

**THE ENTREPRENEUR AND THE PROJECT MANAGER:
MUTUAL SKILLS DEFINED**
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The entrepreneur and the project manager have something in common. They both require the ability to take initiative with a view to success. This article explores the possibility that the project manager and the entrepreneur share some common skills or characteristics and identifies these commonalities by first defining the entrepreneur and project manager, and then verifying their skills and characteristics against traditional findings.

The most common characteristics of the project manager are matched with skills required of an entrepreneur, with more than 60% of the characteristics having matching skills. This article tabulates the findings and supports the value of the finding with current research.

Key phrases: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skill, management skill, project entrepreneurship, project management, project management characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is often defined as a skill or set of skills and an entrepreneur as a person who possess such a skill. Project management and the project manager require several skills to execute a project successfully. The question is whether or not project managers require entrepreneurial skills or, if project managers would benefit from entrepreneurial skills?

This article aims to resolve just this question, by accurately defining the entrepreneur and the project manager and identifying common skills that may exist between them. Further, the article hopes to identify the value of these common skills to the practice of project management, and thus the value of this skill set for a project manager.

Kerzner (1998:174) identifies entrepreneurial skills as being *needed* by programme managers in order to make appropriate decisions for projects, with minimum disruption to organisational goals. He further recognises that these skills are only developed through actual experience.

ORIGINS AND DEFINITIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

To fully appreciate the skills of the entrepreneur and the project manager, formal origins and definitions must be recognised. The roots of the word *enterprise* and thus *entrepreneur* are taken from French and represent a man who undertakes something, literally, takes something between his own hands (Shipley 1979:345.)

Collins Dictionary (1986:282) describes an *entrepreneur* as *the owner or manager of a business enterprise who, by risk and initiative, attempts to make profits.*

A project is often defined as an undertaking or an endeavour. PMBOK® (2004:5) defines a project as *a temporary endeavour, undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result*. Further, PMBOK® (2004:8) defines project management as *the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Project management is accomplished through the application and integration of the project management processes of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. The project manager is the person responsible for accomplishing the project objectives*.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Evans, Williams & Deacon (2000:282) report on a postgraduate diploma in entrepreneurial practice offered by the University of Glamorgan in Wales. The Postgraduate Diploma in Entrepreneurial Practice (DEP) was initiated at the University of Glamorgan in response to two major concerns.

First of all, enterprise education, despite being valued within other regions and countries throughout the world, had yet to be developed sufficiently within Welsh higher education institutions. The creation of the first postgraduate course in entrepreneurship in Wales would serve as an example to other universities to develop this important area of third-level education.

Secondly, the underlying philosophy of the Welsh Enterprise Institute, where the course is based, emphasised the need to establish a style of business education that developed the individual in a "holistic" form and not in discrete units of educational attainment. Evans, Williams & Deacon (2000:282) explains that the practice of enterprise education is one that requires a blend of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which recognises the synergistic links between management theory and entrepreneurial practice. It therefore acknowledges the need for the development of both "hard" and "soft" skills simultaneously throughout the period of education and beyond.

The characteristics and skill sets identified for development within this course are described as opportunity seeking, initiative taking, making things happen independently, problem solving, risk taking, commitment to work and tasks, ability to cope with and enjoy, uncertainty and ambiguity, self awareness, self confidence, creativity, perseverance, persuasiveness, resourcefulness, negotiating skills, motivation, commitment to achieve.

Jung *et al.* (2001:41) identify a consensus among entrepreneurial researchers, in that entrepreneurship is a complex process of putting together several critical resources to initiate a new venture. *From a social psychological point of view, successful venture creation and maintenance is a function of a founder's (founding management team's) ability, motivation, and situation in which the founder (or the entrepreneurial team) is embedded* (Chandler & Hanks 1994:77).

Hence, entrepreneurial researchers have studied each of these three different components to elucidate their potential linkage with venture performance. For example, there has been a long tradition of examining a founder's personal traits and characteristics (e.g., locus of control, extraversion versus introversion) and their entrepreneurial actions in entrepreneurship research (Gartner 1989:27, Lumpkin & Dess 1996:135).

Jung *et al.* (2001:41) ultimately refine a measure of entrepreneurial self efficacy (ESE) to examine how individuals assessment of their entrepreneurial skill is associated with their entrepreneurial intentions and actions.

A key characteristic identified by Pierce & Newstrom (2003:76) that is important for entrepreneurs to have, is the desire for achievement. They claim that high achievers obtain satisfaction from successfully completing challenging tasks, attaining standards of excellence, and developing better ways of doing things.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Du, Johnson & Keil (2004:181-183) claim that organisations that have taken on large-scale projects, will attest to the value of project management (PM) skills and techniques for coordinating complex multidimensional tasks over extended periods of time. It is generally agreed that PM is a necessary ingredient for successful completion of most large-scale undertakings. When projects fail to achieve their desired ends, the culprit is often identified as a weakness in PM. In a study of information systems (IS) project risks, lack of PM skill was ranked among the top five risks by a panel of experts (Schmidt *et al.* 2001:5)

According to Du, Johnson & Keil (2004:182) knowledge areas defined by PMBOK® (2000:189-191) can be characterised against Georgia State University course topics in project management, and for the purpose of this article, they have been redefined into skill sets as follows;

PMBOK 9 knowledge areas and subsequent skill sets

- **PROJECT INTEGRATION MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure that the various elements of the project are properly coordinated.
- **PROJECT SCOPE MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure that the project includes all the work required, and only the work required, to complete the project successfully.
- **PROJECT TIME MANAGEMENT**
The ability to ensure that the processes requiring timely completion of the project are followed.
- **PROJECT COST MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure that the project is completed within the approved budget.

