

IPMA Education and Training Series¹

Project Management Education & Training – an Irish Perspective

By Ed Naughton
IPMA Education & Training Board Member

During the last two decades we have witnessed an explosive growth in the interest and application of project management in Ireland. It has been challenging and interesting to participate in this advancement.

From modest beginnings, academic courses, professional training and accreditation programmes have blossomed as practitioners seek to enhance their knowledge, skills and competencies.

This year will represent a major milestone as in excess of 3,000 individuals will have acquired professional accreditation, in the acclaimed IPMA (**International Project Management Association**) 4 level certification system.

Many of these individuals have become ardent ambassadors for and promoters of the benefits of project management within their work environment. As they climb the corporate ladder, their influence on the application and development of the discipline will contribute to its future health.

There is an ever increasing awareness within organisations that the best utilization of finite and limited resources is through the application of effective project management under the stewardship of competent project managers.

Scanning the landscape

A clear understanding of the state and evolution of education, training, certification and professional practice are particularly important to the future development of the field of project management. Directly observing what practitioners do, how they put in action their knowledge and competencies are a means to understand their practice.

- **Project Management in Ireland – Survey of Practitioners**

For the past eight years, the Institute of Project Management and UCC (University College Cork – Ireland's third largest university) conduct a joint survey across five geographic regions thereby providing a good national perspective.

¹ This series of articles is by members of the IPMA Education and Training (E&T) Board on the subject of project management education, training, careers and related topics. *More* information about the IPMA E&T can be found at <http://ipma.ch/education>.

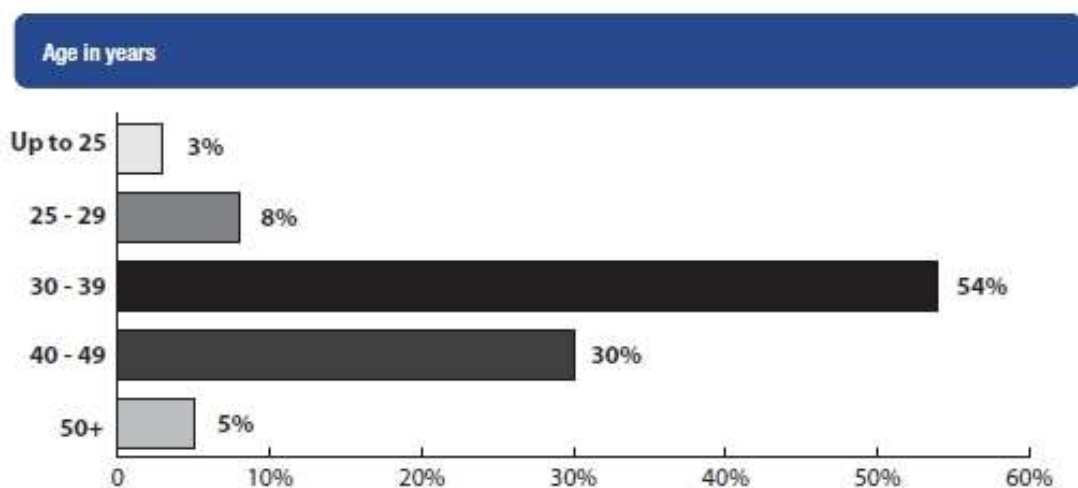
The results provide insights into the present state of the discipline; identify possible future development areas while at the same time providing guidance to educationalists, practitioners and organisations. The following tables offer a glimpse of the latest results of our 2012 survey. In this article we concentrate on two interesting topics addressed in the survey:

- The profile of people seeking to up-skill
- Career opportunities in project management

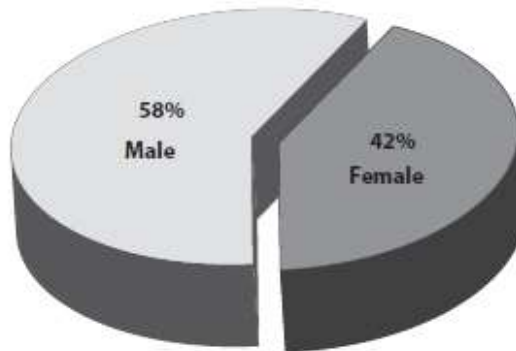
Background Profile

The results show that the typical profile of those seeking to up-skill by acquiring an internationally recognised professional accreditation such as that offered by IPMA is:

