Project management drives organizations, governments, and societies forward. The contribution project managers make is hugely significant. In fact, a recent study from APM and PwC showed that the project management profession contributes over £156 billion gross value added per annum in the UK alone. But what are the issues project managers are facing, and what are their thoughts on the opportunities and challenges ahead?

As the third instalment of our PPM Benchmarking series, this report has been designed to offer market insight into the status of project and programme management, unearthing growing trends and topical issues year-on-year. Project managers should not be surprised that digital transformation is a hot topic for 2019, as digital tools and agile working shift the way they operate and deliver.

Despite a marketplace weathering profound change, some certainties remain. Successful project and programme management teams continue to be built on the solid foundation of tried and tested project management practices. AXELOS is committed to enabling individuals and organizations to embed these best practices while encouraging speed and innovation through the adoption of agile techniques. This report explores the behaviours that characterize those successful practices as project managers tackle the challenges of the modern workplace.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners for their contribution in promoting the survey. Particular mention must go to Tanner James, SPOCE, ILX, PeopleCert, and TSO.

Margo Leach,
Chief Product Officer
AXELOS Global Best Practice
Executive summary
The key findings from our research

- Due to wider economic factors, pressure is increasing on PPM teams, meaning project and programme managers are required to do more with less.

- Project managers see artificial intelligence (AI) and automation as opportunities; GDPR and cyber security are seen as threats to success.

- Poor communication remains the number one challenge for project management teams.

- Only four in ten project managers believe their work is successful.

- The characteristics of successful project management include:
  - ensuring work is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis and that the lessons learned from past projects feed into the planning of future projects.
  - organizations should be aware of the value a specialist can bring to a project, even though there is a trend toward generalism.
  - successful teams are likely to work in an agile way, but they need the wider organization to enable this in terms of support and processes.
  - successful projects are likely to have representation among senior management. Senior leaders need to identify the value of project managers and understand the challenges they face.

- An overwhelming majority of project managers believe it is important to actively invest in continuing professional development (CPD).

- Project managers undertake CPD through attending training courses, reading around key topics, and taking formal qualifications.

- The main driver behind CPD is a genuine interest in the work. Most project managers believe a key objective of training is to understand the nature of the subject, rather than merely to achieve certification. However, the value of certification should not be overlooked.

- Training is also undertaken to improve performance, rather than to flesh out a CV or enhance future career prospects.

- Currently, project managers must seek out information about CPD themselves. Employers should be more proactive in providing information and support to project managers in order identify development opportunities.
This section at a glance

• Pressure is increasing on project and programme management teams due to wider economic factors. This means they are required to deliver more value with fewer resources.

• While many may think of AI and automation as threats, project managers see them as opportunities because they allow them to do more with less.

• Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and cyber security are considered threats as they are seen as an unproductive overhead.

• Although most market trends are technology-based, communication remains the number one challenge for PPM teams. It is considered the most important skill for project managers.

• All of these challenges are leading to a lack of success for PPM teams. Only four in ten currently see their function as being successful.

Doing more with less

2018: a year infused with momentous societal change and permeated by global political and economic uncertainty.

Programme and project managers feel the pressure of this economic and political turmoil\(^1\), which exacerbates the disruption caused by the ever-increasing pace of technological change. Project managers are faced with the increasing expectation to deliver greater competitive advantage with reduced budgets, in tougher timeframes, and in more competitive business environments. In short, project managers are being asked to deliver more with less.

Why are these expectations increasing? It’s likely due to project managers’ ability to deliver change in the form of both internal improvements and new products and services. Eight out of ten project managers say that PPM is becoming a more fundamental aspect of overall business success\(^2\).

“Project managers are faced with the increasing expectation to deliver greater competitive advantage with reduced budgets, in tougher timeframes”

Eight out of ten project managers say that PPM is becoming a more fundamental aspect of overall business success”

While there has always been pressure to make the most of limited resources, the last two years have seen this pressure increase.

In addition, project management teams are operating in an environment where a number of ongoing trends, predominantly technology-based, are having an increasing impact on the ways in which they work and the types of work that they are expected to do.

