

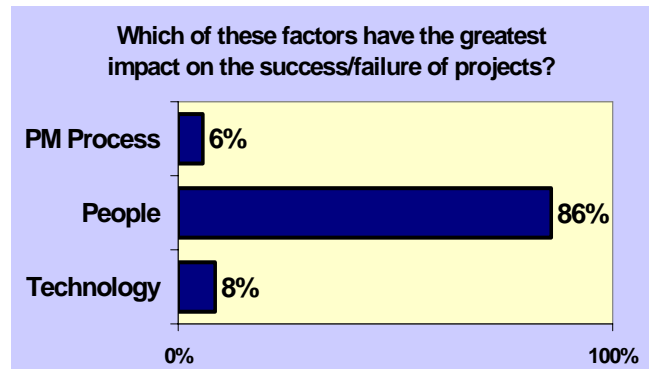
The 2006 People Deliver Projects Survey – Summary Report

Research into the daily experiences and views of 100 project managers, programme managers and sponsors, across a wide range of industry sectors and project types.

The Headlines

More than 80% of project and programme managers believe that people factors on projects are more challenging, and have more impact on project success, than either the technical content of the project, or the project management approach.

Whilst it's a simple headline, when the surface is scratched, individuals describe a wide range of specific challenges, along with practices that they admire, and that they criticise, from their personal experiences of life with people on projects.



Footnote: When asked to allocate 10 points across the 3 factors, the average score was: People 5, Technology 2.5, PM process 2.5

Key findings in brief

1. Winning ownership and commitment is the biggest single challenge
2. People beyond the core project team are felt to be the most challenging group to work with
3. Sponsors & Programme Managers have the same or more extreme views as project managers
4. the range of specific people practices pm's admire and criticise is very diverse
5. Companies care about and invest in pm capability, but do not invest in proportion to the issues

So people issues came out on clearly on top, but specifically which people issues, which people, and which situation?

Finding 1: Winning Ownership and Commitment...

When offered a range of 15 specific options for daily challenges across the three top themes, people factors took three of the top four places, with **team motivation and ownership** (1), **individuals that form well as a team** (3) and **senior management commitment** (4). Winning a place on the podium at no.2 was the process issue of **clear agreed project definition**. However, what was striking was how the issue of ownership and commitment recurred in questions at each level of the survey.



Footnote: only 1% of respondents gave "straightforward" against the top answer

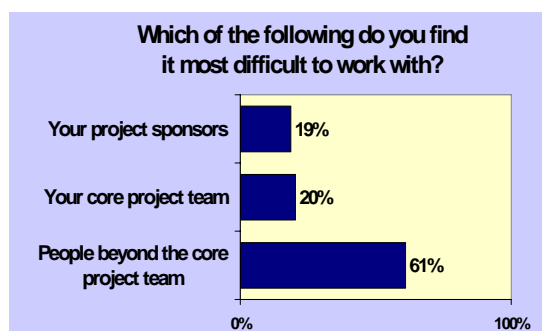
For instance, when asked about **most challenging tasks**, the top score was **gaining real commitment to tasks and milestones**, closely followed by **dealing with non-performing team members**.

On **most difficult personalities to work with**, people who are **unwilling to take responsibility** came out on top.

Finding 2: It's less often about the core project team...

So which group of people that project managers encounter is the greatest source of their difficulties? The first finding was clear – internal staff present more difficulties than either external customers or suppliers - but which internal staff? Neither **team members** nor **sponsors** were the problem area. Instead, **people beyond the core team** stood out, with over three times as many project managers saying this was the biggest problem group.

These so-called “out-groups” seem to crop up in every project organisation – internal suppliers who support multiple projects. Interrogating “in what way” these problems arise, the four top answers covered two clear themes – the problem of **competing priorities**, and the **making & keeping of commitments**. It was also clear from the bottom answers that work rate and technical skill are rarely the main concern.



Finding 3 – Do project sponsors and programme managers see it differently?

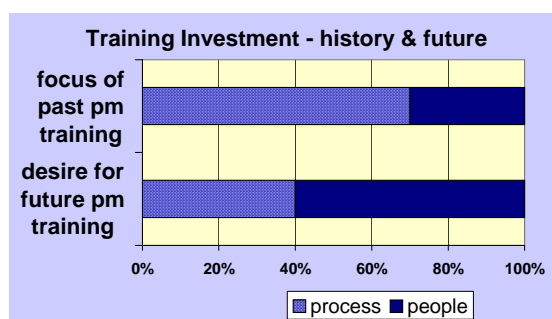
In addition to project managers, 30 project sponsors and programme managers were asked to answer the same questions from their perspective having project managers report into them. Did they see it differently? The short answer was interesting but straightforward – “No”. The only material difference was that their answers were more polarised than for project managers. For instance: 73% (v 61%) said that people beyond the core team are most difficult to work with. 66% (v 58%) said that gaining real commitment to tasks/milestones is the biggest challenge.

