

RESEARCH ON KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION OF JUNIOR PROJECT MANAGER

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Purpose: The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the key requirements for candidates for the position of Junior Project Manager in job offers on recruitment portals.

Design/methodology/approach: The study used a literature review and quantitative research using a survey questionnaire. The analysis was conducted on the basis of 70 job offers available on recruitment portals.

Findings: The results of research and analyzes of job offers indicate the growing importance of soft skills, such as communication and independence, as well as 2-5 years of experience in project management. Employers prefer candidates who combine theoretical and practical knowledge.

Research limitations/implications: The limitation of the research concerns in particular the location of job advertisements for the position of Junior Project Managers. Most offers concern recruitment to companies located in Wrocław. The concept of Junior Project Manager is very rarely found in the literature. Our research therefore partially fills this gap.

Practical implications: The study results could be used by project-oriented companies to improve their recruitment processes and by universities to modify their curricula in order to adapt them to the current requirements of the labor market.

Social implications: What will be the impact on society of this research? How will it influence public attitudes? How will it influence (corporate) social responsibility or environmental issues? How could it inform public or industry policy? How might it affect quality of life? Not all papers will have social implications.

Originality/value: The novelty of the article is that it discusses an issue that rarely appears in the literature on the subject, i.e. the requirements set for recruitment for the position of Junior Project Manager. The research results can be addressed to recruiters and people responsible for shaping study programs at universities.

Keywords: Junior Project Manager, competences, requirements, recruitment.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Project management is one of the key tools of modern organisations to achieve their strategic objectives in a dynamically changing economic environment. It is the process of planning, organising, controlling and closing project work in order to achieve specific objectives within a set time and budget constraint. The importance of projects in the modern world is steadily increasing and this is an ongoing trend. This is due to a number of circumstances, notably the increasing complexity and variety of problems and projects required to solve them (Trocki, 2012).

The choice of topic for this study was prompted by the growing demand for project management professionals, including junior project managers (Junior Project Managers). As more organisations adopt project-based approaches, recruiters are looking for talent that combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills, as well as the ability to work in multi-disciplinary teams (Crawford, 2005).

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse the key requirements placed on candidates for the position of Junior Project Manager in job offers on recruitment portals. The study focuses on two main aspects: the identification of the most common mandatory requirements, such as work experience or knowledge of project management tools, and the analysis of non-standard requirements that may set candidates apart from the competition.

The study used a literature review and quantitative research using a survey questionnaire. The analysis was based on job vacancies available on recruitment portals. The study provides practical guidance for young candidates as well as for organisations responsible for recruitment processes and universities training in project management.

2. Literature analysis

Both academic literature and practical project management standards point to the vital importance of project managers' competencies in achieving an organisation's objectives. The Project Management Institute, in its PMBOK guide, defines the role of the project manager as the person responsible for managing the project team to achieve project objectives and meet stakeholder expectations (Project Management Institute, 2017). The IPMA ICB standard, on the other hand, emphasises the development of individual competence in project management (International Project Management Association, 2015).

As the demand for project managers grows, so does the interest in their competencies and in standards for competence development and assessment (Crawford, 2005). A project manager, in order to carry out his or her tasks effectively and efficiently, must possess the right

competencies, which can be defined as dispositions in knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable professional tasks to be carried out at an appropriate level (Filipowicz, 2019). A number of studies have been conducted on the competencies of project managers. They show that the most important competencies of a project manager are behavioural (human) competencies. These include interpersonal communication, teamwork, entrepreneurship and creativity, self-reflection and self-management, professionalism and ethics, result orientation, leadership, negotiation, conflict management, among others (Marek-Kołodziej, 2024). Another study also indicates that interpersonal skills as the most important area of a leader's competency, such as: communication skills, inspiration, motivation, building trust, and cooperation (Balcerzyk, Žukovskis, 2024). For Junior Project Managers, on the other hand, it is particularly important to combine technical and interpersonal skills to enable effective collaboration in multidisciplinary and multicultural teams (Borg et al., 2023). The findings show that through initiatives aimed at increasing self-efficacy, organisations can support the development of junior project managers, improving their work readiness and potential for further development (Borg et al., 2023). At the same time, the findings of junior project managers can provide a basis for integrating project management issues into university curricula (Nijhuis et al., 2024).

