



## Project Management - Generic?

Discussion paper 5

Project management is an established method of management in the construction industry and the information sector, but is accepted only partly in other industries. Consequently, due to the partial acceptance and understanding of project management as comprising specific processes, project managers may encounter difficulty in being recognised by employers and moving from one professional discipline to another. Mullaly (2006, p.23) argues that “no recognisable standard has emerged to assess project management practices”, and without a recognised standard it is difficult for employers to make a judgment as to the capabilities of project managers. Thus, it is of interest for project managers to determine whether the project decision-making process is generic enough to allow transfer from one discipline to another (Crawford & Pollack 2007). Similarly, it is necessary for them to determine:

- what constitutes project management,
- what are the core project management knowledge areas, and
- in what ways current project management ideas can be developed to progress the discipline.

These questions relate to the competence of a project manager, especially as senior management may have no base of working knowledge of the discipline and rely entirely on the project manager’s abilities. In practice, for project managers and senior management, the merit of a project manager’s technical knowledge versus the merits of the general management skills is a constant dilemma and continuing point of discussion. Kotler (2000), in his text on marketing management discusses topics in common with project management; e.g., communication management, stakeholder management, program management and determining corrective action. As projects are a part of many organisations (Blomquist & Müller 2006, p.52; Koskinen 2004, p.18; Mullaly 2006, p.72) and project management is increasing in type, range and popularity, I have sought to examine the ‘path’ that project management is taking in relation to enabling its practitioners to be ‘flexible’ in the application of their management knowledge across disciplines.

[O’Shea, K 2009, Project Managers: what do they really do and need to know? ISBN: 978-3-639-20304-2](#)

**Lessons learned** The management of knowledge, in terms of ‘lessons learned’ in the project management perspective, is an area given great focus by the assessment process conducted under the guidelines of the Australian Institute of Project Management; as an assessor, I am constantly aware of the lack of attention given to this particular knowledge function.

Snider & Nissen (2003, p.5) describe the usefulness of capturing experiences (lessons learned) thereby increasing the knowledge base available.

*In this perspective, knowledge is recorded and stored for future use. That is, the principal flow of knowledge is across time, rather than across organizational or geographical space in the ‘solution’ perspective. The emphasis is on capturing practitioner experiences so that others may have access to and potentially learn from them, in the sense of ‘learning from the mistakes of the past’ and avoiding ‘reinventing the wheel.’*

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