



How to write a project report

A project report is a crucial way for a project manager to present a project, and it can be used along with a project plan to justify budgets, suggest team members and request resources which will be required to run the project.

During the project, it can be used to keep the key players or stakeholders up to date with the status of the project and the end of the project it will be a final report on the completion and outcome of the project.

Depending on the project, you may need to write a few different reports for different people or departments involved in the project. By sending reports to specific groups of stakeholders, with information that is only relevant to them, you will avoid this information getting lost or overlooked in long blanket reports.

Other than the initial project report, there are two types of project reports you will need to be able to write, firstly, the project status report as well as a project completion report. In this article, we will detail why these reports are important, who they need to be addressed to and how you need to write them.

Project Status Report

This is a report which will be written at regular intervals throughout the duration of the project and is used to keep the necessary stakeholders up to date on the status of the project.

The report will offer a summary of the projects initial timeline, the current progress of the project and any significant changes which have been made to the timeline. It can also be used to report any change in team members and put forward any requests for additional resources which may be required.

This report can help to maintain the momentum of a long term project by highlighting the achievement of certain milestones and providing reminders of targets and along the way.

So who needs to see this type of report?

- Project Management team
- Project Stakeholders
- Finance Department and sponsors
- Contractors

What needs to be included in this report?

Once you have identified which group of people you will be writing the report for, you can then decide what relevant information to include.

Timeline and targets

It is always good to provide a summary of the projects timelines and targets to get people up to speed, remember they may have a number of projects they are involved in. You can then report on the current status of the project, goals which have been achieved and then go on to inform them of any adjustments which need to be made and the reasons for the changes. Make sure that you are accurate and realistic when reporting these details.

Resources

Referencing the initial project plan you can report on the resources which have been used to date, the resources you still have available and request any new resources you may require, these can include physical as well as human resources.

Funding and budget

This is a very important part of the report as it can be used to keep track of the project has come in over or under budget, at any particular point, this can then be used to more accurately formulate future project plans. Your report needs to include a clear overview of the initial budget, expenses to date and predicted expenses.

Team performance

This is an opportunity for you to compare your teams' performance to the initial goals and targets that were set out in the project plan. You can identify any issues with the project which may be creating unforeseen challenges for your team and which may be affecting their ability to achieve these goals and targets. Remember, just because certain goals and targets have not been achieved, does not mean that your team is failing. You can use this as a platform to commend your team on their achievements and praise particular members who have been exemplary.

Notable changes

In light of the feedback given in the report, you can now put forward any changes or recommendations you may have that need to be implemented in order to achieve the goals and targets for this project.

Risk management

Risk management is a project manager's most important skillset, you need to be able to identify and predict any risks and have a number of plans in place to mitigate these risks. It is important to review these details frequently during a project to make sure that the plan in place is adequate or if it is time to switch to Plan B.

When do you write this report?

How often you will need to submit a report will depend largely on the duration of the project, the predicted timeline, goals and targets which are set. Some projects may run over a number of years, in which case it would suffice to submit a quarterly report. However, if your project is only going to span 6 months to a year then you would be better to submit a monthly report.

Project completion report

This will be the final project report which you will submit, in this report, you will give a summary of the initial project plan and report and then go on to give an assessment of the success of the project.

This is one of the most important reports you will write as it will be used in successfully setting up future projects. Here are a few keys steps to follow to help you write this report:

Project overview

You can provide a general overview and summary statement which is a brief description of the project which can be taken the initial project plan and report. This will highlight the expectation of the final outcome of the project.

Results and Outcomes of the project

Here you can go into more detail regarding the final result of the project, you will review the performance of the teams and the outcome versus the target of the project. There are a few different factors to look at when assessing the success of a project:

- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Project cost
- The overall quality of the project

Project scope, cost and schedule

In order to ascertain the scope of a project you need to report on the goals and tasks of the project, if and how these were achieved and how they related to deliverables and deadlines. In addition to this, you are looking at the project inception to completion and showing the actual project schedule and costs in relation to the initial projections.

Project performance analysis

This is the most important part of your report, it expands on the point above but goes into more detail regarding the outcome of the project in terms of the budget and schedule which was set out in the original project plan and the actual final budget and timeline of the project. To effectively provide this information you need to present the following three points:

- Goals and Objective Performance - compare what you initially hoped to achieve with the project to what has actually been achieved. How often did you need to adjust your goals during the project?
- Success Criteria Performance - these criteria can vary substantially project to project and one of a project manager's main tasks is to set out the KPI, key performance indicators, at the beginning of the project. Here, you assess how the project performed in terms of these KPIs?
- Schedule and Budget Performance - did the project meet the schedule deadlines and budget targets? In hindsight, was the initial budget and schedule realistic? If not you need to clearly detail why and what could have been done differently to improve performance in this regard.

Project highlights

Look back at your project status reports and summarise the most important aspects of the project those reports.

Challenges and Risks

Again referring to your status reports you can now highlight any challenges you faced during the project, what action was taken to overcome these challenges and what could be done differently in planning future projects to avoid these challenges.

Looking at the initial risk assessment for the project, which could be anything weather, safety, geographical factors etc., were there any unforeseen risks which were faced during the project and what can be done to mitigate these risks in the future.

Knowledge gained

Every project brings a unique opportunity to work with stakeholders different industries and there are valuable lessons to be learnt this experience. Here you can highlight any of those lessons which were learnt during the implementation of this project.

How to write your report?

Give as much information as you can, be honest and realistic at all times, write clearly and concisely and celebrate the success of the project.