Springhouse – Committed to Improving Project Management Success for all Clients

Since 2001, Springhouse has trained over 1,000 students in the principles of Project Management and on the use of Microsoft Software related to Project Management. Springhouse has also successfully implemented hundreds of installations of Microsoft Project Server for mid-sized and large clients. Our commitment to each client and student is based on our ongoing pledge to implement the right solution and ensure a transfer of knowledge. This is at the core of our success.

Project management principles and guidelines need a technical platform in order to advance an organizations maturity. Therefore, the Springhouse approach is to offer a transitional solution that includes guidance for the client. This guidance encompasses identifying the project management maturity level and formulating an implementation adoption plan which looks at people, processes and technology. Exercises such as these provides Project Managers with the opportunity to first learn the principals and then practice those principals on technology that is both provided by and supported by expert Springhouse PMI consultants, trainers, and technicians.

The Springhouse approach nullifies the more typical method of competitors whereby the effort is to convince the client to invest in a comprehensive installation, often with customization. The competitor approach inevitably causes the project to reach very high cost levels in a very short time. The reality is that very few client PMO organizations are able to absorb the plurality of new information and use it effectively. Therefore, dissatisfaction and unrest plague the client project management team and, instead of embracing the advantages of Microsoft Project Server and Microsoft Project, there is movement against the system, at times even to the extent of seeking alternate solutions.

The Springhouse approach assists client management with introducing the principles and technical solutions in an organized fashion. With an introduction that supplements the technical advances with training, the project is embraced almost from the start and Project Managers look forward to additional functions and skills as the system is installed and further training is delivered.

In keeping with our commitment to quality, Springhouse has been both a Microsoft Training Partner of the Year and a PMI Project Management Partner of the Year. Our consultants and technicians are deeply experienced in the Microsoft technical tools for project management. Our trainers have both field and classroom experience and can lead the class with real time field experiences. To ensure the successful delivery and completion of a Project Management/Project Server plan, Springhouse extends training in leadership, meeting management, and other communication techniques pertinent to successful project managers.

With the troubling global economy, competitive pressures and the constant struggle to do more with less, companies are turning to Project Management as a solution to deliver business results.

More organizations are realizing how project management can be a value-add to their bottom-line. With the competitive nature of business today, every opportunity to succeed must be exercised. Properly implemented project management practices provide the structure to implement change required for the organization to meet its customers' needs and to do so efficiently.

Doing More With Less

Imagine being able to perform additional projects within your organization while maintaining the same projects already active. How is this possible? Effective organizations; those that have realized and implemented project management are able to control their spending and improve results. Unfortunately for many, while they believe they have project management implemented, they may not be doing so consistently by implementing standards, repeatability with measurable improvements.

Projects are Failing

How often have you observed projects within your organization succeed? Recent studies have shown that up to 70% of projects fail with missed schedules and budgets being the leading characteristics. Successful projects are those that deliver all of what was asked of them (Scope), finish on-time (Time), on budget

Reasons for Project Failures

Reason	Percentage
Poor estimates	30%
Lack of executive sponsorship	17%
Poorly defined goals/objectives	12%
Change(s) in scope mid-project	11%
Insufficient resources	9%
Poor communication	9%
Lack of stakeholder involvement	7%
Change in strategy	6%
Change in environment	6%
Inadequate risk planning	5%
Lack of change management	5%

(Resources), while also with the specified quality level. Pretty high standards, right? Well, most projects do not meet all of these rather, some. The leading reasons for projects failing include poor estimates, lack of executive support and poorly defined goals and objectives.

Current Tendencies

Many of the contributors for the top few reasons mentioned above include the lack of planning, poor communication between parties involved, a false confidence in the ability to achieve the project objectives, teams are often lulled-into poor habits due to repeated acceptance of failed projects. Rather than accepting 'just missed' project deliverables and objectives, we should learn from our mistakes and correct them through disciplines project management techniques.

