

FREE GUIDE

The IT Project Map

What a project manager does, stage by stage



By Anzhela Ayvazyan, PMP-certified Project Manager

pmgrowthlab.com

Hi, I'm Anzhela.

When I talk to people who want to move into project management, the first question is almost always the same: **“What does a project manager actually do?”**

This map answers that in one page. It follows a typical IT project through five stages. For each stage you get a plain-language definition, the PM's main tasks, and the free template that fits.

A NOTE BEFORE WE START

Real projects are messier than any map. Stages overlap and plans change. This is a starting picture, not a rulebook.

HOW TO USE IT

- 1 Read the map once (page 3).
- 2 Look at the template for each stage (page 5).
- 3 Take the five-question self-check (page 7).

Five stages of an IT project

The stage names come from the PMI process groups.

1

Initiation “Should we do this, and what is it?”

What it means: The project is defined and approved to start.

The PM's main tasks: Clarify the goal, find the stakeholders (the people affected by or interested in the project), write the first project description.

Template: Project Charter

2

Planning “How will we do it?”

What it means: The work, time, cost and risks are thought through before the team starts.

The PM's main tasks: Break the work into tasks (scope), build a schedule, list risks, agree how the team will communicate.

Templates: Risk Register, RAID Log

3

Execution “Let's do the work.”

What it means: The team builds and delivers the product.

The PM's main tasks: Coordinate the team, remove blockers, keep stakeholders informed. In Agile teams this includes running sprint planning and other Scrum events.

Template: Sprint Planning

4

Monitoring and Control “Are we on track?”

What it means: Comparing what is happening with what was planned. This runs alongside execution.

The PM's main tasks: Track progress, manage changes to scope, update risks, report status.

Templates: RAID Log, Risk Register (kept up to date)

5

Closure “Are we done, and what did we learn?”

What it means: The work is handed over and the project is formally finished.

The PM's main tasks: Confirm the deliverables are accepted, close open items, capture lessons learned.

Words you will hear

Scope	What the project will and will not deliver.
Stakeholder	Anyone who is affected by the project or can influence it.
Risk	Something that might happen and could affect the project. It has not happened yet.
Issue	A risk that has happened, or a problem that is already here.
Assumption	Something we treat as true for planning, but have not confirmed.
Dependency	Something the project needs from someone or something else.
Agile	A way of working in short cycles, with frequent adjustments.
Scrum	One popular Agile framework, with sprints and defined roles.
Waterfall	A way of working in stages, where each stage mostly finishes before the next starts.

Risk or issue? A risk might happen. An issue is already here. Keep both in your RAID Log.

How to use the free templates

All four are free to download at pmggrowthlab.com.

Project Charter

INITIATION

Use it at the start. It is a one-to-two-page summary of why the project exists, its goal, who is involved and what success looks like.

Tip: If you can't fill in one box, you have found a question to ask your sponsor.

Risk Register

PLANNING · MONITORING

A list of risks with how likely each is, how much it would hurt, and what you will do about it.

Tip: Review it regularly, not once.

RAID Log

PLANNING · MONITORING

One place for Risks, Assumptions, Issues and Dependencies.

Tip: A simple RAID log kept up to date is more useful than a perfect one nobody opens.

Sprint Planning

EXECUTION

For Agile teams. It helps the team decide what to work on in the next sprint.

Tip: Start with what the team can realistically finish.

A PM's day, in three lines

A project manager rarely “does the work” themselves. A large part of the day is:

1

Talking with people: the team, the client, the sponsor.

2

Keeping the plan, the risks and the status honest and up to date.

3

Helping the team when something blocks them.

That's why communication comes up in every stage of the map.

Where do I start?

Answer yes or no. There are no scores to be proud of or ashamed of. It only shows you where to look next.

1. Can I explain the difference between Agile and Waterfall in two sentences? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Can I name the five stages of a project without looking at the map? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Could I explain the difference between a risk and an issue? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Do I know who the stakeholders would be on a project I have worked on or seen? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Could I describe what a junior PM or project coordinator does in a normal week? ☐ Yes ☐ No

YOUR RESULT

Mostly “no”: That's a normal place to start. Read this map again, use the Project Charter template on a small project from your life (a move, an event, a work task), and read the glossary.

Mixed: Pick the stage you feel least sure about and practise with its template.

Mostly “yes”: Try applying the templates to a real or realistic project, and look at what your target role asks for.

Next step, if you want one: I teach a live online course, **Project Management Fundamentals** (2 months, live with me), that goes through these stages with realistic IT scenarios. It is one option, not the only one. Details at pmgrowthlab.com.

Or send me a message on LinkedIn or Instagram and tell me your biggest blocker. I read every message.