

Project management growth boom

The sector's rapid expansion is being aided by increasing professionalisation, writes **Jane Hamilton**

Managing managers may not, at first glance, appear to be the most exciting career but project management is undergoing a rebrand to become a driver of global growth.

Recently named as one of the top ten jobs least likely to be replaced by AI, successful project management is key to delivering most major business activities from building crucial new infrastructure or software systems to organising music festivals or transitioning to green energy.

World Economic Forum data suggests project management is the globe's twelfth-fastest growing job role, with an additional 16 million specialists needed internationally in the next ten years.

"Project management is a thriving profession," explains Pierre Le Manh, president and chief executive of the Project Management Institute. "Organisations are faced with the need to transform to remain relevant, and transformation happens through projects. They need highly qualified project professionals to lead these business-critical initiatives."

The PMI estimates almost 40 million professionals work in project-related roles worldwide, with a dizzying array of more than 170 job titles, spanning project, programme and portfolio management to product ownership and agile practices.

In the UK, Association for Project Management (APM) figures show the number of project professionals is up from 2.13 million in 2019 to an estimated 2.32 million, with 50 per cent of firms expecting to take on even more projects over the next three years.

The sector's rapid expansion is being supported by increasing professionalisation of the role. Over 90 UK universities now offer project management degrees and courses, while 71 per cent of major organisations run a project management apprenticeship programme.

"For young people it's important for them to understand what project management actually is, and that it's a profession in its own right," explains Robin Carter-Evans, the education outreach manager at the APM. "Every project needs a project team to keep a close watch on plans, budgets, teams, quality of outputs and any issues that may cause a problem to the project. Without one, projects are likely to fail. Projects come in different shapes and sizes, and all have an impact on the world around us."

Alongside the higher education route, the APM offers three core qualifications in project management, each a pathway to achieving Chartered Project Professional status. Salary levels are rising too, with national aver-



Being a Lockheed apprentice made me

Case study

Sean Lowe began his career as a project management apprentice at Lockheed Martin — maker of the F-35, above — in 2016, spending two years studying for qualifications while working for the aerospace giant. He has since progressed to

become deputy programme manager. Sean, from Milton Keynes, said: "If I had joined as a graduate instead, I might be in a similar role today but starting as an apprentice meant I became ingrained in Lockheed Martin's way of working from an early stage. "This allowed me to

apply theoretical concepts in a real-world setting. The chance to learn while working was invaluable. It required commitment, but the long-term rewards made it worth it. "Undertaking an apprenticeship helped build my confidence, character, and career. It set me up for long-term success."

Develop expertise and emphasise your skills

Two thirds of companies say their staff have an increasing appreciation of the impact of professional project management staff. Here the Association of Project Managers shares expert advice on how to project yourself into a new career in the sector.

- Gain practical experience: Look for opportunities to manage small projects within your current role or volunteer to take on project-related

tasks to build hands-on experience.

- Actively network: Attend project management events, webinars, and leverage LinkedIn to connect with other project managers and potential employers.
- Focus on soft skills: Develop strong communication, leadership, problem-solving, and negotiation skills which are crucial for project success.
- Qualifications: Once

you have some experience under your belt, work towards the APM Project Management Qualification.

- Record your learning: Keep a detailed record of your project experiences and learnings to showcase your abilities when applying for roles.
- Highlight transferable skills: Emphasise relevant skills from previous roles that can be applied to project management.

age pay of £60,000 and senior roles exceeding £135,000. The APM's figures show demand for new project managers is greatest in the fast-moving tech sector, followed by space, sport and logistics. As well as enticing school leavers and new graduates into the industry, the sector is stepping up efforts to attract seasoned professionals who already possess many of the key skills needed for success.

The proliferation of project management also means suitably-qualified professionals can build a long-term career in their chosen sector, from gaming to marketing to charities or healthcare. Le Manh adds: "By learning these skills and landing a project management-related role, you can pave the way for a future position in your dream industry."

Working week

Side hustles increase

The continuing squeeze on living costs means three quarters of professionals would consider taking a second job to earn extra income, while a third plan to start a side hustle this year. Research from the recruiter Robert Walters suggests some professionals with side hustles work up to 67.5 hours a week. Lucy Bisset, Robert Walters director, said: "This attests to the levels of financial instability many professionals and businesses face."

Set clear rules for phones

The JP Morgan chief executive Jamie Dimon has banned staff from reading texts or emails in meetings, but should UK firms follow his example? The HR expert Kate Palmer, from Peninsula UK, said: "For virtual meetings, all cameras could be on, while for in-person meetings you could implement a 'no phones' policy. Anyone not complying can be managed through relevant company procedures."

Make work more fun

With over half the UK population now gaming, firms are increasingly using gamification techniques to boost productivity. Nicki Morris, event director at HR Technologies UK, sees this as a positive. She said: "By leveraging elements such as rewards, challenges and competition, organisations can drive better performance, enhance learning and create a more enjoyable work environment."

Happy as we are

Climbing the corporate career ladder could be losing its prestige as 48 per cent of UK staff say they do not want to be managers or business leaders. Instead, the study from CV Genius found 80 per cent of workers are happy with their current line manager. Samuel Johns, of CV Genius, said: "We're in the midst of a work-life transition, seeing workers prioritise job security and wellbeing over everything else, including career growth."

Six from the best

Expelled from school with no qualifications at 16, Mario Aleppo makes an unusual chief executive. However, after drawing on his Italian heritage, he founded the pizza chain Fireaway Pizza, with 169 stores and a value of £18.7 million. He shares his recipe for success.



- 1 **Don't overcomplicate it.** A good product with a smart strategy that highlights something unique about your offering is enough.
- 2 **Accept that we all make bad decisions.** You can see it as losing money or a financial mistake or you can see it as paying for the lesson, learning and moving on.
- 3 **Stick to the long-term plan.** You will need to adapt when certain short-term obstacles occur but a long-term vision is key.
- 4 **Not everyone that started on the journey will finish it with you.** Partners, investors, employees will all have their own visions. The shared priority should be for the good of the company.
- 5 **Tap into your customer base for insights.** The most honest answers usually come from those that have no financial benefit to make from it.
- 6 **Don't run before you can walk.** If you are considering franchising your business, make sure you have tried and tested the franchise model more than once and have the blueprint ready for a seamless rollout before implementing.

Appointment of the week

Nursing council seeks executive director

The Nursing and Midwifery Council is seeking to appoint an executive director to lead the communication and engagement directorate.

As the independent regulator of more than 841,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, prospective applicants will lead on public engagement, ensuring that strategic messages are developed and communicated effectively.

The executive director will provide strategic direction for communications and engagement, to enable the NMC to play a prominent and appropriate role in influencing across the health, regulatory and, where appropriate, the national landscape. The role presents a complex leadership challenge, and the appointee will be expected to lead with cultural competence.

Applicants must have experience of working at a senior level leading communication and engagement activity in a high-profile, complex organisation. This person will bring experience of maintaining strategic relationships and excellent communications, influencing and motivational skills. Apply by April 29 at appointments.thetimes.com