

# Improving Capability with Project Management Certifications: Telstra's Story

Many of us live in a world where a nearly limitless amount of information is available. Some 3.2 billion people, almost half the globe's population, use the internet, according to a [report](#) from International Telecommunication Union.<sup>1</sup> As a result, being "connected" has emerged as one of the most critical, and sometimes controversial, aspects of everyday life.

Telstra is a leading telecommunications and technology company, and firmly believes that the more connected the person, the more opportunities they have for success. **That's why its strategic goal is to create a brilliant, connected future for everyone.**

To help fulfil this mission and be known as an organization that continually delivers successful projects, Telstra utilizes Project Management Institute (PMI) frameworks, standards, and certifications to cultivate talent, standardize qualifications across its Global Services Practices (GSP) division, and support career paths for its project managers.

## Focusing on Customer Delivery

The GSP division, which is overseen by Telstra's Global Project Management Services business unit, delivers high-end technology consulting, design, and deployment across all of Telstra's technology offerings. Established in 2013, GSP's major product portfolios include network services, unified communications and collaboration technologies, and security and cloud services.



Telstra has approximately 33,000 employees in over 20 countries and offers a wide range of services around the globe, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. Learn more at [telstra.com.au](http://telstra.com.au).

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**"Our vision of becoming a world-class technology company won't be achieved without world-class project management. It's central to the way we work, and fundamental to our ability to deliver a brilliant, connected future for our customers."**

~ Andrew Penn, CEO, Telstra

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<sup>1</sup> International Telecommunication Union, [ICT Facts & Figures, 2015](#)

Senior industry leaders were hired to boost the division's capabilities, and in only two years, the number of employees grew to more than 1,500. Every day, GSP manages an average of 2,000 unique customer engagements, which range from "everyday" projects to multi-million dollar transition and transformation projects.

## The Need for Strategy

In order to continue to deliver world class service, Telstra has developed a clear strategy for its professionals, including project managers with formal career paths and professional development plans.

There is evidence that careful development and management of project managers can contribute greatly to an organization's success (see below).

### High-Performing Organizations Focus on Talent Management

PMI's *Pulse of the Profession*®: *Capturing the Value of Project Management* report indicates that high-performing organizations are significantly more likely to focus on talent management, on establishing ongoing training, and on formal and effective knowledge transfer.

In fact, that research shows that 80 percent of high-performing organizations had ongoing training for project managers, 65 percent had a formal process in place to develop project manager competency, and 62 percent had defined career paths for their project managers.

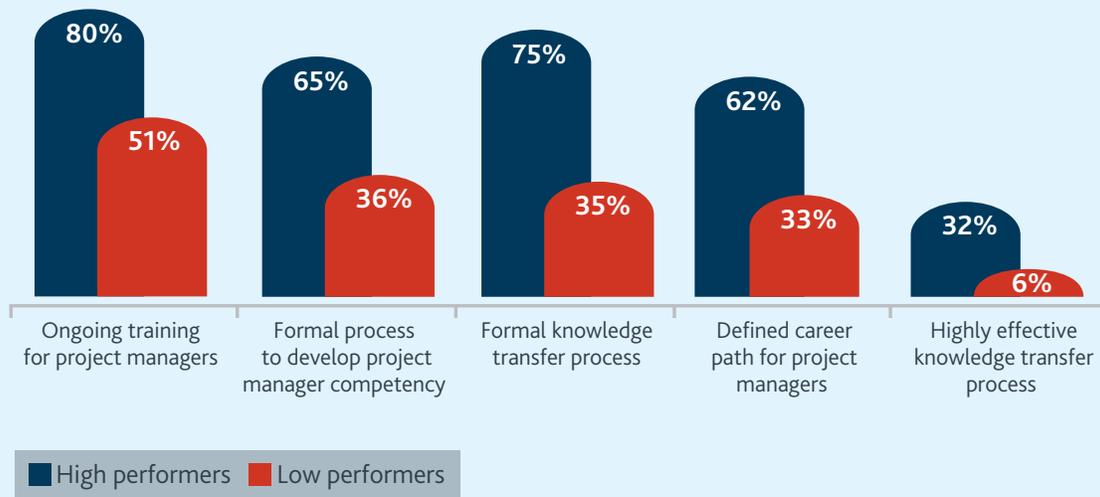


Figure 1: Source: PMI's *Pulse of the Profession*®: *Capturing the Value of Project Management*, 2015

Although Telstra had significant talent within its project management community, not all project management roles were consistently or clearly defined, especially when it came to skills and credentials needed to support customer demands.