- **PROJECT QUALITY MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure that the project will satisfy the needs for which it was undertaken.
- **PROJECT HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure the most effective use of the people involved with the project.
- **PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure the timely and appropriate generation, collection, dissemination, storage, and ultimate disposition of project information.
- **PROJECT RISK MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure that the systematic process of identifying, analysing, and responding to project risk. It includes the ability to maximize the probability and consequences of positive events and minimize the probability and consequences of adverse events to project objectives.
- **PROJECT PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT**
Requiring the ability to ensure the acquisition of goods and services, to attain project scope success, from outside the performing organization.

Archibald (1976:55) defines a broad range of desired personal characteristics for project managers; these characteristics were identified some 30 years ago and remain unattested today:

- flexibility and adaptability
- preference for significant initiative and leadership
- aggressiveness, confidence, persuasiveness, verbal fluency
- ambition, activity, forcefulness
- effectiveness as a communicator and integrator
- broad scope of personal interests
- poise, enthusiasm, imagination, spontaneity
- able to balance technical solutions with time, cost, and human factors
- well organized and disciplined
- a generalist rather than a specialist
- able and willing to devote most of his time to planning and controlling
- able to identify problems
- willing to make decisions
- able to maintain proper balance in the use of time

Kerzner (1998:170) identifies ten specific skills for project managers, namely:

- team building
- leadership
- conflict resolution
- technical expertise
- planning
- organisation
- entrepreneurship

- administration
- management support
- resource allocation

PROJECT MANAGER & ENTREPRENEUR, COMMON SKILLS

In an attempt to recognise common skills and or characteristics, Archibalds’ broad range of desired personal characteristics for project managers are cross tabulated with the characteristics and skill sets identified by the postgraduate diploma in entrepreneurial practice offered by the University of Glamorgan in Wales (see table 1).

Table 1: Matrix of entrepreneurial and project management skills

	PM Characteristics	Flexibility and adaptability	Preference for significant initiative and leadership	Aggressiveness, confidence, persuasiveness, verbal fluency	Ambition, activity, forcefulness	Effectiveness as a communicator and integrator	Broad scope of personal interests	Poise, enthusiasm, imagination, spontaneity	Able to balance technical solutions with time, cost, and human factors well organized and disciplined	A generalist rather than a specialist	Able and willing to devote most of his time to planning and controlling	Able to identify problems	Willing to make decisions	Able to maintain proper balance in the use of time
Entrepreneurial skills														
Opportunity seeking				x										
Initiative taking			x											
Making things happen independently														
Problem solving												x		
Risk taking														
Commitment to work and tasks											x			
Ability to cope with and enjoy, uncertainty and ambiguity.		x					x							
Self awareness														
Self confidence				x										
Creativity								x						
Perseverance														
Persuasiveness				x										
Resourcefulness								x						
Negotiating skills				x		x								
Motivation														
Commitment to achieve					x									

Table 1 forms a matrix of characteristics that can be employed to satisfy skills requirements. Supporting project management characteristics immediately satisfies

approximately 70% of the skills required by entrepreneurs. Conversely, approximately 65% of project management characteristics can be directly employed in supporting entrepreneurial skill.

Summary of common skills

From table 1 the following list of project management characteristics, can be supported with a corresponding entrepreneurial skill or skills.

- flexibility and adaptability
- preference for significant initiative and leadership
- aggressiveness, confidence, persuasiveness, verbal fluency
- ambition, activity, forcefulness
- effectiveness as a communicator and integrator
- broad scope of personal interests
- poise, enthusiasm, imagination, spontaneity
- able and willing to devote most of his time to planning and controlling
- able to identify problems.

Bourne & Walker (2004:226) recognise the importance of project management skills, both the hard and soft skills. They, however, also recognise the need for a third skill. In their paper, "Advancing project management in learning organisations", they recognise that company politics, and being correctly connected, will help in advancing project management ability. Whilst these skills are not identified as entrepreneurial in their paper, they are certainly unique to the concept of project management and ultimately new to the typical characteristics of a project manager. Given that they would describe the project manager as showing initiative in an attempt to be successful, they could certainly fit the profile of *entrepreneurial*.

Showing some similarities with the list in Table 1 Bourne and Walker confirm that relationship management skills are vital for achieving project outcomes that fully address stakeholder expectations throughout the project lifecycle. They claim that relationship skills are required to aid the effective application of hard skills *it is people, using knowledge, creativity and often technology, that realise projects not techniques or hardware*. As project management does not occur in a vacuum. It requires an infusion of enthusiasm and commitment supported by the full range of project stakeholder energy sources. Communication is the ultimately then confirmed as being a vital tool for project managers to develop and maintain robust and effective relationships with stakeholders.

CLOSURE

The question of whether or not project managers require entrepreneurial skills or if they would benefit from them, is clearly answered by the ease at which correlations are found in table 1, between entrepreneurial skills and project management characteristics. What is certainly evident from this paper is that the uniqueness of projects is the ever-determining factor of the skill sets required for effective project

management. Further research into the less common and less identified skills that could be incorporated into project management, could be under taken.

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