Project Management Web Portals and Accreditation

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INTRODUCTION

Project management skills and professional certification are quickly developing into required core practice (Hammond et al., 2006). Peter Shears, CEO of the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM), stated at a April, 2006, conference, that there was increased demand for skilled project managers within all organizations across all industry sectors (Hammond et al., 2006). AIPM is an Australian Project Management Web portal offering certifications of AIPM's Registered Project Management (RegPM). As a supporter of the project management profession, the Project Management Institute (PMI) also plays an enormous role. The PMI Web portal encourages a standard with the *Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) Guide* describing what should be done to manage a project. PMI's Project Management Professional (PMP®) credential program is also available from the PMI Web portal recognizing and approving skills (Project Management Institute, Inc., 2006).

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT (AIPM)

Background

The Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) is the most recognized project management organization in Australia. Formed in 1976 as the Project Manager's Forum, AIPM has been involved in growing the profession of project management over the past 25 years in Australia. Figure 1 shows the Web portal as it currently appears (2006).

The Web Portal

AIPM's role is to improve the knowledge, skills and competence of project team members, project team managers, and project directors. They not only emphasize the importance in the achievement of project objectives, but also in business objectives. Through their Web portal, AIPM helps the other levels in an organization and the community to understand the key role of project management in today's society (Australian Institute of Project Management, 2006).

Figure 1. The Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) Web Portal (Australian Institute of Project Management, 2006)
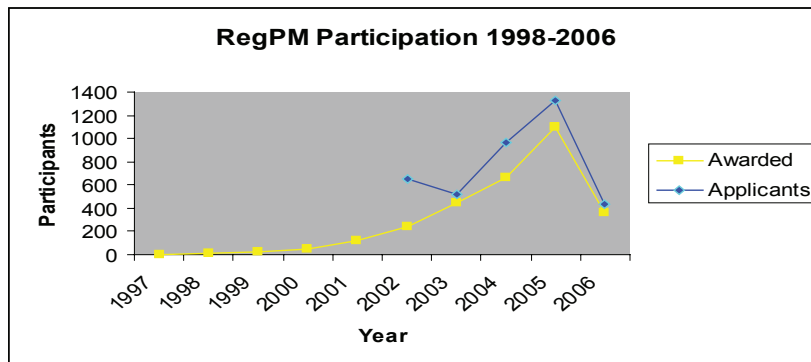

AIPM: Project Management Certification

Registered project management (RegPM) is AIPM's competency-based project management certification program provided within the Web portal. This program is fully aligned with the Australian qualifications framework (AQF), and is based on individual assessment abiding by the national competency standards of project management. RegPM may be AIPM's program mainly aimed for Australian residents, but it also attracts global attention. It is awarded on three levels: Level 4 QPP—qualified project practitioner, Level 5 RPM—registered project manager and Level 6 MPD—master project director (Australian Institute of Project Management, 2006).

Peter Dechaineaux, of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), stated the number of positions advertised, which specified project management skills as a pre-requisite or "desirable," had doubled between 2004 and 2005 (CityNews, 2005). Along with the boom in positions advertised between 2004 and 2005, so too did the applicants, and awards at AIPM escalated. The statistics shown in Graph 1 show an increase of 700 applicants from 2003 to 2005.

The number of people attending the registered project management certification program increased mid-year in

Graph 1. AIPM—Statistical overview of application and awards: 1998-2006 (Australian Institute of Project Management, Inc., 2006)

2005 to approximately 1300 applicants (Australian Institute of Project Management, 2006). The importance of such a certification program provided within the Web portal verifies that necessary skills are required to be gained as a project manager and by many others with different roles within an organization.

The growth in 2004, shown within Graph 1, is believed to have come from defence industry leader Raytheon Australia, which had signed a strategic agreement with the AIPM for its program managers and directors to participate in the institute's certification program. Ron Fisher, chief executive of Raytheon Australian stated that AIPM's competency-based, workplace assessment program should ensure that their program managers become equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to give their customers and partners confidence that Raytheon can deliver defence capability on time and within budget. Signed up as associates of the AIPM, Raytheon's program managers stepped through the assessment towards accreditation as registered project managers (RegPM) and master project directors. (Webb et al., 2004)

Peter Shears, CEO of AIPM (Calabrese et al., 2006), stated in a media release in April, 2006, that the retirement of up to one third of Australia's project managers in the next decade signaled a major skills shortage in leading industry sectors including government, construction, IT, telecommunications, finance, and energy (Calabrese et al., 2006). With Graph 1 showing a decline from 2005 to 2006, it is verified that participants decreased in engaging to improve their skills via *courses* at AIPM.

Shears outlined three solutions to overcome the skills shortage including a new approach in mentoring by senior project managers, new approaches to attract and keep entrants with the skills development, and the addition of experience in project management to that of the main capabilities of all professionals (Calabrese et al., 2006). He adds that mentor-

ing was working at a company level but it was predictably laid on top of a manager's existing workload. Companies needed to take pre-retirement project managers off sensitive projects and place them in positions as full-time mentors. Issues will occur within organizations if these changes do not take place and young people are not taught these skills in time (Calabrese et al., 2006). Shears also states that it is often the case that organizations are already performing a project management function, but may not actually realize it. AIPM's courses will help quantify and realize these skills that individuals in organizations already possess (Calabrese et al., 2006).

AIPM has a list of approved courses within its Web portal that are judged by a board of reviewers, usually people of the institute with a project management background, against AIPM's own competency framework. Other courses range from high-level masters degrees offered by some of the country's best-known universities to tailored commercial training run by registered training organizations, or RTOs (Tracy, 2004).

The Australian College of Project Management (ACPM) is one of the larger and more established training organizations that started offering courses in 1990. Even though universities continue to offer postgraduate degrees, ACPM has the ability to tailor the course to the students' needs therefore being able to modify the course itself. ACPM offers corporate training, which involves the advantage of clients approaching the organization themselves. A course is then tailored for the company and the industry in which it operates. When it comes to project management academia, industry relevance has always been the main focus (Lee, 2004).

Many trainers agreed that one of the fastest-growing sectors demanding project management skills had been the IT industry. AIPM stated that in 2004 a project manager in the IT sector was one of the highest-paid technical positions in the industry (Lee, 2004). Table 1 summarizes the top-10

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