

Chapter

9

Module Review /The Project Management Profession

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Chapter

NOPM Review/The PM Profession

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9.1 Learning Objectives for this Chapter

Having completed this chapter you will be able to:

- Understand the main themes of this module
- Understand some professional development and learning supports available to the project management profession.

9.2 Introduction

This chapter concludes our look at the Nature & Organisation of Project Management

As we near the conclusion of this module we take a look back at the main themes of the course. We conclude by taking an overview of the project management profession itself.

9.3 Recap on the Nature and Organisation of Project Management

This module has concerned itself mostly with the following main themes:

Theme 1 - Projects are Different

Projects share many similarities with “normal” operational work. However they possess a particular mix of predominant features which differentiate them from other ways of working.

We have explored some of these features or characteristics during the course. The main features which distinguish projects from operational work are:

- **A Project is a temporary once off activity which terminates – its not repetitive/ongoing**
- **The project organisation is temporary – while operational teams tend to persist**
- **Project outcomes are risky/difficult to predict – operations outcomes are easily understood/dependable**
- **Project work tends to be cross functional – Operational work is usually confined and managed within a functional area**

Other attributes of projects which we examined were:

- **Uniqueness of the product of the project and of the environment in which the project operates**
- **The need to progressively elaborate from a simple idea to a complex detailed plan to deliver something real and tangible**
- **Constraints on resources**
- **The need to balance multiple objectives**
- **The presence of a central point of responsibility**
- **The organisation of project resources into teams (real or virtual)**
- **The organization of projects into lifecycle phases**
- **The inevitability of conflict**
- **Etc.**

Theme 2 - Projects are Effective and Strategic

Organisations use the project approach because it helps them to achieve their strategic objectives with an increased chance of success. It can be argued that organisations which succeed do so because of their ability to take risk and deliver significant changes. It could be similarly argued that project management is ideally suited to the delivery of such “risky changes”.

The factors which have promoted the increased use of projects have included:

- Increased complexity of products and solutions required by the customer
- Increased scale of required work
- Globalisation of companies
- Increased use of virtual teams
- etc

Theme 3 - Projects are delivered by People

The successful completion of any project is due to a number of factors most of which relate to human activity. These human factors include such things as:

- A team which consists of people with the required skills and experience to complete the job
- Individuals with the required levels of motivation and commitment
- Stakeholders who may interact, negatively or positively, with the project or its outputs
- Availability of a person with central point of responsibility and capability to lead the project to conclusion (The project manager)
- The experience, skills and knowledge of the project manager.
- Support of people (particularly senior management) or of the organisation to the aims of the project
- Good communications between all of these people.

Theme 4 - Projects are organised differently

The unique nature of the project environment leads to some unique ways of organising the people working on projects. The main organisational issue to be resolved is how to structure the grouping of project members in relation to the other units in the company. The manner in which the project is organised will influence how the various people relate to each other and to the company. It will also determine the level of influence that each can exert on each other. This in turn affects their ability to work together towards a common objective.

We have seen that the types of organisations include, at one extreme, the traditional functional organisation in which project activity is carried out with little or no impact on the organisation, on personal interactions or on reporting lines.

At the other extreme are organisations which have chose to carry out their business entirely using project team structures.

It is important for project success that the appropriate organization of people is chosen.

Theme 5 - The Project Manager is at the Centre

Projects demand a central leadership and co-ordination role.

More importantly the project requires a single point of responsibility.

This point is called the Project Manager

Theme 6 - The Project Manager is a Proactive Detective!

It is the responsibility of the project manager to proactively manage towards a successful outcome.

The main weapon in the project manager's arsenal is the Process of Planning, Monitoring and Controlling – a theme which is explored in more depth in the modules “Planning & Scheduling” and “Managing Work and Costs”

However, some of the biggest enemies of the project manager are Silence and Neglect! – Projects are difficult to monitor and control in a vacuum. He must seek out exactly those issues that people are ignoring and would prefer not to talk about!

