



**Project Management LCBB5005**

**~ Assessment 1 ~**

**Project Management:**  
**Google Headquarters**  
**Project in London, UK**

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*“Man’s MIND, once  
STRETCHED BY a new IDEA,  
never regains ITS  
ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS.”*

Oliver Wendell  
Holmes, Jr.

## 1. Introduction:

This essay will analyze a mega Project Management that is taking part in the heart of London: **Google Headquarters Project in London, King's Cross, UK**. The essay will review the core elements of the project as Budget, Time, Stakeholders, Risk Factors, and Project Plan.

The Project Management Institute (PMBOK, Project Management Institute, 2013, p. 417) defines a “*project as a temporary endeavor* undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result”. According to Larson and Gray (2018), “*Project Management* provides people with powerful set of tools that improve their ability to plan, implement, and manage activities to accomplish specific objectives”. Those approaches underline that the project creates a unique result, product, or service, and then it's done at the end of it; on the contrary, an operation it's an ongoing effort that's repetitive.

This essay will detail the way that Google Headquarters Project in London will reach the inauguration day. Also, this essay will methodically examine the *life cycle* of Google Headquarters Project in London under the five stages of Project Management *Process Groups* described by Gray and Larson in 2006 (p.6): 1. *defining* the project and project *initiation*; 2. project *planning*; 3. project *execution*; 4. project *monitoring and control*; 5. *delivering* or *project closure*.

Nevertheless, this essay will evaluate the risks and potential issues encountered during the project in its *life cycle*.

The overall analysis of Google Headquarters Project in London will reveal the necessary path toward successful project management. This pathway will be led by explaining the core concepts of project management.

## 2. Analysis of Google Headquarters Project in London:

Google is looking to inaugurate its one-billion-pound project by next year: a new Headquarters in the heart of London in King's Cross. Google is going to build one new building alongside King's Cross Station – the first one built outside USA. Google currently owns the building at 6 Pancras Square, and a third building will represent a campus to house approximately 7,000 Google employees. Furthermore, we will analyse the core elements of this mega Google Headquarter project from London, UK, by examining the project life cycle.

### 2.1. Core elements from Google Headquarters Project, London described by project life cycle:

Google Headquarters Project from King Cross Station, London represents a mega project management. To better understand this project, the analysis of the life cycle of the project is paramount.

Fundamentals of project management could be condensed in the life cycle of the project management. Gray and Larson, (2006) present the life cycle of a project under the following figure:

