

Security Project Management

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What Is Security Project Management?

Security project management is the discipline of planning, executing and delivering security-specific infrastructure, systems, and services that protect people, property and assets. Unlike general project management, security project managers (SPMs) must balance standard PM practices with specialized knowledge of physical and electronic security systems.

Good vs. Great Security Project Managers

A good security project manager keeps a project on time and within budget. A great security project manager does that while also proactively identifying risks, ensuring system quality and enhancing client trust. Great SPMs know how to lead teams, interpret technical documents, work cross-functionally with trades and keep customer satisfaction at the core.

Foundational Competencies

- **Field Experience:** Walking the job, seeing problems firsthand and building rapport with trades and general contractors
- **System Understanding:** Proficiency in access control, video surveillance, intrusion detection, intercoms and communication systems
- **IT and Network Awareness:** Understanding of hardware, IP-based systems and software integration

CORE SKILLSETS



Responsibility & Accountability



Plans and Specifications



Organization



Communication Skills



Proficiency with Basic Tools

Basic Skill Sets and Expertise

Responsibility and Accountability

- Team Management: Assigning tasks, resolving conflicts and mentoring
- Oversight of tools, equipment and vehicles
- Ensuring availability, security and proper usage of assets on site

Plans and Specifications

A solid SPM must read and interpret:

- Architectural drawings
- Engineering designs
- Riser diagrams, device locations, sections and detailed specs

Organization

- Daily and weekly task tracking is essential
- Software tools and detailed lists ensure nothing falls through the cracks

Communication Skills

- Written: Clear documentation, RFIs, submittals and reporting
- Verbal: Leading meetings, resolving issues and coordinating across trades

Proficiency With Basic Tools

- Microsoft Word and Excel for reports and logs
- IT, manufacturer and industry tools for configuration and diagnostics

Advanced Skill Sets and Expertise

Project Types and Complexity

An SPM must manage:

- New builds, renovations, system replacements and design-build jobs
- Multiple projects at once, each with its own schedule, scope and team
- Contracts, submittals, closeouts and billing cycles.

Scheduling and Budget Management

- Use of Gantt charts, budget tracking tools and schedule of values
- Earned value management and cost-to-complete forecasting

Working With General Contractors

- Acting as a prime contractor or subcontractor
- Managing coordination with other trades
- Ensuring accurate as-builts and construction documentation

Additional Considerations

- Navigating union regulations and prevailing wage jobs
- Compliance with NFPA codes, building codes and ADA requirements.
- Staying up to date through continuing education and industry certifications

ADVANCED SKILLSETS



Project Types and Complexity



Scheduling and Budget Management



Working with General Contractors



Regulations and Continuing Education

PROJECT NAME			PROJECT LEAD				PROJECT START DATE				PROJECT END DATE				TODAY'S DATE			
TASK ID	TASK	% DONE	ASSIGNED TO	START DATE	END DATE	PHASE ONE			PHASE TWO			PHASE THREE			PHASE FOUR			
						WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12	
1	Project Conception and Initiation																	
1.1	Project Charter	100%																
1.1.1	Project Charter Revisions	100%																
1.2	Research	90%																
1.3	Projections	40%																
1.4	Stakeholders	70%																
1.5	Guidelines	40%																
1.6	Project Initiation	50%																
2	Project Definition and Planning																	
2.1	Scope and Goal Setting	5%																
2.2	Budget	30%																
2.3	Communication Plan	0%																
2.4	Risk Management	0%																
3	Project Launch and Execution																	
3.1	Status and Tracking	0%																
3.2	KPIs	0%																
3.2.1	Monitoring	0%																
3.2.2	Forecasts	0%																
3.3	Project Updates	0%																
3.3.1	Chart Updates	0%																
4	Project Performance / Monitoring																	
4.1	Project Objectives	0%																
4.2	Quality Deliverables	0%																
4.3	Effort and Cost Tracking	0%																
4.4	Project Performance	0%																

A Successful Project Example

One standout project involved two school campuses: one a full retrofit, the other a new construction. The work required system upgrades, coordination with architects, general contractors and other trades and solutions that balanced urban access, first responder needs and overall safety. Having the tools and mindset from the Certified Security Project Manager (CSPM) credential allowed me to successfully deliver a complex project on time and on budget. Without those skills, the project's challenges could have easily led to delays and frustration.

Thoughts for Aspiring SPMs

My advice to anyone looking to grow in the security industry:

- Invest in certifications that *actually* prepare you for what the job requires.
- Learn from every project — what worked, what didn't and why.
- Stay curious. Technology changes fast. The best SPMs evolve with it.
- Build trust. Success depends on people—your team, your stakeholders, your clients.
- Deliver solutions that do more than “check the box.” Deliver outcomes that matter.

Security project management isn't just about getting hardware installed—it's about creating environments where people feel safer and systems work seamlessly. The CSPM has helped me do that, and it continues to open new doors in my career.

Your Road Map to Success

Building a Project Management Career

- ☐ **Start small**, get experience with smaller projects or assistant PM roles.
- ☐ Understand project types, scopes and how labor and location impact delivery.
- ☐ Train through **manufacturers, SIA and leadership programs**.
- ☐ Prioritize continual learning —even if it means investing time outside of work.

Career Progression

- ☐ Invest in your growth — this opens doors to promotions, larger projects and leadership roles.
- ☐ Encourage and mentor new talent —**diversity**, especially encouraging **women in project management**, strengthens the field.

How Has Being a Certified Security Project Manager Helped My Career?

Becoming a CSPM has had a meaningful and lasting impact on my professional journey in the security industry. It's not just about passing a test —it's about developing the mindset, skills, and strategic awareness needed to manage complex security projects effectively and confidently. There are many certification programs out there that might fit the bill for you. I chose CSPM, I am confident that most accredited programs will take you from good to great.

Bridging Gaps in the Field

Security today sits at the intersection of physical, digital, and human elements. The CSPM has helped me bridge these areas—especially the increasing overlap with IT and cybersecurity. It's no longer enough to install systems that “just work”; clients expect seamless integration, data-driven insights, and privacy-conscious solutions. The CSPM coursework and real-world examples help project managers learn to ask better questions, plan more effectively and avoid costly oversights.

In 2021, I was invited to join the SPM instructor team. Teaching has become one of the most rewarding aspects of my career. Sharing not only knowledge but also practical, real-world scenarios with attendees has been an incredible experience. The best part? Learning from them in return. We dive into the realities of security project work —retrofitting older systems, navigating construction timelines, managing subcontractors and explaining system designs to non-technical stakeholders.

Real-World Relevance

Many project management classes are broad and focus solely on textbook concepts. The SPM program is different —it focuses on *security* project management, using scenarios and domain-specific challenges that align with the work security professionals actually face. The courses also help prepare attendees for the CSPM exam by breaking down the certification domains and tying them directly to real security projects. Attendees regularly say how refreshing and applicable the training is, especially when it comes to stakeholder communication, coordination across trades and solving field-specific problems.