

SO YOU WANNA BE A...

# Project Manager

Tete-a-tete with Professor Christopher Abraham, Senior Vice President of SP Jain Dubai and Dr. Ali Jafaari, President of Australia Pacific International College, Sydney

Asia Pacific International College (APIC), Sydney, Australia and SP Jain Center of Management, Dubai are to establish a world-class International Center of Excellence in Project Management (PM) in Dubai. The centre will deliver corporate training, project and program health checks and consulting services to clients in the Gulf region. For students interested in the field of project management, here's the lowdown on what the centre has to offer.

#### About the centre

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** The International Centre of Excellence in Project Management will serve the corporate clients from early to mid-career professionals, students and others in the region. The Centre will be able to offer a variety of services related to the field of project, program and portfolio management, including diagnostic services, intensive training workshops, self-contained professional development units, formal graduate degree courses, corporate training, advice and consulting services and others. This is the most comprehensive suite of services offered worldwide!

**Prof. Christopher Abraham:** The Centre will follow the recognised International Standards fully and will also reflect the local needs and conditions into the respective programs.

#### Establishing the need

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** With the current project volume in this region reaching a staggering \$1,500 billion including some of the largest projects ever undertaken, and considering other aspects of change that are taking place in the region, the need for a major centre to serve the needs of the region is paramount. The GCC region is home to more than 270 people with a GNP of \$1.4 trillion. It has a young population and a dynamic economy.

#### Courses offered

**Prof. Christopher Abraham:** The short courses (or intensive knowledge workshops) cover a variety of areas from leadership and socio-cultural competencies through to project management, program and portfolio management, risk management and so on. These range from one-day to four-day intensive face-to-face group learning opportunities supported by advanced tools and systems that Asia Pacific International College has developed and applied across the world.



Prof. Chris with Dr. Ali Jafaari, Jennifer Sanderson & Santosh Stanley

In addition, the program offers four graduate degrees that are formally recognised at University level and designed to impart the high-level competencies needed by managers to deliver projects and programs successfully and handle complexity and change. The qualifications offered are:

- Graduate Certificate in Project Management
- Graduate Diploma in Project Management
- Master of Business and Project Management
- MBA (Project and Program Management)

An industry qualification, Executive Diploma in Project Management tops the list of awards that are conferred in this field. The courses are open to all interested students, professional people, managers and executives at all levels. These courses are held in S P Jain's Dubai Campus in Academic City. The facilities are designed to enhance executive learning and professional development.

The character and focus of the courses will be somewhat different from traditional courses and learning. These are designed to reflect the managerial and leadership capabilities needed to work in today's complex environment. All programs are underpinned by a Chart of Competency that comprises 54 units (156 elements), thus providing a comprehensive basis for tailored learning and development.

#### Consulting services with a difference

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** The consulting services on offer are not similar to those that are offered commercially. The key aspect of these services is their emphasis on diagnostic tools and determination of the areas that need improvements in individuals, projects and programs as well business units. The service offered is supported by online diagnostic tools. Following from the diagnosis stage the Centre will offer a variety of services to match the needs of organisations such as:

- Assistance in strategic planning and positioning
- Organisation PM competency assessment
- Organisation PM competency development and alignment
- Organisation PM processes, systems and infrastructure development assistance
- Organisation risk management capability development
- Assistance with establishment of project/program management office/centre of excellence

- Project/portfolio and program management capability development assistance
- Establishment of in-company assessment centre
- Global role family design and application

#### Logistics involved

**Prof. Christopher Abraham:** The respective institutions are able to support the programs and courses fully. Asia Pacific International College faculty will travel to Dubai to offer the courses in cooperation with academic staff of S P Jain Centre of Management. The Dubai campus of S P Jain is well designed to suit the delivery of the programs in Dubai.

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** Asia Pacific International College is unique in terms of its tools and systems that provide a rich framework for teaching of project management. These comprise:

- Project/program health check
- Competency assessment tool
- Online learning system
- E-library
- Interactive learning media incorporated into all courseware.
- Advanced communication tools

Essentially project management training and professional development needs to be broadened as the current teaching and tools are vastly inadequate. For example, most current curricula cover nine areas out of 54 areas that project and program managers need to possess. In terms of functions, the contemporary approaches cover only three or at best four functions out of 18 core functions that need to be managed successfully to deliver projects of significance size and complexity. Services and programs on offer through the Centre will thus represent the ultimate in terms of both the competencies of managers and the managerial excellence on projects and programs.

The tools and courseware on offer through the Centre will

reflect the above and will provide an outstanding basis for assessment and benchmarking of individual competencies, assessment of managerial performance and for development of high level competencies needed in today's complex world of regulations, market shifts and risk and uncertainties.

#### Educating a project manager

**Prof. Christopher Abraham:** The certification schemes vary worldwide. However, the current system offered by the International Project Management Association requires a sound basis and advanced knowledge in both project management and leadership areas. The Australian Institute of Project Management has released a draft certification scheme (and standard) that requires advanced (higher education) knowledge in project management. The Project Management Institute of the US has also introduced a certification scheme for program managers. It is widely recognised that successful project managers need to be well versed in the science and art of project management, so ad hoc development will not be sufficient.

#### Personal traits of an ideal project manager

- Dr. Ali Jafaari:**
- Possess critical thinking/conceptualisation skills
  - Be strategists and integrators
  - Be reflective learners
  - Possess ability to optimise/customise solutions across technical, organisational, financial, social and environmental angles
  - Be proactive to tap opportunities and resolve uncertainties
  - Be innovative and contribute to evolution of best practice

#### Nature of the work

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** A project manager's challenge is to deliver a

## Fact Box

The advantages of the courses offered are (but not limited to):

- Learning from industry leaders and frontline thinkers in this expanding field of endeavour
- Project/program management taught as the best combination of science and art on a foundation of business
- Short intensive courses offered for boosting and alignment of knowledge
- Holistic project-centred clinical learning and development, resulting in competencies applicable to the real world
- Industry- and career-oriented courses that meet today's professional needs
- Flexible global delivery, supported by unique online tools and systems
- Courses are customisable to suit individual professionals and diverse organisational needs
- Peer group interaction at a global level permitting cross industry fertilisation of ideas and transfer of knowledge
- Accredited academic awards that are endorsed by relevant professional bodies

successful project/program. Major projects are very complex and there are multiple challenges to meet. Projects are distinguished from normal operations in the sense that they are unique undertakings and require integration of project objectives, customer needs, suppliers' knowledge, commercial context, technology, people and systems. Projects are dynamic forms of organizations with goals that tend to change with time.

#### Working conditions

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** The working conditions are diverse and tough but enjoyable to most as these provide a rich ground for professional development and personal growth. The key influence of project managers within organisations and at large should not be underestimated.

#### Job outlook

**Dr. Ali Jafaari:** Project management is a new and dynamic profession. It is a young and evolving field. It is the right time for young aspiring professionals to consider project management as a career option. Worldwide there is an acute shortage of project managers.

For example, Asia Pacific International College has had multiple requests in recent times from prospective employers for graduates in this field. The salary commanded by the competent project managers is high relative to those paid to other professionals. Given the scale of projects in progress or planned for the GCC region the demand for project managers will remain high and the rewards will be obvious.

In short, the International Centre of Excellence in Project Management provides unique opportunities to both fresh graduates and seasoned professionals to undertake studies on a convenient and flexible basis. As the courses are designed from the industry and practitioners' perspectives, their effectiveness