

Project management

With any project it's really important to have a clear strategy and know how to manage your time effectively.

There are two approaches to preparing a project. First, plan properly. And second, completely panic. So, let's start with planning.

Ask yourself, "What are you trying to achieve?" In other words, what are your objectives?

An objective has to be something you can actually achieve. You might not be able to save the world, but you can encourage people not to waste water in your local area.

An objective also has to have a deadline and a way of measuring its success, otherwise a single project could last a lifetime.

Break down your main objective into smaller targets. Think of these targets as milestones you need to pass as you get nearer to your destination.

Your first target might be to make people aware of how much water they use at home. And your second target might be for everyone to make two small changes to reduce their daily water usage.

You need a realistic timescale or schedule to achieve all of your targets, so set deadlines for them too.

Allow for some extra time. It's never possible to know exactly how long some things are going to take, or what might go wrong, unless you can see the future, in which case you're probably too busy buying lottery tickets anyway.

So, you might have targets and timescales but do you have the resources to achieve them? In other words, do you have enough time, money, equipment and people power to get you where you want to go?

If your plan is to put on the world's most spectacular performance of *The Sound of Music*, but all you have is a broken guitar and a rubber chicken, you might need to think again.

You also need to allocate your resources appropriately. If you're producing a play, it's wise to prioritise costumes and theatre venue over buying pizza for your cast.

Next, how are you sharing responsibilities in your team?

Bitesize

Does everyone have the role that's most suited to their abilities? Who's best at managing schedules? Who's best at communicating?

And what about risks? No plan is complete without a thorough risk assessment.

You don't want to discover something's dangerous after it's already happened.

Think about the safety of the public you'll be working with, and of your own team.

If you're doing a presentation on fire safety, do you really need to use a flamethrower?

Be paranoid about what might go wrong, and have a strategy in place, just in case they do.

Of course there's also the other approach, to completely panic, although it does still require a tiny bit of planning. You need to make sure that someone on the team has first aid training.