Understanding the requirements for Junior Project Managers is an essential part of an effective recruitment process. These expectations include knowledge of project management tools such as MS Project or Jira, time management skills, as well as interpersonal competencies such as communication and teamwork. In addition, organisations often expect candidates to be adaptable and to work under time pressure.

In the light of the theoretical issues presented, the following section of the study will present the results of an analysis of job offers for the position of Junior Project Manager posted on recruitment portals, showing the detailed requirements for candidates at this career stage.

3. Research process

The research presented in this article was conducted by a team of five people who are members of the Project Management Group Scientific Association at the Faculty of Management, Wrocław University of Science and Technology. The aim of the research was to identify and analyse the requirements for candidates for the position of Junior Project Manager on the labour market, including what competencies, work experience and personality traits considered key.

The survey consisted of four stages:

1. Stage I - creation of a tool to collect data.
2. Stage II - data collection.
3. Stage III - data selection.
4. Stage IV - analysis of results.

A detailed description of the different stages of the study is presented later in the paper.

3.1. Creation of a tool to collect data

In Stage I, an analytical questionnaire developed using GoogleForms, which allowed information to be collected from job vacancies for the position of Junior Project Manager posted on recruitment portals. The form was designed to allow the research group to enter all details of the mandatory requirements, type of contract, full-time hours and required competencies. Sections of the form included:

- Job publication site (e.g. recruitment portals, company websites).
- Mandatory requirements (language, technical, soft, project management).
- Type of contract and full-time hours.
- Experience required.

3.2. Data collection

The data presented in this article was sourced from the most popular Polish recruitment platforms, which play a key role in the recruitment and candidate selection process, as well as the 'Careers' section from the websites of companies based in Wrocław. The offers came from various industries, including IT, finance, marketing and business services. The study analysed 70 job offers published on eight platforms, which provided a cross-sectional view of the requirements for candidates for the position of Junior Project Manager (Stage II). Figure 1 shows the job offers collected for analysis by the individual online portals from which they originated:

- Indeed (4.29%): A global platform known for its versatility and broad job database. The low participation in the survey may be due to the lower number of offers dedicated to specialised positions in project management (<https://pl.indeed.com/>).
- Other (1.16%): A tiny percentage of offers came from less popular platforms, indicating their limited role in recruitment for the positions analysed.
- BulldogJob (7.14%): A platform aimed mainly at the IT industry, which may suggest a greater specialisation and interest in project-related positions in information technology (<https://bulldogjob.pl/>).
- RocketJob (20%): The largest share in the survey. This platform, despite its relatively short time on the market, has clearly gained recognition among recruiters, which may indicate its effectiveness in reaching young professionals (<https://rocketjobs.pl/>).

- the:protocol (10%): A platform related to the IT industry, which played an important role in the analysis, highlighting the importance of this industry for young project managers (<https://theprotocol.it/>).
- JustJoinIt (11.43%): A popular Polish platform, particularly appreciated in the technology sector, which attracts candidates to work in dynamic environments (<https://justjoin.it/>).
- Pracuj.pl (15.71%): One of the largest recruitment platforms in Poland, widely used in recruiting for positions of various levels (<https://www.pracuj.pl/>).
- LinkedIn (12.86%): An international professional platform with a wide reach that connects candidates with job opportunities in various industries. The high number of listings demonstrates its importance in professional networking and recruitment processes (<https://www.linkedin.com/>).
- No Fluff Jobs (17.41%): A platform specialising in transparent IT adverts that attracts candidates who value clear terms of employment (<https://nofluffjobs.com/pl>).

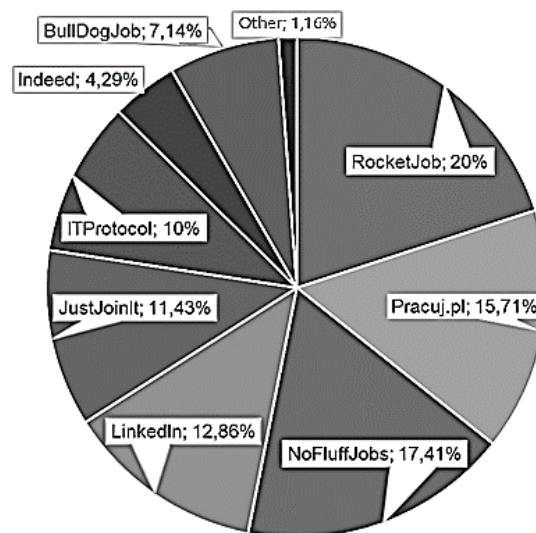


Figure 1. Job vacancies on recruitment portals (%).

