PM World **Journal**
Vol. IV, Issue XII – December 2015
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Project Manager You Know
by Almahdy Eltonsy
Commentary

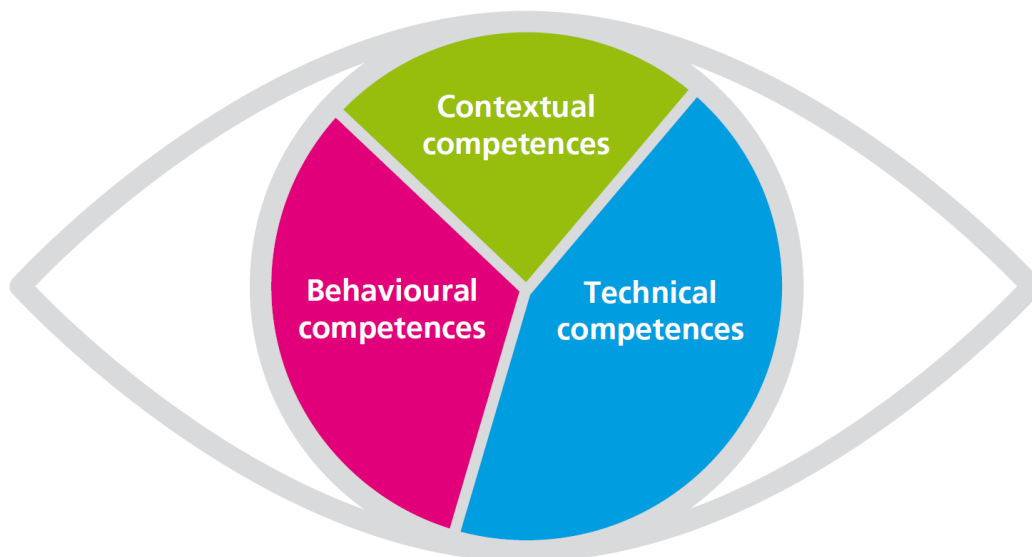# The project manager you know

By Almahdy Eltonsy

Project management is an art based on a core knowledge; as projects manager we all face many situations after which we wonder and say: *"How did I do that?? ".*

The article aims is to share what we tested many times in our daily work and life; we need to put a name over it.
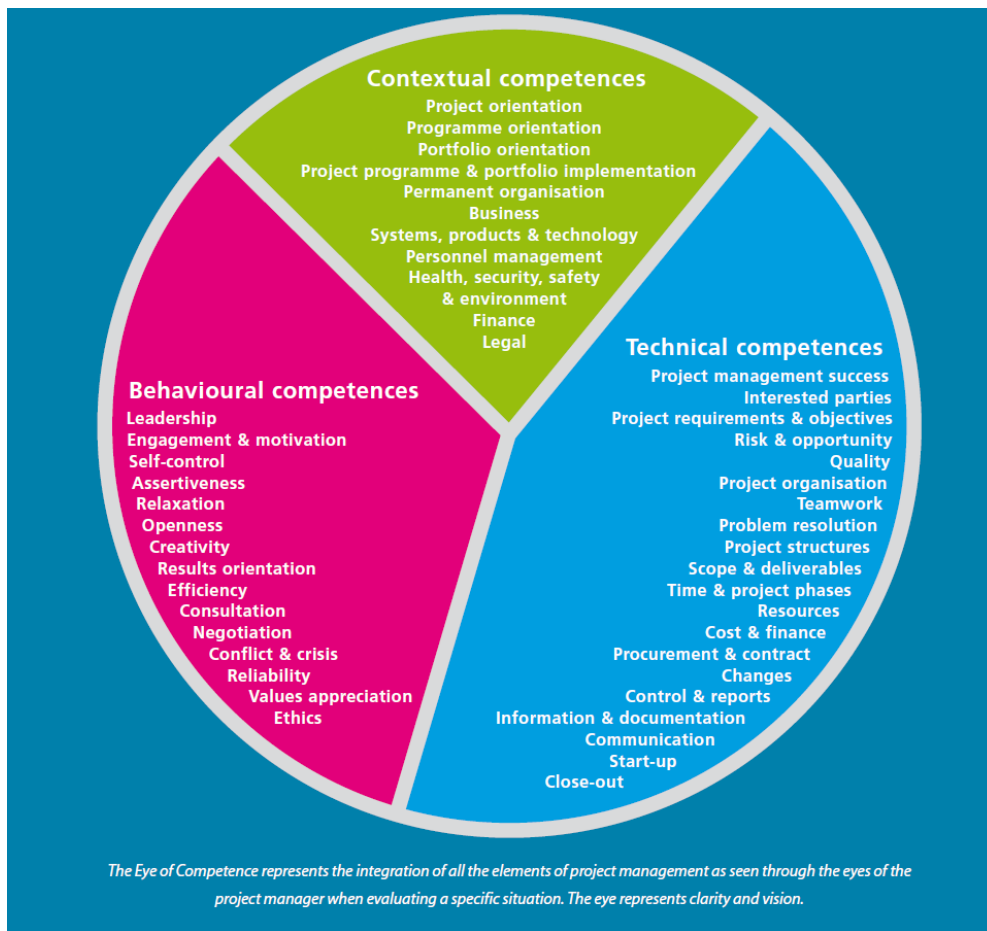
My article is based on the ICB (IPMA International Competence Baseline) linking it to real situations.

