

Insight Sheet

Topic: Serving as Project Manager

Team projects are the rule and not the exception in the world of landscape architects. As with group projects in school, such professional “group” projects likely as not will deteriorate into chaos, uneven work loads, reduced quality control, and physical violence (OK, at least hurt feelings) in the absence of project oversight. Though the title for those who handle oversight may vary, the Project Manager (PM) *role* is almost universally the same.

A PM is there to manage. This may seem obvious, but experience will show you that classmates can lose sight of this fact. Yes, a PM will do more than manage (i.e., s/he will also handle “real work”), but above all they are specially tasked with navigating the team through a phalanx of potential project killers. Like a maestro who is of no value without the orchestra, the PM cannot succeed without a *committed* and *cooperative* team. In fact, the latter two criteria are more important than is the respective skill level of the team members.

So what *does* a PM do? The following points outline tasks and goals your PM should be expected (and enabled) to address.

- Build team unity
- Oversee quality control of the project
- Identify & communicate team members' strengths
- Balance work loads among team members
- Serve as lead contact in communicating with the client/instructor*
- Lead discussion of PM's role, inquiring of concerns team may have
- Lead discussion of team member tasks + distribute in writing the division of labor
- Create (or coordinate creation of) project timeline + updates to it
- Identify the commonly open meeting days/times for group work
- Schedule & gather team for group work periods
- List clearly the date/times for commencing and completing tasks and products
- Assure that all intermediate deliverables are produced in accordance with deadlines
- Communicate upcoming needs (e.g., hand-off of work, materials for a site visit)
- Balance progress by identifying areas of strength & areas needing more work/effort
- Schedule & outline topics for discussion in desk critiques
- Organize prep for final meetings/presentations

- Receive documents from the instructor
- Distribute copies of documents, as necessary, to team members
- Organize the *Project Notebook* (3-ring binder) in which to retain all notes, correspondence, etc. This is to be submitted with evals of team members, and will be evaluated as part of the PM's performance.
- Serve as (or delegate a person to be) secretary to compile minutes of client meetings
- Track, collect and submit tallied timesheets
- Track and collect receipts for expenses incurred by the team**
- Complete standardized eval forms on team members
- Distribute standardized PM eval forms to team members
- Request individual or group meetings with team members who demonstrate inadequate performance or contributions. This includes grievances by other team members.***

[If you identify tasks/goals that you believe should be included on this list please bring them to the author's attention for inclusion in future versions of this handout. Emails are preferable.]

Serving as a PM can be very rewarding, but typically is not for everyone. Your years in college are an ideal time to try your hand at this task. If you do give it a shot, here is a list of skills useful to PM's:

- Written communication
- Verbal communication
- Organization
- Time mngt
- Ability to see the big picture w/o becoming lost in minutia
- Enthusiasm/encouragement
- Team building

NOTE: while a PM may not start with all these skills, look to improve them as the project progresses

* this task can be variously reassigned as agreed upon within the team

** relevant only on projects where reimbursement is possible through client donations

*** this may include the presence of the instructor at the request of either party. Any such meeting taking place without the instructor must be documented to the instructor IF either party requests it. In that instance,

it is to occur through a description of the issues and the outcome of the meeting via 1) an email from the PM to the instructor and, an email from the team member to the instructor.