



I can change my oil – I’m a Mechanic!! I was on a Project – I’m a Project Manager!!

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Just because I have changed the oil on my car nobody would believe that I am a mechanic. I understand debits and credits, but nobody would call me an Accountant. And, just because I have worked on a Project, or part of a Project, I am not a Project Manager. It seems to me that there is a disconnect that many people and organizations have when it comes to Project Management.

I have been thinking about how this logic doesn’t seem to be resonating with many individuals and organizations. It seems to happen most often in the Information Technology area but it happens in all areas of a company. There is some work that is assigned to a person and whether they do some, most or none of the work, they are held responsible for the end result. The outcome notwithstanding, the work comes to an end at some point and either the company or the person assigned suddenly believes that they are a Project Manager and that they do that thing called “Project Management”.

I have seen where somebody does a significant amount of work in a key area of a project and because they had the majority of the deliverables and were central to the project, they start to think of themselves as a Project Manager. With no “true” Project Manager, they are a key person and they do end up leading most meetings and giving status reports – formally or informally. So, the person and the company start to believe that this is Project Management.

This both amuses me and saddens me because it hurts everybody involved AND it hurts the reputation of Project Management in general. The person who is now viewed as a “Project Manager” is given projects and they don’t necessarily have the skill set (or desire) to be a full time Project Manager. If they don’t succeed, then both they and the company can come to view Project Management as something that just doesn’t work. If they do succeed, then they both start to believe that this whole Project Management concept is simple.

There are professions that some organizations and individuals don’t fully realize can be done so much better by trained, competent people (like Project Management, Business Analysis, Human Resources, Bookkeeping, and Purchasing). We need to better educate management about what Project Management truly is and does and the value of it in general. And, we need to encourage those individuals that are “Project Managers” to get the training and expertise to do that thing we call Project Management.

Most companies will not do their financial reports without an Accountant and they won’t take care of legal matters without a Lawyer. We will know that we have arrived as a profession when a company wouldn’t work on a Project without a Project Manager.