Key to success

An effective project manager makes the difference in dealing with business challenges.

IN TODAY’s global economy, organisations are constantly seeking ways to improve their efficiency and competitiveness through the efficient utilisation of information technology (IT). Strong IT leadership and the implementation of relevant IT governance processes are among the critical factors that must be in place.

At the same time, organisations are placing more emphasis on project management to ensure the successful implementation of IT projects. This was substantiated by the recently concluded NUS-ISIS survey on the critical success factors of project management in Singapore.

About 57 per cent of the respondents indicated that project management expertise is a contributing factor while about 80 per cent of the respondents indicated that soft skills were just as important. Foundational project management skills are critical for both experienced and aspiring project managers.

The good news is that these hard skills can be taught through practice-based teaching and experiential sharing and collaboration in the classroom. Those who have mastered these project management essentials can tip the scales in their own favour.

As part of their career advancement, project managers should also consider professional accreditation through widely available courses and certification programmes. Accreditation helps project managers to become more effective by understanding and validating the use of the relevant best practices. At the same time, it ensures consistency in the use of standard terminology within projects.

Need for soft skills

While harder to quantify, personal traits, interpersonal and behavioural skills are just as critical for project managers. These soft skills allow the project manager to proactively manage and engage the project’s stakeholders and project team members.

As a project manager, you need the following soft skills:

BE A STRONG COMMUNICATOR AND TEAM PLAYER
Be a good listener and also ask the right questions at the right time to ensure that your project is aligned with agreed objectives.

BE WILTING TO CONSTANTLY LEARN
When tasked with solving a problem, you need to look at it from various angles. When you are keen to learn, you are more likely to surround yourself with people who possess the desired knowledge and skills.

BE OUTWARD-LOOKING
 Resist focusing purely on management processes. Be conscious of the project's impact and outcomes and you will be less likely to "miss the forest for the trees":

BE A GOOD LEADER AND MENTOR
Lead by example, build relationships and take a keen interest in professionally developing your team members.

Project managers must evolve by mastering both foundational and soft skills to meet new business challenges. In summary, here are three top tips on how to be a good project manager:

1. There is no shortcut to acquiring foundational skills; best practices - invest in gaining knowledge through training courses and certifications to help you successfully implement your projects.

2. Get involved in the business side of things - acquire in-depth and relevant knowledge about how to integrate project management processes with business outcomes.

3. Work on personal traits and interpersonal and behavioural skills - you will help to increase your overall productivity and chances of project success.

Along with project management expertise, also work on improving your soft skills.