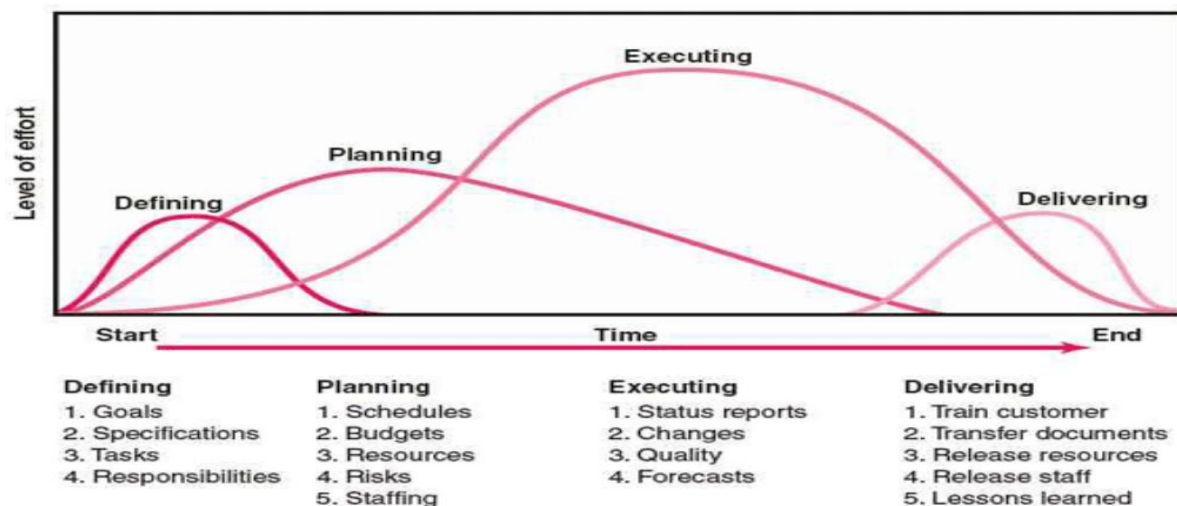


Figure 1.1 Project Life Cycle  
(Gray & Larson, 2006, p6)

Google LLC describes itself as an “*American multinational technology company focusing on artificial intelligence, online advertising, search engine technology, cloud computing, computer software, quantum computing, e-commerce, and consumer electronics*” (Google LLC, Wikipedia, 2013). Google main headquarters is in Palo Alto, California, USA. Also, in London Google has offices at 6 Pancras Square. Nowadays, in the post-covid era, working

remotely, especially in the IT industry, is a well-accepted idea. For those reasons, the main question is **WHY Google** would like to invest 1 billion pounds into a project that would consolidate its presence in London by creating two more buildings that would potentially house 7,000 Google employees. One main reason why Google searches to consolidate its physical presence in the heart of London is a declaration of its power and position worldwide: they are one of the biggest IT companies. Also, they are searching for the best IT engineer worldwide. Nevertheless, by consolidating its position at King's Cross – St Pancras London, Google represents an easy-access IT hub for those who would search to work with them; all the national and international trains arrive there. However, from a business perspective, any investment will have to provide an ROI, this means that Google searches to increase its profitability by growing bigger. For those reasons, the new Google London Headquarters it's a must-align with their vision for the future and, also, with the vision of Google CEO Sundar Pichai who believes in the alchemy of the people working together face-to-face: "We firmly believe that being together, having that sense of community is super important for whenever you need to solve hard problems. So, we don't think the future is 100% remote. We value our offices; we value the culture" (Sundar Pichai interview in Time Magazine, Sept 2023).

We will be looking at each process group from the project life cycle by analyzing Google Headquarters in London, UK; the following figure will be concluded for the process groups analysis:



Figure2. Project Management 5 Process Groups: Initiation, Planning, Executing, Monitoring and Controlling, Closing. (Deniz Sasal, 2017)

### 2.1.1.1. *Defining the project and project initiation:*

All the phases of project management are equally important, and project management success needs to deploy time and effort to fulfill them correctly. However, it's paramount to have the clarity of the project, for that reason, the project initiation process came as the first task and was extremely important. In this first process part, there are a few core activities related to the defining stage.

2.1.1.1.1. **Feasibility study:** before an idea becomes a project, several preliminary assessments are required. We underline why Google wanted to invest in a complex London headquarters. As Google London's existing headquarters in Pancras Square, wasn't enough for its needs and plans, Google decided to construct a new building in "London Silicone Roundabout Valley" (The Guardian, October 2019) at King's Cross Station comprising over 60,400 sqm of prime office space; and an additional third building could all together to house 7,000 Google employee. This mega project of building office spaces has a timeframe of a year left, as it was started in 2018 (<https://www.kingscross.co.uk/google>).

2.1.1.1.2. **Project SCOPE:** "is the work performed to deliver a product, service, or result with the specified features and functions" (PMBOK Guide, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2017, p.175). The Scope is characterized by three essential parameters defining the Iron Triangle: Time, Cost, and Quality. As Google London Headquarters is located in King's Cross – Pancras Square, the external stakeholders could heavily influence this project by impacting its time by delaying it, or over the cost or quality of the project. This means that the project scope could be easily altered, and this creates a scope creep and that it's the biggest risk for this project. **TIME:** it's the key element in the Google London Headquarters project that has the potential to alter the project. For that reason, the Project Manager (PM) is obliged to closely follow the timesheets agreed and prevent delays. PM has to create a **Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)** with clear timeframes; as WBS is the base in deciding the cost and the resource allocated: **CBS** and **RBS**. **Cost:** despite the fact that Google allocate a *generous budget, of one billion pounds*, execution delays could impact negatively this budget. **Quality:** Google is well known for its high standards of work-offices – cafes, gyms, multi-use game areas (MUGA), pool facilities, terraces running tracks, etc – that positively impact Google employees. It's well known that Google has a Healthy Material Selection Criteria; this means that all building's products and materials

