructor any questions you have and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** As you develop the work breakdown structure, you have to deal with people wanting to add new features to the project. You also must cope with one manager who demands that you micromanage everyone on

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the team and another who wants to manage her department's people separately from the project team. You'll cope with the politics and explain the need to manage the project with the best practices you're learning. Then you'll follow the easy step-by-step instructions to build your schedule in MS Project®. At each step you'll send the schedule to your instructor, who will send you feedback on the schedule and answer any questions you have. You'll schedule a mid-course review phone call with your instructor to discuss any issues as well as how to use what you have learned on your projects at work.

## 6. Estimating Durations and Assigning People to Tasks

**Reading Assignment:** The textbook will show you the best methods for working with each team member to estimate the time it will take to complete their tasks. You read examples of how a project manager should handle an estimating session with team members, as well as the process of entering each task's duration into MS Project® software.

**Lecture:** In the lecture, you'll learn the best way to get accurate work estimates for team members' tasks and their commitment to the project. You then watch a movie of a PM negotiating with a team member about how long it will take to complete a task. In the "Best Practices" movie, you will watch a new PM discuss the difficulty of working with team members who pad their estimates. Then see the experienced PM's advice on how to handle this challenging situation and maintain team member commitment. Ask your instructor any questions you have and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** You discover that several of your team members have never worked on a project and are anxious about making estimates. Other team members have project experience and are padding their estimates. You have to determine how to work with each of them to get the most accurate estimate possible and a high level of commitment to the project. You apply what you have learned in an estimating session with several of these team members. Next, you'll enter the task durations to complete your project schedule in MS Project® and assign your team members to tasks. Your instructor will send you feedback and coaching on the assignment.

## 7. Crafting the Best Plan & Getting it Approved

**Reading Assignment:** In the reading assignment, you will learn how to optimize the project duration so you finish as early as possible. You'll also learn how to easily develop alternatives for delivering the project so you have an answer when the boss tells you the project duration must be reduced.

**Lecture:** The lecture drills deeper into the techniques for making the best use of your team members' skills and availability to shorten the project duration. You'll learn how to develop trade-offs between the scope, schedule and budget. In addition, you will learn how to discuss this information with the boss in the final presentation. In the "Best Practices" video you will listen in as an experienced PM gives advice to a new PM who is frustrated by the boss's reduction of the team members' available time while maintaining the project duration expectation. Finally, you'll watch a movie of a PM making a project presentation to get the plan approved by the boss. Ask your instructor any questions you have and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** Your boss is concerned that Vailcrest's customer service problem is getting worse. He wants you to reduce the duration by several weeks. The boss asks you what you need to accomplish this and wants an answer quickly. Using the tools you've learned in the reading and lecture, you develop options for reducing the duration without reducing the end result the project should produce. You'll analyze your schedule for opportunities to shorten the duration by making adjustments to the plan. You present the schedule and suggested changes to the boss for approval and receive written feedback from your instructor on how you handled the situation.

## 8. Team Leadership & Managing Conflict

**Reading Assignment:** Now that you have your plan approved, it's time to launch the project and start work on the plan. You read about leading your team and handling the conflicts that arise on most projects.

**Lecture:** The lecture teaches you effective ways to handle team conflict and boost team member commitment to the project. In the "Best Practices" movie, you'll see an experienced PM talk with a new PM about how to hone leadership skills to become a successful project manager. Ask your instructor any questions you have and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** With the project approved, you and the team begin work. But a conflict flares up between three team members and department managers, threatening to halt the project work. You use the techniques you have learned to resolve the issues and get the project back on track. You analyze the conflict situation and get everyone

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refocused on the achievements in the plan. You develop a conflict resolution strategy, talk with the managers and team members about settling the conflict, and receive your instructor's feedback on your conflict resolution strategy.

## **9. Tracking Progress and Reporting Status**

**Reading Assignment:** In your final reading assignment, you'll learn to gather progress information from your team, enter it into MS Project® in ten minutes a week, spot problems and develop solutions. Then you craft a status report detailing major issues for the boss.

**Lecture:** The lecture explains the best techniques to use in gathering and reporting project progress with recommendations for handling variances. In the "Best Practices" video, an experienced PM discusses how to learn about problems on the project early, before it's too late to solve them. Ask your instructor any questions and get a private response within 24 hours.

**Practice What You've Learned:** The project is not progressing exactly as planned. Instead, there have been some surprises and several team members are behind schedule and are spending more time working on other projects than expected. Your instructor will send you progress reports from your project team and you will update your project schedule, identify problems, and develop solutions to correct those problems. Then you will package all your ideas in a concise report, present it live, and answer questions from the boss, managers, and team members (played by your instructor). You will receive feedback from your instructor on your performance and ability to communicate these difficult concepts with your project stakeholders.