

Developing a framework for improving the decision-making of project management practitioners

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Projects are temporary concepts planned, designed, and developed to deliver a single, and often transformative, purpose against agreed constraints. Projects are therefore a means of introducing change, and project management is about the managing and monitoring of such projects to ensure that they are delivered efficiently in an agreed and optimal manner. Typically, parameters needing to be considered include a consideration of time, cost, quality, scope, risks and benefits. Furthermore, increasingly projects need to address their own sustainability both in terms of how they are delivered, and they must also consider what they deliver to ensure that it has appropriate longevity. Any decisions made by a project manager will often have an impact on some, or all, of these parameters. Decisions made may also impact upon the project's deliverables (outputs, outcomes), and will often affect stakeholders. Because every project is unique, by their very nature projects are variable and unpredictable. As a result, important decisions will need to be made frequently, and these decisions need to be as optimal as possible to ensure that any negative consequences that do arise can be fully understood, minimised, and managed. This research considers how such decision-making is undertaken, and particularly what support a project manager must have to assist them to make the best decisions. The mono-method research in this study is based upon data collected during 2022 from project management practitioners operating in the UK with a particular focus upon the IT and construction sectors. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to determine the thoughts and views of participants with regard to how decision-making is undertaken within the context of the projects which they manage, and take into account any influencing factors which apply. The role of formal education, practical experience, organisational knowledge retained from previous projects and the potential for impact upon project stakeholders are all considered. Analysis of the data collected was

undertaken using the recursive abstraction process which identifies patterns and trends in the interview data. From this analysis, a framework has been developed which summarises the key findings, and which can be used by project management practitioners to help them to create a working environment in which better decision-making is possible. Whilst this study has been focussed upon project managers operating within the UK, the findings derived are equally applicable to other countries which operate with formalised project management processes.