

accel<sup>5</sup>

# Conquering the Project Management Mountain



Managing a project of any size can often feel like an uphill climb. Between tight deadlines, managing teams and working with stakeholders, projects can get off track fast. The key to conquering the project management mountain is crafting a flexible yet structured plan that breaks the project into attainable steps.

EBSCO Corporate Solutions has compiled a list of project management tips to help you conquer the mountain. All information has been provided by content found in the corporate learning tool, *Acce/5*®.



Understand  
the Project



Choose Your Team and  
Launch the Project



Schedule the  
Project



Check-in and  
Adjust Regularly



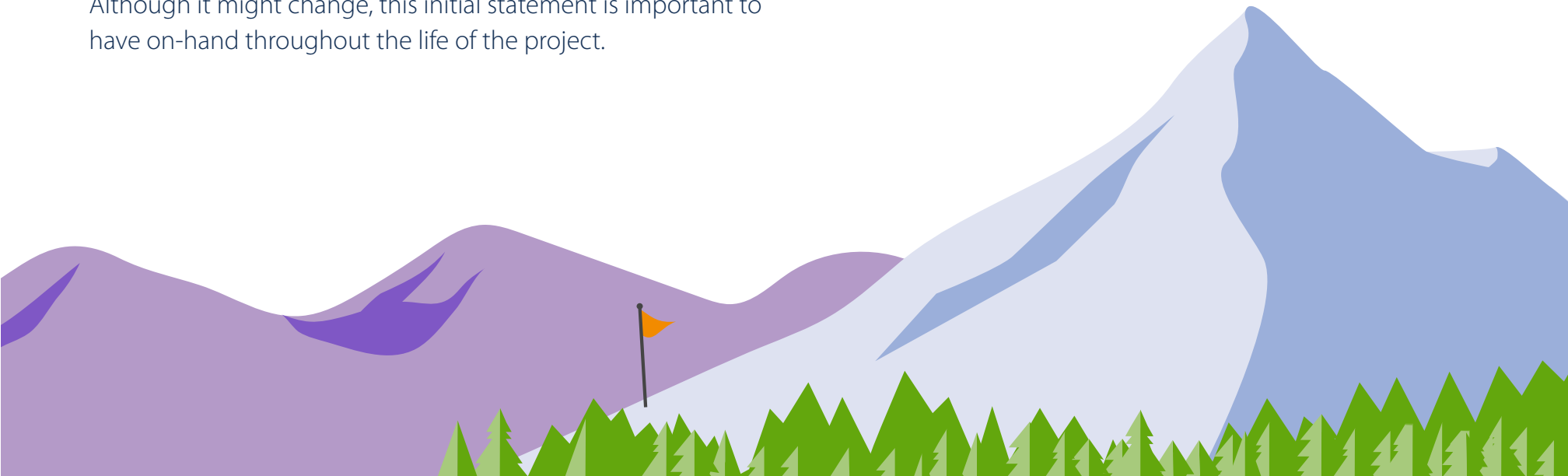
Close the Project  
and Follow Up After

# Understand the Project

Before you get started on your project management journey, you must gather all available background information. Begin by asking the following questions:

- What is the goal of this project?
- What is the timeframe of this project?
- Is the timeframe realistic, or will I need to adjust expectations?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What resources will I need?

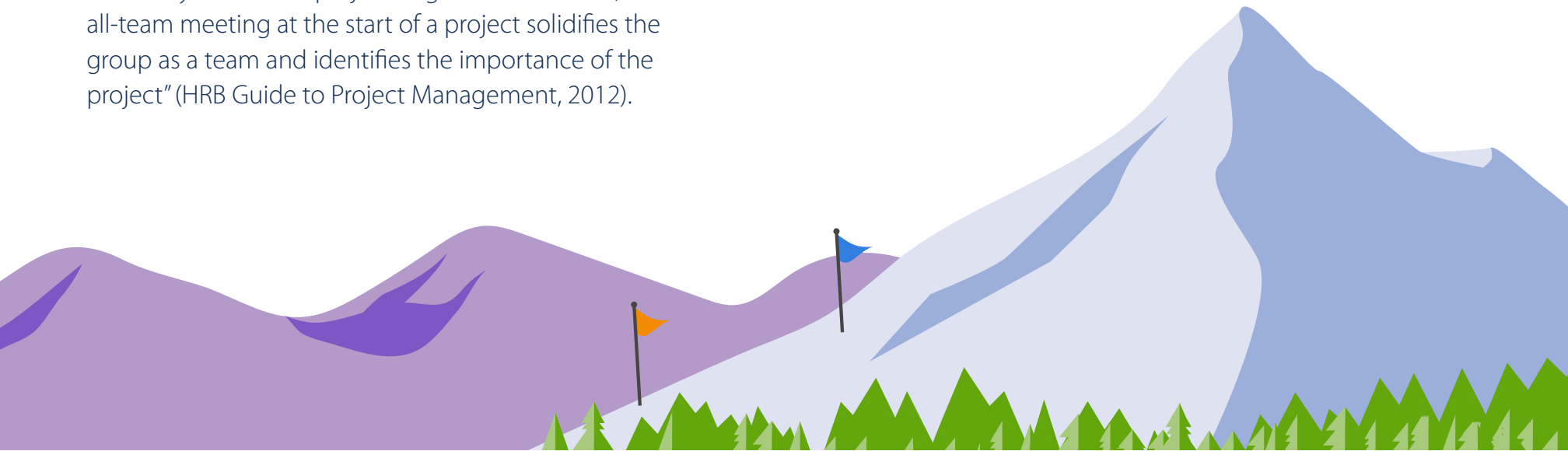
Compile all of this information into a scope statement, “a written confirmation of the results the project will produce and the terms and conditions under which the work will be performed” (Project Management for Dummies, 2010). Although it might change, this initial statement is important to have on-hand throughout the life of the project.