must pass a “rigorous screening process” of quality (Google Healthy Materials Selection Criteria on Google webpage). However, some of the amenities could bring unexpected invoices, especially if the PM listens to the internal shareholders who would ask him to add ‘small’ elements, and functionalities to the initial scope – *“Could you please just add this small ... sauna, etc ... to the swimming pool?”* For this reason, PM is essential to communicate with all the stakeholders by conserving the professional boundaries; and getting the validation of the scope after it’s defined. Any additional elements added to the SCOPE, redefine it, and increase the cost of the project.

**2.1.1.3. Project Stakeholders:** individuals, groups, and organizations that are directly involved or indirectly affected by the Google London Headquarters project. There are internal stakeholders like the Sponsor that is Google, managers, and employees, and external stakeholders like the Government, customers, suppliers, and community. Even if PMBOK offers the last chapter of it, chapter 13, Project Stakeholders Management, this is an important aspect of this particular project as external stakeholders could and already affect the Google London Headquarters construction a lot: for example, the Government response to COVID-19, impact the timing of the project; also, recent pro-Palestine protests in King’s Cross – Pancras zone blocked the area by the huge number of people that gather together there. Having a good professional relationship with the internal and external stakeholders has the potential to reduce the cost of the project. For example, the builder material suppliers could block their prices for the bulk acquisition of building materials, however a good relationship and excellent communication with them will allow those materials to arrive on the construction site at the right time for completing the building, otherwise those materials came in bulk into a highly circulated area like King’s Cross, London could cause block of the construction and definitely will rise an Health and Safety concern, as it’s well known that the untidy bulk material cause accidents. So, the correct management of stakeholders will help any project to run according to the plan.

**2.1.1.4. Project deliverables:** “something produced or provided as a result of a process.” (Adriana Girdler, 2022) Deliverables represent mini goals depending on the SMART objectives.

**2.1.1.5. Develop the Business Case:** means to justify the Google London Headquarters plan by answering the questions: what, why, when, who. This means five steps to

confirm the opportunities of the Google project; to create shortlisted options and evaluate them; then to describe a project implementation plan and nevertheless develop the recommendations. Without a reliable business case, the project could be easily ‘scrap on’, especially this Google London Headquarters after the Covid-19 times: remote work has increased all over the world, and Google already is present in Pancras Square. However, the reason why this project is continued isn’t for the present time, but for the future when the ROI will be greater than possible anticipated.

The outcome of the first process of the project, *initiation* will be the creation of the **Project Charter** or Project Initiation Document (PID). After the key stakeholders, especially the sponsor, have done their due diligence, they will authorize the project manager to initiate and lead the project.

2.1.2. Project *planning*: Benjamin Franklin underlined the importance of planning in any aspect of life: “***If you don’t plan to succeed, you are planning to fail.***”

The moment that the Project Manager (PM) is empowered by the sponsor to lead the project, he plans the roadmap of the project. At this phase of the project, the PM must spot the clarity of the project by creating goals that are SMART and CLEAR. In the case of this mega project of creating a new Headquarters for Google in London, there are multiple plans that the PM had focused on: the new structure from zero, the existing building, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> structure as well. He follows the baseline from the PID under the SCOPE of the project and those baselines are reiterated in the project’s SMART goals. There is software that helps PM follow the evolution of the project by measuring the completion of the goals: the planned vs the actual performance; this software is based on a Gantt chart.