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

3.3. Data selection

As part of Stage III, the Team analysed the adverts based on predetermined criteria relating to the job title, location provided and other elements included in the form used to collect them. Only those advertisements that were for Junior Project Manager positions or similar project management roles were considered. In each case, information on the required competencies, work experience, language skills and additional qualifications required by the employers was noted in detail.

3.4. Analysis of results

In Stage IV, the collected data was organised and subjected to detailed analysis. Data visualisation and business analysis tools were used, such as the programme *Tableau*, which allowed the results to be visualised and the number of job vacancies in each industry and the required competencies to be presented graphically. The charts enabled a comparative analysis and a complete picture of the requirements for candidates for the Junior Project Manager position.

4. Results

Based on the analysis, a number of key requirements that dominate job offers for Junior Project Managers have been identified and are shown in Figures 3-5.

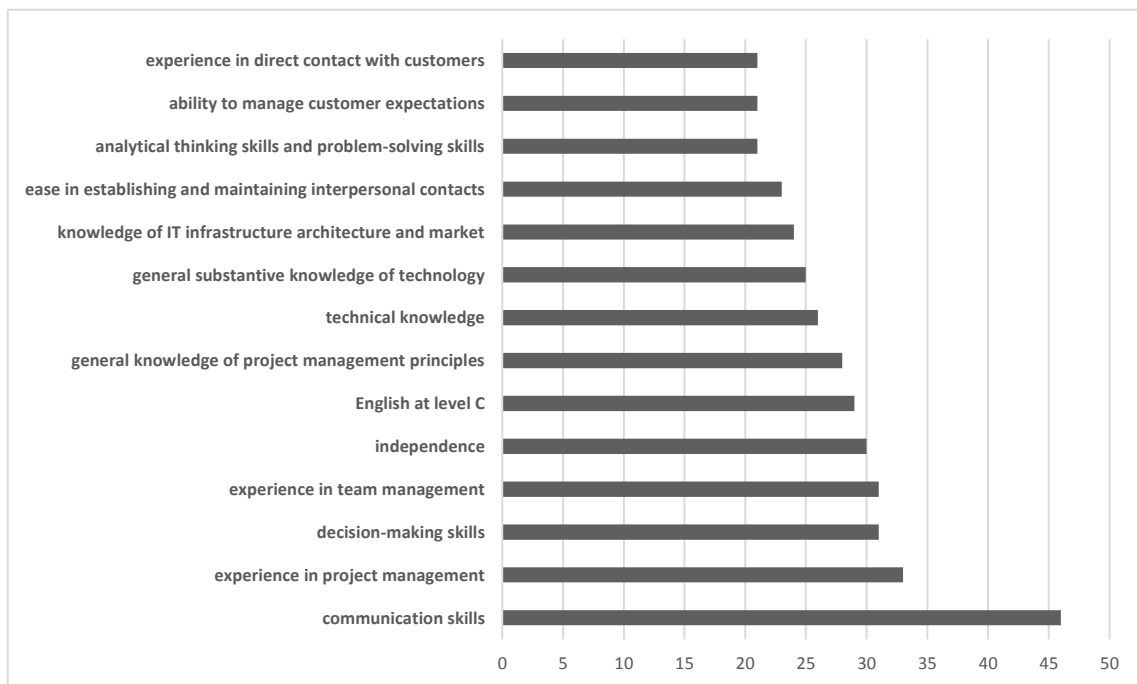


Figure 3. Requirements for the position of Junior Project Manager (1).

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The most common requirement was the ability to communicate, present in 46 offers, indicating the crucial importance of soft skills in project management. These requirements can range from the ability to communicate effectively with team members to external stakeholders, which is essential for effective project management.

A number of offers (in the range of more than 20 offers) also included the need for work experience related to project management (this was specified in 33 offers) and experience related to team management (this requirement was specified 31 offers). This may indicate

a trend where candidates are expected to have leadership competencies early in their management career, which may be challenging in the context of a Junior Project Manager position.

Autonomy, which was required in 31 offers, also appears as one of the key requirements. Autonomy is difficult to define and its interpretation can vary from organisation to organisation.