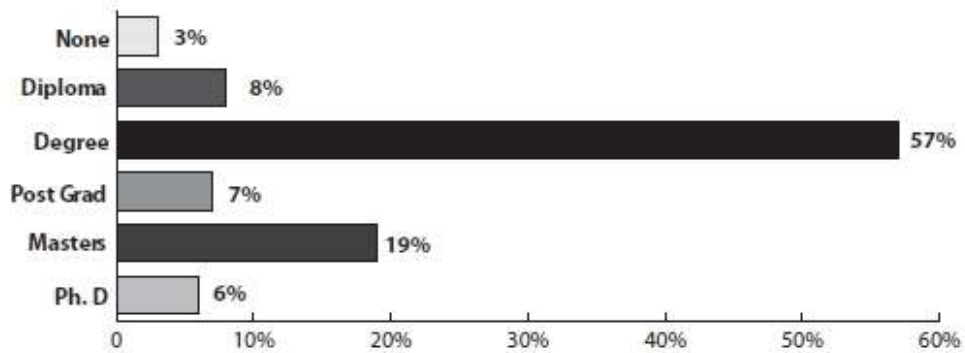
• middle to senior management
• 30 to 45 years old
• 89% of them possessing a minimum of a primary degree from a recognised third level institution
• 71% coming from a range of engineering, business and the ITC primary degrees
• 60/40 male to female gender balance
• almost 50% earn in excess of €55,000



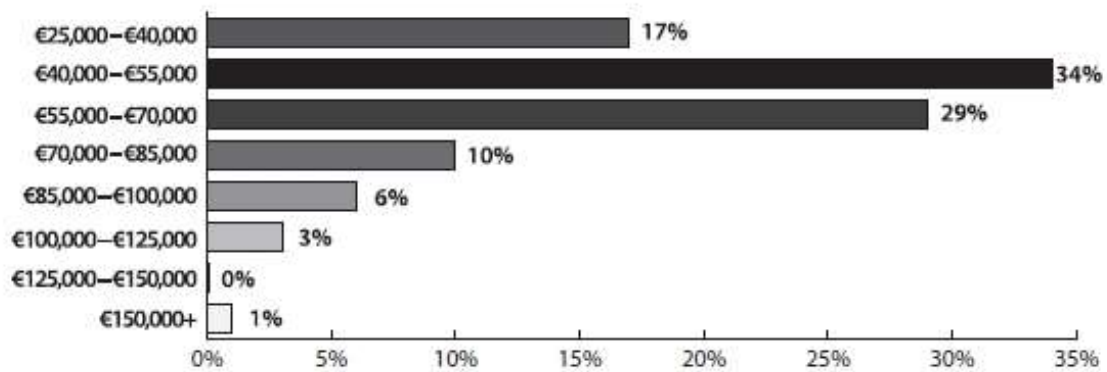
Gender



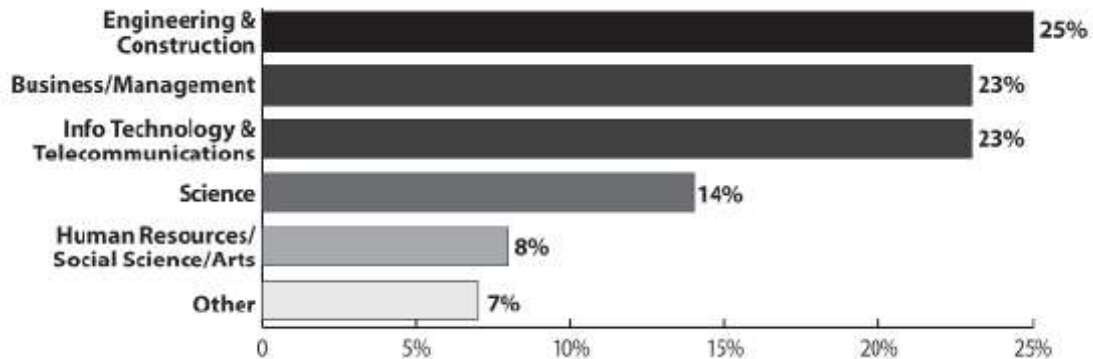
Highest qualification attained



Which of the following best indicated your gross salary range per annum?



Which of the following categories best describes your area of third level education?

