



Study of Program Manager Training and Experience

February 24, 2010

Roy Wood, PhD
Dean, Defense Systems Management College
School of Program Managers
Roy.Wood@dau.mil
(703) 805-4558



Study of PM Training and Experience

- **Purpose of this Study**
- **Methodology**
- **Twenty-two Program Manager Challenges**
 - “Yes” – Training is Sufficient
 - “No” or “Uncertain” – Training is not Sufficient
- **Findings**
 - **Area 1. The Topics of Training**
 - **Area 2. The Methods of Training**
 - **Area 3. Acquisition Experience and Careers**
- **Recommendations**
- **Summary**



Purpose of this Study

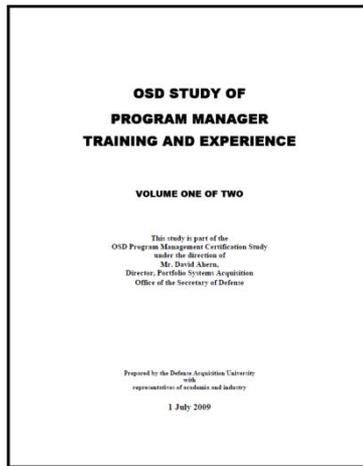
Research Questions:

- What do PMs think about their training and experience?
- Are we training program managers in the right things?
- Are there suggestions for additional training and/or experience to enable program managers to be more effective?

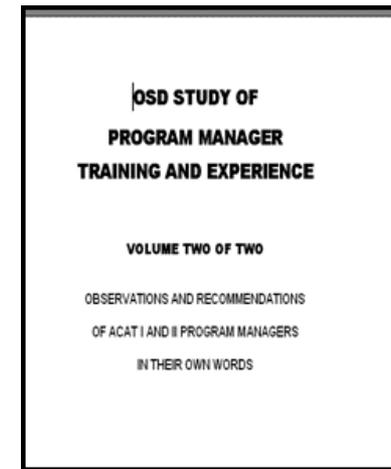
Methodology

- **55 Participants** (USA, USAF, USN, USMC, IND)
 - **85% Military...O6s + 13 GO/FOs**
 - **15% Civilian ...O6 or SES equivalent**
- **Hour long interviews...most by phone**
- **Not-for-attribution**

Over 600 comments
yielding 13 findings



Near & Longer Term Recommendations



Volume Two verbatim comments



Twenty-two PM Challenges

1. Unexpected Cost Growth
2. Changes in Directed Schedules
3. Changes in Directed Funding
4. Changes in Technical Requirements
5. Dealing with User Requirements
6. Technical Failures
7. Systems Engineering
8. Software Management
9. Risk Management
10. Cost Estimating
11. Understanding and Using Contractor Financial Reports
12. Understanding and Using Government Financial Reports
13. Cost Control
14. Earned Value
15. Test and Evaluation
16. Source Selection
17. Contracting
18. Overseeing Contractor Performance
19. Logistics
20. Responding to Military Service Inquiries
21. Responding to OSD Inquiries
22. Responding to Inquiries from Outside DoD (e.g., Media, GAO, Congress)



Where PMs say training is sufficient

1. Responding to Military Service Inquiries	63%
2. Contracting	59%
3. Understanding and Using Government Financial Reports	55%
4. Responding to OSD Inquiries	55%
5. Systems Engineering	53%
6. Responding to Inquiries From Outside DoD	53%
7. Changes in Technical Requirements	51%
8. Test and Evaluation	51%

These 8 challenges received “yes” responses from 50% or more of the interview participants.

Indicates PMs believe they were sufficiently trained to deal with the indicated challenge.



