

Is Project Management Certification Worth It?

Increasing attention is being paid to certifying the skills of project management team members and leaders. We discuss the value of certification and suggest approaches and training that will lead to certification.

Core Topic - Project and Process Management ~ IT Management

Key Issue

What project and process management practices and procedures will improve project success?

Strategic Planning Assumptions

By 2004, 70 percent of successful projects will have certified project managers, while 90 percent of failed projects will not have certified professionals (0.7 probability).

By 2002, employees with Project Management Professional (PMP) certification will receive salaries 20 percent higher than those of project managers without PMP certification (0.7 probability).

By 2002, leading-edge project management outsource vendors will have at least one out of five contracted staff team members who are PMP-certified (0.7 probability).

A poor record for project management (PM) delivery has been chronicled time and again. A 1998 Standish Group survey on overall applications development project delivery success found that 46 percent of IT projects were "challenged" (completed over budget and past the original deadline), 26 percent succeeded, and 28 percent failed.

It has become apparent to many enterprises that there is a correlation between success in project delivery and having qualified and trained project managers on the project. In the eyes of these enterprises, PM needs to be regarded not as a craft but a profession. As in other professions, gaining recognition and credibility by "receiving a diploma" is becoming increasingly important. A case in point is a recent instance where a large subcontractor suggested that the contractor managing a project be PM-certified, to raise the comfort level of the project team.

PM certification provides project managers with "credentials" that are transferable across organizations: The organization gets managers who are recognized for knowledge that will help enable project success, and the managers get a confirmation of their skills that can be used in professional advancement.

Internally, many corporations are requiring PM certification for individual advancement within the corporation and in some cases for employment, thereby creating a "win-win" situation between employer and employee. The competence levels recognized by the certificates can range from understanding sound project management principles, skills and techniques, to gaining the depth and breadth of ability to lead a team in a large