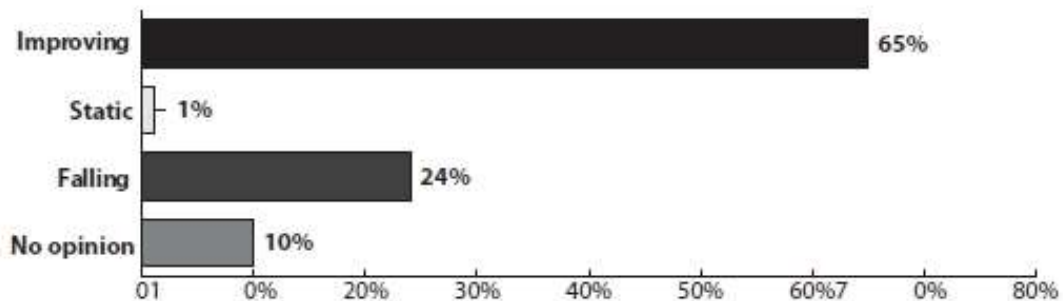


Current Business / Career Opportunities

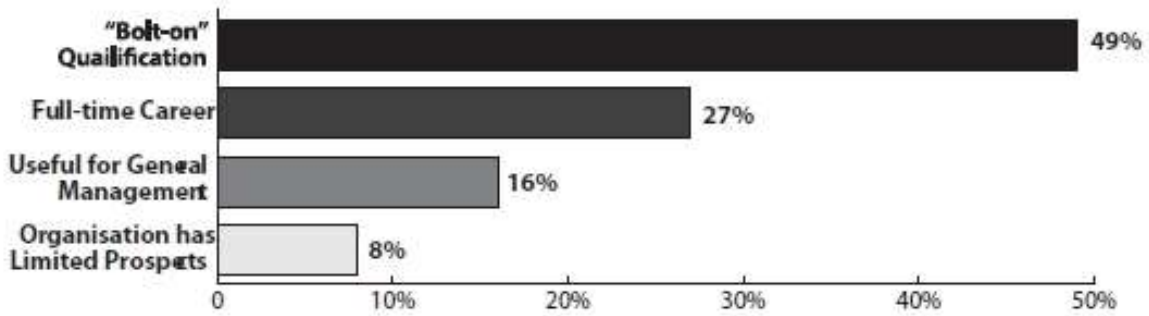
When asked about what sectors they are currently employed in and how they viewed project management as a career opportunity:

- It is interesting to note that even though 71% qualified from a range of 4 disciplines, as project managers they are now spread over a minimum 14 business sectors
- 65% were positive about their future prospects in the discipline despite the fact that only one in four worked in organizations that offered dedicated career paths for project managers.
- almost 50% viewed project management as a “bolt-on” skillset to their primary area of expertise.

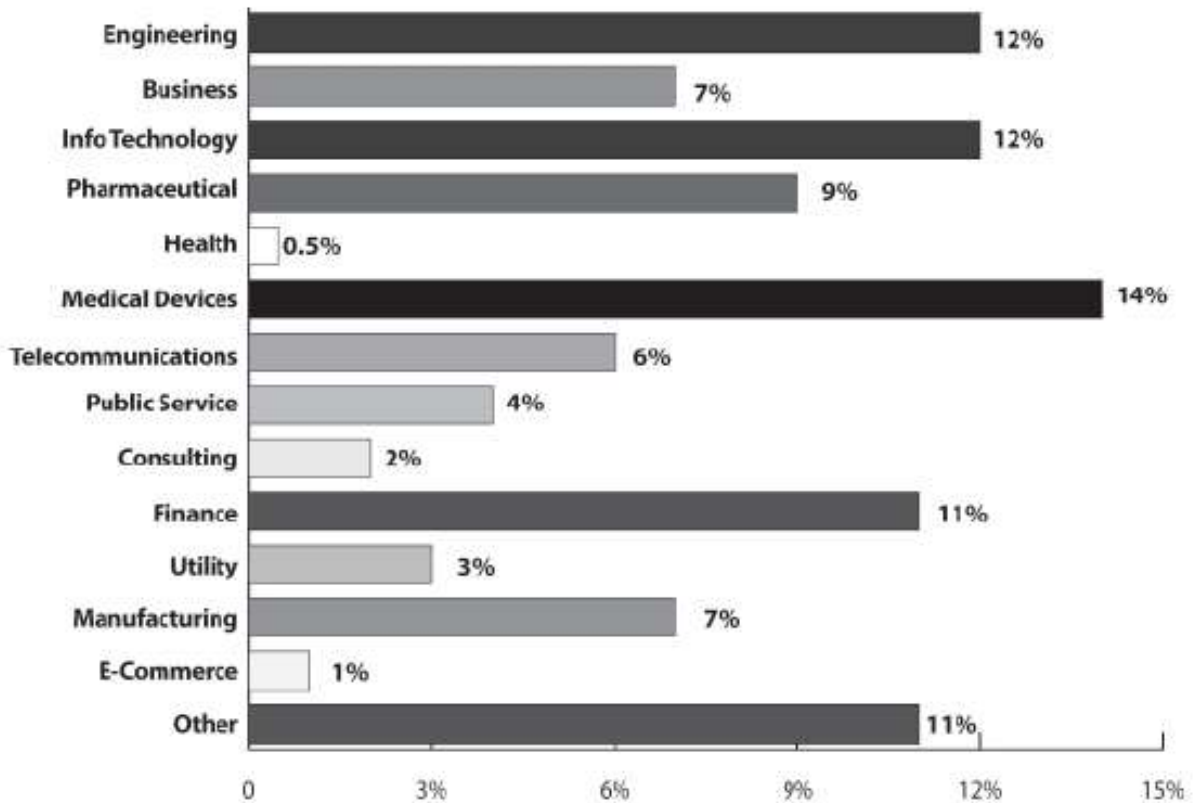
How do you see your potential job opportunities/promotion prospects in project management?