Successful Project Management Principles

Successful projects have sponsors and project managers communicating and planning by recognizing deadlines and providing ample resources and appropriate project scope while maintaining quality. It is the responsibility of the project manager with the team to use sound techniques to prepare the plan; inclusive of the schedule, budget, resources and quality. This relationship between the volume of work, the provided resources and time allotted is known as the triple constraint. An appropriately-planned project is one where the project manager has thoroughly planned the project given the requested scope and provided resources to produce a calculated end-date. This is then compared to the requested day. If differences exist, then adjustments are made.

Project Management Not Valued

Unfortunately for many organizations, Project Management is not valued high-enough. Many do not truly understand how project management should really operation and provide the value it can.

In a recent survey of executives, only 54% fully understood the value. As a result, many believe that any existing project efforts; even when deadlines and budgets are missed, represent the true affect that project management can have. Not true.
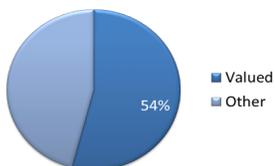
Organizations can achieve their strategic goals by introducing change. This change is enabled by executing programs and projects. Therefore, programs and projects are 'change agents' for the business. The project processes that are defined and used, when done well, are critical to the organization's success.

Training is Decreasing

During recent years, the amount of training provided to those within the project management profession is decreasing. Organizations are at times unwilling to invest properly or additionally. Again, the perception is that either existing project outcomes are 'good enough' or existing training solutions should not be extended.
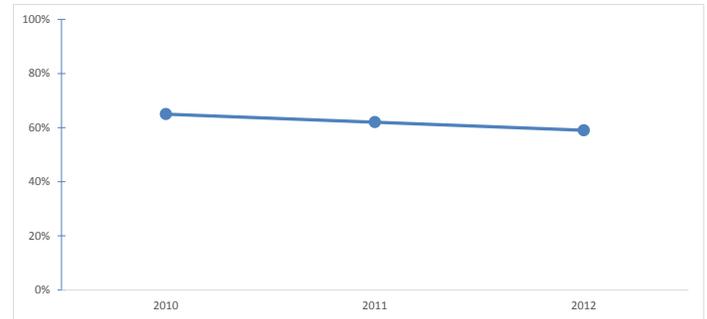
Figure 1 - % of organizations having PM training

Solving the Business Needs

Given the facts that executive support for Project Management overall is not high, combined with decreasing education and training funding, the outcomes of projects are also failing. During the span of recent years, the amount of projects that truly satisfy the needs of the business are decreasing significantly. This is combined with the fact that the current numbers are poor.
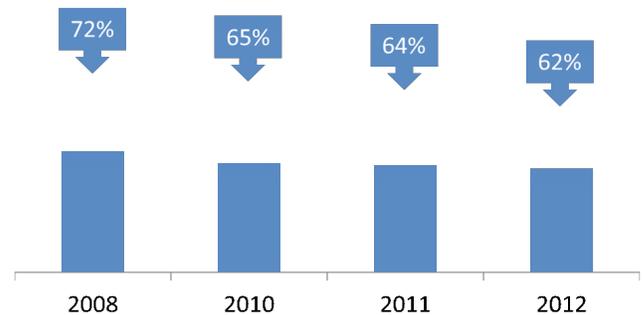
Figure 2 - Less organizations have project solving business needs

The Way Forward

Effective organizations are those that value Project Management by not only having project managers executing projects but also the support of their executives to install a culture supporting this. Their strategy includes:

• Creating a culture of project management with engaged sponsors

- Developing talent through education; combining technical classroom education with soft-skills training

- Using effective communication between all project stakeholders

Keep in mind that you can make this happen while still using your existing tools. Springhouse provides you with the services to retain your investments and to grow with them.

This level of execution is not left for the most-important projects. This is performed on all projects by all project teams consistently. Therefore, these organizations have project processes that are defined, measured, are improved and are controlled. This approach tends to shift the organization's efforts from one that recognizes problems and reacts to them, to one that focuses on prediction and prevention. This change is at the core of proper project management; where the project manager controls the project and its events rather than being controlled.

