

# Business Development: The Expanding Role of the Project Manager

PrezSez 04-2008, by Dr. Lew Ireland

## **Introduction**

Over the years, the term *project manager* has been defined in many ways that does not give a single description of the roles and responsibilities. Organizations have, without consideration for a standard definition, labeled individuals with the title of project manager whether they were responsible for a schedule, schedule and cost, or schedule, cost and product, or service performance.

Rightfully so, organizations tailored the roles and responsibilities to meet their business needs. This does, however, cause some confusion as to what are the full roles and responsibilities of a project manager.

The USA National Competence Baseline (NCB) lists 49 elements (Editor's note: there will be 49 with the addition of Business Development) of competence that are suggested areas of competence that a project manager should possess to fully meet the qualifications for managing a large, complex project. A person managing smaller and less complex projects would perhaps need less competence in some of the areas, but more detailed depth in some of the technical competences. Organizations may selectively use the 49 competence elements to tailor the required qualifications of their project managers.

## **Competence Growth for Project Managers**

The evolution of modern project management as a discipline, and the various roles for project managers have expanded. Where formerly the focus was relatively technical aspects for guiding projects through their life cycle to a realization, increasingly the context in which projects are implemented and the behavioral aspects of the project staff are also important for success. The three categories of project management elements, Technical, Contextual, and Behavioral, continue to evolve through better definitions and added competence elements.

Project manager roles continue to expand into such areas as the business development arena where new projects are initiated through a process designed to obtain additional business for the organization. In today's world, new business is often the life blood for maintaining a steady flow of project work for the organization. This brings new practices to projects. Example: Coupling the business development staff with the project staff to initially assess the potential of future work is not a new idea.

Some Project Oriented Enterprises have been doing this for years. However, this is an example of a good idea that is becoming mainstream, as it provides information to those deciding the viability of new work as projects as well as giving the project staff early indications of the degree of project complexity – both managerial and technical that may be encountered.

The business development manager, in some organizations, functions much like the head of a PMO to oversee new business opportunities that may result in projects for the organization. This potential new source of work for the organization needs to be assessed by a seasoned project manager to anticipate such aspects as the degree of complexity to manage the new work and the type of project organization it would require to implement the project within the future customer's time frame.

The project manager may also compare the required human resource skills needed to those available within the organization in anticipation of actual project performance. The preliminary actions of the seasoned project manager can greatly enhance business development activities in assessing the potential value of an anticipated project.

Another opportunity is for the project manager to become involved in responding to a request for proposal (RFP) for new work. The project manager can design the performing project organization for the proposal manager and describe the proposal project management's role in satisfying the customer's requirements.

Many customers desire to know what the performing organization will accomplish on a schedule and how the work will be addressed. A good description of the management activities, written by a savvy project manager, can build confidence with the customer and have a large influence on whether the proposal is turned into a contract.

These preliminary activities by the project manager in the business development cycle have significant value to the performing (service selling) organization. As well, the performing organization benefits from early definition of the anticipated project management organization and approach to how the work will be accomplished.

If the project organization design, to include anticipated staffing, is not fully addressed in the proposal phase of business development, a less than optimal project can be anticipated. Good project organization structure and functioning does not just happen.

Some advantages of early involvement with the business development professionals could be:

- Better implementing project organization by early identification of available resources.
- Better description of management approach and implementing organization by getting project management considerations in the proposal.
- Better cost and schedule estimates by project management staff.
- Early involvement of the project manager for anticipated new business and tapping the project manager's competence for project implementation.
- Establishing early cooperation between the business development and project management staffs for proposals that have a greater probability of winning new work.

Cooperative work between the business development organization and the project management organization should build on an enterprise's capability to obtain new work and perform that work with maximum efficiency. When the two enterprise elements work together, each contributes toward the enterprise's overall goals and builds a capability that is vital to the growth and profitability of the enterprise that would not be achieved working separately. Cooperation contributes first to the strategic goals and then the business goals by setting the stage for a better performing project.

There is no suggestion that the business management professionals and project management professionals perform each other's work. What is suggested is that both elements work in a collaborative manner, sharing and leveraging their inherent skills. The integrated results for obtaining new work can greatly enhance the probability of winning the contract, and giving the project the proper structure for superior performance.

Project managers and prospective project managers need to learn more about the business development cycle and how they can support obtaining new business in the form of projects. Two organizations are actively pursuing business development competence and promotion of the knowledge required to effectively conduct new business pursuits.

Those organizations are:

- Association of Proposal Management Professionals ([www.apmp.org](http://www.apmp.org)) works to advance the competence of individuals in the business development arena for greater efficiency and effectiveness in obtaining new work. This professional organization holds seminars to promote the interchange of information that has proven to be successful in business development.
- Business Development Institute ([www.bd-institute.org](http://www.bd-institute.org)) improves the organizational aspects of business development through a Capability Maturity Model® for business development. This focus on the business development element of an organization has the potential for optimizing the enterprise's capability to obtain new business by a highly competent group of professionals.

There may be additional sources of information on the business development cycle that are relevant to expanding one's knowledge of what it takes to produce a winning solution to new business development. The library and local bookstore are always good sources of current information.

### ***In Summary***

Project managers need to learn about the business development cycle within their respective organizations and contribute to the process of obtaining new work. When projects are building blocks to the success of the enterprise, it is advantageous to put the right competences to work to win contracts through early actions to influence the potential customer's decision process. Well-written and documented project activity descriptions in proposals by project managers can make a difference as to whether the contract is won or whether the proposal is just another lost opportunity.

Project managers need to expand their knowledge of the process for obtaining new work to be able to effectively contribute to proposals and prepare for the anticipated project that results from the collaborative effort. Business development staff should welcome the assistance that can bring the best project approach to their proposals with relevant descriptions of project organizations and implementation functions. Both the new business development and project management staffs are looking for the winning proposal through their collaborative efforts.

Capability Maturity Model and CMM are registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office by Carnegie Mellon University.

### ***About the Author***

Lew Ireland, Ph.D.  
600 Dunbar Cave Road  
Clarksville, TN 37043  
Tel: 931.647.7373



Lew Ireland is an Executive Project Management Consultant based in Tennessee and serving both US and international clients. He has worked with clients to establish their project management systems to ensure they are supportive of the organizations' respective goals. He is experienced in all phases of project management that include planning, scheduling, project office implementation, project maturity modeling, and project assessment.

Lew has authored or co-authored project management books and articles for professional journals. He is a continual contributor to the *American Society for the Advancement of Project Management*, regularly writing short articles for our website.

Lew has a history of serving for nearly 25 years in volunteer positions to advance project management. He is past President and Chair of the Project Management Institute and has served in various positions within the Institute. He has been recognized by the Institute for his contributions by the Distinguished Contribution Award, Person of the Year, and elected a Fellow of the Institute.

He currently serves as President of the *American Society for the Advancement of Project Management (asapm)*, a not-for-profit professional society dedicated to more effective project management practices.