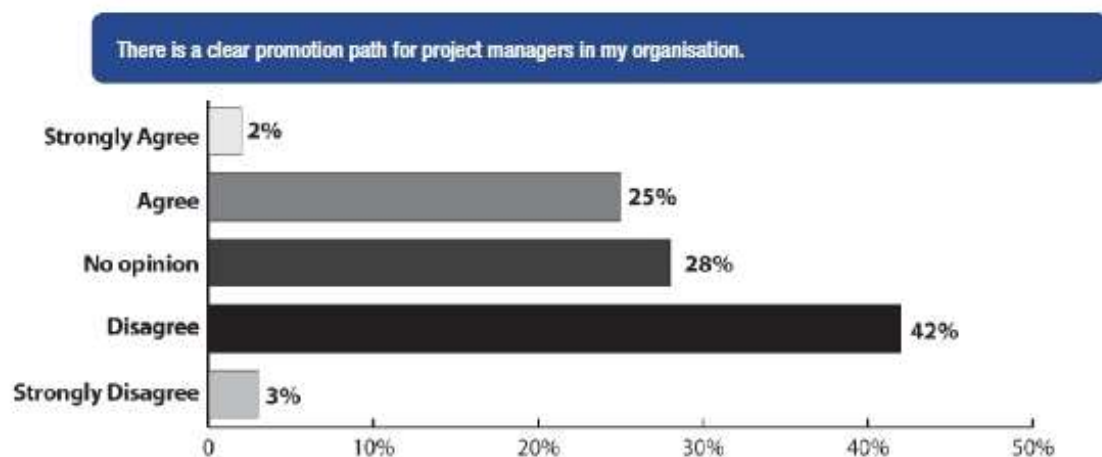


Which of the following statements most clearly represents your personal view?



What is your organisation's primary business activity?





The Future

During the past two decades we have seen the astounding recognition that projects and programmes are important within essentially all forms of human endeavour. Project management is now widely used throughout the entire economy where there is a realization that the efficient use of scarce resources is essential to economic progress.

Where will this obviously very important movement be taking us during the coming decade?

At the heart of management is the need to specialize and then to integrate. Perhaps that is why project management is such a brilliant discipline, as it combines these twins. Its growth will continue as it expands its application to more and more sectors and it becomes embedded as part of mainstream management.

We also need to deepen our commitment to the 'higher order' functions of project management, such as complex project management, strategic project management and portfolio management, in order that the critical importance of project management be better recognized by senior management and CEO's.

There is however a caveat. With the enormous growth in the provision of project management training courses and promises of certification there has been a diminution in the quality of many of these offerings. Organizations that offer a myriad of courses in across a range of disciplines often see project management training as another opportunity grow the top line and increase profitability.

Project management training has also become commoditised to a large and worrying extent with many providers offering "money back guarantees if you do not pass your certification examination". This undermines the image, credibility and professionalism of the discipline and brings with it a "race to the bottom" mentality. Once entrenched in this position, it becomes very difficult to subsequently convince the market about the true value and quality of the project management product on offer.

About the Author



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Ed Naughton, BE, C. Eng., F.I.E.I, IPMA-a, PMP, is the founder and current Director General of the Institute of Project Management of Ireland, the leading authority on the PM profession in Ireland. On the international front, Ed was responsible for initiating cooperation agreements with both the PMI (Project Management Institute) USA and the IPMA (International Project Management Association). He is Ireland's representative on the IPMA council of delegates, and a former Vice President-Marketing for the IPMA. He was also the first PMP registered in Ireland. Ed has researched, published and presented many articles and papers on project management and is the author of the Irish Project Management Competence Baseline. During his thirty year career, Ed has worked as a project manager and/or project management consultant on a large variety of high profile domestic and international assignments. Ed Naughton is a graduate of University College Dublin (BE, civil), a Fellow of the Institute of Engineers of Ireland, a Chartered Engineer (Ireland), a Professional Engineer in Canada, and holds an IPMA Level A certification. He is former founder and editor of the quarterly international publication "Project Management Practice". One of Ireland's most respected experts on the topic of modern project management, Ed is an executive advisor to PM World in Ireland. Ed Naughton lives in Dublin and can be contacted at ed@projectmanagement.ie.