Chapter 2: Project management as a profession

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Chapter 2: Project management as a profession

SYNOPSIS

This chapter investigates the project management approach, project management as a profession and the project manager as a professional person. The evolution of project management and the establishment of various professional bodies for project management are discussed. The purpose of this discussion is to create an understanding of how project management has evolved as a profession.

The Project Management Professional (PMP) Certificate offered by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the project manager as a professional person are discussed. This provides an overview of the benefits that can be achieved by using project management professionals. The world-wide growth in the PMP certification is used as an example.

The PMI research is used to discuss the benefits of utilising professional project management as a competitive advantage tool.
Chapter 2: Project management as a profession

2.1 THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Organisations and individuals have been planning and managing projects since the first day that light appeared on earth. Whenever and wherever civilisation took place there were projects to manage: buildings to erect, roads to construct and so forth. Without the advanced tools, techniques and methodologies existing today, people created project time lines, located materials and resources, and weighed up the risks involved. These early ideas lead to the development of a set of applied management techniques, known as the project management approach.

Project management (Oosthuizen 1995:36) started in the engineering disciplines and was long regarded as a sub-discipline of engineering. This has all changed. Today project management is a unique, independent profession with universal applications in any conceivable endeavour in life.

The phrase “project management” began to emerge in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the size, scope, duration and resources required for new projects began to receive more attention. Today, project management is used globally by most small, medium and large organisations as a means of meeting their customers’ needs by completing projects in the most effective and efficient manner. As a result, project management leadership (the project manager) is a highly desirable and skilled person needed to effectively manage the projects as intense global competition demands that new projects and business development be completed on
time, within quality specifications, within budget and to the customer’s satisfaction with the end product or service.

2.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AS A PROFESSION

The Oxford dictionary (2000:930) defines the word *profession* as “…a type of work that needs special training or skills, especially one that needs a high level of education”, while the word *professional* is connected with a job that needs special training or skills, especially one that needs a high level of education.

According to Lessing *et al.* (2004:14) the use of the word *profession* is often restricted to include only those occupations requiring extensive study and qualification standards, indicating that the *professional* possesses specialised knowledge and practical skills in that field (e.g. accounting, engineering, in law, medicine or nursing).

However, a professional person in this sense can be a well-skilled person that earns a living from doing a special task. A good example is a sportsman or sportswoman.

2.2.1 Nature of a profession

Lessing *et al.* (2004:15) suggests three core criteria that distinguish professional work from the work of other occupations:

- *Academic qualification*: requirement of defined formal training, emphasising an intellectual component. A functional statement for a profession describes
the kind of special knowledge it possesses and the purposes to which this knowledge is used.

- **Skills competency:** The development of underlying skills associated with that profession must be proven by the would-be professional as being competent to apply the knowledge in diverse practical situations.

- **Ethical code of conduct:** This certifies that the professional is subjected to the discipline of the professional body. The aim is to ensure that professional competence will be applied in a socially responsible way.

There are various professional bodies in the field of project management. The most prominent international ones are the Project Management Institute (PMI), Project Management South Africa (PMSA – the professional body in South Africa), the International Project Management Association (IPMA) and the Association for Project Management (APM). These will be introduced briefly.

### 2.2.2 Project Management Institution (PMI)

The Project Management Institute (PMI) was established and founded in 1969 by five volunteers. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, USA issued Articles of Incorporation for the PMI, which signified the official inception of the organisation.

During the 1980s, the PMI’s membership, programmes and services continued to grow. A code of ethics was adopted for the profession and the first Project Management Professional (PMP) certification examination was administered.
By 1990, the PMI’s membership totalled over 8 500 and by 1993 the annual membership growth rate rose to over 20% per annum. The PMI published the project management standard, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK). One of the PMI’s objectives is to identify the areas of learning required for competent project management. The PMBOK is meant to serve as the fundamental basis for the education of project managers.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the PMI had over 50 000 members, over 10 000 certified PMPs and over 270 000 copies of the PMBOK Guide in circulation. The PMI supports over 153 000 members (Table 2-1) in 146 countries worldwide (PMI 2004:24). PMI members are individuals practicing and studying project management in many different industries, including aerospace, the automotive industry, business management, construction, engineering, financial services, information technology, pharmaceuticals and telecommunications.

