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Top 10 project management trends for 2009

Author: RP news wires

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ESI International revealed the 2009 Top 10 project management trends that will impact both private and public sector organizations this year. Identified by a global panel of ESI's veteran consultants and senior management, these trends point to organizational need for expertise while coping with tighter budgets, fewer financial and human resources, and change. The forecast suggests where project management will focus in 2009 to drive project and organizational success.

The Sandwich Generation: Middle Managers' Emerging Role in Change

Seventy-five percent of all change management programs fail because of a lack of employee support. Today's economy will force organizations to confront the important roles middle managers play in the success of change efforts. Middle managers' roles will shift from simple messenger of directives 'from above' to creating a positive environment to enable change, accountability and ownership of change initiatives, achieving the full benefits of change and ensuring return on investment.

Navigating Virtual Teams through Change

As budgets tighten, the role of virtual teams will grow along with the demand for the skill sets to manage them, especially through change. Powerful communication, key management strategies and new rules of engagement will be required to manage virtual teams as organizations seek to effectively shift with the turbulent global economy.

Sharper Distinctions Between Project and Program Management

Many global organizations have managed programs with the same methods used to manage projects, with predictably disappointing results. Programs are not merely "bigger" projects, and program managers aren't simply professionals who are one step up on the organizational ladder. This year will see an increase in the understanding of the cardinal differences between projects and programs and the utilization of strategies to boost program managers' effectiveness and increase program success.

Leveraging Communities of Practice To Hone Skills

The number and importance of project management communities of practice will increase significantly in 2009. These informal communities will be highly prized for the lack of bureaucracy that increase the sharing and use of best practices, enabling increased dialogue to overcome challenges and growing future leaders.

Strategic Selling of the Project Management Office

Although the project management office has gained wide acceptance, it still needs buy-in at the senior executive level. 2009 will see an increase in the importance of quantifying the PMO's value and how to present that data to the CFO to ensure funding in what promises to be highly competitive arena for organizational resources.

Back to Basics for Successful Project Portfolio Management

More than any year in recent history, 2009 will be a critical year for ensuring project success. Project managers will increase their emphasis on the basics, taking a first-things-first approach and address fundamentals such as gaining and sustaining executive commitment, addressing gaps in the alignment of organizational strategy and projects, project selection, and efficient measurement process while leveraging existing resources to increase project success.

Right-sizing Staff with Demand Driven Resource Management

The adoption of Demand Driven Resource Management will increase significantly in 2009. Its ability to right-size internal staff and draw on outside contractors when demand requires will be viewed as an essential cost containment approach leading to greater organizational performance and efficiency.

Improved Requirements Metrics

The economic need to accurately assess and evaluate the organizational and cost impact of project requirements will bring a greater role for requirements management and development. Also known as business analysis, RMD's ability to provide quality metrics that project and portfolio managers can use to assess the economic, performance and feasibility value of each project component will become essential to organizations successfully maximizing the ROI of their projects.

People Will Come Before Technology

Organizations will increase their demands for smart third-party guidance that ensures technology investments deliver enhanced performance. This will result in greater recognition of the critical role people play, leading to increased recognition that employees need the right skills and knowledge before applying processes for consistency and adding technology to deliver increased efficiencies.

Risk Management for Governance

In 2009, many organizations will say goodbye to the 'one number' method for project outcomes and embrace a quantifiable range of potential results on which to base decisions. Recognizing that best governance hinges on the availability of quality information at the project level, education and leadership in risk management and best practices permeate organizations wanting to optimize project forecasting to deliver more effective governance.

"While these trends are about doing more with less, they all speak to the concept of less is more," said J. LeRoy Ward, PMP, PgMP, executive vice president, ESI International. "In 2009, more than any time in recent history, empowering people with the right skills, knowledge and tools to pick the right projects, ensure support for change and effectively track progress for smart governance will be key to project success – saving time and money while driving organizational success."

About ESI International

ESI, a subsidiary of Informa plc (LSE:INF), helps people around the world improve the way they manage projects, contracts, requirements and vendors. In addition to ESI's more than 100 courses delivered in 18 languages at more than 75 locations worldwide, ESI offers eight certificate programs through our educational partner, The George Washington University in Washington. Founded in 1981, ESI's worldwide headquarters are in Arlington, Va.

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