Finding 4 – The PM’s favourites. Best and worst habits...

We asked “**which one good people practice have you found to build most ownership and motivation of the project?**” and conversely “**which one bad people practice...**” The interesting finding here was not so much in the top answers but the huge variety, showing that whilst the importance of ownership is not in dispute, how to achieve it varies greatly according to the individual person. This leads to an important conclusion, namely that only multiple strategies for winning commitment will work, and no automatic formula for success is available. Given the length of the list, the response data for these questions is shown in **Annex 2**.

Finding 5 – PM capability matters to organisations but training investment is skewed

On a positive note it was found that 63% of respondents felt that their organisations take the issue of project manager capability **seriously** or **sufficiently**, and 93% provide training for either **some** or **all** project managers. The survey group, on average, estimated that 70% of their pm training had been **focused on process** compared to 30% **focused on people**, in contrast with a desired ratio of 60/40 the other way around.



Conclusion – Big news or so what?

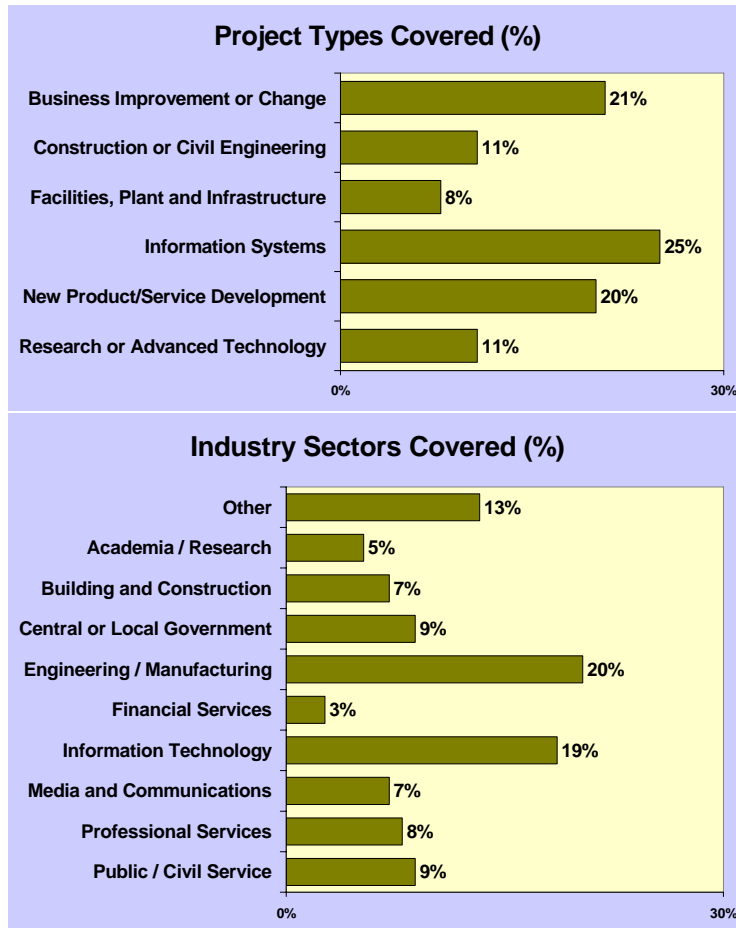
One can look at the survey findings and think, “well, so what, it’s pretty obvious.” After all, the majority of us involved in projects surely know that people issues count the most – that whilst process is necessary and valuable, it is how people use it that makes the difference. Alternatively, one can see that the findings scream out a huge problem that must be addressed in project management today, namely: People are where the real problem is but we over-invest in process to solve the problem. So why the contradiction? Perhaps the answer lies in the very nature of the human factors, which leads us to avoid facing them. They are more challenging, stubborn and awkward, often beyond our control, and they change as quickly as the weather – with each project, with each situation, and with each person. And moreover, learning and adopting new people skills is very hard. So it is not surprising that focusing 70% of training on structured pm methodologies seems like a pragmatic choice. At least this is somewhere progress can be made and there are tangible deliverables. So, is this the pragmatic option? Or is it the easy opt-out? The findings of this research suggest the latter.

