

CONSULTING SKILLS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

By - Aneeta Madhok

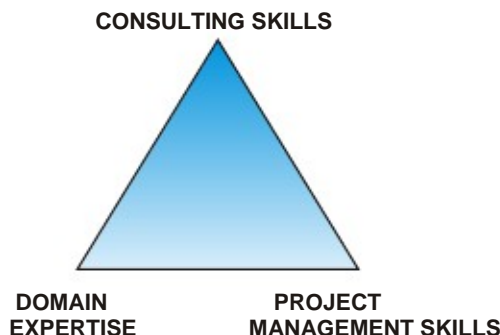
It took a project manager along with architects, craftsmen, and supply chains of vendors and sources of raw materials to build the Taj Mahal. Of course, Shah Jahan paid all the bills and provided the vision borne out of love, but he was the client in the system. And all that was before Frederick Taylor set up the rules of scientific management & much later, Gantt laid the foundations of modern project management methods.

This is the new millennium and the rules of the game have changed. We have several thousands of project managers in the world who are qualified and certified. However, not all project managers are effective and successful. The difference between a successful project manager and an unsuccessful project manager lies not in the domain expertise of the work being done, and not just in project management and teambuilding skills, but also in the process by which knowledge and skills are deployed in the process of work accomplishment and achievement of objectives. For the first time in history we are at a juncture where many consultants themselves are realising the need for learning the art and science of what makes consultants successful. The three competency groups for successful project management are:

over 47 countries as the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes.

There is, however, an art of consulting that lies in the realms beyond skill sets. This is because project managers, like consultants, actually land up moving beyond simple implementation of projects into actually ensuring successful value addition to the client. The bigger picture comes from understanding that the project being undertaken is not an activity in isolation but a part of a larger whole. The context in which the project is done is an important part of the success story and differentiates the mere project manager from the much-sought-after consultant. It is the temples we build and not the walls that count eventually.

COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROJECT MANAGEMENT



The initial explanation of consulting skills is very simply put as those that are required in scoping an assignment, making a proposal, managing client relationships & expectations, building credibility with line managers, managing the intervention, assessing impact & value added and providing effective closure to the assignment, maintaining a practice & marketing of consulting services, etc. There is no rocket science in the learning & training in the skills that make an effective consultant. The body of knowledge & learning content, & also qualification, certifications and accreditations, in the area of consulting skills is newly evolving and headed in the direction of other benchmarked professions like accounting and law.

The subject of consulting skills is now finding place in B-school curricula and on the training agenda of some organizations sparsely scattered across the globe. The emergence of bodies of professional interest in the realm of management consulting is local, in the form of Institute of Management Consultants of India as well as global

So, the proposition of this writer and article is that today's project manager has to be a great performer and, given excellent domain expertise, project management & teambuilding skills, there is a missing piece called 'consulting skills' which completes the skill set required for success. And the good news is that while nobody is born with these skills, they are definitely learnable.

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