One example of SMART goal will be the creation of a landscaped roof, including a 200m running and walking track. SMARTer break-down means:

➔ S: **Specific goal**: landscaped roof with 200m running and walking track. As Google sets the request of how to look like, the PM will ensure that the reality will meet Google

expectations: certain plants and tree, certain flowers, running and walking track, benches and relaxing spots, meditation area, etc.



Picture 1: Google Headquarters project with roof-top garden King's Cross London (source: <https://betterfutureawards.com/LON17/project.asp?ID=15932>)

- ➔ M: **Measurable goals:** specify when the goal is starting and how is measurable. In the King's Cross Google project rooftop, the gardeners could start to work on it the moment all the infrastructure is ready, this means a high level of work from the below levels is completed. Also, there will be established routes of access for the plants, the field, the materials for running and walking track, etc. Gantt charts are a necessary tool to measure the progress of a certain goal. Gantt charts would help and motivate the workers as well: PM could reward the quality ahead work completed and also, could propose penalties for the work that is delayed. This type of motivation couldn't be possible without measuring the progression of the work.
- ➔ A: **Achievable:** The PM's responsibility is to make sure that he establishes reasonable goals in a time frame, or to establish ways of achieving the goals set. For example, to cut the execution time, the PM could grant access to builders during the night to complete the running track.
- ➔ R: **Relevant:** The PM's responsibility is to see how the goal is aligned with the long-term objectives. For example, it's pointless to grant access to builders during nighttime to complete the running track and the rooftop, IF certain plants and core elements would delay the progression of the rooftop. As nighttime work is more expensive than day work, those delays in decorative elements will interfere with the overall time execution

and for that reason, the PM's duty is to decide HOW to better execute to keep the cost low.

- ➔ T: **Time-based**: The PM's goal must be realistic and ambitious to clarify duties and increase the team's motivation. Even if Google needs the rooftop to be delivered at the end of the project, the PM must make sure that the rooftop is finished earlier for Google's representative to be able to applaud it or ask for upgrades.
- ➔ E & R: **Evaluate** and **Reward**: The PM's constant communication with the sponsor and shareholders offers possibilities to evaluate the progression of a goal and also, to reward the progress or to amend part of the goal. For example, certain plants that Google initially wanted to have on the roof start to be key elements of environmental groups that ask the protection on it. PM has to communicate with the sponsor and to explain the implications of the initial goal: delays in the evolution of the rooftop, potential manifestations against Google, etc., also, to propose alternatives: other plants that have similar capabilities, however, that aren't under the environmental focus.

C.L.E.A.R. focuses on the core elements of the goals and prevents overwhelming by details. CLEAR goals mean Collaborative – all stakeholders are involved – Limited – by the time, budget, and scope – Emotional – get everyone's passion – Appreciable – this big project is broken into measurable steps – Refinable – allow stakeholders to refine the goal accordingly to its development: as a good example is the COVID-19 issue which post-poned the progression of constructions and re-evaluation of the costs; as the UK Government offered new COVID-19 guidance, the construction restarted and Google London Headquarters redefine its goals accordingly.

Good planning, exemplified above, will lead to the project's success and completion of Google London Headquarters, poor planning could have the potential to stop any progression of the project management.

### 2.1.3. Project execution:

Following the previous step of extremely well planning, the project execution it's a straightforward step that follows the holistic Project Execution Plan (PEP) under the Plan, Do, Check, Act model.

