

Executives Value Project Management and Are Becoming Supportive of Career Path

these career paths are informal.

Clearly, the individuals who are currently employed in project management efforts but are not titled or credentialed project managers are not receiving the credit or compensation they deserve. The organizations that do offer a loose path for project managers are limiting their employees by not providing them with the concrete training or standardized information they need.

SURVEY GOALS AND METHODS

The telling statistics in the PMI study were the result of a telephone questionnaire conducted at the end of 2003 by LHK Partners, Inc., in conjunction with the PMI Research Department.

The hybrid study, composed of one-third open-ended questions and two-thirds closed-ended questions, was designed to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of project management within five targeted industries, and to determine the executive level of awareness of PMI and project management.

Dun & Bradstreet lists were consulted to ensure the sample met a quota of 17 U.S. and three Canadian companies within the selected industries: automotive, aerospace, banking and finance, consumer products, and pharmaceuticals. All the participants were required to be with their respective companies for at least a year, and needed to hold an executive level title—president, vice president, director or division head.

Although the results are not entirely conclusive due to the small size of the study, some important information emerged.

FAST FORWARD ON THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CAREER PATH

While the executives polled were familiar with the benefits of standardized project management prior to this survey, they were largely unaware of PMI. They understood the importance of the consistency, efficiency and quality that standardized project management offers, but were not aware of the standardized language, educational and professional programs PMI has developed and perpetuated within the project management community.

That situation has now changed, thanks to the survey. By collaborating with PMI, these executives now realize that they need not go outside of their organizations to find skilled project managers—they can develop them through an internal project management career path.

Although internal career paths have only been in existence since the late 1980s and early 1990s, they are "quickly becoming an employee expectation," according to Shelly Prochaska, southeast regional manager for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). And, although internal career paths have their roots in sizable organizations, they are sprouting up in smaller companies as well.

Benefits to Individuals and Organizations Alike "Career development programs within an organization can be an effective tool for retention, improving communication, broadening employee skills, raising employee morale and job satisfaction, and even attracting quality applicants," said Ms. Prochaska.

This type of investment in the employee also

benefits the company by keeping talent in-house, and can logically lead to a reduction in outside consulting fees.

"A career path classifies individuals within a given body of knowledge, skill and ability in performance," said Christian Jensen, PMP, business owner, project management profession at Microsoft.

"It helps an organization move from a general area of work to one that is specialized," he explained. "A career path is important because it provides application and growth within the given field of study."

Microsoft implements career paths through a career framework, internal audits and industry research, Jensen explained. The company uses PMI credentialing because it is "recognized worldwide" and "considered a common currency in its field."

PMI's credentialing program is regulated by standardized tests that ensure project managers are versed in and adhere to industry-accepted principles set by PMI.

The tests are based largely on the knowledge contained in PMI Standards and texts, which are yet another excellent source of project management knowledge. The Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM™) or Project Management Professional (PMP®) credentials can open doors for project managers to advance within their own organizations, earning enhanced prestige, an augmented paycheck or both.

Ron Kempf, PMP, director of project management competency and certification at HP Services, said his company had over 2,000 employees with the PMP credential at the end of 2004. Through HP's internal Project Management Career Path, he said, project managers are recognized "for their contribution to the business," and are regularly assessed based on criteria set for their level of project management. Moreover, career project managers are eligible for "promotion opportunities depending on the complexity of the project they are managing."

CHARTING A PROJECT MANAGEMENT CAREER PATH - INTO THE FUTURE

As with any career path, the project management career is not unlimited but can be implemented in a number of ways. To learn about how you can institute a career path within your organization, contact Laurie Cooke or John Roecker at the PMI Global Operations Center (see page 1 of this supplement for their contact information).

—Judy Thomas

PMI Creative Services Account Executive

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Most executives agree that standardized project management is important for a variety of reasons, and a significant number appear to be supportive of the idea of establishing career paths for project management professionals. Those are among the findings of a recent PMI survey of 103 presidents, vice presidents, directors and division heads in large North American companies.

More than 90 percent of the executives polled said they have benefited from improved on-time delivery, increased productivity and reduced operating costs by adhering to standardized project management practices. In addition, they expressed interest in improving these areas in their own organizations.

In fact, project management is so important that roughly 80 percent of the executives said their organizations consult project managers to determine their strategic needs. Significantly, 40 percent said they use outside project managers and consultants to facilitate projects because they feel their staffs lack the necessary skills and experience.

Those who do use internal staff reported that half of those managing projects in-house are not full-time or career project managers. And although nearly 70 percent of the executives expressed an interest in professional development and educational opportunities, only half of their organizations have a career path in place for project managers. Seventy-five percent of

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If these issues are on your mind, you'll appreciate your newest PMI member benefit, *Career Track* magazine. This new *PM Network*® supplement will be written and designed to provide useful, insightful and dynamic information to help busy project management professionals at all levels maximize their careers and earnings potential.

Career Track will launch in May 2005, with a second edition appearing in November 2005. Both editions of *Career*

Track will be bound into *PM Network*. The publication will provide valuable ideas and information on how to manage your career, whether you're just starting out in project management or you're a seasoned, established pro. It will cover subjects you need to know to truly advance your career including training, certification, effective leadership, compensation, and successfully balancing your work and personal lives.

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