Our research into these wider trends has uncovered interesting insights into which trends are perceived to be threats and which are perceived to be opportunities.
In a competitive environment, are PPM functions expected to deliver more with less?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders expect projects to deliver greater competitive advantage</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>7%</th>
<th>53%</th>
<th>37%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The business environment has become more competitive</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget and timelines are tighter as stakeholders seek more project value</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are expected to deliver more projects over a shorter time frame</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project risk has increased</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advances in technology have made projects more complex</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have delivered more projects over the last 12 months</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit margins have reduced</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We now employ more project and / or programme managers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our economy / currency's strength has made our organization more competitive</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Factors related to the expectation to deliver more in a more competitive landscape**
- **Factors that would make the jobs of PPM contacts easier**

### Expectations have increased over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders expect projects to deliver greater competitive advantage</th>
<th>2017 70%</th>
<th>2019 90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The business environment has become more competitive</td>
<td>2017 76%</td>
<td>2019 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgets and timelines are tighter as stakeholders seek more project value</td>
<td>2017 74%</td>
<td>2019 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are expected to deliver more projects over a shorter time frame</td>
<td>2017 65%</td>
<td>2019 81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do we feel threatened?
AI and automation are trends which are often considered threats. According to research conducted by PwC, 30% of jobs in the UK are under threat from new technologies, including robotics and artificial intelligence. We might have expected these concerns to be reflected in the views of PPM professionals but it doesn’t seem to be the case.

In fact, significantly more project managers recognized automation and AI as opportunities rather than threats. Moreover, when asked whether these technologies would impact negatively on their roles, only a third of respondents acknowledged concerns.

Seeing these trends through the lens of constrained resource, it makes perfect sense for AI and automation to be viewed positively. Both can, when correctly utilized, provide project managers timesaving tools that increase project efficiency, rather than threaten their roles in part or entirely.

However, project managers see a threat in increasing compliance (e.g. GDPR) and cyber security. GDPR and cyber security have the potential to slow project and programme development as resources are channelled into securing sensitive data and managing processes that ensure the project adheres to regulatory standards.

These, of course, are not matters that can be ignored. Project managers, as with most business professionals, have a responsibility to ensure the safeguarding of personal data. The consequences for failing to protect data can be severe. In December 2018, Google was hit with a €50 million fine for two data breaches under GDPR. Project managers need to ensure their projects comply with regulation and cyber security best practice, and that sufficient resources are ringfenced at the pre-project stage to achieve this.

It will be particularly interesting to see the use cases for AI and automation that are developed and adopted over the coming years as a reaction to this continued demand on project managers’ time and resources.

“Project managers need to ensure their projects comply with regulation and cyber security best practice, and that sufficient resources are ringfenced at the pre-project stage to achieve this”
It’s good to talk, but it is difficult to communicate

Dealing with these technological trends is not the only challenge that project managers face. When we asked what challenges negatively impacted on projects or programmes, PPM professionals frequently cited ‘over-ambitious timeframes’, ‘changing project briefs and expectations’, and ‘unrealistic budgets’. These are all issues that project managers can solve by ensuring expectations are managed and agreed by each of the project’s stakeholders. Working in an agile way can help to alleviate these challenges. It is imperative that everyone involved on a project understands what is meant by the term Agile, as misunderstandings can lead to false expectations, particularly among senior management.

Poor communication continues to be the biggest challenge hampering projects and programmes. Even with the availability of a vast choice of communication technology (e.g. teleconferencing, instant messaging), many project teams fail to communicate effectively.

When we asked project managers what skills would be key to the future success of projects, what came up most often was not coding, data management, or other digital skills, it was consistently ‘soft skills’ such as communication, leadership, and negotiation.

While there will be technologies that completely change the way we live and work, it is vital that we do not forget the fundamentals of successful collaboration. Greg Satell, a contributor at Forbes, argues that we are living through the communication age, rather than the information age, and that communication is the most important skill in the workplace, even, and especially, when it comes to technology.

Only four in ten project managers believe their projects are successful. It is important, therefore, that each challenge is tackled in a systematic and systemic way, both by project managers themselves and by the wider organization as a whole.

What can be done to ensure more projects are successful? The following section delves into the processes and initiatives that successful PPM teams employ.

PPM functions struggling to achieve ‘success’
Does poor communication significantly hamper projects and programmes?