Thanks... to our clients who helped in the survey design, all our respondents, and to the Association of Project Managers for helping us to reach them.

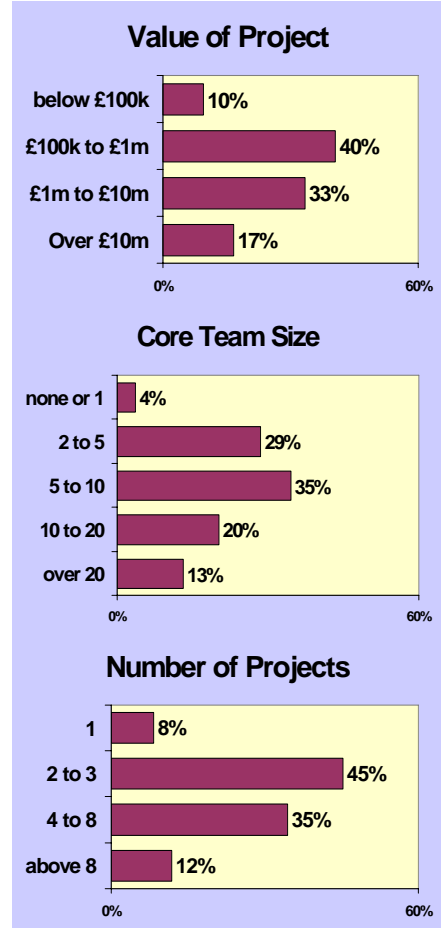
Annex 1 – The Survey Sample

The survey was put out to project managers, programme managers and project sponsors, across a representative sample of industry sectors and project types. The 106 respondents represented this cross-section well, with an even spread across: Sectors, project types and scale, and role complexity.

Sample Coverage

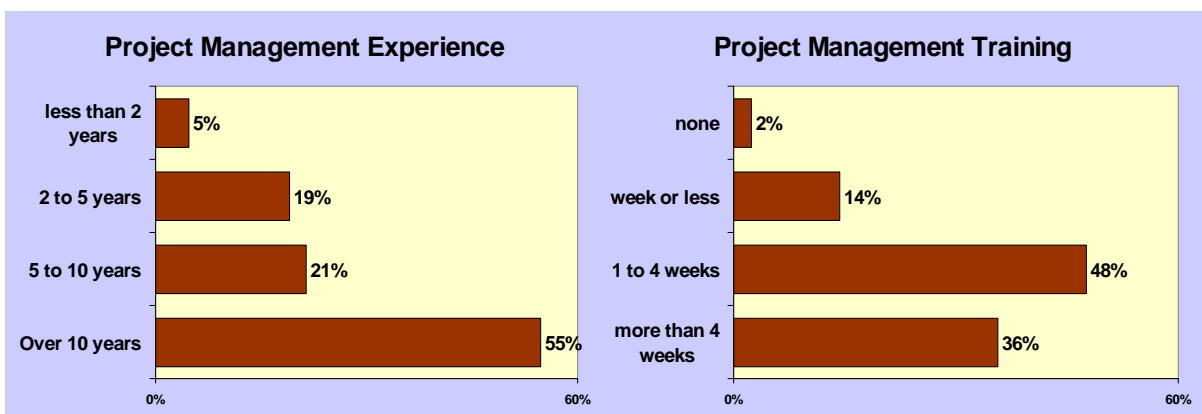


Project Profile



In project management experience, the respondents varied from novice to seasoned, with the centre of gravity being experienced project managers.

Project Experience



Annex 2 – Project Manager Favourites

Respondents were given a free vote to choose the people practices which, in their personal experience, most build (and damage) ownership and motivation of projects. Whilst the responses can be grouped into themes, perhaps most interesting is the wide variety in the individual choices made.

Question: Which one good (bad) people practice have you found to build (damage) ownership and motivation of the project?

