



The Necessity of Critical Skills for Project Managers

Abudi Consulting Group, LLC



Agenda

- ▶ The importance of critical skills in combination with technical skills
- ▶ Core competencies for project managers
- ▶ Gathering information and evaluating to develop a baseline
- ▶ Best practices for developing new skills and strengthening current skills
- ▶ Summary
- ▶ Q&A



A focus on critical skills...

- ▶ Required for project management success
- ▶ Higher the position in the organization = critical skills more important than technical skills
- ▶ PMBOK® focus still more on technical skills than critical skills
 - ▶ Interpersonal skills in Appendix G
 - ▶ Project HR Management: limited focus on building the team
 - ▶ Project Communication Management: limited focus on building relationships
- ▶ Organizations focus often on the technical skills

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Critical skills are good for business...

- ▶ Work with a number of clients – from very small to much larger organizations – have shown that a focus on the critical skills for project managers has enabled:
 - ▶ Increased productivity among team members
 - ▶ Improved time-to-market for products and services
 - ▶ Improved retention of project managers and team members
 - ▶ Reductions in budgets and timelines
 - ▶ Increased customer – internal and external – satisfaction
 - ▶ Improved profitability

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Core competencies of project managers...

- ▶ Start with those interpersonal skills identified by PMI® as essential to project management success:
 - ▶ Leadership
 - ▶ Team building
 - ▶ Motivation
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Influencing
 - ▶ Decision making
 - ▶ Political and cultural awareness
 - ▶ Negotiation

PMI® A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, 4th Edition, Appendix G, page 409

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Additional core competencies...

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ▶ Customer focus | ▶ Network building |
| ▶ Work across boundaries | ▶ Strategic thinking |
| ▶ Emotional self awareness | ▶ Contingency thinking |
| ▶ External awareness | ▶ Interpersonal understanding |
| ▶ Resilience | ▶ Flexibility |
| ▶ Integrity | ▶ Visionary team leadership |
| ▶ Performance accountability | ▶ Professional confidence |

Identified through work with clients on developing project management best practices, processes and PMOs.
And frankly...common sense too!

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How was it evaluated....

Socializing was key!

- ▶ One-on-one interviews to gauge extent to which project manager candidate possesses the competency or behavior
- ▶ Conversations with team members, project sponsors and customers
- ▶ Conversations with leaders in organization
- ▶ Review of past projects within organization

By developing a baseline – able to create strategic development plans and secure the budget

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Let's look at an example...

Performance Accountability: The ability to hold team members accountable to high standards of performance on projects using influencing skills and effective communication.

Communicates high standards to team	Sets clear, consistent expectations and goals with team	Monitors performance of team members	Holds team members accountable	Takes effective action to address performance issues
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Questions we might ask....

- ▶ Describe a time when...
- ▶ To probe further...

You had to emphasize to your team the importance of high standards on a project.

You had to confront a team member about his/her poor performance.

What led up to the situation?

What steps did you take?

Who was involved?

How did the team member react?

What was the outcome?

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Development of strategic learning and development plans..

- ▶ Key component of the learning plan included:
 - ▶ Assessments
 - ▶ Training
 - ▶ Team building activities
 - ▶ Mentoring
 - ▶ Opportunities to work in other areas of the business
 - ▶ Stretch assignments
 - ▶ Collaboration portal
 - ▶ With just-in-time learning modules
 - ▶ Action planning
- ▶ Opportunities were provided for all levels of project management staff
- ▶ Most programs ran from 6 months – 1 year
- ▶ Business impact and ROI

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Continuous learning is key...

- ▶ A best practice = continuous learning
 - ▶ Don't rely on the company – control your own destiny
- ▶ And not simply training classes...
 - ▶ Challenging projects
 - ▶ Co-project manager responsibilities
 - ▶ Mentoring
 - ▶ Attendance at conferences, etc.
 - ▶ Building networks
 - ▶ Online resources/blogs/newsletters
 - ▶ Associations/groups
 - ▶ Webinars/podcasts
 - ▶ Action plans

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Summary...

- ▶ Key success factors:
 - ▶ Make the case for the need for critical skills
 - ▶ Socialize the initiative – including among the project managers!
 - ▶ Gather the data beforehand – information is necessary for long-term success
 - ▶ Be creative in ways to develop new skills and strengthen current skills

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Contact information....

Any questions?

Thank you for your time!

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