

PMI® Case Study

AT&T Project Management Center of Excellence:
Communications Leader Promotes Project Management Leadership

As a world leader in communication technology, AT&T connects people from all around the globe. Just as consumers and businesses rely on AT&T services to stay connected, AT&T relies on internal resources, in particular project and program managers, to remain a best-in-class service provider.

Background

In an effort to institute common standards, foster a project management culture and improve individual and organizational competencies, AT&T established a Project Management Center of Excellence (PMCOE). The PMCOE targeted over 10,000 project managers, program managers and their supervisors, as well as holders of the Project Management Professional (PMP®) credential within the company, with the mission to be recognized internally as the resource for project management consulting, mentoring, training, processes, tools and techniques.

Additional goals of the PMCOE included:

- Drive AT&T's culture to advocate, support and sustain professional project management
- Assess and improve AT&T's professional project management competency at all levels: individual, team and organizational
- Ensure the right processes, services and tools are in place and linked to support professional project management success
- Ensure pertinent information is communicated to the PM Community in the most effective manner possible
- Secure visible leadership champions to support PMCOE initiatives
- Facilitate creation of a project management community to promote exchange of information to improve project management practices
- Encourage, facilitate and support continuing education and development of the PMCOE team

The project was led by 11 PMPs with an expense budget that covered the cost of the team's professional development and the costs associated with the annual AT&T Project Management Symposium, a significant PMCOE initiative.

Challenges

The largest challenge the PMCOE faced was that during project activities, legacy companies SBC and AT&T merged, bringing together two distinct project management improvement organizations with slightly different areas of focus. This change forced the PMCOE to re-evaluate the project and determine how to appropriately fuse the strengths of the two organizations.

The PMCOE was also finding it difficult to determine the best way to support the over 10,000 employees that make up AT&T's project management community. Within the community, there are various business units all of which have different needs and concentrations. Additionally, not only was the PMCOE tasked to support a large number of AT&T project managers, they had to also understand which services were most important to them.

Finally, effective and efficient communication would be a key element for the success of the PMCOE; however with such a sizeable and worldwide PM population, the PMCOE would have to determine how to best share valuable information on a large scale. Without appropriate communication, the PMCOE risked going unrecognized and not being used to its full potential.

Solutions

To combat and avoid challenges during the development of the center, the PMCOE applied a project management methodology that was in complete alignment with *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)*. The first priority was to ensure that the merging of the PM practices between legacy companies ran smoothly. As such, the PMCOE followed a five step process as established by PMI for successful project management:

- The **Initiating Process** - During this stage, the PMCOE team received approval from senior management to establish the merged PMCOE. A proposal was developed which included a needs assessment, resource forecast and financial benefits. During annual planning, the PMCOE Business Plan was re-evaluated to ensure mission and goals were in alignment with corporate priorities and strategic drivers.
- The **Planning Process** - The team determined which project management products and services from each legacy team continued to add value to the project management community. A needs assessment was completed to identify the most critical project management products and services under the new AT&T vision and mission statement.
- The **Executing Process** – The team executed the outlined plan which resulted in delivering the project on time, under budget and with quality. Within several months, the new PMCOE had executed the integration of the two legacy teams and gained traction with the recently merged PM Community.
- The **Monitoring and Controlling Process** - The PMCOE reported business plan goals each month to senior management. An annual Client Satisfaction Survey was distributed at the end of the year to capture feedback from the merged AT&T Project Management Community and additional surveys were distributed to the participants of major deliverables including the annual AT&T Project Management Symposium. All this feedback was analyzed and incorporated into key findings that were then used to improve the PMCOE.
- The **Closing Process** – This final step occurred in two distinct stages. First, the integration of the legacy teams was completed successfully. Next, the process (Planning, Executing, Monitoring and Controlling) was repeated when legacy BellSouth and legacy Cingular project managers were incorporated effectively into the PMCOE Business Plan. To finally close the project, lessons learned were identified to assist with future planning.

To support the AT&T Project Management Community, the PMCOE established consultants who were designated to support the various business units within the company. This business unit specific support provided the guidance and resources project management community members required even more intensive consulting was provided upon request to ensure that all needs were met.

To understand which services were most important to the AT&T Project Management Community, the PMCOE distributed both company-wide and business unit surveys to identify problem areas (e.g. leadership support, adequate training, etc.) and determine what needs its audience had which could potentially be met by the center. Initial discussions and survey findings helped to tailor the PMCOE offerings to provide the best payback of investment for both the PM Community and PMCOE efforts.

Since effective communication was a vital element to the success of the project, the PMCOE established a formal Communications Management Plan which promoted awareness and use of PMCOE products and services throughout the company. As companies merged, targeted emails to known project and program managers of each legacy company were used to announce the center's purpose and mission, offering to support their professional needs. As the PM Community grew, the PMCOE launched a monthly newsletter containing recent project management accomplishments, success stories, upcoming events and reminders of best practices. It was distributed via corporate email to ensure that information was being disseminated effectively. More recently, the PMCOE is expanding communications through rich content on the corporate intranet using the latest in Web 2.0 technology.

Additionally, to further promote the PMCOE and communicate the mission of the center, an annual AT&T PM Symposium was established to bring significant recognition to the practice of professional project management at AT&T. The annual event provides training and empowerment for project managers as well as the opportunity to network and collaborate with peers. Furthermore, leadership involvement in the Symposium has been consistently high, and in 2007, 22 AT&T officers and vice presidents participated across multiple locations. Communication with these corporate leaders has also been a critical success factor for the PMCOE. AT&T has found that when executives and middle managers support the mission of the center, their words have a significant influence on the project management community.

Results

Through the use of targeted project management techniques, the PMCOE project was achieved within budget and ahead of schedule. Preliminary results from the first PMCOE Client Satisfaction Survey showed greater than anticipated awareness and appreciation of the PMCOE mission, objectives and offerings.

The AT&T project management community is stronger than ever as the PMCOE successfully brought together project managers, program managers, PMOs and Supervisors of PMs across many functional areas and global regions. Additionally, through diligent cost management, comparing estimates to actuals and remaining in close communication with the organizational finance coordinator, there have been no PMCOE project cost overruns.

Key Achievements

- Over 20 new project management courses have been developed and delivered to 4,190 participants totaling 5,432 training hours in 2008.
- There was a 13 percent increase in corporate-wide PMP certification in 2007 vs. 2006, and 15 percent of AT&T PMs are now PMPs.
- The 2008 AT&T Project Management Symposium, including the participation of 11 officers, provided 10,000+ hours of training at eight live locations and over the intranet across 39 states and 15 countries.
- The most recent PMCOE Client Satisfaction Survey revealed 72 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed the training and development resources the PMCOE offers has improved their ability to project manage. More importantly, 84 percent agreed/strongly agreed the PMCOE promoted best practices. And 80 percent agreed/strongly agreed the PMCOE ensured project management information is communicated.

About AT&T

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States and around the world. Among their offerings are the world's most advanced IP-based business communications services and the nation's leading wireless, high speed Internet access and voice services. In domestic markets, AT&T is known for the directory publishing and advertising sales leadership of its Yellow Pages and YELLOWPAGES.COM organizations, and the AT&T brand is licensed to innovators in such fields as communications equipment. As part of its three-screen integration strategy, AT&T is expanding its TV entertainment offerings. In 2008, AT&T again ranked No. 1 on Fortune magazine's World's Most Admired Telecommunications Company list and No. 1 on America's Most Admired Telecommunications Company list. Additional information about AT&T Inc. and the products and services provided by AT&T subsidiaries and affiliates is available at <http://www.att.com>.

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