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Recruiting a Project Manager: A Hiring Manager's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Project management is a practice based profession. Just knowing the project management principles does not make a person a successful project manager. It is more important to assess how the candidate applies the project management principle in practice than merely knowing the theoretical aspects of project management. Project Managers play a critical role in the organization. They are responsible for maintaining the revenue stream by ensuring steady flow of project deliverables, be it an internal initiative or a client program. As a Hiring Manager one has to use the right tools and methods to select the right candidate for the position of Project Manager. In this article some of the basic qualities of a Project Manager and the interview techniques adopted to select a Project Manager are discussed. The paper ends with discussion on new competency areas of Project Managers and new roles played by Project Managers in those areas.

INTRODUCTION

The profession of project management is becoming more and more challenging over the years, as the expectations from the Project Managers (PMs) are increasing (Aram & Noble, 1999). The knowledge area of project management is rapidly expanding, and the PMs are expected to possess expertise in multiple disciplines. Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) 2nd edition (PMI, 2000) did not include people management skills as part of project management. Human Resource Management was added as an additional knowledge area by Project Management Institute in the PMBOK 3rd edition (PMI, 2004). PMs quite often have to deal with the legal clauses of the contract. Probably, it will be a good idea to include Contract Management as part of PMBOK. A “Project” can be viewed as a miniature version

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0196-1.ch086

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of the organization, but with additional complexities. When the project is implemented at the client's organization the PM has to follow the client's practices wherever applicable. Projects are temporary endeavors that last for few months to few years. Apart from the usual project management tasks, PMs are also required to learn the clients' practices, protocols, and methodologies to operate seamlessly at the client's organizations.

Projects are often executed to introduce new products, or services that help the organization to expand their revenue base. Projects also implement the regulatory requirements or enhance the existing capability of products, services, resources or the organizational potentials as a whole. Lot of times these projects are executed with the internal resources, but often we find that an External Service Provider (ESP) is appointed to execute the project.. The ESP brings its own resources that work as consultants in close alliance with the internal employees of the organization. These resources from the ESP, including the PM, get on-board with the client organization, and the success of the project depends on how cohesively these consultants work with the internal employees. In this paper we will mainly focus on that aspect of a project that is executed by an ESP.

Project management is becoming far more complex than what it has been initially perceived (Ives, 2005; Jafaari, 2003). It not only encompasses knowledge of various other fields, but also handles the complex interaction of those concepts in a dynamic environment. In this paper we focus mostly on the real life experience related to project management, rather than the project management theories per se. In this paper we mostly deliberate on those aspects of project management which go beyond any formal project management training, and can only be learned by solving the actual problems in the field. Project management, as a career, is steadily becoming more promising. Many organizations define PM as a Job Role, thereby defining the job profiles for a career progression. This paper would provide the required information to the PMs and help them in aligning their career path. This paper would also help recruiters to identify qualities that they should be looking for while recruiting a PM. This paper would be of great importance to:

1. People looking for career progression in project management discipline;
2. Recruiters and Hiring Managers looking for potential PMs;
3. People who want to gain more Project Management knowledge from the practical perspective;
4. Project Management Office (PMO) and Human Resource professionals who are in the process of defining the PM competency model and the PM career path in the organization;
5. Talent Management professionals who are working on defining the PM skills, developing the PM courses and evaluating people for different PM skill levels.

This paper discusses the importance of PM's role in the organization, and stresses on succession planning rather than recruiting an inexperienced person for this critical position. It is understood that it is not always possible to find these skills internally; therefore this paper also suggests possible ways to mitigate the risk. Finally, once a person knows the essential ingredients for a career in project management, he would be well equipped to plan his career.

This paper aims to give practitioners, recruiters, and aspiring project managers a general picture of the qualities required by a PM to have a productive career in the field. This paper mentions the eleven important interpersonal skills included in the PMBOK, and other desirable skills, which are not included in PMBOK. The role of PM in an organization is discussed in this paper, and how a PM has 360 responsibility of the project is examined. We then discuss the personality qualities of a PM based on

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