

Project Management Professionalism by Ed Naughton, Director General



As society becomes more and more project oriented, the ability to develop and maintain qualified project management staff is emerging as an important issue for many organisations.

The development of a project management training programme to meet such needs is a project in itself. An assessment of the present environment must be done in the conceptual phase, revealing the skills, knowledge, and competencies of the intended audience, and thereby producing a more useful training effort. The training plan evolves into the actual project plan that delineates the audience, deliverables, and the expected outcomes from the project management training. Appropriate tools must be selected to measure the progress of candidates. Selecting the right kind of instructor to present the project management training provides the basis for the effective deployment of skills and knowledge to the students.

Assessment

The Project Manager Competency Assessment gives organisational leaders a holistic view of an individual's current project management knowledge, skills, and potential to effectively fill a project manager role. With this information, companies can determine which individual project managers have the highest potential to grow and excel. The assessment results also help organisations target training only where deficiencies are recognised, thus eliminating unnecessary training programs and ensuring more productive results from training investment.

For example, the Project Manager Competency Assessment Diagnostic, as operated by the Institute of Project Management, has three main components:

- **Assessment Profile** measures the knowledge and experience of the project manager.
- **Personal Qualities**, identifies personal qualities that are recognised as being conducive to effective project management.
- **Rating Tool** translates the results of the individual and rates them against the internationally recognised IPMA 4 Level certification system.

Training Plan

The training plan identifies the target audience - project managers, team members, ancillary individuals - in concert with the desired outcomes, major deliverables, schedule, budget, and the resources needed to carry it out. The most important elements of the plan should incorporate the project management training initiative's mission, who the desired audience is, what the curriculum will be, and the methodologies to measure its ultimate effectiveness.

Content

The content of the curriculum should support at least three areas of development: project management skills, business skills, and leadership skills. Leadership skills, often referred to as 'soft skills', include areas such as relationship management, negotiation, communication, and conflict resolution. In terms of "hard skills,"

strategic planning, portfolio management, and financial analysis should be intrinsic to this portion of the project management training programme.

At the very least, the project management training programme should cover the nine knowledge areas (scope, cost, quality, human resources, communication, risk, procurement and integration). Classes should concentrate not only on the inculcation of knowledge, but also on best industry practices which help articulate the ways project management knowledge can be most effectively applied.

Instructors

When choosing individuals to present the project management training, two key components should be considered: specific project management experience, and teaching experience - the best instructors in project management training display an impressive degree of proficiency in both areas. In order to enjoy credibility in the classroom, teachers need to have devoted significant time to managing projects. It is this invaluable experience, gained in the field, which improves the learning experience by dint of shared examples and anecdotes.

The most successful instructors also possess outstanding platform skills: the ability to lecture, lead discussion groups, conduct effective debriefing sessions, and facilitate case studies.

Summary

People at different levels in the organisation have diverse needs that evolve from basic induction and tools application courses to a much more in-depth appreciation and understanding of the project management discipline in its entirety.

An organisation needs to have an overall project management development plan that steers the individual through each stage and concludes with a recognised international certification. Such certification provides proof positive that the individual concerned has gained peer recognition of his or her ability to manage projects.

The quality of the project management training and education a company's employees receive is, along with executive buy-in, one of the most important factors in achieving success and ultimate excellence in project management.