



PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY

CASE STUDY – Developing PM Excellence

Client

Centrica Energy Upstream

Challenge

Develop a competency assessment framework to underpin individual training at Centrica Energy Upstream.

“We are moving to a place in the world where PM is recognised as a skill and discipline in its own right, it is multifaceted and to assure delivery of large scale spend portfolios or significantly complex projects requires people with very good experience and knowledge of all facets of PM, not just engineering skills.” Marshall Allerton, Projects & Wells Director – Centrica Energy Upstream

The story so far

Over a three year period, 20|20 Business Insight has provided a wide range of project management consultancy services, professional competency assessments and training services to Centrica Energy’s Upstream and Renewables divisions.

One of the outcomes of this ongoing working partnership has been the ability for Centrica Energy to identify existing levels of PM competence within the organisation and to support an ongoing programme of professional training and development for all project managers and related support staff.

Building a competency matrix and individualised training programmes

In 2010, Centrica Energy engaged 20|20 Business Insight to undertake a detailed competency assessment and subsequently create personalised training and development programme for its PM team. Compared to some parts of the Centric Energy group, the PM team within the Upstream division routinely manages highly complex projects involving multiple stakeholders, often with conflicting objectives.

In order to minimise the associated business risks, Centrica Energy wanted to ensure that all its project professionals and anyone else working in a projects environment had the knowledge and competency required to be successful and fully effective. Added to this, the level of risk involved with capital projects had increased considerably, which meant that inefficiency would prove very costly for the business.

Marshall Allerton, Projects & Wells Director – Centrica Energy Upstream commented, “We recognised that the scale and complexity of our capital expenditure portfolio was growing rapidly and we were moving to multi billion pound projects as well as running multiple concurrent significant sized projects.”

An APM accredited training provider, 20|20 set about building a competency framework based on APM principles. This would give Centrica Energy Upstream a sound baseline from which to measure the PM capabilities of both current and future employees. It would also provide a way of creating a highly individualised training programme.

Measurement

The APM competency measurement framework is one of the most exhaustive in terms of providing a true 360 degree assessment of capabilities and 20|20 is one of only a handful of training providers accredited to use it. The framework is very robust and designed to measure an individual’s test score across a project management standard based on three primary domains – technical, behavioural and contextual – with each individual rated across 300 variables.

According to APM guidelines, contextual capability refers to the way an individual can perform in context of the business’ operating environment; technical capability refers to the level of skill in the mechanical aspects of project management– cost control estimates, critical path analysis and planning; behavioural refers to interpersonal or team management capabilities and interactions with colleagues.

The APM methodology followed by 20|20 included an initial self assessment by participating individuals, followed by one to one interviews to verify the results of the self-assessment and produce an individually validated score. After agreeing the results with each participant, 20|20 and Centrica Energy designed an appropriate training programme to suit each individual’s short and medium term career goals.

Identification of needed training

Upon completing the competency assessment, 20|20 identified 3 main categories of training and created a development programme accordingly. Of the individuals assessed, 15% of the group were classified as support staff requiring an entry level understanding of PM terminology with a basic understanding of project structures and international standards. A further 15% comprised seasoned project managers who did not require professional PM training but needed to enhance 'softer skills' like leadership and negotiation. Finally, the remaining 70% of the Centrica Energy Upstream projects team were classified as 'PMs of the future' who had successfully managed projects in the past, but needed to build on their practical knowledge base in order to meet the challenges of the high-risk portfolios they would be managing in the future.

As experts in the energy industries, when developing the training programme, 20|20 were able to contextualise the Centrica Energy Upstream team's need to reflect upon existing business processes, which made the training programme more rounded and valid. "I received very good feedback from the individuals who attended the 20|20 PM courses, the company has excellent training and facilitation skills and the way they run their assessments is really very good," said Mr Allerton.

Looking ahead to the future, as the company moves forward and more people join the PM team, Centrica has the tools to assess their existing PM capabilities and, working with 20|20, can ensure each individual develops a level of competence to match their job role.

20|20 expertise

"20|20 are a very open organisation," concludes Marshall Allerton. "They listen to and understand what you are trying to achieve and work hard to resolve specific issues and challenges. Although PM is a skill set in its own right, I have found some of their people to have a lot of relevant industry expertise to complement their knowledge and add greater value in helping resolve Centrica's PM related business challenges."

Both parts utilise the same process of self-assessment followed by validation by qualified 20|20 personnel and both provide an indication of the individual's project management knowledge and experience.

The model is delivered either through an individual executable file or through an online interface; however the validation is done on a one-to-one P2P basis.