A significant number of offers (29 offers) also included a requirement for English language skills at level C. In the context of globalisation and international cooperation, a good knowledge of English is becoming standard in many industries. Surprisingly few offers required knowledge of other foreign languages, such as German or French.

An interesting observation is the increasing importance of technical knowledge in the job of Junior Project Manager. This requirement appeared in 26 offers, as well as knowledge of the IT infrastructure market (24 offers) and systems architecture. This indicates the growing role of technology in project management, especially in IT industries.

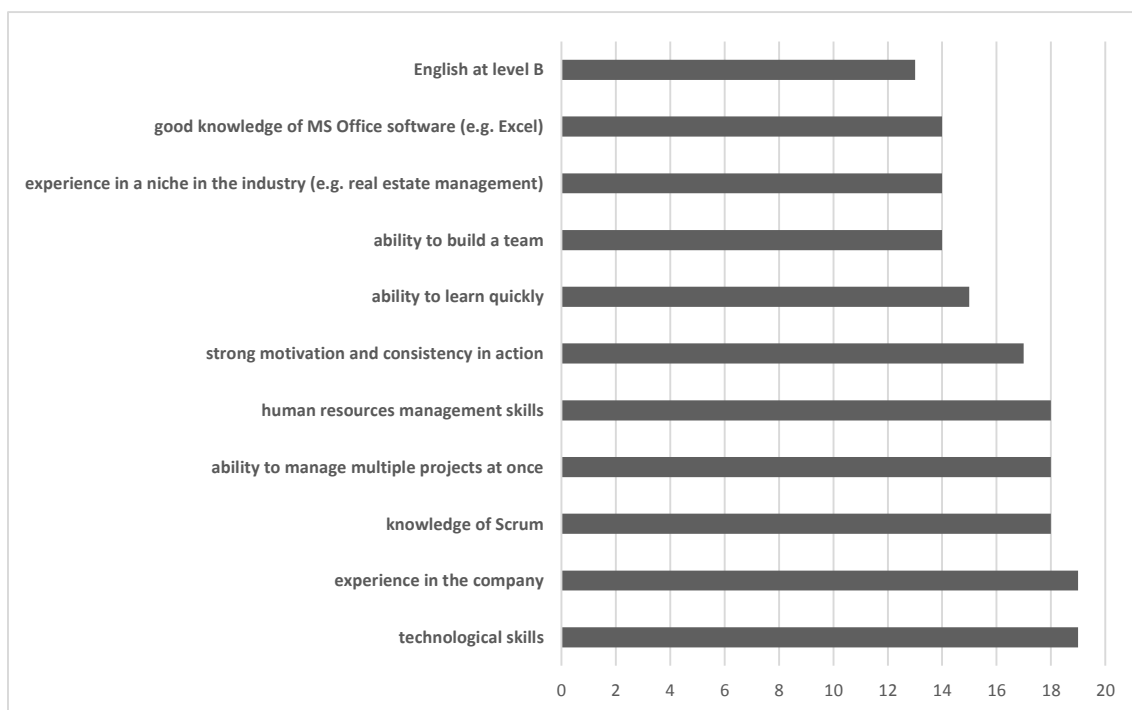


Figure 4. Requirements for the position of Junior Project Manager (2).

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

Mandatory requirements that occurred between 10 and 20 of the job offers analysed include technological skills, team-building skills, good knowledge of MS Office software. Additionally, knowledge of agile methodologies (18 offers) and general project management principles (28 offers) indicate the popularity of Agile methodologies, which have become a standard in the IT industry. An interesting aspect is the lack of certification requirements, which suggests that recruiters value practical skills more than formal proof of competence.

