

PROJECT MANAGER

MOST PROJECTS REQUIRE THE WORK OF MANY DIFFERENT TEAMS. PROJECT MANAGERS ORGANIZE THE SCHEDULES, BUDGETS, AND COMMUNICATIONS TO KEEP EVERYONE ON TRACK

It's nine at night and while Ruth is unwinding on the sofa with her husband with a show after a busy day, a message comes in from Italy on her phone. Without him even noticing, she sends a quick reply and the message automatically forwards to her programming team in India to take care of it. Her formal duties won't start until the morning, but her customers and team are running at all hours of the day. She has the team and software to back her up and keep everything humming along 24/7. Ruth works for a division of Expedia where she is a project manager. Many people know Expedia as a website that helps people purchase flights and hotels, or otherwise make travel plans. Her division within Expedia creates a product specifically tailored for businesses to purchase and manage travel services for their traveling employees. Because the needs of every company are different, they customize the software to those unique requirements. Ruth's job is both to track the progress of customizations from her team of programmers, and assist her customers to use that software and navigate new features. She never would



FOR THE RECORD

EDUCATION

COLLEGE:

Illinois State University

Normal, Illinois 2011

Marketing and International Business

Illinois State University

Normal, Illinois 2013

Masters of Business Administration (MBA), Marketing

WORK HISTORY

Expeditors International

Customs Brokerage Agent

2013 - 2014

St. Lewis, Missouri

Landstar

Export Team Leader

2014 - 2015

Rockford, Illinois

Outcome Health

Senior Implementation Specialist

2016- 2017

Chicago, Illinois

Egencia (An Expedia Company)

Implementation Project Manager

Director

2017 - Present

Chicago, Illinois

YOU MIGHT LIKE THIS CAREER IF:

You like people and helping them solve problems. It requires good relationship skills, patience, multi-tasking, and adapting to new software. If you like to plan events and parties and have excellent organizational skills, you might enjoy this career.

have expected to be working in the tech industry when she was exploring careers in high school, but now couldn't imagine doing anything else!

HIGH SCHOOL CHOICES

While still a high school student, Ruth was ambitious when she thought of her future. The problem was, she didn't know what that

would look like. She had so many interests and passions in athletics and academics. It was hard to know just what to focus on. "It was very overwhelming. For a short time, the plan was not to go to college but to travel and experience different cultures and see how they lived. I had studied Spanish at a college level and was interested in languages and linguistics." She was also interested in business, finance and economics. Her parents trusted her to make the best decision so when she decided she would rather travel than go to college, they were not worried about it.

Ruth made a bet with herself: "If I didn't get into one of the schools of my choice with a soccer scholarship, I wouldn't go to college and would just travel for a while. I applied to a lot of different schools and got into

all the ones I wanted. So I entered college with a scholarship to play soccer."

COLLEGE ATHLECTICS, ACADEMIC ADVISOR AND AN MBA

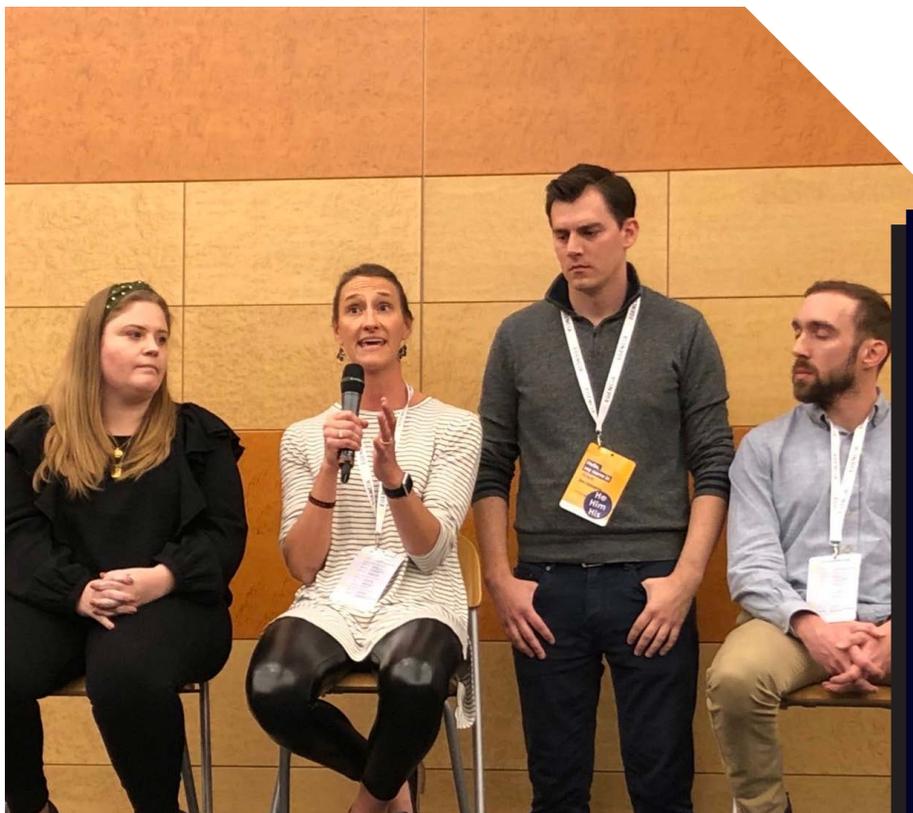
Ruth chose Illinois State University, a few hours away from her hometown in northwest Indiana. She double majored in International Business and Marketing with a minor in Spanish. She was very busy playing soccer, in addition to all her schoolwork.

