

Assessing Project Management Knowledge & Skills

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Determining the current conditions is required on any project that involves introducing a change that will impact people across the organization especially if it affects the way they do their work. Clearly documenting the current conditions establishes a baseline, which is a prerequisite to estimating the effort that will be required to achieve the changes. Determining the effort is accomplished by measuring the gap between the AS IS (current conditions) and the TO BE (future conditions). The ability to measure progress towards achieving the change is dependent on having a clear understanding of baseline conditions.

The organization's current level of project management knowledge and skills (also referred to as maturity level) is the baseline that must to be established when implementing a project management practices within any organization. There are a number of processes available in the marketplace to day that can be used to assess project management maturity. I developed the following are three tools to determine the maturity of several organizations in recent years. (Examples of the these three survey tools can be found in my book *Building Project Management Centers of Excellence*.)

1. Management Team Survey: is a (33) question survey used to gather general information from department managers on communications and business environment issues that can interfere with the implementation of project management best practices.
2. Project Management Maturity Survey: is a set of (90) questions, which cover all nine areas of knowledge found in the Project Management Institute's publication *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide 2000 Edition)*, used to gather information from a sampling of people at the executive, functional and operational levels of the organization to evaluate the organization's current knowledge and application of project management practices.
3. Project Evaluation Survey: is used to evaluate (23) elements of project management processes, tools, templates, and forms. The survey tool is used to evaluate several projects of different sizes, complexity, durations, including past projects as well as projects in progress. The primary objective is to analyze the amount and consistency of documentation between projects of various sizes, complexity, and durations. Another outcome will be a validation or contradiction of current practices as those who participate in survey number two have reported them on.

These three surveys are designed to provide a general understanding of the organization's knowledge, practice, and capability for applying project management disciplines. People in the organization often view surveys as an unjustified distraction and a waste of time, because they typically feel the results do not provide much value to the participants. Planning and communication are critical elements in the successful use of surveys and following these steps will help to ensure willing participation, which will in turn provide better data:

1. Start by defining the objectives for the survey information: what is need, why is it needed, and what will be done with it. Provide this information in a meeting setting if possible to allow for questions and answers.
2. Determine how the survey results will be obtained (manual or computerized), how the participants will be selected, how will the results be analyzed and communicated to the organization.
3. Prepare a plan for performing the survey by establishing a list of the participants; develop a sign-up process to schedule participants times; organize the meeting agendas; determine how to keep the participant responses anonymous; and determine how the results will be communicated back to the organization and survey participants.
4. Perform the survey(s), summarize the data, analyze the data, create a report and communicate the results to the organization.

The value of surveys is only as good as the accuracy of the data collection and the proper interpretation of the responses, which reflect the “average” conditions within the organization rather than the exceptions. Interpretation of the survey data requires an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and an ability to express the findings in a clear and concise matter. The information that is obtained from the surveys will help the PMCoE implementation team understand how significant knowledge and skill level differences are across the organization, which in turn will help them develop a more effective action plan for establishing the PMCoE, and define the type of services required initially.

Dennis Bolles, president of DLB Associates, LLC, is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP®) with nearly 25 years experience in increasing professional performance levels within many organizations. He excels in developing multi-functional teams to improve business workflow processes utilizing Six Sigma and other methods to achieve “world-class” capabilities in meeting the needs of internal and external customers. He is a published author of many project management articles, and a book entitled Building Project Management Centers of Excellence, (ISBN 0-8144-0717-X), released by Amacom in June 2002. For additional information visit the DLB Associates, LLC web site at www.dlballc.com or contact the author by email at dbolles@dlballc.com.