

Career Sheet: Senior Researcher & Project Manager



Claudia Vicari, Senior Researcher & Project Manager

I am a senior researcher and project manager with extensive experience in delivering R&I projects in various application areas. I graduated in Economics and Business from the University of Palermo (Italy) in 2001. I have been PMP PMI certified since 2013 and I got PRINCE2 Foundation Level certification in 2016. Since 2002 I have been working at the R&D Laboratory of Engineering Ingegneria Informatica, the head company of the Engineering Group (www.eng.it), a leading ICT group in Italy, made up of over 20 companies spread across Europe, the United States, and South America. Currently, I am a Senior Researcher and Project Manager within the Open Public Service Innovation Group (part of Engineering R&D Laboratory), working on the topics of Digital Transformation in the Public Sector, Smart Cities and Social Innovation.



OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

My work mainly consists of the management and implementation of ICT research projects both at the European and Italian levels, as well as in the preparation and submission of proposals for funded projects under EU (Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, EIT Digital) and national (MISE, PON, POR-FESR) research programmes. I am primarily involved in projects concerning innovative technologies and approaches to support data-driven decision- and policy-making processes in the public sector, Digital Government at various levels, citizen participation and engagement with the ambition to build smart, sustainable and inclusive cities and territories.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU

When I started my job, I didn't have a precise idea of the evolution that was going to take place. Then a series of work situations occurred and people and colleagues I met along my path inspired me and led me to my current career path.



TYPICAL WORKING DAY

My typical working day may include carrying out various activities within the research projects I am involved with or for the preparation of new project proposals, such as i) undertaking research or management activities, including also administrative and financial aspects, ii) contributing to deliverables, reports and other documents or proposal writing, iii) participation in project meetings and email communication and cooperation with colleagues and partners from other ICT companies, public and non-profit organizations, research centres and universities, etc..



STUDY & CAREER PATH

At the beginning of my study path in Economics and Business, I had a clear idea of what was expecting me at the university, in terms of subjects and exams. During those years, I also realized that some courses on informatics, which were pretty unusual and, in some sense, far from my overall study path, could be helpful to my future work activities. I have to admit that more than a real plan, it was just a lucky inspiration. That was the turning point because that decision helped me to get in touch with the ICT world in some way, even though I could not imagine at that time it would be my field of work after the university. Then several educational courses (ranging from technical to soft skill and project management courses) attended during my work path thanks to the IT & Management Academy of my company have also been extremely helpful to enrich my career path.



KEY SKILLS

Analytical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as adaptability and commitment are often needed to manage complex projects and unpredicted situations/issues that might arise in the daily operation of any project. Communication and interpersonal skills such as, for example, active listening, collaboration, and public speaking are essential since I am involved in collaborative projects involving multidisciplinary partners and teams. Having good writing skills is also necessary to prepare project deliverables, reports and other documents as well as to be effective in any other written communication (e.g. emails) that is part of the daily work. And last, but not least project management skills are an important part of effectively addressing the various aspects (technical, administrative, financial and communication) of any project and successfully deliver the expected outcomes.



CAREER PROSPECT

With my skills and background, I might work in different sectors (not only in the ICT sector) in the field of project management, consulting, education and training, especially in R&I contexts.



CHALLENGES

Time management is one of the challenges in my job since it is often required to meet tight or concurrent deadlines, especially in specific situations where the workload is high. It is also challenging (and at the same time motivating) to have to communicate and collaborate with multi-disciplinary teams with different backgrounds and cultures.



YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Many factors should be considered for a successful career and most of the things that will happen during the career path are usually unpredictable. So, in general, I would advise students to keep an

open mind, to explore the various opportunities to find the right job that fits their interests and passions, whatever they are (bearing in mind that time spent on work will be an important part of their life). Another piece of advice is to be prepared to accept a possible failure and embrace the change: not all choices will be successful and obviously, some of them could lead to some unwanted changes that can sometimes scare but be necessary for an evolutionary and growth path.



YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

The best way to support the children/students is to teach them to investigate the world around them, not to settle for the status quo and to adapt quickly to changes. Indeed, changes can be inspiring and can help to learn new things. This approach is well known in R&D where not all the experiments are successful but all the experiments are always essential to improve knowledge.



LEARN MORE

This Career sheet has been provided by means of the URBANAGE project, in which I am currently involved as deputy project coordinator.

You can find out more about the project at: <https://www.urbanage.eu/>

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