- Poor communication: 35%
- Lacking the right people for the task: 31%
- Over-ambitious timeframe: 29%
- Changing project brief / expectations: 26%
- Unrealistic budgets: 24%
- Inefficient work practices: 22%
- Lack of buy-in from senior managers: 21%
- Lack of skills and training: 21%
- PPM does not have enough influence: 20%
- Business transformation: 18%
- Administrative burden: 11%
- Lack of effective tools: 11%
- Lack of innovation: 10%
- Teams are located across multiple locations: 7%

Managing expectations is key to avoiding challenges.

Having the right tools in place is a much smaller issue.

Specific skills

Are there any specific skills you believe are going to become increasingly important for successful project / programme managers?

- “Ability to communicate and influence with a diverse and sometime sceptical audience.”
- “Stakeholder engagement, communication / negotiation skills, and conflict resolution.”
- “Communication skills, assertiveness, generally soft skills will remain very important.”
- “Greater emphasis on softer skills like influencing and communication. Being able to communicate project status to sponsors in depth and in real time.”
This section at a glance

- **Delivering the basics** – ensuring that the team has processes in place that are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, that project reviews are conducted, and ensuring that lessons learned are identified and applied to future projects.

- **The value of specialism** – while some trends may be leading project managers towards generalism, we shouldn’t ignore the value that exists in having specialist expertise within a PPM team.

- **Ensuring agility** – successful teams are likely to work in an agile way. The primary barrier preventing more teams adopting agile is the lack of support and understanding from the wider organization.

- **The role of senior management** – it is helpful for the PPM team to have representation at senior management level; the senior managers need to see the value that project managers bring and to understand the challenges they face.

As we have seen, a number of external factors lead to only a minority of PPM professionals believing their work is successful. When we look into the working practices of successful project management teams, we see a number of significant differences in the way they and their organizations operate. Several features define successful PPM teams. They can be emulated to ensure the greatest chance of success. These success factors can be broken down into four areas:

- delivering the basics
- the value of specialism
- ensuring agility
- the role of senior management

**Delivering the basics**
What simple things can be done to help deliver success? There are two specific actions that any project or programme manager looking to improve their team’s delivery can take.

The first is ensuring there are established processes in place that can be monitored and measured. We asked PPM professionals to tell us where their function stood on a scale of sophistication, using the five maturity levels within the Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Maturity Model (P3M3™):

1. A little disorganized, with no clear or consistent processes in place
2. Some very basic processes in place, but no monitoring or evaluation
3. Some established processes in place, but no monitoring or evaluation
4. Established processes in place, with routine monitoring and evaluation
5. Established processes in place, with ongoing improvements and innovations introduced, based on feedback from monitoring and evaluation

While it is positive to see that very few believe their work is ‘disorganized’ (only 6% say this), the number of teams with processes that involve any sort of monitoring or measurement is worryingly low (52%). This is slightly higher than in 2017 (45%), but there is a long way to go until this becomes established best practice.

The value becomes even clearer when we map this against projects that are believed to be successful. Whereas half the project management teams have monitoring and measurement in place, this drops to just two in ten for those considered to be unsuccessful teams and jumps to seven in ten for those considered to be successful teams.

This suggests that, far beyond simply being a ‘good idea’, monitoring and measurement of processes is a key facet of the way successful project managers work.

**Learning from the best**
What can we learn from successful project management teams?
Successful PPM functions have established processes and monitoring in place

Two in ten respondents that rate their PPM function as unsuccessful have established processes and monitoring in place

This rises to over seven in ten for respondents that rate their PPM function as successful
The second of the basics is project reviews. This was covered in detail in the 2017 report, where we looked at how neglecting to undertake a project review can contribute to project failure. We see a similar story this year; 66% of successful teams conduct reviews most or all of the time, as opposed to just 20% of their less successful counterparts.

There has been a marginal improvement from 2017. More organizations are conducting project reviews than in the past, though the percentage has only increased from 44% to 48% over two years. This means that while only 5% say they never do project reviews, around half only do them occasionally. This suggests that project reviews are still considered by most to be a ‘nice-to-have’ in a project, as opposed to a fundamental and essential step.

Why are project reviews and lessons learned being neglected? PPM professionals give a variety of reasons, but the one that came up repeatedly in different guises was time and resource constraints.

“If project reviews are to be undertaken as frequently as they ought to be, staff from the top of the organization down need to understand they are an integral part of the project”
There are two consistent messages here; a lack of prioritization for project reviews, and a lack of support from senior management. If project reviews are to be undertaken as frequently as they ought to be, staff from the top of the organization down need to understand they are an integral part of the project, as opposed to an optional extra to be discarded when another project comes along.