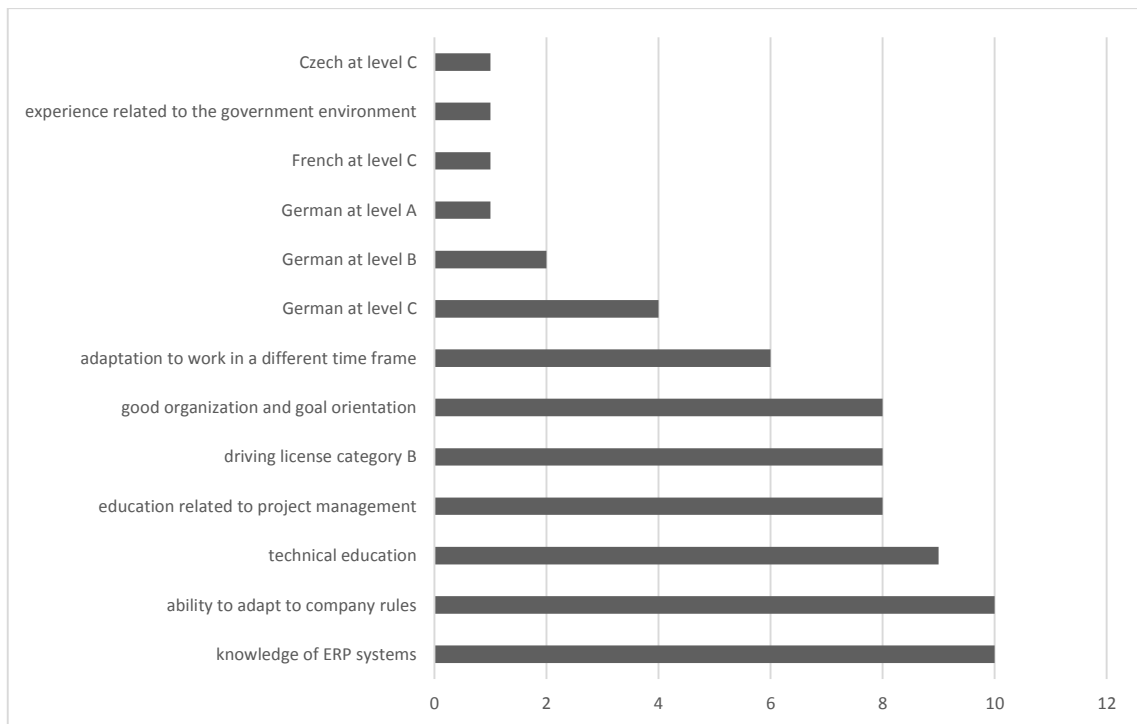


Figure 5. Requirements for the position of Junior Project Manager (3).

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

Among the mandatory requirements that occasionally (in a maximum of 10 offers) occurred in the job offers analysed, we can point out: education (completed Bachelor's or Engineer's degree) related to project management, technical education, or knowledge of foreign languages other than English.

The **work experience results**, shown in Figure 5, provide important information about the experience requirements of recruiters for the position of Junior Project Manager. The figure shows five categories that range in experience from no requirements at all to candidates with more than five years of experience in the field.

The analysis of the results shows that recruiters are most often looking for candidates with work experience in the range of 2 to 5 years, with many offers also lacking exact experience expectations.

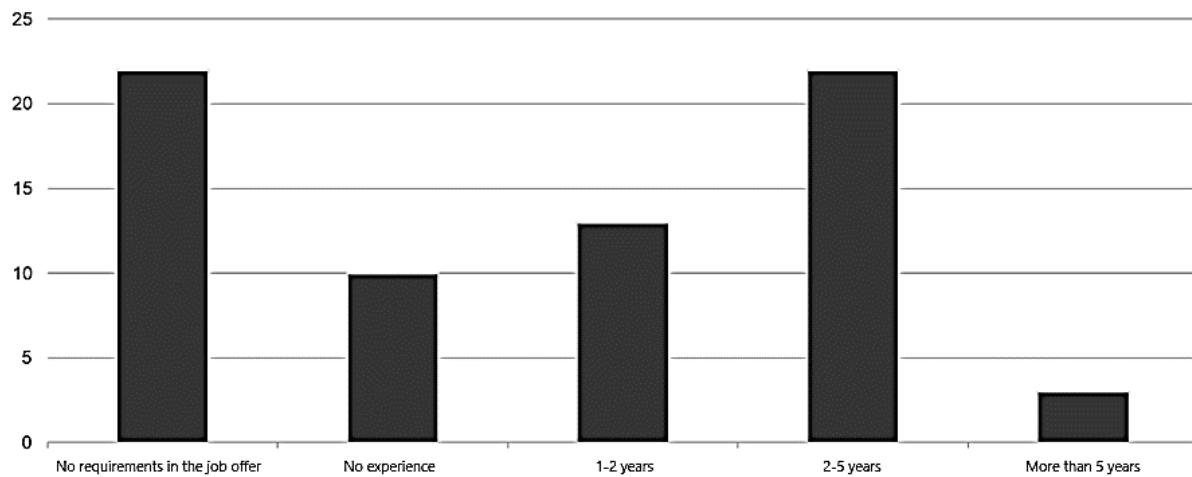


Figure 6. Required work experience for the position of Junior Project Manager (pcs).

