

PM SIG Meeting 17 September 2003

Project Manager Skills

Outcomes from the Discussion

Differences in PM skills over the last decade

Projects Managers ten years ago required the following traditional skills.

- Well versed in the PMBOK disciplines – Management of Scope, Time, Cost, HR, Communication, Quality, Risk, Procurement and Integration Management.
- Communication skills
- Planning skills
- Motivational ability
- Leadership
- Managing Timelines
- Facilitation
- Administration skills
- Financial understanding
- Technical skills
- Ability to monitor progress

In the current environment, in addition to the skills above, a Project Manager needs to be able to:

- Manage from a distance as projects have become more scattered
- Deal with suppliers and customers
- Deal with cultural differences
- Tendering – both managing Vendors and contracts
- Understanding business processes
- Developing a business case with a focus on ROI
- Knowledge management
- More tightly control Change management
- More comprehensively carry out risk management
- Working with a Governance framework
- Cater for reuse
- Manage expectations of a complex number of stakeholders

The causes of the change have been:

- Business is taking more of an interest in ownership. IT is no longer accepted as a black box approach. Business wants to understand and take more of a controlling role in projects.
- Technology is allowing development to take place more quickly and more interactively. In a Cobol development, requirements were signed off, and then months may pass before anyone saw the system. Using more modern technologies, a more evolutionary approach can be used. Requirements can change as the system is being constructed.

- Another consequence of new technologies is the component nature of what is developed. What may have been an 18 month development in Cobol may become a series of 3 month developments in VB or Delphi.

Project managers need to have soft skills in addition to their technical skills. Typical soft skills would include communication, negotiation, conflict management, facilitation, leadership, writing business plans, finance, time management, presentation and influencing skills.

Project Management tools have improved considerably and are available at lower prices. Project managers must be savvy about the range available and be able to use these to manage, control and report on projects effectively.

Project management certification programs:

ACS Certification (CMACS)

ACS provides a certification that consists of two Project Management modules. Each takes 3 months to complete. The modules are distance learning. To achieve a qualification, the specialist modules (PM 1 and PM 2) must be completed plus two core subjects which are IT Trends and Business, Legal and Ethical Issues. If all four are completed the CMACS (Project Management) qualification is attained. There are also another 10 specialist subjects covering such topics as Knowledge Management, Management and Strategy, e-Business, e-Learning and Software Development.

PM1 covers traditional and introduces new techniques. It is not specifically directed to IT. Documentation provided includes PMBOK (Project Management Book of Knowledge from PMI, a book called Project Workout by Robert Buttrick, and course notes. Much of the learning is web based).

PM2 is more IT specific. It includes manuals and is focused on case studies of real projects. Both modules have examinations at the end.

PMI Certification

The Project Management Institute has a qualification that is heavily weighted to experience on projects. Details are on their web site.

Diploma in Project Management

The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) delivers a Diploma in Project Management. This comprises a 3 day program followed by a 4th day six weeks later. About 140 hours of study and assessment are required in this six week period. You will be developing a workplace project and presenting this information on the 4th day. This is followed by an open book exam two weeks later.

This program is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework and articulates to the University of New England Graduate Certificate in Project Management (1 unit of credit) and meets the requirements for the Australian Institute of Project Manager's Registered Project Manager (RPM)

Soft Skills

AIM has an extensive list of programs what can help project managers develop their soft and business skills. More information is available about programs at www.aimnsw.com.au

Other sources

Book lists for Project Management are available from Dymocks (www.dymocks.com.au) and Amazon (www.amazon.com). It was also mentioned that some of the best books are those by Australian PM Trainer Rob Thomsett. His most recent is Radical Project Management.

For a listing of PM sites visit www.projectperfect.com.au and look under “Free Info”