"I got very confused about my future career because business is very generic and there were so many routes I could go. I was forced to take classes in different areas like accounting, finance, economics, sales and market research. All these classes focused on completely different careers in the

same major. Some careers might require a secondary degree. I wanted to get out of college and get right into a career if possible."

Because she was so busy with soccer, she didn't go to job fairs or interview for jobs before getting out of college. She searched jobs on her own using keyword searches like "international business," She did get two job offers in the spring of her senior year. One in sales and one in marketing research. "I felt really pressured to take a job just to have a job and then my advisor suggested I stay on for grad school for a Masters of Business Administration (MBA)."

That was a huge decision, but her school sweetened the deal by giving her an academic advisor role as a graduate assistant in the athletic department for the undergraduate athletes. She advised athletes one-on-one to help them handle their workload and pass



RUTH PRESENTS DURING A COMPANY RETREAT IN ROME, ITALY

While Ruth now works from home, her team gathers from around the world in person to build relational bonds, brainstorm, plan and strategize for the future.

Working for a global company can be an exciting way to collaborate with people from all over the world.

“Startups are an amazing way to get your foot in the door because they don’t have the traditional requirements”

their classes. It was in this role that she discovered her true professional calling. “I absolutely loved my position as advisor, more than the MBA program itself. It was then that I realized I needed to work one-on-one with people and help them solve problems. I also liked working on projects with an athlete or team to help them succeed.”

FIRST JOB

When Ruth got out of college she took a job that was connected to international business dealing with imports, exports, and customs. She worked one-on-one with clients to solve problems. This was an operations role, where productivity was valued the most. “The more you got done in less time, the more profit you were bringing to the company. I didn’t really enjoy that aspect because quality was being neglected.”

She started to hunger for a career change, especially in the tech industry. She thought it might be a better fit than the more traditional company where she

worked. “The tech industry is a lot more flexible and modern in how to address customer needs across teams. In my old job, we didn’t talk to other teams in my company to understand their pain points and areas of opportunity. This limited my ability to take care of my customers and find really good solutions.” She was also looking to focus less on the process in her work and more on the people.

CAREER CHANGE TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Ruth thought project management seemed like a better role for her. She learned that some companies have different titles for similar jobs, like “implementation” or “onboarding” manager. She was able to expand her search to include multiple job titles. “I found my first tech job because I was looking for jobs in downtown Chicago. I had been following the company, Outcome Health, for a little while and then I had a friend who posted on LinkedIn they were looking for project managers. I messaged my friend and it turned out I

had 2 friends who also worked there. They referred me for the position.” She read the job description and she knew it was perfect for her. “When you read a job description and it doesn’t sound exciting to you then that’s a clear indication that you shouldn’t even apply for that job.”

“Startups are an amazing way to get your foot in the door because they don’t have the traditional requirements many established companies have. I wasn’t exactly qualified on paper for the position I had gotten, but I tailored my resume to call out all the things I was already doing that aligned with the job description. It’s important to apply, even if you don’t think you’re qualified.” She applied, interviewed well and got the job. “It was the most pivotal career move I had made as I jumped from one industry to another and got a significant pay increase.”

