



PM Accreditation & Knowledge

Discussion paper 3

In initiating this discussion, I make known I am a member and assessor for the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM). When firms seek to engage the services of a project manager (PM), there is a growing trend towards seeking a PM with either a qualification or accreditation, specific to project management. There is a view that training in any methodology does not a Project Manager make! Worsley (2005, p.2) suggests that the focus should not be on learning project management methodologies, but on project management education.

So what's the problem? It's the difference between education and training. Not sure what the difference is? Just check your reaction to your child coming home and saying they had sex training rather than sex education at school today! Senior executives want people skilled at running projects. People skilled at running projects are distinguished by their attitudes, their skills, the responsibilities they intuitively accept, and the tasks and procedures they follow. It is also a well-researched finding that the best predictor of project performance is level of previous project experience.

RegPM ('Registered Project Manager') is AIPM's project management certification program. The competency standards against which an award is granted are based on extensive research into national and international best practice in project management. So; what's your opinion? Following on from the previous QTC discussion papers on the subject of project governance, is there a place for assessing project management workplace competency in a governance structure? As a manager would you prefer to employ a PM certified as competent, who along with underpinning knowledge is able to demonstrate such, or employ a PM who has been schooled to pass a particular exam? In any-case, you are no doubt aware of the value of quality when it comes to the provision of training in PM and the use of your valuable training budget.

PM Knowledge

Jugdev (2004, p.23), discusses that project management is a knowledge based discipline and that tacit knowledge is a significant source of the acquisition of this knowledge. "Similarly, intangible assets seem to be undervalued in project management, yet they potentially play a crucial role in project management as it is a knowledge based discipline, and tacit knowledge and social capital are significant sources of knowledge exchange". Anderson (2006, p.22) outlines his belief in the role project managers play in the acquisition and application of knowledge; "The role of the project manager is to facilitate this blending of knowledge, e.g., by establishing and opening up arenas and creating channels for information and knowledge sharing.". Morris et al. (2006, p.4) have noted that "knowledge is one element of competency - others being skills and behaviours". Cohen and Levinthal (1990, p.133) discuss areas such as problem-solving skills, contextual knowledge and complementary expertise.

These topics suggest to me that over time, project managers (particularly those working as project management consultants) will develop the ability as a result of experiences to apply their stored knowledge and concepts to differing scenarios. Also, experience adds to a PM's underpinning knowledge which is gained through formal training and education. To enable firms to develop their PM competency and thereby facilitating the growth in PM maturity, the challenge for project managers contracting their services and even PMs within firms, is to ensure the knowledge transfer process takes place. The growth in the firm's PM maturity will facilitate the delivery of the organisation's strategic plans (more discussion on this to follow). What's your view?

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