

# Project Management Series

## SPOTLIGHT ON MARKETING



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**Education** – B.Comm.(Co-op.)'14, Memorial University

**Experience** – Nancy has worked at m5 Communications, a large, well-established marketing agency. She currently works in a startup, Mysa, where she has held two roles: marketing project manager, where she creates and implements marketing processes from the ground up, and marketing production lead, where she plans, manages and executes marketing projects with a team of designers.



NANCY SAUNDERS

### LET'S TALK ABOUT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

#### What's the importance of project management within startups or entrepreneurial organizations?

Mysa is a fairly new company focusing on fighting climate change by producing and selling smart thermostats that reduce energy consumption, lowering customers' monthly power expenses.

I was hired at Mysa as a project manager at the perfect time. The company was growing exponentially and being involved early in that growth allowed me to help navigate the team by implementing the necessary processes for the marketing department to follow to allow for consistent, quality and timely release of our marketing campaigns.

Before Mysa had a marketing project manager, there were times when the department was scrambling to complete and get projects released through no fault of their own, but simply because there was no structure, task lists, deadlines or processes to guide them.

#### What are the responsibilities of a marketing production lead/project manager at Mysa?

When I first started working at Mysa, my primary role as a marketing production lead and project manager was developing marketing processes for existing employees and new hires to follow. The purpose of these processes is to ensure the quality, consistency and timely creation of marketing campaigns and projects.

As my time with Mysa has progressed and I finished developing and establishing the marketing processes, my role has become more managerial, meaning I lead an entire team. I assist in the planning, managing and executing of marketing-related projects within Mysa. My duties include prioritizing and delegating tasks, creating timelines and work-back schedules, and scheduling the launches of each project throughout the year. Additionally, I oversee a team of designers and ensure they have everything they need to execute their responsibilities.

***“The first or second person that every start-up should hire is a project manager, to set the tone and create the processes to ensure success.”***

***“At Mysa, aside from our major campaigns, there are so many projects that pop up, it’s never the same. There’s always something new.”***

### **How has project management helped Mysa achieve its goals?**

We live and breathe campaigns and projects within our departments. Black Friday and Cyber Monday are when we have our most extensive campaigns. We also have smaller projects and ongoing updates such as social paid media, email, web page updates and developments, search engine optimization (SEO) content, and adding tags and metadata, which allows us to track and gain analytics and data correctly. In addition, there is A/B testing, which is where we test variations of the same design to see which ad resonates better with our target audience.

From a project management standpoint, I liaise with other team leads within the marketing team (i.e. e-comm, data and analytics) and project owners to develop task lists, work-back schedules and timelines for the creative aspects of the project. Then, I make sure that everyone on the creative and design team is aware of what they are working on, all the specifics of that project (i.e. text limits, sizes, video lengths), and how long they have. I also ensure that all team members are completing tasks on time. Additionally, I delegate coverage if someone is on vacation because those smaller projects within a campaign still need to be completed.

***“If you set up the proper foundation for the team with project management processes, you’re setting your team up for success.”***

### **How have your education and experiences prepared you for project management?**

First, the skills I learned from my co-op placements during my undergrad have directly related to my current roles. For example, during two of my placements (at Memorial University and the Community Business Development Corporation), I had the opportunity to roll out new programs from start to finish. With the Memorial placement, I also had the opportunity to help co-ordinate MUNDays, work with stakeholders and manage the budget.

Second, knowing your team is crucial for effective delivery of information and critiques, and a leadership course I took taught

me how to manage team member expectations, emotions and varying personalities.

Third, the Asana project management software and project management training have helped me learn to prioritize tasks, increase my time management skills, and appropriately adjust deadlines and timelines. Before this training, I was more hesitant to make changes for fear of making a mistake that would affect the people or outcome of the project.

The final, most invaluable piece of training that helped grow my project management skills was the mentoring program offered through Mysa. During this training, I got to work with a project manager in a similar role employed with Gap/Banana Republic. The job shadowing and mentorship opportunities are why our marketing processes are as strong as they are. I would never have been as successful in my project management position without these opportunities.

### **What advice do you have for marketing majors who want to pursue project management in the future?**

Apply for the job you want. I didn’t apply for the project manager job at Mysa at first because I didn’t feel I had the appropriate skill set. I didn’t give myself enough credit for what I’m capable of and my skill sets. Look at your strengths and the skills you have or are willing to get, and research jobs that go along with those skills. If you are good at time management, are organized and enjoy fast-paced and constantly changing environments, project management is for you!

I fell into project management but, after working in the field, I now know I want to stay in the field and believe obtaining my PMP certificate would be beneficial. Apply for opportunities and take the risk; you’re no further behind if you don’t get the job than if you hadn’t done anything.

## **Contact us**

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