Perceptions Analysis of Importance and Skills of Effective Project Management

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

The project management (PM) has always been an important subject among practitioners and in academia. The need for successful projects has increased the need for more effective project managers to guide projects to successful outcomes. This is particularly true in the field of computing as the need for capable teams and project managers are increasing to lead Information Technology (IT) projects. Therefore, the institutions of higher education are striving to meet the high demand and short supply of project managers by training and preparing future project managers. The high demand for skilled project managers has also inspired industries to pursue PM training and certification programs offered by the Project Management Institute (PMI). This research examines the perceptions of experienced professionals on the importance and skills contributing to effective PM.

The importance of PM is increasing in general and in computing education in particular; Computer Science (CS), Software Engineering (SE), Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT). Historically, the demand for project managers has been strong (Herzberg 2006) and PMI reports that currently there is a dramatic increase in the number of jobs requiring PM skills especially in developing countries with overall job growth expected to be around 33% (PMI 2017b). This is particularly true because the demand for capable team and project managers to lead information technology (IT) acquisition, development, and implementation projects is increasing. Additionally, the demand for new entrants into PM is increased by the large number of PM professionals retiring from the workforce (ibid).

PMI additionally predicts that over the next decade, demand for project managers will outstrip the demand for other professions (ibid). Further, the IS curricula models specifically address PM courses and concepts, and the models includes a course on PM (Topi et al. 2010) and the ABET accreditation criteria for IT programs also include the ability to assist in the creation of an effective project plan as one of the required skills for graduates from accredited programs (ABET 2019). This interest in the PM course is partly driven by industry to respond to increase in demand for effective project managers. The steady increase in IT project investments has continuously increased the importance of PM skills as billions spent on IT projects in the US each year and PM skills are necessary and contribute to reducing IT project failures (Capell 2001; Reif and Mitri 2005).

Therefore, the increased value placed on PM knowledge and skills by practitioners and educators is well documented. However, PM’s perceived importance and perception of which skills are important for success among working professionals has not received much attention. As educators aspire to prepare students for the PM positions and their challenges, they should be aware of the perceptions of working professionals who have experience with many projects successful or not about the importance and necessary skills in successfully completion of a project. This awareness of educators is needed to prepare future project managers. They should also ensure that these same levels of importance are imparted to students in their PM class.

This proposed research seeks to understand how practicing PM professionals view the relative importance of various PM related skills. It also wants to assess whether the academic PM class is providing those skills to students and giving them the appropriate impartation of the importance of those skills and of PM. The practical implication of this research is to design a more effective PM course.