It is not enough to conduct a project review. The lessons learned need to be logged and actioned. A project review is not a box-ticking exercise, it provides invaluable information that can contribute to the success of future projects. Lessons must be learned from issues that arose or objectives that weren’t met. This is a key characteristic of a successful project management team; 65% from successful teams said their project reviews are used to learn what to do better next time, as opposed to just 28% of those in less successful functions.

Successful organisations are also more likely to conduct reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% conducting reviews</th>
<th>% learning lessons</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>most of the time or always</td>
<td>that are taken into account in future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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Project reviews

You mentioned that you do not always conduct project reviews. Why is this?

“Mainly because we move on with new projects and don’t always get time to review after a project closes. People are required on the new projects.”

“Top management always want to move on to the next sales opportunity without ‘losing time’ in project management ‘theory’.”

“Too many projects to deal with at the same time, in which case it often gets forgotten to officially close a project. Measuring project benefits at the end is very rare.”

“Timeframes, deadlines, and workloads. We often feel the pressure to move on to the next challenge. There is also a lack of engagement and access to people after the project has finished. Resources are quickly moved to the next project so project reviews are not prioritized.”
The value of specialism

The balance between generalism and specialism is a common concern in many organizations. Last year, for example, Forbes considered the values of each, discussing which might be most useful for progressing in a career. In many roles, not just in project management, there are a range of roles for people who might consider themselves generalists, with a good level of knowledge across a number of topics and areas, and others for people who would purport to be specialists, with an in-depth knowledge of a certain subject or industry.

In a PPM team, there are places for both. However, most consider themselves to be generalists, displaying a range of skills that can be applied to a variety of project management situations.

This is interesting in itself, as it hints at the self-perception within the industry, but what is potentially more insightful is that, when asked whether PPM professionals need to become more generalist or more specialist in order to be successful in the future, there was a clear majority saying there was greater value in being a generalist.

Despite living in a world of increasingly complex software, PPM professionals still believe it is more important to have a broad base of knowledge rather than expertise within a specific area such as AI or cyber security. Project managers do not want to be specialists themselves, as they’ve already got specialists on-hand within their project team. The greater priority therefore is an ability to communicate successfully with a wide range of individuals across a spectrum of skills and specialisms.

However, over twice as many professionals within successful PPM teams consider themselves to be specialists than in less successful teams. This suggests it is unwise to believe all project managers should be generalists.

Which would you more closely consider yourself to be?

- Definitely a generalist: 27%
- Definitely a specialist: 16%
- 54% generalist
- 24% specialists
There are factors that account for this growing trend for generalism within project management. 83% of project managers claim to be working on multiple projects or programmes at once. This requires them to utilize a variety of skills at once, yet there is not the time to dedicate to develop specialist knowledge or expertise when there is a need to do more with less.

We need to ensure that the value of specialism within project management is not lost. A key component of successful projects is a blend of generalism and specialist expertise.

In the Forbes article, they suggest that individuals can switch between a generalist and specialist mindset as they take on different tasks within their workload; a specialist when it comes to topic and desire, and a generalist when it comes to skills and approach. Perhaps the question should not be whether to aim to be either a generalist or a specialist, but to decide when to be each.

In order to be successful in the future…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% who say they are specialists</th>
<th>In more successful PPM functions</th>
<th>In less successful PPM functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“...we need to become more specialist”</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...we do not need to change either way”</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ensuring agility

In our 2017 report, we found that the word ‘agile’ was being used as a buzzword, without a real understanding of what it meant. Worse, claiming a project was ‘agile’ was a way for project managers to justify doing whatever they chose, by-passing sign off from senior managers.

These concerns are beginning to abate. In this year’s research, the opinion was expressed much less frequently, and when it was, it was caveated with an expression of the belief that things would change in the near future.

“Agile projects will be better initiated and assured [in the future] - and no longer just a trendy buzzword for a lack of management”

Although there may be lingering scepticism, agile is maturing as a concept. In our study, three quarters of respondents claim to be working in an agile way, and believe this is having a positive impact on business success. Even more indicative of the maturity of agile as a concept is the specific benefits that project managers associate it with. Agile ways of working have been associated with internal benefits, such as efficiency, transparency, reduced risk.

