

Project and Programme Managers are Positive Change Agents

Some key questions and answers

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The following questions and answers are based on a recent panel discussion with a well-known media house in South Africa and provide the underlying basis for the current curricula at Cranefield College.

How is project and programme management evolving as a profession?

The evolving trend is for organisations to adopt a cross-functional approach to their business models. Essentially, this means that diversification has become the norm and this has placed even greater emphasis on project and programme management to ensure a focused approach. In both the private and public sectors, the pressure is on meeting delivery targets in shorter timeframes. Completing work ahead of deadlines also reduces wastages in terms of manpower. Plus, earlier completion means prompter payment and positive cash flow management.

What's the difference between programme and project management?

Project management is the foundation, and the principles and practices are very important to understand. Learning these skills provides project managers with the ability to move into the modern-day realm of programme management, which focuses on maximizing strategic benefits along the value chain.

Programme managers reflect critically on the role of quality and performance management in the organisational supply chain, and in particular the cross-functional processes. They compare business strategy theory with practice to meet challenges in both internal and external organisational environments, in a prescriptive and emergent manner, to enhance the value creation ability of the knowledge-based learning organisation. This includes managing multiple project portfolios. That's where keeping bureaucracy to a minimum is vital, as is the need to remove silo cultures in organisations.

How closely is project and programme management linked to business success?

For organisations to survive, they need to stay focused on continuous improvement and product and service innovation. Project managers play an essential role here, and keep programmes on track.

What are the implications for virtual project management?

This is a major new area for project management professionals. Location is no longer an issue with an online systems approach. Business models are shifting to a network matrix in terms of functionality. Here virtual managers help to shape the evolving organization via online programme offices. Virtual networks enable dispersed organizational teams to collaborate more effectively, using the best talent available irrespective of geographical location. For virtual project managers to be effective, they need to build effective data linking systems to optimize interconnectivity. It's an exciting near real-time approach as virtual teams work together to achieve targeted goals.

What are the reputational advantages of project management?

Implementing effective project and programme management ensure that there are rigorous checks and balances along the value chain. This enables organisations to significantly reduce the risk of corruption and unofficial expenditure.

What courses can help prepare students for these trends?

Focused Bachelor in Business Administration, Advanced Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, and Master's in Management qualifications are needed that enable students to demonstrate advanced knowledge and insight into the optimal functioning of knowledge-based learning organisations where the value system plays a central role in creating a preferred supportive organisational culture and top performance. At the heart must lie the balanced scorecard in its strategy map form containing the critical success factors for achieving an organisation's mission and vision. Continuous improvement initiatives are also profoundly important for value chain performance optimisation and improvement.

Management and the law are also inextricably interconnected. Managers in all fields of practice must know the law that applies to them, and lawyers inevitably must apply principles of management (whether they realise it or not) in dealing with cases.

What are the implications for change management?

Our research shows that organisations are bombarded by change, which poses threats and opportunities. This has motivated new roles for project and programme managers at the executive level, which include the 'chief portfolio officer' or CPO. Their key role is to manage change and help grow the cross-functional model. It's clear that organisations of the future will be compelled to shed old ways of leading and managing in favour of a knowledge-based approach that embraces innovation and learning.

About the Author



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Dr Pieter Steyn is Founder and Principal of Cranefield College of Project and Programme Management, a South African Council on Higher Education / Department of Education accredited and registered Private Higher Education Institution. The Institution offers an Advanced Certificate, Advanced Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, Master's degree, and PhD in project and programme-based leadership and management. Professor Steyn holds the degrees BSc (Eng), MBA, and PhD in management, and is a registered Professional Engineer.

He was formerly professor in the Department of Management, University of South Africa and Pretoria University Business School. He founded the Production Management Institute of South Africa, and in 1979 pioneered Project Management as a university subject at the post-graduate level at the University of South Africa.

Dr Steyn founded consulting engineering firm Steyn & Van Rensburg (SVR). Projects by SVR include First National Bank Head Office (Bank City), Standard Bank Head Office, Mandela Square Shopping Centre (in Johannesburg) as also, Game City- and The Wheel Shopping Centres (in Durban). He, *inter alia*, chaired the Commission of Enquiry into the Swaziland Civil Service; and acted as Programme Manager for the Strategic Transformation of the Gauteng Government's Welfare Department and Corporate Core.

Pieter co-authored the "*International Handbook of Production and Operations Management*," (Cassell, London, 1989, ed. Ray Wild) and is the author of many articles and papers on leadership and management. He is a member of the Association of Business Leadership, Industrial Engineering Institute, Engineering Association of South Africa, and Project Management South Africa (PMSA); and a former member of the Research Management Board of IPMA. He serves on the Editorial Board of the PM World Journal. Pieter is also Director of the De Doornkraal Wine Estate in Riversdale, Western Cape.

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