



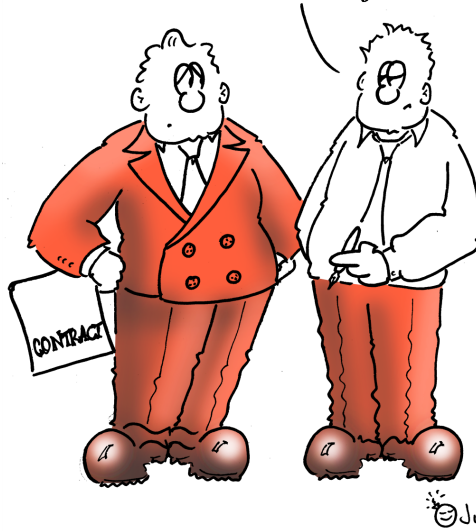
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THOUGHT

## Is the age of the gifted amateur over?

Has the time come for organisations that practice project management internally, or those that procure project management related services from consultants, contractors and suppliers; to demand that those either managing or working on projects in influential positions are professionally qualified? We have estimated that in the UK alone there are approximately 200,000 people (and growing by at least 10% annually) with a project management qualification that is better than or equivalent to the International Project Management Association's (IPMA) Level D certification (see [www.ipma.ch](http://www.ipma.ch)). Such qualifications would include APMP, PRINCE2® Practitioner, Open University MS865, PMP®, NVQs (Levels 4 and 5) plus the many Certificates, Diplomas, Undergraduate Degrees and Masters Degrees.

Over the last few years we have been constantly surprised by some organisations' apparent unwillingness to demand that the consultants, contractors and suppliers they use provide only project managers and other project management staff that are appropriately and professionally qualified. We know that in national and local government circles and in certain areas of the IT and Financial sectors there is often a requirement for project managers and support staff to be PRINCE2® qualified (i.e. trained to use the PRINCE2® method) yet further professional qualifications in core project management practices such as scheduling, earned

*“Of course I’m a qualified Project Manager... I’ve had extensive experience of reading a short book on the subject...”*



value, team leadership or conflict management are not required. In some sectors, including industries such as oil & gas, construction, shipbuilding, transportation, utilities and pharmaceuticals, no requirement is set other than domain experience. **Why might this be?**

When quizzing organisations why they don't demand suitably qualified and experienced personnel or 'SQEPs' when procuring project management services we have been told that to make such a demand might be seen as both unreasonable and unrealistic (and maybe even unnecessary as anyone can be a project manager can't they?). We have always argued with the validity of this attitude and questioned why it is adopted. We don't suggest that buyers of project management services request this step change

tomorrow, or even next month, but neither do we understand that if 'suppliers' are warned in advance that this couldn't happen in 12 or 24 months. Unlike other contracted professions where qualified individuals are the norm such as accountancy, civil, mechanical and electrical engineering and quantity surveying to name only a few there has never yet been a want for this to be applied to project management.

But we believe that very soon those days could be over forever and for at least three good reasons. Firstly as highlighted in the

opening paragraph the number of qualified people is already 200,000 and continually increasing. This alone will mean that a **'tipping point'** will be reached soon where there are more people who are qualified than are not (**note the Association for Project Management - APM has estimated that there are 250,000 full time project managers in the UK**). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, as we are sure many of you reading this article already know, the APM is in the process of applying for Chartered Status, which will provide recognition of increased project management professionalism. It will also be a pre-cursor to APM establishing a Register of Chartered Project Professionals on behalf of the profession at large. The third reason is the development of an ISO standard in Project Management - ISO21500. This is in production and although not scheduled for release until 2012 will be the first time that the world's various standards organisations and project management bodies have worked together to achieve a level of agreement and consistency and deliver a high level standard that can be applied to all projects.

**So why should these reasons have a major effect on the way we in the UK carry out projects?** All three of the reasons discussed will contribute to some degree. Organisations will begin to

realise that there are already many individuals with qualifications that, coupled with suitable experience, can be called upon and so will begin to recruit and buy with this in mind. The recognition of the profession achieved by the anticipated gaining of Chartered Status will add to this dynamic. Finally the creation of an ISO standard is like the **'icing on top of the cake'**. We will have qualifications, a recognised profession and an international standard. Assuming that these three are fit for purpose what are the barriers to moving project management from an accidental to a deliberate, professional management practice?

We challenge those of you reading this article who work for organisations that don't do so already to start the process of professionalising project management both internally **AND** with your consultants, contractors and other suppliers. Professionalism needs to be present on both sides of the contractual divide. Those of you who are the providers of services you need to pre-empt this. To quote from one of our sources when talking about the up-skilling of project managers in their organisation, maybe **"the age of the gifted amateur"** will soon be over.

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