The top benefit of agile working, according to those we spoke to, was ‘increased customer satisfaction’.

Benefits aren’t just internal – it’s about better delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased customer satisfaction</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater transparency</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater efficiency</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in likelihood of project failure</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher quality outputs / deliverables</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced project risk</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More enjoyable working environment</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster ROI</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased project control</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower project costs</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Given the business benefits, it should come as no surprise that there is an increasing appetite for adopting Agile techniques in both project management and across the wider organization.

However, only around half of companies are actually adopting agile ways of working. 56% said that their project management team is becoming more agile and only 48% said the same for their organizations as a whole. There will of course be industries where Agile is less appropriate, construction being the typical example. Yet, for every organization who claim to be working in a more agile way, there is another not embracing an agile ways of working.

Among those who don’t believe their project management work is successful, the percentage drops to 40%. It raises the question, why is Agile not more commonplace when it is a proven benefit for successful PPM teams?

The primary issue appears to be that project managers are not given the tools and structure to work in an agile way by their wider organization. Only 12% said they felt ‘very well equipped when it comes to support, processes, and expectations’.

“Three quarters of respondents claim to be working in an agile way and believe this is having a positive impact on business success”
We have seen the progress of the perception of agile from buzzword to beneficial in recent years.

However, there is another step to be taken before agile is accepted throughout the organization: embedding. It is important that the wider organization do more than just say they want their teams and people to work in an agile way; there must be support to enact this.

Best practice needs to be agreed with the organization to ensure staff are empowered to work using Agile methods. All processes currently in place which hamper agile working, for example, overly laborious sign-off structures, need to be reviewed to ensure they are compatible with a new way of working. For this to work, it is vital to develop a good working relationship with senior management and lobby the importance of agile working, if not a priority within senior management already.

The relationship with senior management

So far, we have looked at three different contributors to successful project management: doing the basics, the value of specialism, and ensuring agility. They each require input from senior management before they can be successfully embedded within the team’s workflows.

One of the striking differences we see between successful and non-successful PPM teams is their representation at senior levels of the organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% that have representation at the most senior level of their organisation</th>
<th>more successful PPM functions</th>
<th>less successful PPM functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This representation has a significant impact on a project manager’s ability to perform and on whether a given initiative will embed within the organization. The importance of this representation is not lost on project managers. Of the project managers who said they do not currently have representation at a senior level, 87% said that there should be some form of representation and just 13% who said they thought that the status quo was acceptable.

It is about more than just representation. 56% of project managers say their senior managers recognize and appreciate the value of PPM and 45% feel as though senior managers understand the challenges faced by PPM. The difference in these statistics is stark when it comes to successful and unsuccessful PPM teams; successful teams are around three times more likely to think well of senior management than their counterparts. The key is not just about having representation at the top level, it is about having a senior management team which values the work of their project management team and which appreciates the challenges they face. While this is partly the responsibility of the wider organization, it is imperative that project managers do what they can to ensure senior management are aware of the challenges they face, particularly the growing pressure to deliver more with less, and demonstrating the value they bring to the wider organization.

There is much that can be learnt from successful PPM teams. However, there is one key factor that we have not yet discussed: people. No PPM team will be successful without its people having the right skills and experience to do their job. The success of any given project will be impacted by the extent to which the organization invests in their ongoing professional development. In our final section, we will explore this in more detail, looking at the extent to which project managers can take charge of their own professional development.

It’s not just about representation, it’s about appreciation and understanding

Respondents feel as though senior managers understand the challenges faced by PPM in their organisation (45% agree overall)

Respondents feel as though senior managers recognise and appreciate the value of PPM in their organisation (56% agree overall)
This section at a glance

- Project managers unanimously say that investing in professional development is important.
- Their primary routes to CPD is attendance of training courses, reading about topics and trends, and taking formal certifications.
- A big reason for undertaking CPD is a genuine interest in their work. Most believe the key aspect of training to be learning the content rather than achieving the certification. The value of certifications shouldn’t be overlooked, however.
- Outside of this, training is usually undertaken to improve performance in a current role as opposed to preparing them for their future career and improving their CV.
- Currently, PPM professionals are getting most of their information about training themselves. Employers should be proactively doing more to make staff aware of development opportunities.