First, the ICB divides project management competencies into 3 categories as shown.

The Eye of Competence

The details of the competencies are as follow:

PM World *Journal*
Vol. IV, Issue XII – December 2015
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Project Manager You Know
by Almahdy Eltonsy
Commentary

The Eye of Competence represents the integration of all the elements of project management as seen through the eyes of the project manager when evaluating a specific situation. The eye represents clarity and vision.

Openness:

It is the autumn with a breezy air in the hot weather of Cairo, standing in front of a huge modern building, new hospital, a national project that all look at as a real example of determination for change.

With tight schedule and a lot of complex situations the GPM, general project manager, as well the PMs in the project keep looking at their watches.

Now the project organization is complet, and we started with a team of 7 core team members. The core team members or the subproject managers are not all from my organization and they do not directly report to me.

After about 6 weeks from starting the project, with a project period of 8 months (32 weeks), I found two project managers in my team standing in front of me at 18:00. Looking me in the eyes they said: "It will not work, we are under resourced and the work is massive. We will quit and advise the others to quit as well. We are sorry but we saw a real bad progress and a catastrophic situation"

What a feedback!

PM World *Journal*
Vol. IV, Issue XII – December 2015
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Project Manager You Know
by Almahdy Eltonsy
Commentary

Is it the right time for OPENNESS??? All under stress from the customer and the company … I was asking myself, is it the right time??

As per the ICB, **Openness** is the ability to make others feel they are welcome to express themselves, so that the project can benefit from their input, suggestions, worries and concerns. Openness is necessary as a means of benefiting from others' knowledge and experience. Since a project manager works with various professionals, openness is an important competence.

Good words but is it real with the real situation, I was asking myself, looking at the scope of work and all project details.

The project started with:

- Tight schedule.
- Low margin.
- Un-finalized contracts with suppliers
- Weak matrix organization.
- High technical details.

I looked at them and didn't make a single comment, then went back to my office repeating what they mentioned, totally angry. How could they say so? What is the benefit they bring by telling this? It is total nonsense. They have only a few years of experience! Who are they to judge a 30 Million Euro project?

I continued to heat up, remaining in that heat for about 2 more hours, then it was reaching 21:00. I decided to leave the office, going back home. I reached home, had my dinner, spent some time with my kids and wife, and then went to the living where I used to take a cup of tea and read a novel or any kind of book.

My wife asked me: "What is wrong with you, you look awful?" I replied: "No nothing wrong at all, tell me about the kids." I put a faked smile on my face and started to listen.

My wife continued: "The big boy was a champ today, I was reading a book when he came to me and started to argue about the way we organize his room. You know at the first moment I didn't listen but he noticed that and told me: 'Mom, please listen!'"

