

# Challenges and Opportunities Facing Project Management in Ireland

**The Celtic Tiger is now more of a Cub driven primarily by a dramatic slowdown in construction that is impacting the entire economy. There are, however, still a number of sectors offering potential for project management growth in the immediate future**

The whole compliance area continues to grow and companies and organisations will have to implement new systems as a result. Another growth area is in the whole green agenda. If you look at companies in the IT sector like Dell and IBM they are advertising their products as being green, and power usage is a big issue in operations like data centres. The presence of the Green Party in the ruling coalition government is a further catalyst and stimulus to the promotion of the green agenda.

Financial services also present another growth opportunity. There is a lot of activity right across the financial services sector in terms of optimizing cost bases to become more efficient. Also, the main banks in Ireland are looking at updating their core banking systems. Most of these systems were home built – built in-house by the banks – and are around 20- years-old, and need renewal.

The project management consultancy sector in Ireland is still big business. It is mainly split between major construction project management organisations and professional project management organizations such as PwC, KPMG, and Accenture”.

In a recent interview on the changing face of project management in Ireland, Ciaran Kelly, PricewaterhouseCoopers’ (PwC) advisory services partner, stated that “finding the right kind of people to oversee important projects can be a tough task”.

A significant component of these organizations’ work involves supporting clients through major business transformation change projects. These include business process re-engineering and six-sigma projects; business process and information technology (IT) outsourcing projects; the project management of major IT projects (e.g. new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems); finance re-engineering projects; cost reduction projects; and revenue growth. “We have grown our business significantly in recent years,

with a total of 15 advisory partners and over 200 people servicing clients in Ireland and internationally” says Kelly.

He also maintains that the demands on recruitment in the project management sector are “varied” and that, while the right jobs are available across most sectors, the position of senior project manager requires a person who has industry-specific knowledge and experience “to really add value and mitigate project risk”.

He stresses that success in attracting the right people for specific jobs is also varied. “It is significantly easier to identify a qualified project manager. However, it is more difficult to get a project manager who will also understand a particular business issue, such as finance transformation, cost reduction, growth strategies, change management, etc. While most project management positions are filled by people already living here, Kelly suggests it only becomes imperative to do otherwise “if the specialised skills do not exist in Ireland. That, in general, only happens approximately 20 per cent of the time”.

Looking to the future and considering whether the business of project management is likely to change, Kelly asserts that “the level of professionalism applied to projects is likely to improve, accreditation will become more important and a deep understanding of organisation change and the ‘people’ dimensions of project management will become ever more important”.