# Choose Your Team and Launch the Project

Now that you have an idea of what is expected in the project, it is time to recruit your team. Be sure to choose people that not only have the technical abilities that you want, but the soft skills as well. When working in teams, it is important that all members have strong communication, time management, teamwork and innovation skills. If you find that your team could brush-up on critical soft skills, [request a free trial of Acce/5®](#), EBSCO's newest corporate learning solution.

Before you and your team begin your climb, it is important to get everyone together to review their roles and expectations moving forward. This is often referred to as the "Project Launch." Be sure to invite all team members and stakeholders to ensure that there is a level of familiarity before the project begins. Furthermore, "an all-team meeting at the start of a project solidifies the group as a team and identifies the importance of the project" (HRB Guide to Project Management, 2012).



# Schedule the Project

The first thing you should do when you begin climbing the project management mountain is to create a scheduling system. You can begin by breaking down the project into milestones. Begin with the target completion date of the overall project. Is there a firm deadline? Have you committed to a timeframe for the completion? Take this information and begin to work backwards.

First break the project down into milestones. Think about what you want to have completed by when (ensuring that these milestones are realistic). These milestones can be further broken down into tasks – what actionable steps need to be taken each day to get to your milestones? Assign each task to a member of your team, clearly articulating the deadline for each task.

In summary from the Harvard Business Review Guide to Project Management, available exclusively from *Acce/5*, the process of “time boxing” is recommended to boost productivity. Time boxing includes the following steps:

- Write out all tasks that must be completed within a time frame
- Estimate how long each item on the list will take
- Block off the time on calendars for each item

Time blocking allows you to take control of the project schedule, and it can boost your team’s productivity (HRB Guide to Project Management, 2012).



# Check-in and Adjust Regularly

You have given your team the resources and information necessary to begin the project, but that doesn't mean that you can step back now. Throughout the life of the project, you must commit to regularly checking-in with your team, even if it seems as though everything is going well.

For an effective check-in meeting, you must start with an agenda. Have a list of everything that needs to be discussed throughout the meeting. Be sure that your team stays focused and that conversations don't get off-topic. However, it is also important to give others the floor. Be sure to block out time at the end of each meeting for the team to discuss any roadblocks and to brainstorm with each other.

Finally, it is your job to send a follow-up email to each attendee summarizing what was discussed, what was decided and any new deliverables.

If you are meeting with your team regularly, then you have a pulse of how the project is going. Use the information you receive in these meetings to adjust the project as necessary. Be sure to communicate all changes to your stakeholders so that they are kept "in the loop."



# Close the Project and Follow Up After

After working with your team to complete the project, it is time to descend down the project management mountain. Meet with your team one last time to review all pieces of the project. Be sure that you are aware of all aspects of the work so that you are prepared to discuss any issues with your stakeholders. It is also important to document and organize all information associated with the project.

Once you feel confident that the project was completed, communicate this to your stakeholders. Host a wrap-up meeting (or celebration) to officially “close” the project.

After the completion of a project, it is important to look back on any lessons learned. Within three to six months of the project being closed, reflect on what worked and what didn't. Depending on the scope and success of the project, this can be a team or individual task.

If you would like a more thorough follow-up, then it is best to host a formal meeting with the team members and stakeholders. In the summary for the book “10 Steps to Successful Project Management,” available on *Accel5*, author Lou Russell recommends a follow-up meeting with team members and stakeholders. It is recommended that the facilitator is someone who was not involved in the project, as they will have a fresh perspective and can offer new insight. (Russell, 2007).



# All Information Provided by *Acce/5*®

EBSCO's corporate learning solution, *Acce/5*, features business book summaries, articles and videos to help improve soft skills such as project management, leadership, teamwork and more. Access an immense and regularly updated library of information from top thought leaders. Customize your platform to ensure that employees are focusing on the skills that matter most to your company. Request a free trial or more information today.

## SOURCES

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