Megan Nowikowski (she/her)

PROJECT MANAGER | MECHANICAL ENGINEERING | MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TECHNICAL DELIVERY

Scope, Schedule & Budget Control • Risk & Change Management • Vendor & Stakeholder Management

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SUMMARY

Project Manager with a background in mechanical engineering and 13+ years at Walt Disney Imagineering, leading complex, multi-disciplinary projects from concept through installation and closeout at six parks on three continents. I've led animation scopes as large as $40M+, coordinating 30+ internal engineers, designers and specialists with outside vendors and the facility, show set and show control teams. I own the plan, budget, risks, issues and dependencies, report status and trade-offs to executive leadership, and recover the schedule when priorities collide. I also build the tools teams run on: I designed and piloted the Animation Studio Management System, which brings schedule, budget, risk, change, deliverables and procurement into one source of truth.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Large-scale delivery:** Led all animation for a new land at Disney's Animal Kingdom: 90+ animated elements and $40M+ in scope across two attractions, with 30+ internal engineers, designers and specialists and 4 outside vendors.
- **Schedule recovery:** When one attraction's priority delayed the other, rebalanced the shared resource pool and renegotiated the overall schedule, showing leadership the trade-off and the recovery path.
- **Cost savings through better decisions:** Data-backed proposals to use off-the-shelf KUKA rails saved about $1.5M on Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway and an estimated $3M on two figures in The Enchanted Tale of Beauty and the Beast.
- **Process improvement adopted at scale:** Built a parametric cost-estimating tool adopted by 39 engineers across 10 projects; web-form test plans saved an estimated 1,400+ hours (about $280K+ in labor).

SKILLS & CORE COMPETENCIES

PROJECT DELIVERY

- Project plans and timelines
- Scope management
- Milestone tracking
- Risks, issues and dependencies
- Resource and capacity planning

PROJECT CONTROLS

- Budget preparation
- Cost to date and estimate to complete
- Cash-flow forecasting
- Change control
- Executive reporting
- Status reporting

PROCUREMENT & VENDORS

- Scopes of work and bid packages
- Equipment specifications
- Contract documents
- Bid scoring and vendor selection
- Vendor management

ENGINEERING & INTEGRATION

- Mechanical engineering
- System interface definition
- Design reviews
- Production oversight
- Installation and closeout

QUALITY & SAFETY

- Hazard analysis
- FMEA
- Code compliance
- Lessons learned
- Standards and process setting
- Maintenance training
- User guides and admin documentation

LEADERSHIP

- Cross-functional coordination
- Leading software, electrical and mechanical engineers
- Stakeholder communication
- Facilitation
- Mentoring

TOOLS: Airtable · JavaScript · Power Automate · Jira · SAP · Microsoft Project · Microsoft Office

EXPERIENCE

Walt Disney Imagineering

Animation Project Manager, Show Mechanical Engineer Sr. Orlando, FL | 2023 – 2026

Tropical Americas, Disney's Animal Kingdom (two attractions)

- Led delivery for all animation in a new land: 90+ animated elements and $40M+ in animation scope across two attractions, coordinating 30+ internal engineers, designers and specialists and 4 outside vendors.
- Managed the project plan, timeline, risks, issues and dependencies with facility engineering, show set, lighting, projection, A/V and special effects, with scope of work documents defining each interface and dependency.
- Served as finance representative: prepared budget inputs, tracked cost to date (CTD), estimate to complete (ETC), cash-flow forecasts and vendor payment milestones; reported budget, schedule, risk and resourcing to studio and executive leadership.
- Kept delivery predictable when priorities collided: when one attraction's priority delayed the other, rebalanced the shared resource pool and renegotiated the overall schedule, showing leadership the trade-off and recovery path.
- Brought new vendors on through a formal procurement process: wrote equipment specifications, scopes of work and bid packages; scored and compared bids; carried awards into contract documents changed only through approved change requests.

Internal Technology & AI Tooling: Animation Studio Management System (designed and piloted)

- Found the team's work scattered across 50+ project documents in 6+ locations; gathered requirements from engineers, finance and leadership and set a staged rollout: pilot in one discipline, then each animation discipline, then studio-wide.
- Brought the project planner's schedule exports and SAP budget data together with risk, change, deliverables and procurement in one Airtable data model, with role-based dashboards and weekly budget and risk reports emailed to leadership automatically.
- Built a risk and change management request (CMR) workflow from intake through approval, escalation and mitigation; tracked 100+ risks and CMRs to mitigation.
- Piloted an AI agent that drafts scopes of work from project data, cutting team time per scope by an estimated 70% on three pilot scopes.
- Authored user how-to guides and upkeep and modification documentation for the estimating tool and test plan tool.

Animation Project Manager, Show Mechanical Engineer Sr. Orlando, FL | 2023 – 2026

Zootopia: Better Zoogether, Disney's Animal Kingdom

- Ran the animation scope for a theater refurbishment (one figure and one prop) in parallel with Tropical Americas, leading an engineer, a designer and a vendor.

Show Mechanical Project Lead, Show Mechanical Engineer Sr. Orlando, FL | 2022 – 2024

Frozen Ever After, Hong Kong Disneyland and Disneyland Paris

- Managed scope, schedule and budget against the established strategy at two international sites: production of 20 animated systems in Paris; inspection, maintenance training and closeout of 20 figures in Hong Kong.
- Identified unmitigated hazards through hazard analysis and failure mode and effects analysis (FMEA), and coordinated mitigations across three Frozen attractions.

Show Mechanical Project Lead, Show Mechanical Engineer Sr. Glendale, CA | 2018 – 2022

Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway, Disneyland

- Created the initial Show Mechanical Engineering budget and strategy for 107 show mechanical systems in the Florida-to-California duplication, then managed scope, schedule and budget with 4 outside vendors and a team of 5.
- Wrote a data-backed proposal to replace a planned custom track with an off-the-shelf KUKA linear rail; approved, it saved about $1.5M and eliminated 85% of replaceable and maintainable components.
- Set department standards for hazard analysis and code compliance, including how to navigate California permitting, and developed tools that standardized seismic analysis.

Show Mechanical Project Lead, Show Mechanical Engineer (Staff to Sr.) Glendale, CA | 2015 – 2018

The Enchanted Tale of Beauty and the Beast, Tokyo Disneyland

- Created the initial Show Mechanical Engineering budget and strategy for a $30M+ animation portfolio of 10 highly dynamic robotic figures, then managed scope, schedule and budget and an 11-person design and production team, tracking deliverables in Jira.
- Ran a lessons-learned review of figures already operating in the parks and fixed the root causes of vibration and reliability issues before reuse.
- Built an Excel figure database that became the proof of concept for a web-based tool later used across multiple projects.
- Proposed a slight performance change so the team could use off-the-shelf KUKA rails for two animated figures, saving an estimated $3M.

Show Mechanical Project Lead, Associate Show Mechanical Engineer Glendale, CA | 2013 – 2015

Shanghai Disneyland: Buzz Lightyear Planet Rescue, Jet Packs, Once Upon a Time Adventure, Steamboat Willie fountain

- Trusted with full attraction leadership at a brand-new park: delivered 17 animated systems across four attractions, managing two international vendors and leading two designers.

Engineering Intern, Walt Disney World (Ride Engineering, Park Sustainment, Show Systems) Orlando, FL | 2010 – 2012

- Spearheaded an overhead-safety initiative that expanded companywide.

Education

Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering, University of Central Florida 2012

Mentoring

Mentored about 15 colleagues, including technical leads who became project leads, and close to 20 students.