



DEVELOPMENT **IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

- **A GALLANT KNIGHT ON A NOBLE WHITE STEED?**



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As training manager for a project management training and consultancy company I am lucky enough to see many sides to the same story. It is fascinating to witness the differing attitudes towards the field of Project Management at both organisational and individual levels. One of the challenges that any training organisation must face is convincing people that time spent in the learning environment and therefore away from their day job is an investment in more than just monetary terms.

The sad truth is that despite having a skilled workforce and corporate and commercial expertise, projects continue to fail to either meet their stated objectives to deliver something within their constraints, or crucially deliver within their constraints but fail to deliver the benefits they were sanctioned to deliver. What we see time and time again are organisations that are very successful and very profitable but nonetheless are not as successful and profitable as they could or would aspire to be. We see individuals, very capable and competent who live comfortably in their own part of a project and don't necessarily comprehend the bigger picture or the potential impacts of their efforts.

So this is the point where you might expect Project Management training to ride in on a noble white steed of best practice, ready to convince you that this alone will solve your problems and increase your efficiency. The key players in best practice would not claim this to be the case. We deliver training across the APM©, PMI© and PRINCE2© methodologies and indeed they are all worthy in different ways, and all acknowledge the fact that methodologies are the foundations for actual best practice in the workplace and that if used appropriately in the

hands of dedicated project professionals they can be tailored to organisational needs and deliver time and time again.

We are constantly striving to challenge the paradigms that in the past have hindered true learning and development. I remember with sadness 25 years ago, when learning and development was synonymous with people who talked in clichés and possibly wouldn't even entertain a discussion about their favourite biscuit unless they could link the conversation directly to a theoretical model. Those were dark days indeed and although we still come across this very rarely, the learning and development industry has evolved to be a crucial part of any organisations' ability to create a solid platform of competent resources and retain them.

The 'Sword of truth' if you like for project management is simply this.....it works! Project management is, to a large extent the application of common sense in a very uncertain environment. "Ah well" I hear you say, that's simple then! Simple, no...possible, certainly!

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Unfortunately trying to teach common sense is a pursuit of folly, and so is utter and complete dependence on a few highly competent individuals. What is needed is a more grown up approach to the whole field of projects and project management. An environment where projects are governed appropriately, expected levels of competence for project people are clearly defined, project personnel are developed into their roles properly, clear and appropriate process is in place to allow projects to exist within the boundaries of the business with confidence that uncertainty is being addressed, and a repeatable project delivery system that becomes a cultural norm. If these things are in place, then we are almost ready for the noble white steed....almost but not yet!

There are many reasons why we are approached to deliver training in project management. For some organisations it is to meet the needs of a corporate accreditation, for others it is the results or performance of project execution that have indicated need, for others it is a desperate plea for help, but for most it is a desire to invest in the business and its people. We believe that the key to true engagement and efficiency increase doesn't necessarily begin with Project management training, and when the training does commence it should not be made up of academic best practice alone.



We believe that to make significant improvements, a more appropriate approach would include elements of:

- Understanding organisational needs, requirements and structure
- Analysis of project process and governance
- Gap analysis to find where best practice could help increase process and governance
- The creation (if it is missing) of a robust project delivery and governance system
- Competency assessments of project personnel
- Training needs analysis
- Blended learning solutions, which can contain:
 - E-learning in best practice
 - Classroom based learning against a mix of academic and organisational elements
 - Alignment to accredited standards
 - Alignment to organisational project delivery system
 - Application workshops, where learners practice what they learn in a safe and relevant environment
 - Professional accreditation in the form of exam preparation and exams

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You will see from this type of model that far from being the Gallant Knight on a Noble white Steed, who rides in to save the day (hurrah!) the training element is more akin to the stable that keeps the noble steed healthy in the first place.

There is no magic wand for the increase of project efficiency, but sometimes wearing a silly hat on a training course is a beginning.....

ABOUT 20|20 BUSINESS INSIGHT

At 20|20 Business Insight, our ultimate aim is to help you optimise your business and project performance. Embedding best practice project management and business management into organisations and then putting employees through training and development programmes has proved to be an optimal solution to attain competitive advantage for companies in demanding industries.

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