Northrop Grumman PMs Connect with UCI Training

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Over the past decade, there has been a dramatic increase in the number and variety of project management-related training and education offerings, giving organizations an opportunity to choose and customize programs that work best for their specific needs, locations and culture. As the PM training field has evolved and grown, so too has the training collaboration between Northrop Grumman and the University of California Irvine Extension, which offers a Project Management Certification Program as a Charter Global Registered Education Provider of PMI. What began as a simple training effort has become an enduring, 10-year relationship, growing from a single program to several customized programs, providing personalized instruction and standardized curriculum across multiple locations.

ProjectsAtWork spoke with Jocelyn Cenna, PMP, of Northrop Grumman’s Enterprise Shared Services, Project/Program Management, about its participation in the UCI PM training program.

What prompted Northrop Grumman to make PM-related training and education opportunities available to its employees?

Northrop Grumman wanted to provide to employees a solid industry project management training program across the U.S. that could lead to Project Management Professional (PMP) certification by the Project Management Institute. The curriculum was based on the PMI Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) and keeps current with PMI updates.

How does NGC go about selecting its employees for PM-related training?

Project managers provide a critical leadership role for us. Many different internal and external training opportunities are identified for project managers and their team members to succeed in their position. Management designates and employees self-nominate themselves for various PM training opportunities.
What are the benefits of this training, tangible and intangible, to your company and to the individual?
The training is a win-win for both the company and the employee. The company benefits with project and program risk reduction, standardized implementation of processes, improved product assurance, better cost management, and schedules implemented on time with increased customer satisfaction.
The employee enhances their personal growth, organizational value, and future employment opportunities. The company is able to supplement in-house training with industry PM training. Many of the students have become PMI-certified as a result of the training leading to increased business opportunities.

How are these benefits — team productivity, employee retention/commitment, ROI, strategic planning — measured?
Team productivity metrics such as cost, schedule, risk, customer satisfaction, staffing, system performance, change management, supply chain, and product assurance are tracked and presented monthly. Employee retention and commitment is tracked quarterly and employee engagement is a critical focus for NGC. Strategic planning includes current and future ideas to ensure our success amongst our competition.

In terms of specific projects/programs (past or ongoing) are there a couple anecdotes/examples that can be shared to show how the training was put into practice?
The training helped one PM to understand better how to create a scope document and emphasized the need to update the document to reflect project changes. Another PM commented that their understanding and use of Earned Value is much better understood. PM's also realize more fully their lifecycle role of a project or program, and that they are responsible for everything. The course on communication had a formula to determine the complexity based on the size of the team. PMs have used the formula on projects to determine the complexity of their communication plan, thus level setting in the areas most needed. The risk course added a lesson learned for PMs to determine risk based on the three triple constraints: Scope, Time, and Costs.

Anything else to add about the importance of PM-related training?
The training enhances the participants’ image as leaders, assists them in driving implementation, enables them to build trust with customers/stakeholders, and reinforces their need to communicate well. The on-site training also provides valuable networking opportunities with employees of other NGC sectors.

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