

Project Management

Program Manager Skills

According to the Project Management Institute's, The Standard for Program Management, a program is defined as *a group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits and control not available from managing them individually. Programs may include elements of related work outside of the scope of the discrete projects in the program.* Program management is defined as *the centralized coordinated management of a program to achieve the program's strategic objectives and benefits.*

Programs differ from project in a number of ways. Some of which include:

- Projects are finite with a specified start and end
- Projects are unique; programs are typically ongoing focused on achieving business results
- Programs are benefits oriented; projects are requirements oriented
- Program management includes management of projects that make up the program

Because programs are typically much more complex than traditional projects, program managers must be multifaceted. To achieve success, program managers must relate to the people being managed, tasks being accomplished, tools and techniques available, organizational structure, and the culture and environment of performance and delivery. Program managers must not only be both technically and socially aware but also possess the appropriate mix of skills and be capable of apply them in various proportions based on the current needs of the program. Such necessary skills include:

- *Team Building Skills* - Building an effective team is one of the main responsibilities of any manager. For program managers this responsibility takes on greater level of importance and complexity as both the program and the projects that make up the program must be considered to ensure teams communicate effectively, are committed to the effort, possess appropriate skills and necessary experience, expertise, and leadership.

- *Leadership Skills* - Program managers must often coordinate both managers and support staff from across functional lanes of responsibility, with little or no direct authority to do so, in what is typically a relatively unstructured environment. Effective leadership includes the program manager's ability to set priorities and resolve conflicts, to integrate the demands of stakeholders from across program areas in a manner that positively benefit the program's overall objective, and at the same time negatively impacting any specific project or requirements as little as possible.
- *Conflict Resolution Skills* - Program managers must understand the organization and behavior of individuals under their scope of responsibility. Effective communication and detailed knowledge of the program, projects, and individual requirements help increase this understanding. This in turn enhances the manager's ability to effectively apply appropriate conflict resolution techniques and style that ultimately determine their ability to promote a beneficial resolution for the ultimate good of the program while minimizing potentially hazardous consequences resulting from the conflict.
- *Technical Expertise* - Rarely does any one individual possess all the technical, management, administrative, marketing, etc. skills needed to direct a program single-handedly. However, a good understanding of these and other areas is certainly required. In addition understanding how these and other elements integrate to influence projects and the program is essential to planning, organizing, executing, and administrating program activities.

Being able to understand and communicate in technical terms is also important for the purposes of evaluating technical concepts and solutions that may be vital to the success of the overall program.

- **Planning Skill** - Strong planning skills are absolutely essential for successful program management. Initial planning develops a defined schedule that acts as a roadmap for program and project activities throughout the life of the effort. Effective planning requires program managers to be skilled in areas such as resource negotiation, schedules, communication, and budgets. Planning is an iterative activity that continues throughout the life of the program in order to identify and account for risk, change, and issues that may influence the original plan.
- **Organization Skills** - Organizational skills are particularly important during the start-up phase of the program when it is vitally important to establish effective organizational structures and to integrate people, projects, process, and technology from across the organization into an effective program team.
- **Administration Skills** - Programs are made up of multiple projects. Each project is managed by a manager with responsibility for delivering successful results. Administrative skills such as planning, staffing, budgeting, scheduling, records management, etc are essential for the effective identification, documentation, management, and communication of information across the program and its related projects and activities. In addition, knowledge gained from program and project activities is essential for identifying and encouraging organizational efficiencies. Effective administration of such information is vital to continue maturing the organization.
- **Management Support Skills** - Program managers must understand how an organization works and also how to work the organization for the purpose of negotiating to efficiently deliver benefits expected from the program. Managers must juggle multiple interfaces into various areas of the organization. An understanding of these interfaces, the relationships developed from them, and the potential implications of various interactions with them is an essential skill for success. By ensuring stakeholders have accessibility to the program; the manager can support relationships that may ultimately help to promote the program's credibility, visibility, and priority within the organization.

For more information on program management or the CDC UP please visit the CDC Unified Process website at <http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/>. ■

Project Management Community of Practice

2010 PMCoP Meeting Calendar

- **December 10, 2010**
Managing Projects in a virtual World

2011 PMCoP Meeting Calendar

- **January 28, 2011**
Impact of CIMS/CITS on Projects
- **February 25, 2011**
CPIC for Project Managers
- **March 25, 2011**
Managing Change
- **April 29, 2011**
Developing Meaningful and Measurable Metrics
- **May 27, 2011**
SharePoint for Success
- **June 24, 2011**
A Conversation with CDC's COO
- **July 29, 2011**
Understanding Section 508
- **August 26, 2011**
Leadership
- **September 30, 2011**
Dig Deeper into Microsoft Project
- **October 28, 2011**
Information Security 101 for Project Managers
- **December 02, 2011**
Enterprise Architecture

CDC Unified Process Presentations

The CDC UP offers a short overview presentation to any CDC employee and/or contractor group, upon your request. Presentations are often performed at your facility, on a day of the week convenient for your group, and typically take place over lunch structured as 1-hour brown bag/lunch-and-learn style meeting.

Contact the CDC Unified Process at cdcup@cdc.gov or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup> to arrange a short overview presentation for your group. ■

Contact the CDC Unified Process

The *CDC Unified Process Project Management Newsletter* is authored by Daniel Vitek, MBA, PMP and published by the Office of Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services.

For questions about the CDC UP, comments regarding this newsletter, suggestions for future newsletter topics, or to subscribe to the CDC UP Project Management Newsletter please contact the CDC UP Team at cdcup@cdc.gov

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