The importance of ongoing learning and professional growth for those in PPM teams is widely recognized. Almost every person we spoke to agreed that continually and actively investing in their professional development is an important undertaking (98% agreement). Continued professional development (CPD) offers a way for ambitious employees to demonstrate their achievements and become equipped with the most relevant tools to assist them in their career.

There are a number of different ways in which PPM professionals are able to invest in their development, but three are most common:

1. Attending training courses to improve existing skills – 79%
2. Actively reading about new topics and trends that are relevant to their role – 77%
3. Formal qualification or certification to demonstrate professional development – 75%

Although training courses and certifications are common, the fact that people report that they actively read about new topics and trends relevant to their role suggests that CPD is not just a stepping stone on the career ladder but also a pursuit of genuine passion and interest in their sector specialism.

People are the key to success
Are they developing their knowledge and skills?

Similarly, when asked what the main reasons that PPM professionals invest in their professional development, the second highest was because of a ‘genuine interest in their work’.

While it is positive that those attending training are genuinely interested in the course content, it is vitally important not to undervalue achieving the certification. Taking an exam in order to test what’s been learnt is a trusted way to validate your ability to practically apply learnings and, more widely, to be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge that you’ve acquired to peers, the wider organization and others the industry. The 2019 Power of Professional Certification report from AXELOS showed that 84% of end-learners and decision-makers feel that certifications had a positive impact on their career and organization. Furthermore, the top drivers for certification for learners are efficiency, job satisfaction, and involvement in new projects.

Other key reasons for investing in CPD were ‘increasing job performance’, ‘keeping pace with current standards’, and ‘strengthen their CV for future employment’. It is interesting that the two former came out higher than the latter, suggesting that PPM professionals are more focused on doing a better job in their current role when they attend training as opposed
“Other key reasons for investing in CPD were ‘increasing job performance’, ‘keeping pace with current standards’ and ‘strengthen their CV for future employment’”

to thinking about potential future opportunities. It’s not just employees that see the value in CPD, about three quarters say that their organization recognises the value of its workforce undertaking professional training. Despite this, it’s unusual for an employer to actively promote CPD opportunities, with only a quarter of staff reporting that they received CPD information from their employer. Instead, those in PPM functions tend to use online search engines (Google) and LinkedIn/business networking sites to get their information on professional development opportunities.

Although it is positive that businesses are valuing their staff’s development, they need to ensure more is done to promote development opportunities – including formal training courses

Where do you get information about professional development?

- Employer: 25%
- Training courses: 52%
- Business sites e.g. LinkedIn: 54%
- Online search e.g. Google: 56%
– proactively, rather than expecting employees to take this on for themselves. Given the core driver for their employees is being able to do their job better, they should view CPD as a benefit for the organization as a whole, not just the individual. As project managers become more critical to business success, leadership need to invest more in staff development to ensure they retain key talent. If this happens, we would expect to see an increase in the number of PPM teams that consider themselves successful - currently just four in ten PPM teams - as more highly skilled project managers are able to implement success-driving initiatives and navigate a landscape that requires them to do more with less.

**Key reason for investing in CPD?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase job performance</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A genuine interest in their work</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep pace with current standards</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen their CV for future employment</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Continued professional development offers a way for ambitious employees to demonstrate their achievements and become equipped with the most relevant tools to assist them in their career.”
From our research, certain working practices underpin a PPM team’s ability to operate effectively, and successfully. Successful PPM teams exhibit several key qualities when it comes to working practices:

• The ability to master the basics; including consistent monitoring and evaluation of projects throughout the project lifecycle.
• Recognizing and harnessing the value of specialist expertise in the PPM team.
• They often work in an agile way, with support from the wider organization.
• They have greater senior management representation and support.

It is also imperative not to forget the importance of active investment in people. We have highlighted a few areas worth considering:

• Project managers see continued investment in CPD as important, and therefore senior leaders need to ensure budget is ringfenced.
• Senior leaders must provide various CPD routes, and not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Project managers use various learning methods, and this should be reflected in their organization’s approach to professional development.
• Employers should actively seek to identify new developments in CPD, and offer employees information and support on their professional development options.

By highlighting the attributes of successful PPM teams, we hope this report acts as a springboard for actioning change; offering tangible solutions within the working practices and people approach amongst those project management teams still looking to achieve success.
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Acknowledgments

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