



Following a Career in Project Management?

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The FIFA2010 World Cup, the Gautrain initiative and our government's commitment to massive infrastructure development are just some of the recent events that have brought the discipline of project management under the spotlight. It is no secret that excellent project management is required to deliver these initiatives in a manner that meets time, cost and quality requirements and achieves the objectives for which the project was created.

Often seen as a 'secondary' or 'accidental' career, it is true that many of today's project managers started their careers as something else: engineers, IT professionals, architects, event managers, to name just a few. In recent years however, people are increasingly embracing the title and looking at a career path that remains true to the discipline. And such a career path exists! Mature (in the project management sense) companies are building their own career paths, while professional associations, such as Project Management South Africa (PMSA) have recommended versions based on trends in employment, certification and education specific not only to project management but to the project environment as a whole. This means identified career routes accommodating progression through the ranks or specialisation at a particular level with regard to project, programme and portfolio management as well as project support services.

A clearly-defined career path is just one component of a mature or maturing profession. PMSA identifies a number of other elements which already exist.

An Organised Professional Body - Most, if not all 'professions' have one or more professional bodies inviting membership that is voluntary or legislated. Its mandate, constitution and range of benefits are guided by its member base.

A Core of Professional Practitioners - This element of a profession implies that professional people consider themselves part of a community of like-minded people displaying professional behaviour in carrying out their work.

A Formal Education Process - There are different schools of thought relevant to how we define a formal education process in a field like project management. The volume of post graduate qualifications, training courses, accreditations and certifications available specifically for project and programme management is gradually influencing how practitioners define themselves.

Codes of Practice - These are 'a set of guidelines and regulations to be followed by members of some profession, trade, occupation, organisation etc. that does not normally have the force of law (wiktionary.org). In the project management space the industry, work performed and prevailing standards and legislation will highlight the individual's accountability in conforming to relevant codes.

Standards - Standards relevant to a profession are typically developed over time by some form of cooperation and consensus amongst active practitioners who would benefit from having a structured guideline for carrying out the various aspects of their work.

A Body of Knowledge - This relates to the collective knowledge of a profession. With best practices and case studies documented by private companies, the learning curricula inherent in tertiary and training institutions, books, journals, conference proceedings, portals, blogs etc. the current body of knowledge for PM is substantial and growing.



Professional Development – This speaks of an ongoing commitment to maintaining and growing individual knowledge, expertise and exposure to the other elements of the profession to ensure that practice is current.

Whether we are ready to call project management a profession yet remains debatable but it is certainly an exciting a growing environment discipline receiving a lot of attention from the public and private sector alike, in South Africa and around the world.