

Professionalism: at the heart of project success

By Andrew Bragg

Association for Project Management

Today's economic pressures mean that professionalism in project and programme management is an absolute necessity. Recruiting appropriately competent project and programme professionals helps reduce the risk of projects overrunning, exceeding their budgets or failing to deliver their intended benefits. A global survey by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) supports this theory. The report, *Insights and Trends: Current Programme and Project Management Practices*, concluded that 80% of projects classified as high-performing used a certified project manager.

Demonstrating project success

In UK government the creation of the Major Projects Authority (MPA) – focused on improving project performance – is already starting to pay dividends. According to Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office, progress to date has saved taxpayers £1.7 billion on major projects alone; the equivalent of £100 for each working household in the country. At the same time the MPA has transformed the record of project delivery so that now around two thirds of major government projects are expected to deliver on time and to budget, with that figure forecast to exceed 90% by 2015. Much of this success can be attributed to the work done to build capability in project and programme management, including the nomination of suitably competent and experienced senior leaders. Only this month we saw the first cohort of leaders graduate from the Major Projects Leadership Academy, with over 300 more expected to have gained the requisite skills by next year.

Recruiting and developing competent project professionals

Boards have a responsibility to ensure that their organisations assess the competence of the project professionals they deploy. Fulfilling this responsibility has got easier over the last couple of years with the development of a universally-accepted UK professional standard by which project managers can demonstrate their skills, training and experience, together with their commitment to continued professional development and to a code of professional conduct. It really allows project management professionalism to earn its place at the heart of project success.

Association for Project Management (APM) has set out its vision as a world in which all projects succeed. It is indeed a bold vision, but one that is achievable by constantly raising the bar of project professionalism across all sectors in the UK.

The association – the lead professional body for project management in the UK – has over 20,000 individual members and in excess of 500 corporate members across the public and private sectors and in all areas of UK activity.

Practitioners are supported through APM's FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism – Breadth of knowledge, Depth of competence, Achievement through qualifications and experience, Commitment to continuing professional development, and Accountability to a code of professional conduct – which provide them with a robust framework to develop their career.

The association continues to invest substantially in developing the competency of practitioners through the APM Body of Knowledge, defining the knowledge needed to manage any kind of project, and the APM Project Management Competence Framework.

APM works tirelessly to address the growing public demand for a step change in the delivery of projects and programmes. This reflects the expectation of society: a world in which all projects succeed.

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About the Author



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Since joining APM in 2004, Andrew has taken a leading role in the extensive organisational change programme which has prepared APM to seek chartered status on behalf of the profession. During that period, APM membership has increased from 11,000 to over 20,000; the APM Body of Knowledge has undergone two major revisions; the re-designed website now attracts 425,000 unique annual visitors; APM Registered Project Professional standard has been launched; income has grown from £2.5m to over £6.8m; and APM's engagement and influence within public and private sectors have both increased significantly, with APM championing the cause of ever-increasing professionalism.

Andrew was recently elected Vice-President, Finance & Administration of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). He has presented widely on the topic of professionalism.

His particular interest in the pan-sector nature of project management reflects the range of sectors such as print, packaging, multimedia, stationery, lighting manufacture and publishing in which he has worked – for the last 20 years as chief executive and prior to that, as marketing specialist.

As well as contributing to *Re-inventing Influence*, judged by the Management Consultancies' Association as best management book of the year in 1996, he co-authored *Developing New Business Ideas*, published by Pearson in April 2005.

He holds an MBA from Cranfield University as well as Diplomas from the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Paris Chamber of Commerce. His first degree was in Modern Languages at Trinity College, Cambridge, to which he won an entrance exhibition. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.