To illustrate this – here is an extract from some research carried out by the US consultancy company Vital Smarts. The study examines how failure to “speak up” or engage with crucial issues can impact success. They refer to these instances as “crucial conversations” and applied them to the world of project management. They found five main areas where project managers and their sponsors need to have “crucial conversations”:

- **FACT FREE PLANNING** – A project is doomed to failure when deadlines or resource limits are set with no consideration for the actual reality on the ground (someone neglects to cry “Stop”)
- **AWOL Sponsors** – A sponsor doesn’t provide leadership , political clout, time or energy to see a project through to completion (a neglect of responsibilities)
- **SKIRTING** – Powerful stakeholders work around the initiation, feasibility and prioritisation steps and attempt to go straight to “execute”(neglect of the process)
- **PROJECT CHICKEN** – Team leaders and member don’t admit when there are problems with a project but instead wait for someone else to speak up.
- **TEAM FAILURES** – team members are unwilling or unable to support the project

9.4 The Project Management Profession

We have seen in previous chapter that there is strong evidence that project management is increasingly being regarded as a profession in its own right. We have mentioned surveys of senior executives which indicate a positive endorsement of project management (93% strongly agreed that project management is a valuable asset)

We have also mentioned the existence of a number of professional institutions which promote, support or represent the project management profession.

Here we review a sample of some of the various supports for professional development:

9.4.1 The Project Management Institute (PMI)

A US based organisation active since the early 1970’s and now claims more than 450,000 members in over 160 countries.

It defines itself as a membership association for the project management profession.

Its primary activities include:

- Promoting the Project Management profession
- Setting professional standards,

- Conducting research
- Providing knowledge resources for its members.
- Promoting career and professional development
- Offering certification, networking and community involvement opportunities.

There are local chapters of PMI in many countries (including Ireland).

The PMI is probably best known for producing the Project Management Body of Knowledge (the PMBOK) which defines a global standard for project management.

The PMI also offer a professional certification path which includes:

- The Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM®) Credential
- The Project Management Professional (PMP®) Credential

The PMP credential is widely recognised and often specified as a qualification by some companies when recruiting for project managers. The PMI claim 500,000 project managers with PMP accreditation. The PMI have recently added a Program Management Professional accreditation (PgMP) and a Portfolio Management Accreditation – (PfMP)

9.4.2 The International Project Management Association (IPMA)

The IPMA (International Project Management Association) is a non-profit Swiss registered organisation whose membership is comprised primarily of national project management associations throughout the world.

They have similar aims to the PMI and also publish standards – in this case “The IPMA Competence Baseline (ICB). They also provide a 4 level certification structure – IPMA Levels A to D. This credential is a well-recognised project management accreditation, particularly in Europe (along with PRINCE2)

Each member association is responsible for developing and managing its own project management qualification and competence programme and for establishing its bodies for certification.

The Irish “**Institute of Project Management of Ireland**” is aligned to this body.

9.4.3 The Association for Project Management (APM)

The Association for Project Management (APM) is a UK organisation which is also affiliated to the IPMA. It claims to be the largest independent professional body of its kind in Europe with over 20,000 individual and 500 corporate members. It aligns its certification with the IPMA 4 level model but has also published its own Body of Knowledge.

9.4.4 Project Management Education and Development in Ireland

The Centre for Project Management is located within the Campus of UL (University OF Limerick) and offers Masters Degrees in Project Management. Many of the other Universities also offer specialist qualifications in project management. For example, **University College Dublin** offers an MSc in Project Management by Block Release or by Distance Learning. Other third level institutions such as **National University of Ireland Galway and Sligo Institute of Technology** offer a BSc Degree in Project Managmnet in Construction

The Institute of Project Management of Ireland was founded in 1989 to advance the theory and practice of Project Management in Ireland. It is a membership organisation whose aims are similar to that of the PMI and IPMA. It provides project management training is association with University College Cork and supports certification for both PMI and IPMA.

Note: The above are only a selection of the Project Management development opportunities available. There are many other organisations providing excellent quality training and professional development.

As you can see – the profession of Project Management is thriving and there are plenty of opportunities to expand your knowledge further.

There are also numerous web sites devoted to project management. A sample is given in the references section.



References & Resources

www.ipma.ch

www.pmi.org

www.apm.org.uk

www.vitalsmarts.com

www.ganthead.com

www.projectsatwork.com

Student Notes

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