

Project Management: The Ultimate Transferable Skill?

By Kathy Martucci, PMP

Project Managers (PMs) exist in many organizations in many different industries. Being successful across multiple organizations involves knowing which skills can be effectively transferred and what organizational hurdles must be cleared.

One of the reasons individuals enjoy the project manager role is that, theoretically, a PM could be in the healthcare sector one week and in the finance sector the next. But is it really that easy to wrap up a communications project for a trucking empire and then segue effortlessly into the implementation of back-office financial management applications or e-trading software? This paper will discuss the skills of a project manager and important things to consider when transitioning from one project environment to another.

Certainly there are skills that most good project managers have developed, which are more or less easily transferrable between different areas of business. These are as follows:

- **Verbal and written communication skills:** A good PM can make a point, communicate a specific message or present an argument with an awareness of the audience's reaction and we can respond appropriately to feedback. It's what makes us who we are.
- **Organization skills:** What project manager isn't an ace at planning ahead, meeting deadlines, managing yourself and others, establishing priorities, coordinating people and organizing activities, such as events of all kinds?
- **Problem analysis and solution:** A PM takes pride in having clarity of thought in defining and logically solving complex problems; in having the capacity to identify key issues and reconcile conflict; in having ingenuity in the creation of solutions; in effectiveness under pressure, concern with priorities and on creative thinking.

- **Team working:** This ability is necessary to work in formal and informal, long-term and project based teams or groups towards a common objective, with an understanding of the different roles within groups and importance of team building.

A PM with all the above in the toolbox is highly prepared. Or at least mostly prepared. There are challenges when making a change in the usual project portfolio. Each organization has its own unique personality; therefore, a PM needs to be aware of the following:

- **Corporate culture:** The old organization was loose and informal, so a trip to the executive director's office was a common thing. But is the new organization as friendly and open? Take some time to learn the culture; win over a seasoned mentor before committing political suicide.
- **Industrial buzzwords, acronyms and heroes (affectionately named BAH!):** A PM may be familiar with clinical terms and medical infrastructure and software. But what about key terms for the finance sector? Can the PM differentiate between a CBC and an OCT? Who are the leaders in the new business sector?
- **Power brokers and politics:** A good stakeholder analysis should assist the PM with who's who. But who has the real power? Who are the vocal, visible customers and who are mostly behind the scenes but plenty powerful? Project managers, must understand this or efforts may be focused in the wrong direction.

The bottom line is that project managers have a lot of options. Project Managers have many skills, which transfer to any situation. A good PM will do some homework and get to know the industry and players before making the move, and that might be the most highly transferable skill of them all.

About the Author

Kathy Martucci, PMP has over 20 years of business analysis and project management experience and has worked in both the private and the public sectors. Her clients have included major health care firms, health and human services government entities and New York State government and retirement systems. Ms. Martucci has been responsible for requirements gathering, tracking and tracing for small to highly complex and large systems. Her accomplishments include premiering thermal technology to print on demand tickets for the NYS Thruway and replacing all major systems at the NYS Teachers' Retirement System with PeopleSoft Human Capital Management and Financials. Ms Martucci has directed five PeopleSoft implementations over the last twelve years. Starting with Version 7.5 (client/server architecture) Human Resources and Payroll in the public sector, she has also implemented Financials, Human Capital Management and Pension (v8.4, 8.9, 9.0) in the public and higher education sectors.

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