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

A significant number of offers either did not include a requirement for work experience or required 2-5 years of experience. This means that for many employers, project management experience was not an important selection criterion or they expected candidates to have intermediate level experience of between 2 and 5 years. This distribution may suggest that the Junior Project Manager position is seen as a role that already requires some experience, but not necessarily a long one. Employers who are looking for candidates with experience in the 2 to 5 year range often prefer individuals who can implement new tasks quickly, but do not yet expect the high level of autonomy and responsibility typical of more experienced managers.

'No experience', on the other hand, appeared in the lowest number of adverts, suggesting that recruiters rarely choose to hire candidates with no prior project management experience. Although the Junior Project Manager position implies an entry-level role, organisations typically expect a certain experience base that will enable a young employee to adapt more quickly to the challenges of running projects. Such a requirement may be related to the fact that, in a management position, it is not just theoretical knowledge that counts, but also the ability to apply it in practice in the context of projects.

The 'Over 5 years experience' bracket also occurred in a small number of advertisements surveyed, indicating that employers are rarely looking for candidates with this much experience for a Junior Project Manager position. This may suggest that they are looking more for people who have project management experience, but not necessarily full-time experience, allowing them to develop further within the organisation. From the information provided, it can be inferred that organisations are reluctant to hire people with more experience as they may expect higher salaries or find it difficult to accept a lower role within the organisation. Hiring individuals with more than five years' experience may also be associated with less flexibility to adapt to the working methods characteristic of organisations seeking younger employees.

From the analysis of the results regarding the work experience requirement, the following conclusion can be drawn: there is a prevailing trend on the labour market where employers prefer to hire people with project management experience in the range of 2 to 5 years. These types of candidates already have the basic skills and knowledge, but are still able to adapt quickly to the specifics of an organisation that can offer further career development in project management. By contrast, offers are rare for those with no work experience or very extensive experience. Such figures suggest that the Junior Project Manager position is seen as a role that requires some experience, but candidates are not expected to have a high level of autonomy and responsibility.

Another important aspect that was considered in the analysis of job offers for the position of Junior Project Manager is **the scope of work and the full-time hours** that appear in the advertisements (Figure 7). The results of the survey indicate that the vast majority of the offers (92%) provide for full-time employment, which means that employees hired for this position will in most cases work a standard number of hours per week, most often 40 hours. This type of employment is the most common option chosen by employers and is one of the primary expectations in offers for the Junior Project Manager position.

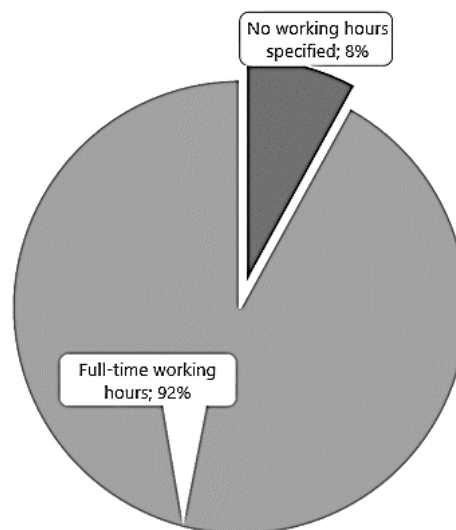


Figure 7. Required hourly working hours for the Junior Project Manager position (%).

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

Full-time hourly work in this context can be considered the industry standard, especially in large organisations where designing, coordinating and monitoring the progress of projects requires systematicity and the full commitment of the employee. Full-time employment also provides the opportunity to be fully integrated into the team, to participate in daily project meetings and to collaborate with other departments of the organisation on an ongoing basis, which is particularly important in the case of the Junior Project Manager position. Employers, when deciding on this working time, usually expect candidates to be fully available, which fosters effective project management and enables young professionals to develop quickly by engaging in a variety of tasks on a daily basis.