Significant growth in the PMI’s membership reflects greater understanding of the organisation’s relevance and broader recognition of its value and credibility. A rapid growth in the membership of professional associations is strong evidence of the popularity and use of project management in the management of operational and strategic change in today’s organisations (Knutson 2001:11).
2.2.2.1 PMI code of ethics

The Oxford dictionary defines *ethics* as “… the moral principles that control or influence a person’s behaviour”. Project managers involved in project management need to behave in an ethical manner, thus ethical standards are required to guide these project managers on ethical issues. A project manager, particularly in the public sector, may easily become embroiled in the ethics concerning issues such as pollution, public safety, industrial plant locations, the use of public land, and so on (Meredith & Mantel 2003:142). The PMI created a code of ethics for project managers. This was first approved in 1982. It was revised in 1989 and again in 1995. The current version of the code is shown in Table 2-2. The PMI’s ethical standards reflect the current best practice in the ethics field, making PMI membership a competitive advantage by raising the standard of conduct for PMI members.
Table 2-2 Code of Ethics for the Project Management Profession

PREAMBLE: Project Management Professionals, in the pursuit of their profession, affect the quality of life for all people in our society. Therefore, it is vital that Project Management Professionals conduct their work in an ethical manner to earn and maintain the confidence of team members, colleagues, employees, clients, and the public.

ARTICLE I: Project Management Professionals shall maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct and:
   a. Accept responsibility for their actions.
   b. Undertake projects and accept responsibility only if qualified by training or experience, or after full disclosure to their employers or clients of pertinent qualifications.
   c. Maintain their professional skills at the state-of-the-art and recognise the importance of continued personal development and education.
   d. Advance the integrity and prestige of the professional by practicing in a dignified manner.
   e. Support this code and encourage colleagues and co-workers to act in accordance with this code.
   f. Support the professional society by actively participating and encouraging colleagues and co-workers to participate.
   g. Obey the laws of the country in which work is being performed.

ARTICLE II: Project Management Professionals shall, in their work:
   a. Provide the necessary project leadership to promote maximum productivity while striving to minimise costs.
   b. Apply state-of-the-art project management tools and techniques to ensure quality, cost and time objectives as set forth in the plan are met.
   c. Treat fairly all project team members, colleagues, and co-workers, regardless of race, religion, sex, age, or national origin.
   d. Protect project team members from physical and mental harm.
   e. Provide suitable working conditions and opportunities for project team members.
   f. Seek, accept and offer honest criticism of work, and properly credit the contribution of others.
   g. Assist project team members, colleagues, and co-workers in their professional development.

ARTICLE III: Project Management Professionals shall, in their relations with employers and clients:
   a. Act as faithful agents or trustees for their employers or clients in professional or business matters.
   b. Keep information on the business affairs or technical processes of an employer or client in confidence while employed, and later, until such information is properly released.
   c. Inform their employers, clients, professional societies or public agencies of which they are members or to which they may make any presentations, of any circumstance that could lead to a conflict of interest.
   d. Neither give nor accept, directly or indirectly, any gift, payment, or service of more than nominal value to or from those having business relationships with their employers or clients.
   e. Be honest and realistic in reporting project quality, cost, and time.

ARTICLE IV: Project management Professionals shall, in fulfilling their responsibilities to the community:
   a. Protect the safety, health, and welfare of the public, and speak out against abuses in these areas affecting the public interest.
   b. Seek to extend public knowledge and appreciation of the project management profession and its achievements.

*Source: PMI, as reproduced by Meredith & Mantel 2003:143*
2.2.2.2 Project Management Professional (PMP)

Project management is now being recognised as a rewarding career path for individuals with strong organisational skills. As project management gains recognition as both a profession worth aiming for and a discipline with a good future, project managers themselves are pushing to make project management a professional career choice. Named by CertCities.com as one of the “ten hottest certifications for 2004”, PMP credentials continue to be recognised and reinforced as the management certification of choice across world-wide (PMI 2004:17).

