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Survey Identifies Key Challenges to Successful Project Management

Results Indicate Need for Greater Attention to Skills Assessment and Development

ARLINGTON, VA - May 21, 2008 -- The results of a new survey conducted by ESI International report some of the most pressing issues for executives and technical professionals include managing complex projects; responding to change both internally and externally; and prioritizing projects within a program or portfolio. Survey respondents were representative of federal, state and local government agencies as well as numerous industries including aerospace/defense, financial services, IT, insurance, manufacturing, pharmaceutical and healthcare. The responses indicate areas requiring greater attention in order to ensure the successful outcome of an organization's projects.

Shortfalls in program management and business analysis skills underlie many of the survey respondents' concerns. Among the survey highlights:

- When **managing projects**, the most pressing issue is managing complex projects, with 44 percent of participants choosing this response. The next most pressing issues are adapting to changing requirements and developing proper metrics to effectively track progress and outcomes, with 42 and 41 percent, respectively, citing each of these issues.
- When **managing programs or project portfolios**, the most pressing issue, cited by 53 percent of participants, is responding to organizational and environmental changes that impact the program. Prioritizing projects within a program or portfolio was the second most pressing, selected by 45 percent of participants.
- When **managing business or project requirements**, the most pressing issue, cited by 38 percent of participants, is communicating effectively with team members and stakeholders. Developing and improving business analysis competencies, and integrating project management and business analysis roles/functions were tied as the second most pressing, with each selected by 36 percent of participants.

"The survey findings are important for all organizations because of the essential role projects play in driving organizations forward – from organizational change to new product development. Good project management drives success and, important at this economic juncture, helps organizations do more with less," said J. LeRoy Ward, PgMP, PMP, ESI Executive Vice President.

"The saying 'knowing you have a problem is half the battle' comes to mind. The project manager and senior executive survey respondents know where the trouble spots lie. Now they need to accurately assess their people's skills and implement initiatives to close the gaps," said Ward.

The survey also shows differences in project management challenges between the government and commercial sectors.

- Managing global projects or dealing with cultural issues was cited as a greater concern to commercial organizations (17 percent) than to government entities (5 percent).
- Managing risk of high-profile projects was cited as a pressing issue for 36 percent of

government sector respondents, but only 26 percent of commercial sector respondents.

- When defining requirements, implementing a solution development methodology or determining which one best fits the organization was cited as a more pressing issue to government sector respondents (33 percent) than commercial sector respondents (22 percent).

Survey Methodology

This online survey was conducted in February 2008. Responses were received from 190 U.S.-based senior managers and executives responsible for their organization's project management, business analysis, IT, program/portfolio management, contract management/procurement/sourcing management, or learning and development/training, among other key responsibilities. Not all 190 respondents answered every question.

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