

SELF-STARTERS

Left without company backing, project managers in Asia Pacific are investing their own money into education and training.

BY LYNDA BOURNE, DPM, PMP

With corporate training budgets decimated by the current downturn, many project managers are taking it upon themselves to upgrade their education.

We've noticed a significant shift in our local Australian training market since the beginning of the year. Almost all corporate training has stopped and discretionary skills-development courses have been abandoned. However, those downturns have been counterbalanced by a pickup in interest from self-funded trainees looking to boost their position in the job market. Despite the tough times, it seems Australians are prepared to spend their hard-earned dollars on training—provided there's a clear ROI at the end.

Patrick Lam, Ph.D., is seeing a similar trend at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

"Compared with last year—before the global financial crisis—more applications have been received, both for full-time and part-time post-graduate programs. Although

"In 2009, things are different," Mr. Smith says. "Many positions, especially senior roles, express a strong preference for PMP qualifications. Realizing this, and knowing the number of people like me seeking jobs in the current economy, it seemed strategic to invest in something that would help me to differentiate myself in the market."

The training not only helps project managers prepare for the exam, but gives them "an appreciation for present-day expectations of project managers," Mr. Smith says.

"Defining scope, making a schedule and delivering to it is only a start," he says. "Managing stakeholders, maintaining professional standards and dealing with cultural issues in virtual teams are a few of the areas where much effort has gone into raising the bar for project managers."

The training paid off—Mr. Smith is now a PMP credential holder. "Those three letters are a prized asset, representing commitment as well as knowledge," he says.

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the information is not given in their applications, I would think most people are using their own resources to finance their studies," says Dr. Lam, the university's program leader for the master's and doctoral program in project management.

Apart From the Pack

Looking to stand out in a cluttered job market, many project managers are seeking training that will help them earn a certification. Delbert Smith, PMP, took workshops as he prepared to earn his Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] certification.

Certainly the recession has changed the way companies approach training, but it would appear the value attached by project managers to both formal academic qualifications and professional credentials has not diminished. **PM**

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