Project management is not something with which one can graduate from university and start doing right away. It requires some intensive on-the-job experience, plus academic training to become a project manager. The PMI clearly recognises that proficient project managers are truly made, not graduated. One of the requirements for PMP certification is that any candidate wishing to sit for the examinations leading to a PMP designation, must have demonstrated from three to five years’ practical experience in applying project management principles in a diverse array of projects he/she has completed amongst other requirements.

In most cases a good project manager has work experience or a track record of managing projects, while at the same time holding an academic qualification, i.e. a bachelors degree in civil engineering, management or other discipline.

The PMP certification continues to grow exponentially (Table 2-3). This is a positive indication of its credentials and the value to its members. The PMI processed over
43 900 applications for PMP certification in 2004 alone, and of those, 74% earned the certification (PMI 2004:17).

Table 2-3 PMP certification

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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*Source: PMI 2004:14*

### 2.2.2.3 The PMI 2004 research

Project management is the growing profession in the competitive marketplace and many organisations are using project management to accomplish their goals. This is the conclusion of the Thought Leadership Research (PMI 2004:7):

The survey explored perceptions on project management among senior executives worldwide, from senior vice-presidents to chief executive officers. The survey was
designed to assess the value of project management within large and medium-sized companies across eight different industries.

**Observations gained from the data include:**

- Some 94% of international respondents agree: “Project management is a valuable asset to my company”.
  - US – 84%
  - France – 76%
  - Japan – 80%
  - Germany – 64%
  - UK – 76%
- Companies around the globe anticipate the growing use of project management.
  - France – 80%
  - Hong Kong – 48%
  - US – 76%
  - Germany – 47%
  - Japan – 60%
  - UK – 32%
- Some 92% agree that “utilising professional project managers is an effective way to ensure success,” and 65% currently employ professional project managers.
- Some 76% agree that they “often attribute the successful completion of projects and change initiatives to effective project management.”
- When asked in an open-ended format, 52% volunteer cost and budget stories as examples of project management success, followed by efficiency (37%), timing (31%) and improving client relationships (29%).
- The greater the company’s annual revenues, the more likely it is to have used project managers. In fact, 87% of companies with greater than $500 million in revenue have used project managers, while only 50% of companies with less than $50 million in revenue have used project managers.
• The larger the company, the more an international certification is preferred over a local/regional certification (53% for $500M+; 46% for $50-$499M; and 37% for $25–$49 M).

From the above survey results, it is clear that the international community recognises project management and the project manager as a professional discipline and a professional person respectively. Some 92% agree that utilising professional project managers is an effective way to ensure success, while 65% currently employ professional project managers. Project management is a multidisciplinary profession that has considerable overlap with other disciplines and professions (Oosthuizen 1995:36).

A professional project management organisation can provide immeasurable benefit to a company. In today’s highly competitive business world, professional project management can easily be positioned as a differentiation of services between companies (Knutson 2002:333).

**2.2.3 Project Management South Africa (PMSA)**

Project Management South Africa (PMSA) – formerly known as the Project Management Institute of South Africa (PMISA) – was formed in 1997 as a national association to represent project management professionals across all sectors in South Africa. Since 1997 PMSA membership has increased from 400 to over 1 200. Members are drawn from a diverse cross-section of industries and ethnic groups. The drive to create PMSA came from a need for a cross-sector forum for
practitioners in Southern Africa to meet and work together and for a national body to work with local organisations and the South African government in developing effective project management within South Africa.

The PMI South Africa Chapter was formed in 1982 and has been a very active contributor to PMI since its formation. The PMI South Africa Chapter therefore nurtured the formation of PMSA and a very close working relationship exists between the two organisations. PMSA also has a cooperative agreement with PMI and maintains close ties with PMI activities.

PMSA is registered as a not-for-profit company and is managed by a board and national executive. Representatives on the board are drawn from major organisations and government. Members elect the national executive for a two-year term of office. Local activities are undertaken through branches. Currently there are eight branches in South Africa, organised according to provinces or major concentrations of members.

