DO YOU MAKE THESE 5 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN MANAGING MULTIPLE PROJECTS?

LEARN 5 PROVEN STRATEGIES TO AVOID THEM.
Have you ever wondered why some managers seem to be natural born multitaskers and run 10+ projects smoothly, when others seem to be having a hard time running multiple projects? Working in a company building one of the most popular project management software products on the market, we hear a lot of project management war stories and spend a lot of time analyzing the bottlenecks in project management and various ways to overcome them. This white paper is our humble attempt to compress those war stories in the shortest possible form to help you improve your skills. Here we'll tell you about the 5 most common mistakes managers make when managing multiple projects. Read very attentively, as we will also disclose the 5 strategies that will help you become a productive project manager who can easily complete several projects on time and on budget.
OK, if you’ve managed projects already, you know you are able to evaluate and scope a single project, plan the implementation, communicate with team members and manage the risks. But the moment you start managing multiple projects simultaneously, your PM job takes on a new dimension. Your responsibility increases, the demand for your leadership rises and the need for your coordination skills is multiplied. Breathe in; you are not alone in this game. You can learn from others’ mistakes and use experienced professionals’ winning strategies for managing multiple projects.

Mistake #1: Micromanagement and doing everything yourself

You’ve assigned an important task to a talented employee and given him a deadline. Now, do you let him do his work and simply touch base with him at predefined points along the way, or do you keep dropping by his desk and sending e-mails to check his progress?

If it is the latter, you might be a micromanager. The micromanager is the manager who must personally make every decision, take a lead role in the performance of every task and, in extreme cases, dictate every small step the workers take. Micromanagement is mismanagement, and under it, the manager, the employees and the business all suffer.
Winning strategy #1: Learn to delegate

Don’t do everything yourself. You will never have time to do the entire job for all of your projects. Even “Super-You” needs help and support. Remember that your most powerful leverage is your team. Your team members are experts, each in his or her own area. Together, they can act like a powerful collective brain. The only thing you need to do is guide them, showing the right direction of project development. It helps to remember at all times that a manager is there to ensure that the work gets done as effectively and efficiently as possible. If the manager is attempting to dictate all actions and otherwise trying to control the employees’ every move, the group will not be as efficient and effective as it could be under rational, enlightened management. We highly recommend you to read “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Steven Covey and “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. These books have some really great thoughts on delegation, management and leadership, which will not only help you to become more productive, but might also inspire you to change your whole management style.

Delegation is a win-win strategy in managing multiple projects. On one hand, you empower your teams to do well by giving them opportunities to excel. On the other hand, you get rid of a part of your job. Giving your team more freedom in collaboration and contributing to project plans will save you time and give you a chance to think over strategies, set priorities and sequence tasks across your numerous projects. Delegate to cut your routine work! But don’t forget to coordinate your team’s actions.
Mistake #2: Careless project planning

There is a great temptation to not think too much over your plan and just dive into the doing. Remember that one of the most important reasons for project management failures is having project plans sitting on the shelf. A project plan that is nonexistent, out of date, incomplete or poorly constructed leads to mistakes in project execution.

Most of the project management mistakes made are due to a lack of efficient and up-to-date project plans. Once you fail to keep you project plans up-to-date, you fail to monitor and influence the progress of any of your projects. You also end up being busy for longer than you need to and spending more money than you’re allowed to spend. Your team members will postpone and delay their completion of tasks. This will directly influence your project delivery date.

Winning strategy #2: Keep your plans realistic and up-to-date

If you want all of your projects to be completed on time and on budget, it’s important to check the progress of each of your projects on a daily basis. Review, Review, Review. Your project team must believe in their project’s goals and schedule. For this to happen, you must update your plans regularly; otherwise, your plans will turn out to be useless. When you manage several projects at a time, you need to be ready to instantly react to unexpected changes within a project and adjust your plan for them. Make your plan flexible. This will save you the cost of errors in the initial scheduling. Have all the information at your fingertips to be able to react to changes on your projects, so that the
projects are completed successfully. Don't let valuable information on updates be buried in disconnected files. Consolidate your data and keep all the project-related files in one place. Make it easily accessible to the appropriate people. Having all the information at hand will allow you to know where each of your projects stands at any given moment.

**Mistake #3:**
Keeping project plans separated from each other

When you manage multiple projects in separate places, using different tools for planning, you waste hours on bouncing from one schedule to another. Moreover, you'll never have a whole picture of your projects, which will inevitably result in conflicting due dates and personal schedule conflicts, and therefore will damage your project delivery time. Separated project schedules make it extremely hard for you to figure out task sequences and priorities across your multiple projects. In this case, you are sure to turn up being a manager who runs from project to project, grabbing at straws.

