

Project Management – Art or Science!

Good project management requires not only knowledge of and the ability to apply technical or “science” skills, but also the softer “art” skills relating to human behaviour and interactions.

Project management science skills generally consist of a knowledge and ability to use specific project management techniques or tools such as those set out in the PMBOK, which are most likely to be gained from training. However, effective project management involves much more than the mere application of processes, tools and techniques. The ability to define the scope and objectives of a project is not enough. A project manager may be highly skilled in setting out a project timeline, but if he cannot get the individuals to deliver the tasks on time, then the project will not succeed.

Project management art skills, such as good judgement, adaptability, business acumen and leadership abilities, are often grounded in inherent personal attributes or abilities, but can also be developed through on-the-job experiential learning.



There is plenty of evidence that the soft skills of project management are among the most important in contributing to project success. The Economist Intelligence Unit survey, for example, found that the key elements of success in successful initiatives were leadership, planning and communication, whilst the 2008 McKinsey Global Survey of executives similarly found that factors such as good communications, setting clear and high aspirations for change, engaging employees and involving senior leaders were most closely associated with a successful organizational transformation.

Applying the right balance or mix of art and science – something which will vary by different projects - is the key to successful project management.

Reference material: Assessing the Art and Science of Project Management
By Harold Schroeder, *PMWorld Today* Nov 2009