2.2.4 International Project Management Association (IPMA)

In 1965 the International Project Management Association (IPMA) started as a discussion group of managers of international projects. The first international congress was held in 1967 in Vienna with participants from 37 different countries. Since that time INTERNET (the name of the organisation until 1994) has developed steadily and is now the prime international promoter of project management. A most significant characteristic of IPMA is the parallel development of associated national
societies that serve the specific development needs of each country in its national language. IPMA has thus emerged as an international network of national project management societies. A member of a local national association is indirectly also a member of the international association.

IPMA only accepts direct individual members if there is no national association in the local country. Currently IPMA comprises over 30 national associations representing approximately 35 000 members primarily in Europe, but also in Africa and Asia. It promotes project management professionalism under specific cultural requirements in all types of projects. Moreover, institutional contacts to national associations in North America, Australia and South Africa ensure a truly global dimension to the work of the IPMA.

2.2.5 Association for Project Management (APM)

The Association for Project Management (APM) was formed in 1972 by a group of esteemed British engineers and managers. The APM is the largest independent professional body of its kind in Europe. Sustained growth of the APM’s current cross-sector base of 13 500 individual members and some 300 corporate members makes APM the UK’s leading association for project management.

The APM body of knowledge identifies 42 areas of knowledge required to manage any project successfully. The APM’s key objectives are to develop and promote excellence in project management across all sectors of industry and beyond. The APM is a non-profit organisation. Any profits APM make are covenanted to the APM and are ploughed back into the profession. The APM’s objective is to develop the art
and science of project management through a programme of activities designed to increase, recognise and promote project management excellence.

The APM’s members are recognised in their local countries and, as members of the IPMA, also worldwide.

### 2.3 THE PROJECT MANAGER AS A PROFESSIONAL PERSON

Due to technology in today’s global marketplace, complexity and speed are mostly certainties. Creating clear direction, efficiency, timely response and quality outcomes, requires project managers who are agile and can adapt to any change initiative within their organisations. The complexity of the problems faced by project managers, taken together with the rapid growth in the number of project-oriented organisations, has contributed to the professionalisation of project management (Meredith & Mantel 2003:5).

Finding individuals with this broad range of expertise, as spelled out in the definition of project management in Chapter 1, is challenging, which is why a competent project manager is needed. Effective project management not only necessitates the use of the powerful tools and techniques that have been developed, but also requires leadership on the part of the project manager (Steyn et al. 2003:11). There is growing appreciation that projects will be delivered more effectively if there is synergy between the project management competence of individuals and of the organisations in which they operate (Crawford 1999:1).
Project management requires a keen knowledge of human behaviour and the ability to skilfully apply appropriate interpersonal skills. The second aspect involves the knowledge, understanding and skilful application of a prescribed project management process. Project management is a multi-disciplinary approach and a well-educated project manager has a working knowledge of a number of diverse disciplines (Steyn et al. 2003:11).

The discipline of project management plays a key role in the competitive, global business. Customers demand more and better products and faster service delivery in today’s global marketplace. As a result, organisations need individuals and teams with solid project management knowledge and skills to meet the demand of customers. This is a clear indication that project management is a profession and needs someone with professional skills and knowledge to manage these projects successfully. Most project managers opted PMP certification, meaning that they have decided that project management is the profession that they want to pursue (Lewis 2003:17).

2.4 CLOSURE

Organisational management is becoming increasingly aware of the added value of a professional project management capability within the organisational environment. This increases its intention to reinforce this important skill set within its staff component and contributes to the development of project management as a profession. Individuals are also discovering the value of project management as a profession and consider it a career opportunity with a challenging future potential.
The exponential growth in PMI membership and PMP certification is a clear indication that there is a bright future for organisations that use professional project managers. The research also shows that professional project management plays an important role in organisations' business success. Furthermore, 92% of businesses utilise professional project management as an effective way to ensure the success of their business.

The next chapter discusses the role of projects and project managers in business success.