

The New Leadership Competency: “PM for Non-PMs”

The Pace of Change Makes Project Management a Critical Competency for All Leaders

Rapid organizational change has been a reality for over a decade. Now there's a new response to this challenge: add basic project management to the leadership competency model. The trick is scaling traditional project management down to a size that is practical for leading the constant stream of internal initiatives.

It's not news that the pace of organizational change is faster than ever. Global markets, technological leaps, and the demographic shift to a millennial workforce are just a few of the drivers. What is new is that organizational development and HR professionals have been adding project management to the competency models for leaders at all levels of the company, from individual performers up to executives.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: Jennifer Church, *Director of Organizational Development for Crowley Maritime* says that learning and refreshing project management skills is an emphasis this year for managers, directors and vice-presidents. Crowley, founded in 1892, is a maritime logistics company with a diverse fleet of vessels operating from the equator to the North Pole. The new emphasis on project management coincides with major system and process upgrades and an acquisition – changes that will reach across the entire organization.

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The Growing Demand for Everyday Project Leadership Skills

The new competency comes as a surprise for many leaders that don't consider themselves 'professional project managers,' a role often equated to Information Technology (IT) or engineering. The reality is that this wave will affect professionals in every department – marketing, accounting, purchasing, and human resources just to name a few – whose work is shifting to include more projects as a part of their day-to-day responsibilities. The shift is driven by several easily observed factors:

- **Work is increasingly accomplished through projects.** Every change is accomplished by one or more projects. As projects become a bigger proportion of everybody's work, basic project management skills are becoming as essential as interpersonal communications, conflict management, team dynamics, and other foundational skills that apply to every professional.
- **Millennials are entering leadership roles.** The Millennial workforce is now entering leadership roles, while Boomers are retiring. Flatter, more agile organizations are turning over the reins for small and large leadership responsibilities to a new generation of leaders who will spend most of their careers navigating change. The sooner they sharpen their project leadership skills, the better.
- **Innovation and V.U.C.A. are pervasive challenges.** Whether a company is driving disruption or reacting to it, innovation affects everyone. V.U.C.A. (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) is a term used to describe the less predictable world most organizations face. Project management is a key capability for driving innovation and responding to 'a V.U.C.A. world.'

These trends are affecting the demand for project management skills at Crowley. *“Things are changing at a more rapid pace, so projects need to be structured and have flexibility. I definitely foresee project management being more prominent for managers. The competency will be pushed down to lower parts in the organization where they'll manage smaller chunks of larger projects.”*



Meeting the Needs of the New 'Non-Project Manager'

Since many managers, executives, and senior staff don't see themselves as project managers they are leery of training and processes that are bloated or designed for IT, construction, or engineering projects. And they absolutely reject training designed for passing the PMI PMP exam. The keys to successfully addressing this audiences fall into two categories: A) translating the jargon of project management; B) scaling the discipline to fit smaller, less complex projects. A Chief Learning Officer at a financial services firm described it this way, "My accidental project managers need to understand the key principles without slowing down all their projects with too much process."

A. Translating the jargon of a complex discipline can be easier than you'd think. Ask anyone who's been on a project team what makes a project successful and you'll hear a pretty consistent theme: common goals, a plan of action with clear responsibilities, and regular communication. That makes sense to anyone. Continue to frame the tools of project management in the context of their projects and these business people will soon appreciate visualizing the sequence of events and keeping a list of current problems – also known as a critical path schedule and an issues list.

B. Scaling the discipline to fit part-time and less complex internal initiatives follows a similar strategy. Focus on the key success factors – clear goals, an action plan, team communication – and limit the discussion and the standards to those factors. Carefully tracking scope changes may be absolutely critical on a construction project, but it just isn't practical for a part-time, two month effort to revamp an HR policy, so leave it out.

The Versatile Company has a 25 year track record of success in both translating the jargon and scaling the discipline of project management.

Versatile's "PM for Non-PMs" training has been proven successful with HR professionals, part-time project leaders, and functional managers in a wide variety of industries.



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Although the Organizational Development and Training teams are organizing the training at Crowley, Jennifer says the demand for the skills comes from the people running the business. "They came to us. Then the word spread." Crowley chose Versatile's two-day **Principles of Project Management Workshop**. "It is a refresher for those who have experience so they are up to speed with current best practices, for others it was their first experience. I spoke to people who were worried about being overwhelmed because this was their introduction to project management. They said it was fast-paced with a lot of information but it was well balanced. It made a big difference that they applied the topics to Crowley projects in class. It made everything relevant."

Change Management and Project Management are a Powerful Combination

Successful projects also manage the people side of change. One of the biggest trends in the project management world is teaching project managers the principles and techniques of change management, so the people affected by a project are less likely to resent or reject the result. Likewise, change management practitioners are learning from project managers. This combination is particularly important for organizations that expect a steady diet of internal transformations, both large and small, in the years to come.

Crowley has embraced this combination, forming a new Change Leadership group to support the most significant projects. Members of this Change Leadership group are also attending the project management training, ensuring continuity of understanding and vocabulary.

Build Your Capacity for Agility and Change

The pace of change is not slowing. Recognize that every change is a project that will benefit from the basic principles that apply to all projects. Add "Project Management for Non-Project Managers" to your competency models to build your firm's resilience, responsiveness, and capacity for transformation.

Jennifer Church was previously Manager of People Development at Crowley. She is currently Director of Organizational Development. Crowley Maritime has been a Versatile customer since 2008.