When executives are involved in establishing the culture of the organization supporting effective project management, positive results occur.
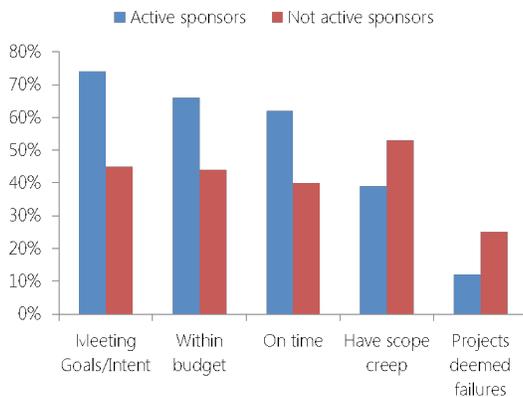
Talent and Training

As mentioned earlier, effective training for project managers and team members cannot only by technical by nature. Studies have shown that while this is important and necessary, the most successful organizations require talent development in the soft-skills as well. It is necessary to develop skills in technical project management, strategic and business management and leadership. Four out of five organizations rank leadership skills as most important for project managers.
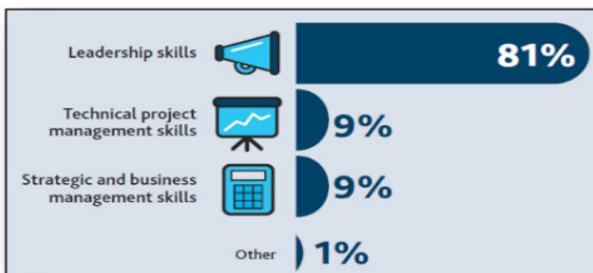
With proper training, project managers should have the skills to:
- Set the direction of their project
- Be an example for others
- Manage emotions
- Inspire team members
- Build or encourage accountability
- And seek continuous improvement

Additional soft-skills valuable to project managers to effectively manage their projects include listening, coaching, team-building, ground rules, communications and recognition and rewards. Think about this; when was the last time a simple 'Thank you' for a job well done was shared?

The Project Management Office (PMO)

Some companies recognize the benefit of a centralized department for all project management activities. They realize that by doing this, they can be advocates for project management, better align projects with their organizational strategies, and define concepts and vocabulary for the project teams. They even help to promote the learning, training and consistencies for excellence.

Companies having deployed a PMO record higher percentages of successful projects than those that do not. In fact, companies with PMOs decreased failed projects by 31%. That's significant.

Getting a Project Started On the Right Foot

Before any project goes too far, it's important for the project manager to ensure that expectations are in-sync with the executive sponsor. The project manager, having heard of the new project, documents information obtained from the sponsor but also any other pertinent information. This can include high-level schedule or budget information from similar projects. Additionally, assumptions being made by the project manager created by filling-in the blanks through limited information provided might be different than the sponsor was expecting. Upon review of the document, the sponsor may cause for these to be changed. Exactly! This is why project management works. It confirms the sponsor's request while formally establishing the existence of the project. Imagine what could happen if this was not confirmed and the project proceeded!

Effective Project Communications

Poor communication was identified earlier as one of the leading causes for project failures. More specifically, it speaks to either insufficient or inappropriately planned communications. Effective project management communications keeps all stakeholders and sponsors abreast of the favorable or unfavorable information at all times. Project managers should strive to communicate the facts, good or bad. Since one out of two failed projects are caused by poor communications, project teams should ensure the right information is shared to the right people at the right time and in the right format.

Poor Estimation

Estimating project activities is required for effective project scheduling. Yet, this is a difficult task to do well. Struggling project teams tend to overestimate their capacity to focus on their work, underestimate the true scope of the work while not fully accounting for the effort required. Leading project managers realize this on their projects and plan accordingly by leveraging various estimation techniques and risk management. They plan for sufficient time for the project team to grasp the scope and estimate the effort required without acting in haste.

You wish to change something?

Effective communications are used to establish expectations with the project stakeholders of the planned effort, time required and resources needed. Once established, the project manager needs to ensure and takes steps to keep expectations in line with project outcomes. However, from time to time, it's expected that change may be needed. Change is not a bad thing but can be when not managed. This is why a Change Management System is required. It forces that the established expectations remain unless a formal change request is submitted. When one is received, it is analyzed and the impacts to the project and expectations are discussed. This is why the formal title for this process is called Integrated Change Control; since, for example, a scope change will likely have impacts to the schedule and budget. If approved, the changes are made and the updated project plan should be communicated to all stakeholders.

