

Project Manager

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Every year the offshore industry completes a huge number of projects, each run by a project manager who could be working either for a contractor, consultant or client (most often an oil company) or alternatively for a government department or approval body such as a certifying authority.

Project managers come from every type of engineering, scientific, mathematical and IT background, attracted as much by the variety of roles in the offshore industry as by the opportunities for travel and the extra dimension that the offshore environment brings to project management.

Good project management is essential for the on-time and on-budget delivery of the many complex and challenging offshore projects being developed today. As well as being skilled in communicating, supervising a team, client liaison and contract management, project managers must also have a thorough knowledge of their own company, engineering and technology. All of these qualities must come together to successfully complete a project where different solutions, time and budget pressures, and conflicting ideas need to be balanced and managed on a daily basis.

Projects need to be feasible, economical, safe, and delivered on time and to budget, while also being respectful of the environment and not wasteful in the use of material – a tough wish list. All of this takes a special combination of aptitude, knowledge, vision and commitment.

Few projects are repeated in the industry so it delivers a lifetime of challenges set against a constantly evolving technological and commercial background.

Most projects are multidisciplinary, which means working alongside and leading other experts while both stretching and widening one's own knowledge at the same time.

The work can be office-based, located on sites either onshore or offshore or in a combination of locations.

Education and Qualifications Required

Many project managers reach this position after gaining experience as a project engineer. Please see the accompanying sheet in this series 'I want to be an offshore engineer'.

Skills and Training Required

Working in the offshore industry involves a continuous programme of training and development. Some of this will be provided 'on the job' while some of the more formal training in specific subjects will be delivered by external specialists.

Success as a project manager usually requires experience of working on similar projects, all-round company knowledge, good communication and leadership skills, top level technical expertise, commercial and contracts acumen as well as the ability to liaise with clients. Project managers must be level-headed and able to work under pressure.

To work offshore in any capacity it is usually necessary to complete a 'Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training' (BOSIET) course. This generally includes first aid, safety at sea, the basics of fire and fire fighting and 'HUET' – helicopter underwater escape training. In many regions, someone who has not successfully completed a course of this nature will not be permitted to work offshore. This would not be required for those project managers who are 100% office based.

Medical Fitness

In many areas of the world, potential offshore workers must undergo and pass a special medical examination. These requirements may vary from country to country, but usually involve a medical leading to a certificate which may be valid for one or more years. The requirements are not unduly onerous for fit and active people but certain common conditions, or previous injuries, can be a cause for failure. If in any doubt, interested persons should seek out a doctor knowledgeable about offshore standards before they seek work or embark on a course of training. This would not be required for those project managers who are 100% office based.

Working Conditions and Prospects

Project managers can expect to work on projects in the offshore industry all over the world. Work may be based at overseas site locations or in the office anywhere in the world, which means that the career can suit all aspirations. Project managers have to be resourceful, resilient and able to work both as part of a team and independently. They will take responsibility for success and need to be able to deal with the challenges this brings.

Career development is a never-ending process in the offshore industry. Many employers encourage their project managers to pursue professional qualifications, for example to become a 'chartered engineer'.

Opportunities for career progression are there to be grasped. After seeing several different projects from inception through to completion, those with all-round aptitude, experience and desire may progress to the company management structure. Some engineering companies will have project managers on their board of directors.

Further Information

Further details of work in the marine contracting sector can be seen at www.imca-int.com/careers

One of a series of IMCA careers factsheets, including the following, with case studies on individuals working in selected positions (*) also available:

- ◇ I want to be an Offshore Engineer
- ◇ I want to be a Diver *
- ◇ I want to be a Life Support Technician
- ◇ I want to be a Dynamic Positioning (DP) Operator
- ◇ I want to be a Deck or Engineering Officer
- ◇ I want to be an Offshore Surveyor *
- ◇ I want to be a Data Processor *
- ◇ I want to be a Geophysicist *
- ◇ I want to be a Survey Engineer/Technician *
- ◇ I want to work with ROVs *