
“Are there any real opportunities in Project Management?”

POSTED BY: HELEN SABELL

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There seems to be a lot of doom and gloom in the jobs market but, it seems to me that there are just as many fantastic opportunities for those willing to take the plunge and change careers or for those savvy enough to see the writing on the wall and update their skills and knowledge.

Let's take the case of project management and, the career project manager. Now, with regard to career growth, project management has certainly been front and centre for the last few years and I get the feeling that it has of late lost some of its appeal. Sure the mining and manufacturing sectors are getting bad press with significant job losses but this doesn't and shouldn't affect the intelligent PM.

Despite what we hear in the press, Project Management is still the career to be in with so many job opportunities at many and varied job sites all over Australia and in fact, all over the world.

However, the demand seems to be shifting slightly from those PM's who can use a methodology or follow a system to an urgent and growing need for PM's who can understand the strategic vision of the organisation and align these with the project goals, being able to understand how a project fits into the big picture so that they can return to the original blueprint to determine the way forward.

As Tim Wasserman, program director of the Stanford University Advanced Project Management program, Stanford, California, USA says,

"The ability to convert strategy into action is the emerging skill of our time." He also says that:

"The ability to persuade and influence others, understand stakeholder values and negotiate for scarce resources is critical."

The demand for 'skilled' project managers is also getting more specific for each sector but, across all sectors, there is little doubt that project managers need a solid foundation on which to build more advanced skill sets and, whichever way you look at it this means the Diploma of Project Management. This qualification has been the benchmark qualification across all industry sectors for some time now and nothing has changed. Of course you can and should build on this foundation with specific 'how to' methodologies such as PRINCE2, Agile and ITIL and, you shouldn't sit still either. Once you have the basics in place then you need to focus on project leadership and building value through leadership and/or you can specialise in one or two aspects of project management. So you might advance your skills in procurement and/or contract management or project HR Management or you might further

develop your PM skills to manage programs, portfolios or even the Project Management Office (PMO). The exciting thing about project management is there are just so many areas you can specialise in and then, the world is truly your oyster!

Now, according to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) here in Australia, employment is set to grow by 820,100 jobs, or 7.1%, to November 2017 across most industries and occupations in Australia.

It's a broad field, but DEEWR predicts the range of project management jobs to increase overall to a massive 16.4% to 2017 and, according to a survey conducted by PMI, the number 1 country for project practitioner salaries is Australia, with an average salary of \$134,659?¹

There is no doubting the fact that project management is a growth industry both in Australia and globally. In fact our close neighbours throughout Asia and including China and India are just starting to recognise the need for qualified project managers and this demand will grow as their industry becomes more competitive and regulations begin to push for more integrated governance, compliance and quite simply strong management approaches in all sectors from construction to Health. In fact the discipline of project management can be the important 'force multiplier' that improves performance across all sectors.

Speaking of health there is a global prerogative to do more with less so to improve care and lower costs; to reduce costs, boost efficiencies and improve the customer experience. This is just the right sort of environment for skilled project managers in the health sector both here in Australia and globally who will all require significant numbers of skilled PM's.

Similarly the construction sector will continue to grow but, overtime will shift from developed economies to emerging markets. A 2013 report on this topic² says that, by 2025, growth in the construction industry is expected to increase by more than 70% to US\$15 trillion, and it will be concentrated in three countries: China, the United States and India.

In fact, the Project Management Institute (PMI) list the 'project hotspots' around the world that will offer a wealth of opportunities and, these include (as well as the US & Australia) places like Canada who will need in excess of half a million new PM roles by 2020³. It estimates that Brazil will need more than 1.3 million new PM roles by 2020 (and where two-thirds of employers can't currently find enough workers), and Germany will need more than 1.6 million over the same time period. The report estimates India alone will require nearly 9 million new PM roles while China's rail projects alone are estimated to require nearly 25million project management roles by 2020!

¹ (Source: [PMI Project Management Salary Survey, Eighth Edition](#))

² (2013) "*Global Construction*," published by Global Construction Perspectives and Oxford Economics.

³ (2014) *PMI Project Management Talent Gap Report*

Finally, IT Project Managers with the ability to process huge amounts of data in near real-time will be very much in demand.

These figures indicate the huge demand still to come for project managers and anyone who says Project Managers are dead and dusted really must have rocks in their heads with estimates like these to look forward to!

So, there is little doubt that organisations here in Australia and throughout the world, will be searching for professional project managers who have a strong set of technical, business and leadership skills as well as the basic and underpinning skills of PM. This means, if you're planning a career in project management you must be prepared to commit to ongoing professional development.

First off you need the basic skills of project management that you get in an accredited Certificate or Diploma qualification and then you might need to understand and utilise specific methodologies such as PRINCE2, Agile etc. and then of course, you need to practice, apply and polish your skills focusing eventually on either project leadership so that you can lead people, projects and portfolios or, on the more complex technical skills so that you can add depth and expertise to a specific sector or project application. Either way you must focus your development so that you are positioned to add true value to your organisations bottom line.

I know I keep saying this in all the blogs I write but, there is no doubt that Lifelong learning is no longer just a catch phrase it is the new reality.

The world of work is changing so quickly that new skills and knowledge are always needed. The person who recognises this and keeps their skills and knowledge not just up to date but also one step ahead is the person who is always in demand for high paid, challenging and satisfying work assignments. These are the people then who are in challenging and exciting PM employment and who will continue to do so as they move from one assignment to the next.

Why not let it be you?

Helen Sabell
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