

# Career Paths in Action



## HP Services Adds Consistency and Top Talent to Global Project Operations

**Project Management Institute (PMI) has introduced its career framework, a formal career path for the project management profession. This initiative was launched to help organizations of all types establish clear expectations and a process for developing project management professionals and helping them advance through their careers. As a part of this effort, we have sought out interesting examples of major organizations that have acknowledged this need, wrestled with the issue of designing a career path for project professionals and have succeeded at creating their own approach.**

**THE STORY OF HP SERVICES' EXPERIENCE IS ONE OF THESE GREAT EXAMPLES.**

### > PROJECT BACKGROUND

HP Services is a major division of technology solutions provider Hewlett-Packard Company and is responsible for building relationships with internal and external customers and providing them with technology services. HP Services employs approximately 4,000 project managers in 170 countries on six continents.

### > CHALLENGES

HP has long been aware of the need to address the career development of their project professionals.

**Ron Kempf, PMP—Director of PM Competency for HP Services Worldwide Engagement PMO**—says their previous path was largely vague and there was a clear need to improve on it.

Specifically, they sought to:

1. Introduce consistency among detailed job descriptions;
2. Tie project management skills to the organization's business needs;
3. Introduce consistency in the nomination and selection process;
4. Introduce consistency in managing promotions across geographies; and
5. Add a senior level position at the director level to accommodate the needs of larger, more complex projects.

# The Path to Success

## > PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Because this project was breaking new ground, it required wide representation and participation from all of the organization's geographic regions and business groups. According to Ron Kempf, most of their work—performed over a period of about a year—consisted of sitting down together to discuss, understand and define the requirements and expectations for each proposed project management job level.

Because consistency across businesses and geographies was of paramount importance, much of the design work focused on determining the appropriate criteria to be used for each level in the model.

Three major criteria emerged:

- **Impact of contributions**—assessment of size and scope of project (including risk);
- **Leadership**—assessment of creativity, project team management, judgment, collaboration and knowledge sharing, client relationships and business acumen; and
- **Knowledge**—assessment of breadth and depth of project management, HP Services and industry knowledge.

“This process has clarified the expectations for each role in the organization.”

— RON KEMPF, PMP

The most quantifiable assessment areas, then, became metrics in the model. For instance, in the area of scope, a level one project manager is said to be able to handle small, straightforward, local projects, whereas the most senior level project manager must be able to manage large, international projects with multiple deliverables. Similar level-by-level requirements are then outlined for the other criteria.

In its practical application, HP Services' method benefits the organization and the individual. A manager considering an employee's suitability for promotion, for instance, has a criteria and assessment document as reference for each level of project management competency. These serve as guides for the process of review, interviewing, assessing and decision-making. Originally, HP used their method only for internal promotions, but they have also come to find it very useful in making hiring decisions.

The individual applicant can use the criteria and assessment documents as guidelines presenting a clear view of the requirements and expectations at each level of project management work. These serve as a career-planning tool, showing individuals how their current skills look in relation to the benchmarks provided.

## > RESULTS

Overall, this process has clarified the expectations for each role in the organization, Kempf says. A process that used to be somewhat nebulous is now fully consistent. In an organization as large as HP, this is highly critical.

While pointing out that it is challenging to isolate any one specific factor as the cause of a given positive effect, Ron Kempf says, there are several areas in which the success of the program is clear, on both an anecdotal and quantitative level:

- Overall project management maturity of the organization has increased;
- The percentage of projects completed each year on time and on budget is higher, beating industry averages; and
- Employee retention rates are also significantly higher than the industry average.

The company's robust employee development program has resulted in an enhanced ability to attract, grow and retain top talent. Employee feedback suggests that new hires are not only attracted to the company because of its attention to development, but this issue has, in some cases, made the difference between an individual taking a job at HP and going to work for a competitor.

## > CONCLUSION

The HP Services story is a great example of an organization recognizing the central role that project management plays in the implementation of business strategy and taking serious steps to support project managers in developing their skills and their careers, while strengthening the organization's ability to execute its business effectively. Of course, not every organization has the resources of an HP to tackle this issue at every level and on a global scale. Those with an interest in learning more about how to introduce a framework within their



organization should contact John Roecker, Ed.D., at [careerframework@pmi.org](mailto:careerframework@pmi.org) to discuss the options available through application of PMI's career framework.

**Many of the deliverables in HP's model—such as consistent job descriptions, a clear career path and an assessment of job skills—are highly consistent with the approach represented in PMI's career framework. For organizations unable to invest the considerable time, manpower and other resources required to create their own programs, PMI's project management career framework, available at [www.pmi.org/careerframework](http://www.pmi.org/careerframework), provides an easily accessible alternative.**

## CAREER FRAMEWORK

Credentialed People + Advanced Skills =  
Organizational Success

### PMI'S CAREER FRAMEWORK

The latest entry to PMI's career development plan for organizations, this framework serves as the blueprint for successful human resource integration at the project-oriented company.

With this valuable tool, PMI provides organizations:

- A formal career path for their project management professionals;
- The guidance necessary to introduce advanced-level project positions, including program and portfolio manager;
- Professionally accepted baseline job descriptions that can be customized to reflect the unique nature of an organization; and
- A means for organizations to assess the skill-set of their project professionals against standardized job descriptions.

PMI's career framework provides your organization with the consistent structure and accurate employee information that will help improve employee satisfaction and retention of your organization's most valuable resources.

Registration is free and easy.  
Get your organization started today at  
[www.pmi.org/careerframework](http://www.pmi.org/careerframework).

### ABOUT PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE (PMI)

Project Management Institute is the leading global association and advocate for the project management profession. PMI's primary goal is to advance the practice, science and profession of project management. By building global consensus on roles, defining competencies and providing professional standards and credentials, PMI provides continuous support to project managers and the organizations that employ them.

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