

Life After Motorola

Pat Lucey is a Senior Resource Manager with Motorola, and has headed up the Program Office for the Motorola facility in Cork from 2002 to 2006. Motorola places strong emphasis on formal project management methods, and for some years, the Cork operation has placed project managers on the IPMI Project Management Diploma course to reinforce the principles of strong project management. Having challenged his Project Managers in Motorola to seek professional certification, Pat was delighted to "walk the talk" and signed himself up for professional certification via the programme, and was awarded the National Graduate of the Year Award in 2005. Pat is PMP and IPMA Level B certified.



In this interview, Ed Naughton discusses with Pat Lucey, former head of Programme Management what the future might hold in store for him and many of his colleagues after Motorola finally winds up its Irish operation in Cork

Pat what is your view on what makes a good Project Manager?

I think that good communication skills are absolutely essential. Many projects now require multi-site teams, separated by thousands of miles - and that separation can easily magnify any differences or misunderstands within the team. I see a strong Project Manager as being someone who can drive good communication throughout the team, someone who drives accountability within the team, and who can build a team that pulls together when the going gets tough.

What's your view on using Certified Project Managers?

I see certification as a "necessary but not sufficient" condition to be a good Project Manager. You can have a person who is great at passing certification exams, but struggles with the hands-on project work - the interpersonal skills, the multitasking, the flexibility that's required to be a great Project Manager. However, Professional Certification brings some huge advantages - it ensures familiarity with industry best practice and the extensive Body of Knowledge that's out there. For any large scale or complex projects, I will only consider using proven and certified project managers. What I like about the IPMA 4-level certification model is that it gives you immediate insight into a Project Managers level of experience and capability - I think it gets a good balance between theoretical knowledge and practical application, and it provides a progression path for project management professionals.

Now that Motorola is winding down its Cork operations, what is on the horizon for your colleagues?

As part of the wind-down phase with Motorola, there has been a lot of interaction with external companies and agencies. The level of support and willingness to share information from agencies like Enterprise Ireland, the local Enterprise Boards, Innovation groups and the local Universities and Colleges has been tremendous. We organised a number of events such as a Jobs fair, a "Start Your Own Business" seminar and a Consulting fair. It became clear very quickly that the skills and expertise that Motorola employees have gained over the year are in hot demand. The management discipline and technical capability that one builds from working with High-Tech Multinational Corporations is something Motorola staff have taken for granted - but is a tremendous asset to bring to a new company. As we evolve into a knowledge-based economy, I have high expectations that many of my current colleagues will help sow the seeds for significant future successes within Ireland and internationally.

On a personal level, what's on the horizon for you?

I have been lucky enough during my time with Motorola to have worked in management roles right across the complete software development lifecycle. Over the years, I have headed up both the Motorola Program Office and the Quality Division, being responsible for multi-million dollar programs with a global footprint. For my next role I aim to harness that knowledge and experience and with some of my colleagues am setting up a new business - called AspiraCon. We aim to utilise the Top Talent available to create and deliver Project Management and Quality Management products and services to the ICT industry.

It has long been a source of frustration to me that it can be so difficult to get a reliable, easy-to-use, integrated and cost-effective toolset to manage a project. You can get bits and pieces that address some aspects, or you can pay millions for a system that requires a small army to maintain. AspiraCon has the vision to develop an integrated project and quality management infrastructure that we can offer out of a box or can easily tailor to work with existing business solutions. Our products and services will focus on the key value-add functionality. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail - and our team has the knowledge and the battle-scars to understand what it takes to deliver a project successfully - on time, within budget, hitting your quality targets, and doing that repeatedly.

How will your Project Management skills relate to you running a business?

Of course it will be a big change moving from life in a Multinational to running my own business, but it's clear that the mindset in Ireland has become much more entrepreneurial. Where once people were suspicious of anyone trying to start a business, now where it is a "respectable" thing to do and there is a realisation that our long-term competitiveness as a country will be based on our ability to incubate Irish businesses that can deliver innovative products and services. My experience in dealing with companies all over the world has convinced me that the talent pool we have in Ireland is second to none, so we should certainly have no lack of confidence or self-belief in our abilities.

I think having a strong Project Management discipline provides an excellent base for running a business. In the start-up phase the discipline behind creating a business plan is similar to creation of a project plan. Running an accelerated feasibility study is no different to running a project with a tight deadline. The main skill set that is not covered by the Project Management area is of course the whole area of financial accounting. I found myself digging out my old Project Management diploma notes to re-read the module that covered financials. The key advice to anyone starting a new business seems to be to recognise your strengths and weaknesses and make sure you build a team around you create a well-balanced structure.

As I look at the opportunities becoming available, it is apparent that one of the most sought-after skill-sets is that of Project Management. I would encourage anyone to take any opportunity that comes along to gain some project management experience, and then to pursue professional certification. Once you are certified and have gained the confidence built on a good track record, you will be well equipped to be successful across industries.