PMI research has revealed that more than half of high-performing organizations support project, program, and portfolio management through the use of standardized project management practices throughout the organization.<sup>2</sup>

Telstra needed a certification model that would provide confidence for its customers and ensure that projects would be delivered in a consistent, reliable, world-class manner. **This was the impetus for Telstra to establish a formal certification program for its project management community.**

Most significantly, this strategic initiative received support from the highest level of management.

“Our vision of becoming a world-class technology company won’t be achieved without world-class project management. It’s central to the way we work, and fundamental to our ability to deliver a brilliant, connected future for our customers,” said Telstra CEO Andrew Penn.

## A Corporate-Wide Initiative

In mid-2015, Telstra launched a program to certify more than 400 of GSP’s project managers through PMI’s globally recognized certifications. Although certain methodologies are preferred in different regions, the PMI certifications would best suit Telstra’s Australian customer base, as well as customers who work with Telstra to deliver their offerings worldwide.

Many of Telstra’s practitioners had entered the project management field with engineering backgrounds or made the transition from collaboration specialist or technical professional, so the PMI certifications have helped achieve consistency across the practitioner base.

The leadership team at Telstra recognized the need to establish core qualifications and a shared understanding of how projects are run. They wanted their project managers to manage customer and team expectations with confidence and, most importantly, to align their approaches with the business goals of their customers.

Michelle Bendschneider, Executive Director Global Products, Telstra, explains the strategy: “We have a heritage of strong technical capability, but we are aiming for a consistent understanding of all the other things that make a great project manager. Telstra really wants to affect the culture positively and see the profession take pride in what it can achieve, to recognize the key role project managers play in the value chain with our customers.”

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“We are committed to delivering world-class technology solutions to our customers. Our professional project managers, certified by PMI, help us deliver these solutions to our customers on time and on budget.”

~ Brendon Riley, Group Executive,  
Telstra Global Enterprise and  
Services

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<sup>2</sup> Project Management Institute, *Pulse of the Profession®: Capturing the Value of Project Management*, 2015

## The Value of Working Together

Telstra worked with PMI to support the core project management team as they studied for PMI's Project Management Professional (PMP)<sup>®</sup>, the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)<sup>®</sup>, and the Program Management Professional (PgMP)<sup>®</sup> exams.

To offer a helping hand and friendly face to Telstra's busy project managers as they studied, groups of dedicated PMI volunteers ran information sessions and study groups and provided mentoring.

The first group of successful candidates shared their experiences across Telstra's internal communication channels, including the enterprise social network and internal corporate blogs.

## Delivering Projects Brilliantly

To date, Telstra's management team believes they have already achieved great success with the program to certify their project managers. "This certification program," says Ms. Bendschneider, "paves the way for greater commitment and improving the overall capability at Telstra."

The project management framework at Telstra has been simplified with standardized job codes, job families, and the requirements for certification. **Now, Telstra has a model that can be scaled domestically and globally.**

"We're at the beginning of a cultural transformation which is extremely important," says Ms. Bendschneider. "We are seeing the bar being raised and, when you raise the bar in project management, you create a rising tide that truly lifts all boats."

Ms. Bendschneider observes that the world's technical and consulting professions are being swept up in the transformation, with project management being the glue that binds everything together: "Leadership brings the whole engagement together for our customers. We can see the commercial improvement and, most satisfyingly, we can see the customer satisfaction improving."

Her ultimate goal is for every one of Telstra's GSP project management practitioners to become certified within the next two years, with the support of Telstra's leadership team. "That's how we'll develop our project management practitioner base and create a legacy around quality and consistency."

"We're committed to delivering world-class technology solutions to our customers. Our professional project managers, certified by PMI, help us deliver these solutions to our customers on time and on budget," adds Brendon Riley, Group Executive, Telstra Global Enterprise and Services.

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## About PMI

Project Management Institute is the world's leading not-for-profit professional membership association for the project, program, and portfolio management profession. Founded in 1969, PMI delivers value for more than 2.9 million professionals working in nearly every country in the world through global advocacy, collaboration, education, and research. PMI advances careers, improves organizational success, and further matures the profession of project management through its globally recognized standards, certifications, resources, tools, academic research, publications, professional development courses, and networking opportunities.

As part of the PMI family, Human Systems International (HSI) provides organizational assessment and benchmarking services to leading businesses and government, while ProjectManagement.com and ProjectsAtWork.com create online global communities that deliver more resources, better tools, larger networks, and broader perspectives.



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