

PM Knowledge - The Three Competencies

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Early in 2002 I was tasked with creating a development plan and path for an internal PMO group. The goals for the project were to provide:

- PMO staff with a definition of just what knowledge and skills they needed to gain and apply to succeed in the project management office at our organization; and
- a means for gaining and demonstrating these.

The first step was to define the knowledge and skills needed. I believe that if you want to be the best, you need to find out what the best are doing and do what they do, adapting of course to your environment and applying your own creativity and learning. We began by reviewing the literature, reading the books, conducting on line research, and asking our peers in NewGrange, PMI, and other professional PM communities. In addition, I called on old friends in internal PMOs across industries.

The Three Competencies -Business, Technical and Management

After much sifting sorting and filing, we were able to identify three knowledge/skill domains that were common to most successful PMO groups. These are

- Business Acumen⁽¹⁾ - what you need to be able to effectively manage projects at our Enterprise
- Technical Acumen - the knowledge and skills that are specific to Project Management, and
- Management Acumen -the knowledge and skills needed by anyone supervising others but specific to the project management arena where one may be managing people on a project that are not direct reports.

We refer to these as “the competencies.” In addition we surveyed staff to determine their perception of:

- Their own needs
- The needs of their peers
- The needs of their functional managers

And we asked in which of a variety of formats they preferred to receive “training.” Interestingly, we learned that we were quite accurate in our definition of needed competencies across the PMO office, which was gratifying. We also learned, as we had expected, that we needed to offer staff with a variety of ways in which they could gain a competency.

The competencies that follow are now part of an online, self-service, development tool that allows project staff to chart their development with a mentor and with their functional leader.

Staff members identify areas they wish to develop and are provided with resources and tools as well as guidelines for demonstrating and using the new skills. For purposes of development, staff is designated as professional or practitioner. Demonstration is more rigorous for practitioners.

In addition, we require that each staff member select a mentor from anywhere in our organization. The only requirement is that the mentor be well versed in project management, management, or the financial industry (or all three) and that the mentor agree to work closely with the staff member and assist with his or her development within the focus area.

Business Competencies - what you need to do to be able to effectively manage projects at our Enterprise

- Business Literacy – demonstrate understanding of the business by mapping the business vision to the project vision. Demonstrate a global perspective in your project management by including consideration of or application to enterprise global business needs. Strategically align project initiatives and recognize when corporate focus calls for realignment or re-evaluation of project priorities. Competent in technical and management areas relative to contracting and vendor and issue management.
- Corporate Procedures and Tools –apply established policies and procedures and corporate tools to the project.
- Corporate Culture – work within the corporate culture effectively to ensure success product delivery. Recognize and prepare for cultural constraints that may impact your project. Prepare mitigation plans as appropriate. Be competent in technical and management negotiating and communication competencies.
- Organizational Structure – work within the corporate organization, business division, and project team.

Technical Competencies –The technical aspects of project management. Traditionally considered the primary competencies needed to bring in a project from a purely technical perspective – the execution plan.

When these overlap with general management competencies; note that the learning and demonstration will be specific to the project management environment. When resources for gaining proficiency overlap, you are encouraged to select a means for gaining proficiency that you are unfamiliar with.

Initiation and planning

- Scope management - the "big picture" perspective on projects, including project life cycle, implementing change management procedures, and constructing work breakdown structures (WBSs) Balance resource supply and demand.
- Negotiation
- Influencing and stakeholder analysis and management
- Presenting Project Plans
- Business Case Presentations
- ROI Analysis
- Cross functional analysis – solid analysis of project impact across business units.

Control and execution

- Time management - solid scheduling capabilities using appropriate tools in creating and monitoring schedules.
- Cost management - cost estimating, budgeting using corporate CBA and

monitoring tools. Appropriate application of data gathered through comparison of BCWS; BCWP; ACWP; etc.; EVA; variance analysis, depreciation of capital – standard corporate practices.

