



How has project management evolved over the last 10 years? We spoke to ESI training veteran, Iain McPhail

One of the first project managers to take a course with ESI EMEA, back in 1999. Today Iain is a Programme Manager with Hitachi Data Systems and has just taken his 18th course with ESI!

How did you get into training with ESI?

The company I was working with at the time wanted everyone to get formal project management training, and ESI was recommended to me by my boss. I started off just planning to do a Masters Certificate in Project Management, but once I had gotten the certificate I kept coming back because I realised what an important factor training was in my career development.

You have now been training with ESI for 10 years - What keeps attracting you back?

I find the standard of the courses consistently high and I am always very impressed with the instructors. They really strike a good balance between presenting the academic course material from George Washington University and telling us about their own real life experiences – it really brings the course material to life. In the last 10 years, ESI has really expanded their offering. You not only have courses in the area of project management but also programme management, business skills and business analysis. This means that I can pick up more than just the basics – I can start to expand and refine my knowledge. ESI's PMI affiliation is also a plus for me – I need PDU's to retain my PMP* certification and with ESI's courses you get those PDU's as you train.

Do you think formal project management qualifications are important?

Training is a massive advantage in the project management profession, often certification is the only thing setting you apart from the competition. In larger companies you can find barriers to promotion unless you have industry certification. This means that if you come in to do project work as an outside contractor for one of these companies, they require that you are at least qualified to the standard of their own internal project managers – otherwise, you won't win the contract. I encourage everyone in my team to work towards their PMP* certification – it's invaluable in this industry.

*Project Management Professional certification from the PMI

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Why do you think training is so 'key' to your development?

Although important, training is about more than just formal qualifications. Sometimes it is easy to get off best practices by all the lengthily processes and administrative hurdles you can encounter. As a job, project management can be really challenging and you can sometimes lose sight of the main goal. Training really reignites my enthusiasm for project management and reaffirms why we have certain processes in place. After I go on a training course and I get back to the office invigorated and keen to apply what I have learned and keen to make sure all the right procedures are being followed.

How has project management changed in the last decade?

When I started as a project manager, the majority of us were technical specialists implementing system-based solutions. However as project management developed, organisations decided that they needed project managers to be able to articulate the project solution and business case at the organisational level. Now we have almost come full circle – because of all the technology presently being implemented – there is, again, more call for IT and systems-based project managers. However, unlike the early days of project management, project managers now have higher levels of standardised industry certification. This enables us to communicate properly with each other and articulate the business case and overall organisational goals to the rest of the business.

The face of project management has really changed in the past 10 years. It is becoming more regulated and there is definitely an increasing demand for project managers to have formal training and accreditation. Projects definitely have higher success rates now than 10 years ago – but we are still looking at success rates of around only 36%, which is staggering! There is still a lot of work to do within the industry to raise standards.