Challenges where PMs say they need more training

	<u>“No”</u>	<u>“No” + “Uncertain”</u>
1. Unexpected Cost Growth	76%	86%
2. Cost Control	61%	75%
3. Software Management	57%	75%
4. Cost Estimating	65%	73%
5. Overseeing Contractor Performance	57%	69%
6. Earned Value	47%	63%
7. Understanding and Using Contractor Financial Reports	47%	61%
8. Dealing with User Requirements	51%	59%
9. Changes in Directed Schedules	47%	59%
10. Changes in Directed Funding	51%	57%
11. Technical Failures	47%	57%
12. Source Selection	51%	55%
13. Logistics	45%	55%
14. Risk Management	51%	51%

These 14 challenges received 50% or more “No” or “Uncertain” responses from the interview participants.

Indicates a majority of the interviewees believed they were not sufficiently trained to deal with the rated challenge.



Findings: Area 1 - The Topics of Training

1. PMs ask for more training in industry practices and industry incentives.
2. PMs ask for additional earned value training with applications, combined with experience in financial management.
3. PMs ask for additional training and experience in dealing more effectively with contracting officers and contractors.



Findings: Area 2 – The Methods of Training

4. DAU courses are strong contributors to PM acquisition knowledge.
5. PMs ask for greater depth and more applications in their training.
6. Program Management Office Course (PMT 352) Parts A and B could benefit from more applications and exercises in contracts, incentives, financial management, and earned value.
7. Program Manager's Course (PMT 401) -- an effective course evolving new teaching materials and methods. PMs should attend prior to program manager assignment. PMs believe course could benefit from more attention to implementation planning and execution.
8. Executive Program Manager's Course (PMT 402) -- an effective course PMs should attend prior to a program manager assignment.



Findings: Area 3 - Acquisition Experience & Careers

9. More rigorous screening **is** necessary to select PM candidates with **business, engineering and technical backgrounds and skills.**
10. PMs careers need **more preparatory assignments and experiences** for proficient management of ACAT I/II programs.
11. PMs need **mentors and senior advisory teams** in dealing with particularly complex challenges on major acquisition programs.
12. PMs need improvements in **communications with users.**
13. **Training and experience waivers appear excessive** and can inadvertently produce unqualified program managers.



Recommendations – Near Term

1. OSD and the Services establish PM advisory teams and arrange for PM mentors. [Underway with Program Assist Capability Effort]
2. OSD and the Services strictly adhere to the training and experience standards for level III PMs. [To be discussed at Acquisition Management Functional Group (AMFG)]
3. OSD establish a “training with industry” program at the OSD level. [Topic for NDIA/ICPM Professional Development]
4. DAU initiate a program to strengthen and expand program manager training in earned value and financial management. [DAU taking actions to implement]
5. DAU continue to emphasize training, performance support and knowledge sharing. [DAU will continue to emphasize]
6. DAU and the Services introduce more applications and exercises in courses. [DAU taking actions to implement]



Recommendations – Longer Term

1. OSD and the Services establish an **Acquisition Qualification Standard** for key areas, e.g., cost estimating, earned value, source selection, contracting. [Being addressed by AMFG; Roy Wood Lead]
2. OSD and the Services establish the military acquisition workforce as a **primary occupational specialty** for all services. [Being addressed by AT&L Director for Human Capital Strategy]
3. OSD and the Services develop program manager **career track designations or specialty codes**. [To be addressed as part of an Acquisition Workforce Data Improvement Group]
4. OSD and the Services give careful consideration to 1) developing **Level IV PM certification** training and experience criteria and 2) implementing a **pilot program** for a selected cadre of ACAT I PMs/DPMs. [Being addressed by AMFG; Roy Wood Lead]
5. OSD **provide incentives** to **encourage civilians** in the workforce to seek program manager positions. [To be addressed by AMFG and AT&L Director for Human Capital Strategy]



Summary

- **PMs are dedicated to successful performance of their jobs.**
- **DAU courses are strong contributors to program manager acquisition knowledge and skill – incremental/continuous improvement .**
- **PMs are often wanting in the practical training and experience they need.**
- **PMs desire greater depth and more practical training.**
- **Career Managers need to find additional career training time and experiences for prospective PMs.**