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35 Project Manager Interview Questions

What each question checks. Answer past-experience questions with STAR: situation, task, action, result.

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

1. **Tell me about yourself.**
   Whether you can summarise your experience in a way that fits this role.
2. **Why do you want to be a project manager?**
   Motivation that goes beyond the title or the salary.
3. **Why this role, and why our company?**
   That you read the posting and understand their projects.
4. **How do you define a successful project?**
   Whether you think beyond on time and on budget.

BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS (PAST EXPERIENCE)

5. **Tell me about a project you're proud of.**
   Scope, your personal role and a measurable result.
6. **Tell me about a project that failed.**
   Honesty, ownership and what you learned.
7. **Describe a conflict with a stakeholder and how you handled it.**
   Whether you can disagree without damaging the relationship.
8. **Tell me about a difficult team member.**
   People management without authority.
9. **Describe a time you missed a deadline.**
   Early warning and recovery.
10. **How have you handled scope creep?**
    Change control in practice.
11. **Tell me about influencing people who didn't report to you.**
    Leadership without formal authority, the core PM skill.
12. **Describe delivering bad news to a sponsor.**
    Courage and clarity under pressure.

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS (WHAT WOULD YOU DO?)

13. **Two senior stakeholders want conflicting priorities. What do you do?**
    That you escalate with facts instead of choosing sides.
14. **A key team member leaves mid-project. What's your plan?**
    Risk response and continuity.
15. **The client asks for extra features without more budget or time.**
    Change control and commercial awareness.
16. **You're halfway through and 15% over budget. What do you do?**
    Financial control and transparency.
17. **A vendor is late on a critical deliverable.**
    Supplier management.
18. **Your team keeps underestimating tasks.**
    Planning maturity.
19. **You join a project that is already failing. Where do you start?**
    Diagnosis before action.
20. **Your sponsor has stopped engaging.**
    Governance and stakeholder management.

PLANNING, RISK AND BUDGET

21. **How do you plan a project from scratch?**
    A repeatable approach.
22. **How do you estimate time and cost?**
    Realism and method.
23. **How do you manage risk?**
    Proactive, not reactive, risk management.
24. **How do you track a project budget?**
    Financial discipline.
25. **How do you report project status?**
    Clear communication to different audiences.
26. **Which KPIs do you use?**
    That you measure what matters.

METHODS AND TOOLS

27. **Agile or Waterfall: when would you use each?**
    Judgement, not dogma.
28. **What is a hybrid approach in practice?**
    Real experience with mixed delivery.
29. **What is the critical path?**
    Basic scheduling knowledge.
30. **Which project management tools have you used?**
    Hands-on use, not a list.
31. **How do you run a retrospective or lessons-learned session?**
    Continuous improvement.

QUESTIONS FOR CAREER SWITCHERS

32. **You've never had a project manager title. Why should we hire you?**
    Evidence that you already do the work.
33. **How does your current experience translate to project management?**
    That you understand the role.
34. **Do you have a certification?**
    Commitment and vocabulary.
35. **Where do you see yourself in three years?**
    Ambition that fits their structure.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THEM

- What does success look like for this role in the first six months?
- Which projects would I start on, and what state are they in?
- How are project decisions made, and who is the sponsor?
- Which delivery method and tools does the team use today?
- What is the biggest risk on your current portfolio?
- How do project managers here usually grow: larger projects, programmes, PMO?
- What made the last person in this role successful, or not?
- What are the next steps in the process?

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Prepare your 5 project stories

Most behavioural questions can be answered with one of these five. Aim for two minutes each, with a number in the result.

STORY 1: A SUCCESS YOU ARE PROUD OF

Situation	
Task	
Action (60%)	
Result + number	

STORY 2: A PROJECT THAT WENT WRONG

Situation	
Task	
Action (60%)	
Result + number	

STORY 3: A CONFLICT WITH A STAKEHOLDER

Situation	
Task	
Action (60%)	
Result + number	

STORY 4: A SCOPE CHANGE YOU HANDLED

Situation	
Task	
Action (60%)	
Result + number	

STORY 5: A RISK YOU ANTICIPATED

Situation	
Task	
Action (60%)	
Result + number	