"I decided to listen more carefully to him, most of his words were not really valuable but you know, from his unorganized words he gave me a real great idea on how to position his bed and wardrobe in a way that will save real space and minimize the unused spaces in his room."

Mariam, my wife, continued: "I was thinking how he came up with such a perfect idea although I was there all the time, you know what …. The point is that he spent more time with the details and he could see much better than we; imagine if I didn't listen to him or just pretended to listen"

PM World *Journal*
Vol. IV, Issue XII – December 2015
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Project Manager You Know
by Almahdy Eltonsy
Commentary

At that moment, it was like a light turning on … just like the comic books … really it happened to me at that moment.

Next day, I went to my office early, I was there at 7:00 bringing all the data and opening all the excel spreadsheets and dived into the details. I was like that till 11:00, then I went to the PMs who talked to me the day before.

I asked them to join me for an hour for a nearby coffee so I could listen more. They were apprehensive and worried about my invitation but then we went, the three of us, to a nearby coffee shop.

I told them, "I want to thank you so much for your proactive attitude and ability to communicate the risks you see, being open is real valuable assets. As you noted we didn't talk much yesterday, I got only a nutshell feedback from you. Please let me listen to you now … tell me whatever you need in any way you need to do it."

The two young PMs started to talk, most of their notes were just feelings and perceptions, I had my old timer's block note and a pen, writing down all that they said.

They made a real valuable note about some accessories with no valid date of arrival which, although it is a low budget item, could have a massive effect on the workflow.

I talked to them openly, described to them the massive risk we are in, and the stress we are in. They listened carefully. At the end of the discussion I had the biggest surprise ever …!!!!

"We will do it in time" they gave me their words, but they continued:

"When we started to talk and listen to ourselves in a new way and with a new eyes, we figured out that most of the points can be solved easily and nearly all risks can be mitigated, even the missing accessories. You know it is amazing when you talk, you listen to yourself and start to evaluate what you are saying .. Not just that, find solutions that you never imagine are there"

I thanked them, and sure paid for the coffee and deserts we had; it was a real lesson to me …

Thanks for the PMs and surely thanks for my wife she taught me how to listen and be open.

Even if you have unstructured, unorganized or even a non-sense feedback that you don't use at all, it is a real great benefit for the project to be open, to listen, to encourage your team to give you feedback.

Let us move to the next situation.

PM World *Journal*
Vol. IV, Issue XII – December 2015
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Project Manager You Know
by Almahdy Eltonsy
Commentary

About the Author

Almahdy Eltonsy

Cairo, Egypt

Almahdy Eltonsy, IPMA – B is a Senior Project Manager in the HealthCare industry, and the first healthcare PM granted the IPMA-B certification in Egypt. Starting with Siemens in 1993, Almahdy has extensive technical and managerial experiences, gaining the ability to work cross-functionally in a time-intensive environment. One of the most important milestones in Almahdy's project management career is Children's Cancer Hospital in Egypt (57357) (www.57357.com), a 30 Million Euro Project. As a GPM for this strategic pivotal project, the scope was not only project management but also the service management, in addition to work with accreditation bodies.

In 2012 Almahdy moved to GE HealthCare to work as a product service manager for Surgery – X-Ray – Intervention – Ultrasound – Life Care solutions, using his experience in leading the service team with project management methodology. Almahdy's motive to change is to take a new challenge and exposure to new cultures and discipline, taking advantage of his technical and managerial skills and using the project management tool box in general management aspects.

In addition to his work in healthcare, Almahdy worked as an IT project developer with one of the largest media and advertising groups in Egypt. Almahdy was able to realize a new methodology and software for Media planning and advertising campaign planning. Almahdy holds a B.Sc. in Systems and Biomedical Engineering from Cairo University - Faculty of Engineering, and passed many specialized courses in Siemens, GE and Microsoft. Linkedin: Almahdy Eltonsy. Email: Almahdy_eltonsy@yahoo.com

To view other works by Almahdy Eltonsy, visit his author showcase in the PM World Library at http://pmworldlibrary.net/authors/almahdy-eltonsy/.