**Winning strategy #3:**
Integrate project schedules

An integrated project plan will give you a bird's eye view of your work. Create a master project plan that will include a timeline for each project. This structure should be absolutely transparent, so that it’s possible to trace any project from a quarterly goal to a daily task of a team member. Besides identifying the major project milestones and their dates, this plan should reflect all the tasks on all of your projects. You then will be able to determine the tasks’ priorities across projects.
and identify which project milestones to concentrate on.

To create a master plan, you’ll need an integrated project planning tool. This kind of tool also will help you unify your reporting for each project and bring it to one standard. What’s more, the master plan will help you to save lots of time, as you’ll have all the information in one place and at hand.

Mistake #4:
Turning from a project leader into a project secretary

Now, if you want to get the up-to-date information (winning strategy #2) all in one place (winning strategy #3), you are prone to mistake#4: turning into a robot, constantly copying information back and forth. The project secretary job can be overwhelming. Do you often find yourself running from meeting to meeting, calling and sending dozens of e-mails to your team, requesting status updates or shooting off reminders about the upcoming deadlines? In this case, it might seem that the essence of the project management job is just collecting information and updating the plans. Most of your working hours are spent on gathering data and updating your project schedules. Don’t forget that you still need time to lead your teams. You need to motivate them.

Winning strategy #4:
Use the right technology

When you start a project, and then take on several more, you’ll need a reliable tool that will help you to integrate your data. Get a tool that will let you to manage an entire project portfolio, without overloading
you with unnecessary routine activities. Tools should make your life easier, not create even more duties for you. While choosing a project management tool, make sure it will truly integrate the project schedules for you and that the schedules will be easy to update. Don’t choose project management software that will make you create a separate “workspace” for each project. Remember that separating project data and schedules is a common mistake (#3). Many of traditional project management tools make it really hard for you to make changes to your initial project plan. Choose a flexible application that will let you easily keep your plans up-to-date. Some Web-based applications (Wrike is one of them) allow your team members to update tasks assigned to them directly in the plan. This saves you lots of time, as you don’t need to collect all the updates and integrate them manually into your schedule. Such a tool will also help you accelerate your delegation skills, as you follow winning strategy #1.

Mistake #5:

**Poor interactions within your team and with clients**

The last, but not least, most common mistake project managers make when managing multiple projects is inefficient communications. Poor communications within a team lead to misunderstandings and therefore to mistakes in project work. If your project lacks communication with clients, you and your client might end up with two different project visions as a result. In any case, miscommunication will result in loss of time and money, as well as in increasing your stress.
Winning strategy #5: Enhance project communications

Don’t do everything yourself. You will never have time to do the entire job for all of your projects. Even “Super-You” needs help and support. Remember that your most powerful leverage is your team. Your team members are experts, each in his or her own area. Together, they can act like a powerful collective brain. The only thing you need to do is guide them, showing the right direction of project development. It helps to remember at all times that a manager is there to ensure that the work gets done as effectively and efficiently as possible. If the manager is attempting to dictate all actions and otherwise trying to control the employees’ every move, the group will not be as efficient and effective as it could be under rational, enlightened management. We highly recommend you to read “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Steven Covey and “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. These books have some really great thoughts on delegation, management and leadership, which will not only help you to become more productive, but might also inspire you to change your whole management style.
Lessons learned:

1. **Don’t do everything yourself.** Delegate to your team members, but don’t forget to coordinate their actions. Find the right balance for it.

2. **Don’t let your plans sit on the shelf.** Keep all the project information in one place and the project schedules up-to-date.

3. **Don’t keep your multiple project plans disconnected.** Create a master plan for all of your projects.

4. **Don’t let the project management job become a project secretary job.** Leverage technology and make sure to find the right tool that will perform your routine operations for you.

5. **Don’t neglect flaws in communication with your clients and within your team.** Integrate your communications with project planning to ensure your project plans are up-to-date.

Managing multiple projects can be successful if approached correctly. Now you have the 5 powerful winning strategies to become a great project manager who can easily manage several projects at a time. Don’t miss any of those tips, if you don’t wish to compromise on your project management success. We’d also like to encourage you to share your experience and project management war stories with us and our readers, so that next time we can provide even better tips for becoming a super-productive project manager.
About Wrike

Wrike, Inc. is a provider of an award-winning, on-demand, online project management solution. It provides executives with a unique platform for gaining productivity for the whole team and getting things done throughout the company. Wrike helps companies from SMBs to global corporations to stay in control of their business. Its e-mail integration is the most advanced in the project management space. Wrike, Inc. has patents pending. Wrike was named a winner of RedHerring’s Top 100 Global Company Award and a winner of eWeek’s Excellence Award. Founded in 2003, Wrike Inc. is a privately held corporation located in California.