Risk Management

So, the project manager followed established practices and put a thoroughly planned project plan together. They're ready to go. Right? No. Did they anticipate problems that might occur and take necessary steps to ensure they don't? This is the idea behind risk management. High-performing organizations realize the benefit of risk management and embrace a proactive approach and attitude towards unexpected change. They accept this by providing the time and money to reduce or eliminate these risks above and beyond the immediate project work. They are willing to spend $1 to prevent a risk rather than accepting a $10 overage later when it occurs.
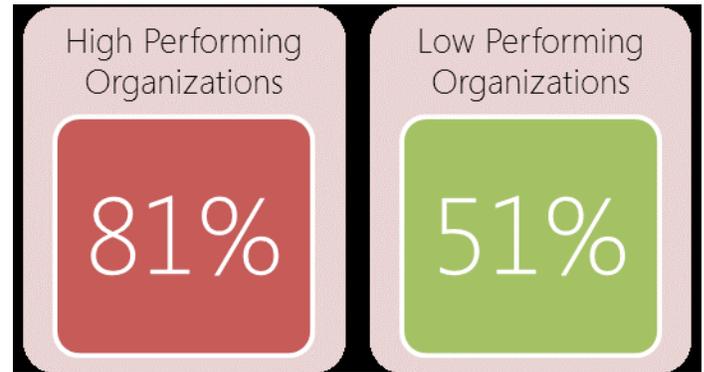
High Performing Organizations	Low Performing Organizations
81%	51%

*Figure 3 - % of organizations using Risk Management*

Project Planning

A project's plan should be one that is complete not only of the immediate work but also all of the efforts for communications, risks, team development, etc. A thoroughly planned project will encompass many areas. The relationship between each of these must be kept and communicated.

If the project requires more efforts to ensure the quality of the final product, then this will likely require more effort (effecting the project schedule) and resources (effecting the budget). Ultimately, the project plan should balance each of these topics in order to deliver everything that was asked for, how it was asked, on time, within budget and at the acceptable quality level.

The Project Management Plan

Communications Management
Procurement Management
Requirements Management
Scope Management
Human Resource Management
Schedule Management

Cost Management
Process Improvement
Risk Management
Stakeholder Management
Quality Management
Configuration Management

Doing more with less...

Imagine if projects held their dates and budgets as planned! Sound impossible? Well, it's not. By establishing a sound project management culture and processes and ensuring they are adhered to by talented project managers trained, it is possible. Can you see that tactical planning can be positively achieved if projects plans were upheld by the project teams? What if project dates are met and as a result, one additional project was able to be completed fully, not partially this fiscal year?
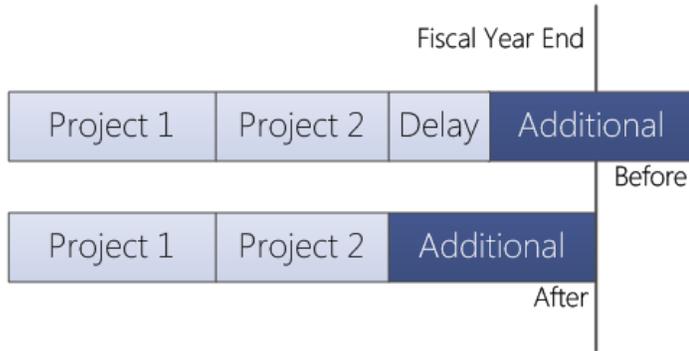
Summary

Professionally managed projects are run reliably and efficiently. They successfully deliver what was asked, by the time planned, spending only what was planned at the quality expected. Additionally, steps are accounted for to manage risks in order to minimize impacts to the intended plan. The project's management and sponsorship embrace, support and instill a supporting culture to ensure each project has the greatest opportunity to achieve its objectives most efficiently. To that, the environment provides ample education and training; ensuring each project manager is not only the administrator of their opportunity but a leader of it as well.

Springhouse is ready to assist you in implementing successful project management through education and services while maintaining your investment of resources and tools. Consider Springhouse as your education and Project Management partner!

Training	Strategic Staffing	SharePoint	Project Management	Office 365	Instructional Design