Ruth suggests job seekers to read up and do research on startups in the tech industry. “Keep tabs on up and coming startups that are leading the industry. Keep an eye on companies like this that you might like

to work for. Network as much as possible. Go on LinkedIn and find people you may have gone to high school or college with, ask people what their jobs are and how they like them, and set up news alerts on companies that peak your interest.”

Ruth learned very quickly that tech is fast paced. She quickly had to learn new software, both to be able to offer clients the newest software products, but also to use the newest software to do her job. “In my old company it could take months or years to change over systems. In tech, I might be required to change over in a single day.”

Ruth gained a lot of experience and confidence in her first position in tech. She observed as a startup, there were some issues with her company’s finances and legal structure that could be a problem down the road. She decided she’d rather work with a more established and secure company. She found a listing with Expedia

that was just about closing and quickly applied. She later found from her boss that they’d already interviewed

60 candidates for that position and had chosen their new hire until they met Ruth and hired her instead.

WORK ROUTINE

Ruth now works at home, though she started the position working at the Chicago office. She and her husband decided to move to Salt Lake City after a year on the job. They enjoy having an early morning routine together. “We usually wake up at 5:15 and have quiet time for prayer and study until about 6:00 and then do a workout together at home or at the gym.” She normally gets started working between 7:45 and 8:15.

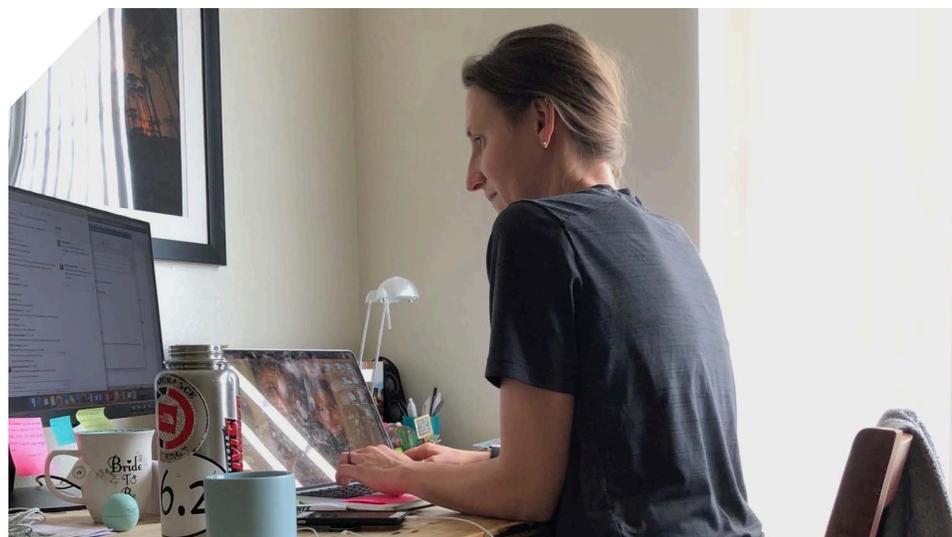
“First thing I do is jump into email. Since my company is global there’s always emails

“In my old company it could take months or years to change over systems. In tech, I might be required to change over in a single day.”

going while I’m sleeping, from teams in the U.K. and India.”

On a normal day she has scheduled three to four one-hour calls. These are all booked two weeks in advance. She’ll do a couple in the morning and a couple in the afternoon. In between meetings, she answers emails and Slack messages. “It could be a message from a sales team member asking a question from a client, or from an account manager on how to configure the platform.”

Ruth manages project plans. She reviews what deliverables are expected from programmers or her clients and tracks the health of a project by color codes: green, yellow, or red. Red means a project



WORKING FROM HOME

While it’s true that you can work in your pajamas, there can be downsides to working from home. Many people miss the vitality of a real office with the noise and social interaction, many find that they can get much more done by working from home and save a lot of time and money by not commuting daily. Ruth makes sure to take breaks throughout the day.