- Human resource management – effective staffing and management of the project and project team including conflict resolution and influencing. Determine resource needs and available of specific resources. Resource allocating and leveling. Ensure that the best resources are assigned, not the “most available” resources. Ensure that human resources have the appropriate other resources and are set for success.
- Risk management – Identify and assess risks. Effectively use decision tree analysis to illustrate risk and assist sponsors in making informed decisions. Define and differentiate between project risks, business risks, and inherent risks specific to our line of business (such as the effect of the market on resources). Create plans for risk management and mitigation.
- Quality management – apply corporate standards for quality controls effectively. Quality control as appropriate including; attributes vs. variables; tolerance and control limits, prevention and inspection; design and quality, benchmarking, just in time practices; cost of quality.
- Contract management and negotiation – understand contracting basics, correctly use the contracting templates and apply guidelines and be familiar with the legal department contract dispute resources.
- Communication management- adhere to corporate communication standards. Gain competency in all defined communication areas under management competencies.
- Change Control

Transition

- Integration management – use all competencies to deliver solutions on time, within budget, according to specifications, and with the highest level of customer satisfaction. Apply corporate metrics to all projects as part of the PIR report.
- PIR – participate with business relationship managers in the PIR. Review results with PMO and other management. Develop plans for addressing identified areas for improvement. Working with Pathway team to document and publish lessons learned and best practices.

Project and product Tools

Meet proficiency requirements for the following tools.

- MS Project
- Summit D SDLC
- PlanVIEW
- Earned value
- Decision Tree Analysis
- RFI Template
- RFP Templates
- Evaluating Proposals
- Cost Benefit Analysis Template
- Using Project Templates
 - Status Reports
 - Meeting Minutes
 - Proposals
 - Reports
- Quality reporting tools: Pareto charts, cause and effect diagrams, control charts; scatter diagrams, etc.

Management Competencies –required of anyone managing others. Especially important for project

managers who constantly deal with new teams and new group dynamics.

Must demonstrate a basic understanding of the Project Management terminology and process outlined in the Division Toolbox (found in the Intranet) and how the processes contained in the guideline relate to formulation, approval, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Perform fundamental, basic and routine activities while gaining subject matter expertise in the Project Management skill.

- Communications
 - Written communications
 - Effective Listening Skills
 - Presentations Skills
 - Multi-site communications
- External Issue Management –identify, analyze and prioritize issues external to the project and develop mitigation plans – vendor management; disaster recovery management; team turnover; RFI/RFP Development; Proposal analysis
- Financial Acumen –understand how decisions affect the bottom line; knowledge of corporate financial and accounting principles and practices that impact operations; knowledge of the links between operations and the company's financial performance.
- Leadership –motivate, set achievable objectives, maintain a positive outlook, take responsibility, make decisions, and provide constructive feedback and coaching. Complete technical competency requirements for human resource management.
- Influencing
- Learning and Knowledge Management
- Negotiation – the ability to undertake continual adjustments with stakeholders in a persuasive manner, to keep the project on course by use of positive win/win negotiations.
- Organization – ensure that needed tools, resources, and data are easily accessible, create and maintain a clear team structure.
- Problem Solving and Decision-Making –analyze and define a problem, evaluate alternatives, find a solution,
- Relationship Management –consult and provide advice; facilitate discussion and resolve conflict; develop relationships with key project stakeholders; recognize and deal with other cultures; establish trust, credibility and respect
- Conflict Resolution – complete technical competencies relative to HR management
- Strategic Thinking –analyze and consider the future impact of decisions. Maintain a global big-picture approach, strategically position the project within the business to relate to short- and long-term objectives.
- Team Building –assemble a team within the right mix of skills, then “create” the team, understand and know how to share information, coach members, delegate responsibility, promote support and interaction. Relate to other HR competencies.
- Time Management – the ability to manage competing priorities effectively. Know the techniques for promoting and facilitating empowerment, participation, and cooperation with teams to achieve project commitments.
- Meeting Management

Definitions :

Best Practice – the agreed upon best way to accomplish a task or goal in a given environment.

Acumen is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as "Keen discernment, penetration"

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