

VIEWPOINT

## The Accidental Project Manager is Alive and Kicking!

*By David Baccarini*

The accidental project manager has been a part of project management folklore for generations. Accidental project managers fall into the role of project manager, rather than formally plan or consciously choose the career.

During the past decade there has been a growing awareness in organizations of the importance of project management to implement business strategies to achieve organizational goals. Consequently, one would have expected that the accidental project manager would be close to extinction. The results from a recent survey suggest the opposite – the accidental project manager is alive and kicking!

A survey of 46 accidental project managers working primarily in the Western Australian public sector, conducted by research student Vanessa Darrell of the Western Australian Department of Culture and the Arts, underscores the fact that when these accidental project managers first start working on projects there is inevitably a project management skills gap. A worrying 90 per cent of those surveyed indicated an absence of project management tools in the workplace, and 83 per cent said there was no project management methodology in place. This reflects a lack of preparedness within an organisation, leaving it without a good project management foundation. Only 41 per cent of respondents indicated that project management is seen as a core competency, which is a reflection of an organisation not fully recognising the critical nature of the project management as a key business process.

This situation cannot be tolerated in today's competitive environment; the result will be continued project failures. Executive management need to re-evaluate and change their whole approach and mindset to project management and the way they select and support project managers so that individuals with the appropriate skills are chosen to undertake this demanding role.

Project managers indicated a particular difficulty with the project management process of scope management. Scope management is the primary process for articulating the project goals. An organization that does not prepare its project managers for effective scope management is setting itself up to fail.

The survey's finding of a serious lack of support from senior management for their project managers, particularly in terms of training, mentoring and project management tools, techniques and methodologies, should be of concern to organizations. Without these, an organization will not have a strong foundation from which to build skilled project managers, and ultimately will not achieve their better business outcomes.

**For additional information related to this article or the survey, contact:**

Angela Calabrese, Write Away Communication + Events

Ph: 02 8904 1622 or mobile: 0423 706 653

Email: [angela@writeaway.com.au](mailto:angela@writeaway.com.au)



*David Baccharini*

*Author*



David Baccharini is Associate Professor in Project Management at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia. He formulated the Master of Project Management program at Curtin, which was the first post-graduate university program in Western Australia. The course is also conducted in Hong Kong, Singapore & Sri Lanka. He is the Course Coordinator for this program and lectures in project management, cost management, procurement management and risk management. David has undertaken numerous training and consultancy assignments in project management and risk management