Despite the predominance of full-time employment, positions with indefinite working hours appeared in around 8% of the offers analysed. This may mean that employers are offering greater flexibility in working hours, which is particularly attractive in the context of a dynamic labour market, the growing importance of work-life balance and well-being (Procházka, Bočková, 2024). In such offers, employers may suggest the possibility of part-time work or offer flexible working hours, allowing the employee to adjust their schedule to accommodate other commitments or personal preferences. These types of options may be particularly attractive to those who are studying, working on different projects at the same time or seeking a better work-life balance.

Flexible working hours may also result from the organisational policies of companies that place trust in their employees and allow them to manage their own working time. On the other hand, the offer of a job with non-standard working hours may also refer to employment contracts that do not require a full commitment to a standard working mode, but allow tasks to be completed on a flexible basis. In this case, employers may expect Junior Project Managers to work on a project in a more structured way, based on flexibility of working hours, which may involve less stress and more autonomy in organising their own working time.

This type of offer, although a minority, can be attractive in the context of new trends in the labour market, such as remote working, hybrid working and offering non-standard working hours. Flexibility in terms of working hours can attract people who value the ability to tailor working hours to their individual needs, while also enabling companies to attract younger workers who are more willing to be flexible.

5. Conclusions

The study presented in this paper aimed to identify and analyse the key requirements for candidates for the position of Junior Project Manager. The analysis was based on 70 offers from various recruitment platforms, providing a picture of recruiters' expectations of young project management professionals. The study focused on the identification of the most common requirements in terms of work experience, technical and soft skills, as well as an analysis of the scope of work, including full-time equivalents.

In terms of technical competence, offers most often required knowledge of project management tools and technical knowledge related to IT systems architecture and IT infrastructure markets, which may reflect the growing influence of technology on project management processes. In addition, emerging requirements for knowledge of agile methodologies (including SCRUM) reflect the current trend in the IT industry, where flexibility in project management methodologies is key. Another interesting finding of the survey is the

lack of explicit requirements for certification in the area of project management, which may suggest that practical experience is valued more than formal proof of skills.

In terms of working hours, the survey found that the predominant form of employment is full-time, accounting for 92% of the offers analysed. This type of offer ensures employees are fully integrated into the project team and have a permanent presence in the organisation, which is important in the context of delivering projects that require ongoing coordination and commitment. Only 8% of offers provide for flexible working hours or non-standard full-time hours, which may indicate the growing role of flexibility in the workplace, especially in the context of the changing expectations of today's employees, who are looking for more autonomy in organising their working time.

In the context of the work experience analysis, the survey results reveal a dominance of the 2-5 years of experience category, indicating that recruiters prefer candidates who have some project management experience, but at the same time do not require excessive experience that could limit the flexibility of hired employees. The least sought after were those with no work experience and those with more than 5 years' experience, which may indicate a preference for people who can quickly get into complex project processes but do not yet expect a high level of responsibility.

The conclusions of the survey indicate the increasing importance of soft competencies such as communication and self-management, which are key in the work of a project manager, especially in the position of Junior Project Manager. The results of another study of project manager competencies also show that certain competencies are highly sought after in the job market. These include competencies from the 'Practice' category (Plan and Control, Stakeholder, Organisation and Information, Requirements and Objectives, Scope and Time) and 'People' category (Personal Communication, Relationships and Engagement, Teamwork, Leadership) (Zemlińska-Sikora, Kozarkiewicz, 2023). Furthermore, the results of the research show that companies are looking for candidates for the position of Junior Project Manager with project management experience in the range of 2-5 years, which indicates the need to hire employees who have adequate theoretical and practical knowledge, but are also still open to learning and adapting in a new environment. Employers rarely choose to hire people with no experience, highlighting the importance of at least a minimum background in project management.

Further research could analyse the impact of specific educational programmes on the level of preparation of candidates for work as project managers. In addition, it would be worthwhile to explore differences in employers' expectations depending on industry or geographical location. The research could also serve as a prelude to a broader analysis of the role of universities in shaping practical skills and their cooperation with the labour market.

The results of the research may be relevant both for universities, which could better adapt their educational programmes to the needs of the labour market, and for students, who would thus be better prepared to meet the requirements of employers. For recruiters, the research could

provide guidance for an optimal candidate selection process, as well as raising awareness of the importance of soft skills. As a result, they can contribute to an overall improvement in the quality of project management in organisations.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that project-oriented organisations should support Junior Project Manager recruits through, among other things, mentoring, training, collaboration with universities, providing feedback and assigning manageable tasks (Borg, Scott-Young, 2022).

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