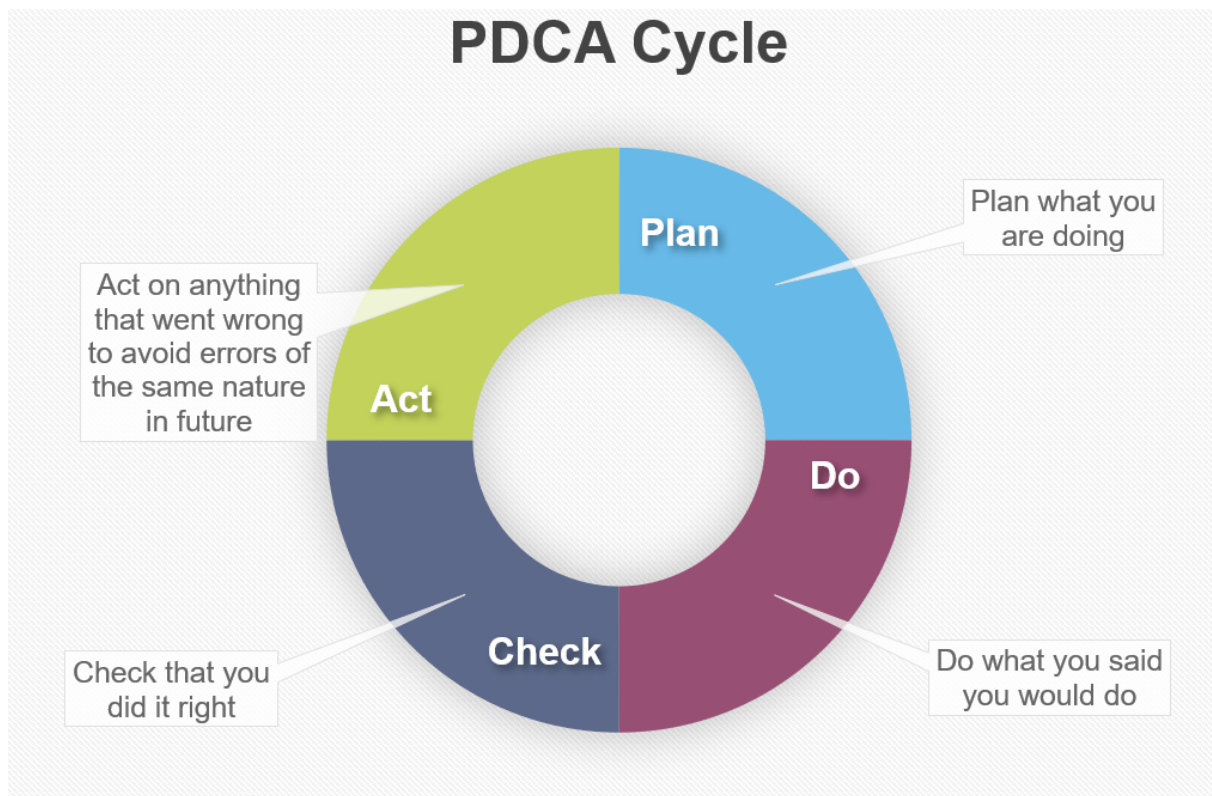


Figure 3: PDCA Cycle Diagram (source: <https://www.qmsuk.com/news/what-is-the-plan-do-check-act-cycle>)

#### 2.1.4. *Project monitoring and control:*

The PM's role is vital in the life of the project. In the monitoring and control step, the personality and the personal skills of the PMs are fully used by intensively communicating with the shareholders to motivate the builders to follow the plans and deliver the project according to the scope. PMs have the focus on initial timeframe, budget, and agreed quality.

#### 2.1.5. *Delivering or project closure:*

At the end of the project, the PM will deliver Google London Headquarters to the sponsor of the project. Also, the PM will gather all the information on the process of the project and will do relevant reports on the budget, schedule, quality, risk, shareholders, and the lessons learned.

### 3. Conclusion:

A mega project management like Google Headquarters in London is not an easy task, especially since it's developed in the heart of London's transport at King's Cross. An experimented Project Manager piloted this mega project by engaging different teams and stakeholders. At the same time, PM will apply all the project tools that he has for the success of the project.

PM is forced to obsessively follow the agreed SCOPE of the project and to be present for the duration of the project to motivate the execution teams. As we have observed until now, even if the budget is generous, the timeframe represents the real nemesis especially since the COVID-19 restriction already impacted the project.

The personality of the PM and his communication skills would influence the teams to progress in this project and to deliver it.

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