Good Practice	Count	Bad Practice	Count
behaviour	8	behaviour	15
being open	2	project manager who feel they are superior	4
enthusiasm	1	failing to follow up or keep promises	2
humour	1	people with entrenched views	2
keep promises	1	academic snobbery	1
sincerity	1	allowing Jekyll and Hyde personalities to dominate	1
treat people as friends even if they are a hindrance	1	bullying	1
walking and talking	1	cliques	1
		cynicism	1
		laziness	1
		not talking, shouting	1
communication	11	communication	15
good, regular communication	7	hidden agendas or keeping secrets	7
early involvement and communication of the issues	1	lack of or poor communication	5
keep team aware of situation at all times	1	failure to report when critical events happen	1
open and honest communication	1	no feedback	1
talk to the team	1	senior management demanding constant reports	1
direction	5	direction	14
sharing goals and vision publicly with the team	2	changing of goals or priorities	6
defining objectives	1	conflicting priorities	4
give clear priorities	1	setting unrealistic imposed goals and deadlines	2
roles and responsibilities defined upfront	1	no clarity on deliverables	1
		lack of clear decision making	1
focus	2	focus	2
co-location	1	being pulled of the projects for periods	1
concentration of resource - co-location and time allocation	1	lack of time devoted to the project	1
		dispersed team	1
involvement	17	involvement	9
agreeing objectives, actions, decisions and outcomes together	4	controlling personality not getting team involvement	4
engaging with everyone all the time	2	not listening, or ignoring team member input	4
team members state and write down commitment at launch	2	continual contradiction or criticism of people's input	1
Dealing with team member problems, & keeping momentum	2		
allow input on scope and decision making	1		
Available to discuss issues and problems with team	2		
involve the team - value their expertise	1		
open and encouraging relationship with team members	1		
open debate of definition and the plan	1		
regular discussions in PMO of status and problems	1		
leadership	5	leadership	5
strong upper management support & commitment	2	failing to support people who ask for help	2
a galvanising vision	1	senior managers managing by whim	1
leadership by example	1	unwanted technical input from sponsors	1
no-hierarchy, to create harmony and common goals	1	lack of senior mngmnt support with the customer	1
meetings	7	non-performance	3
project kick-off meetings or events	3	ignoring poor or disruptive performance	1
regular team meetings	2	impatience with non-achievers	1
effectively managed project team meetings	1	not delivering to due date	1
project team away days	1		
recognition	6	recognition	3
recognition of successes/ faithfulness / commitment	2	failure to reward or recognise success	3
thanks and praise for tasks well done	2		
give encouragement	1		
public recognition of job well done	1		
responsibilities	5	responsibilities	9
give people responsibility for delivery	3	blaming others	4
delegate responsibilities and link to performance review	1	lack of clear responsibilities	2
empowerment	1	not following up owners	1
		not taking responsibility	1
		unwillingness to share responsibilities	1
miscellaneous		miscellaneous	
close cooperation with key customers	1	poorly resourcing the team - negative signal	1
empathetic relationships with difficult people	1	continually asking people to work long hours	1
evening pint at the pub down the road	1		

Note 1: in some cases wording has been paraphrased for ease of formatting and grouping

Note 2: groupings were defined at the discretion of the author

Annex 3 - Why this research, and what can be done with it?

Who did it?

This research has been conducted by **People Deliver Projects Ltd**, a collaborative joint venture of independent consultants, trainers and professional actors. **People Deliver Projects** was formed in 2006, specifically to tackle, head-on, the development of project managers and teams in people issues of project delivery.

Why did we do it?

Throughout our time introducing and improving project delivery in organisations, we have found that the most important issues, coming up time and time again, are human ones. Moreover, those organisations were either frustrated that the project management industry dealt no more than a glancing blow to the people issues, or they innocently followed the route of implementing process on top of process to solve their delivery problems. The problem seemed certain, but evidence was lacking. Previous surveys have tended to focus on *which* process factor is most important – perhaps (a bit like this one!) serving the needs of those that design and execute the survey.

This survey was created to get real insight, from real project professionals, on their daily life on projects, with a particular focus on people challenges.

Whilst we clearly have a bias towards the people side, we have carefully ensured that the survey sample and analysis has been objective. We want to raise the profile of the people issues, but this report is not intended as a piece of sales literature, and we hope very much it is not seen as such.

Is the research finished?

We would like to extend the sample size so that we can gain further insights into how the findings vary in different circumstances to do with: Industry sectors, project types, role type, pm experience, project portfolio. And so we invite you to complete the survey if you haven't already, and involve your colleagues too. The survey is on-line, takes around 15 minutes to complete, and individual responses are confidential.

You will find a link to the survey on the People Deliver Projects web-site.

Would you like to know more?

If anyone reading this report would like to question further its findings, or to receive a full report of the questions and answers, please get in touch by sending an email or a giving us a phone call.

What can you do with this report?

This report is under copyright protection. Nonetheless, we encourage you to circulate it freely to those people to whom it may be of interest and value. If other project management organisations would like to use it in their work, please get in touch to discuss what can be done.

Andy

Andy Taylor
People Deliver Projects Ltd
www.peopledeliverprojects.com
info@peopledeliverprojects.com
07977 495098