PRESENTING A NEW PROJECT PLAN

Ruth gets to help organize and oversee the master plan of the projects of her company. Because she understands the needs of her customers from being client-facing, she's able to help define the evolution of features that her company can put forward in the next version.

could be put on hold. There are a lot teams involved in keeping a project moving forward. "There's certain things that I have to do. I manage other teams that are getting to me what they need. I make sure programmers deliver to meet the needs of our customers."

Besides her one-on-one client calls, she participates in an hour team meeting every day but Friday. These include general team meetings, product updates, industry and security updates.

Ruth tries to take about forty-five minutes for herself for a lunch break. Sometimes she sits at her desk or takes a walk around the block outside. She normally wraps up the main part of her day around three in the

afternoon. "Things quiet down for a few hours until around six or seven when a new set of emails come in. From seven to nine at night I intermittently answer emails. Usually they just require quick responses. I can still chill out on the couch and casually answer."

Due to the client facing nature of her job, she has to be accommodating to her

"You have to be willing to do things that are not always comfortable. It can be hard to tell a client 'no' when they're requesting too much attention."

customers' needs. Sometimes they can be demanding. "You have to be willing to do things that are not always comfortable. It can be hard to tell a client 'no' when they're requesting too much attention. It's frustrating because you're really at

the mercy of your clients' schedule. Also things can change really quickly and that changes the process very quickly like security breaches, product updates or client concerns."

"If you're thinking about project management as a career, really consider your skill sets. Do you like to stay organized, plan events or be in charge of things?"

Look at different companies and what project management means to those

companies. Every company has a different definition of that. Broaden your horizon and make sure that the job you seek meets your desires and the exciting things you like about your work."

DATA FILE

PROJECT MANAGER

DOT: 189.117-030

O*NET: 13-1082.00

HC:EC

COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

WORK DESCRIPTION

Project Managers can have a wide range of responsibilities and expertise depending on the company they work for. They might also be called Implementation Managers or Onboarding Managers. They are in charge of organizing and overseeing the work that goes into a project, often from many different teams. They may also handle the budgets, time management, and client relationships. This could include facilitating the use of new computers, software, or features so it is common for project managers to work closely with information technology (IT) and software development staff. The implementation manager is a type of project manager that works specifically on introducing new systems and equipment. They typically don't program software, but they do have the responsibility of ensuring that new additions and features to software are implemented effectively.

WORKING CONDITIONS

They might work closely with a small team of programmers and other team members and executive staff. Many spend a lot of time in meetings and on phone calls with their clients. While in-person relationships are important to this job, it is common to work either from an office or from home, using communication tools like email, chat, and project management software.

PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

Project Managers normally work in tech and information technology (IT) but could be employed in any medium to large size company that uses software for their business, or produces custom software for their clients.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A bachelor's degree is usually required. Since many project managers work closely with IT professionals and software developers, experience in computer science or a similar discipline can be helpful. Many project managers have education in business, marketing, or economics. Employers seek project managers with relevant experience, which can be gained by working in entry-level IT jobs or through internship programs. Project Management Professional (PMP) certification may be necessary for some positions.

JOB OUTLOOK

The Project Management Institute (PMI) reports an "extraordinarily positive jobs outlook for skilled project professionals." Pointing to a rising need for project management professionals globally as well as a larger portion of the existing professional talent pool reaching retirement age, they estimate that employers will need 87.7 million individuals working in project management-oriented roles by 2027.

SALARY RANGE

In 2020, PayScale reported that implementation managers earned a median annual salary of \$73,290.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Project Managers can be found in every type of industry. There are related careers in information technology such as Computer Networking Specialist, Computer Forensic

Analysis, Information Security Specialist are Computer System Specialist. Other project managers might have responsibilities similar to those in Sales, Marketing, or Business Management departments.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Seek out an internship in a tech company. Spend time learning different industry standard business and project management, or budget and time tracking software. Spreadsheets are your friend. Learn about "Agile" and become a "Scrum Master," Read articles on the future of technology and business.

LIFESTYLE/HOURS

Monday through Friday business hours, though some teams could be working from different time zones. Project managers can find themselves working non-standard business hours for some communications or when trying to complete a deadline.

MORE INFO**Professional Organizations**

IProject Management Institute (Project Management Professional Certification) - www.pmi.org

Agile Alliance (Agile software development process) - www.agilealliance.org

The subject of this biography is not available to answer personal inquiries.