

Project managers need to plan for new ways of working

While many say Covid-19 has improved their work-life balance, rising stress levels and feelings of loss of connection are a concern for project managers.

Research by [PricewaterhouseCoopers](#) in collaboration with the [Project Management Institute Ireland Chapter](#) reveal that 72pc of project managers are concerned about adjusting to new ways of working following the re-opening of the Irish economy.

According to the study, more than one-in-four (42pc) of project managers have cited an improved work-life balance.

60pc reported a delay in project delivery due to Covid-19 mainly due to Government restrictions, poor team engagement and lack of resources. Communication barriers (48pc), skills gaps (38pc) and technical issues (31pc) were also cited as areas that had become more difficult due to the pandemic.

These challenges impacted negatively on motivation - nearly a third (30pc) noticed a decrease in their own motivation since working remotely. When asked about their team's motivation, 34pc of respondents also reported a decrease in team motivation.

This is despite an overwhelming majority (87pc) reporting that their organisation had introduced incentives over the last 12 months to improve motivation within the team such as more flexible working (71pc), wellness programmes (63pc) and greater staff engagement and collaborative tools (40pc).

Digital innovation

The importance of digital innovation and new technologies is clear. With many having worked remotely for over a year, 85pc of Ireland's project managers said that digital transformation incorporating new technologies is the top area for further investment over the next 3 years. Other areas for investment include initiatives to realise cost efficiencies (70pc) and upskilling (51pc).

Just half (50pc) reported plans to invest in sustainability and climate change initiatives over the next three years.

"The survey suggests that Irish project managers have withstood the storm of COVID-19 and are emerging with confidence," said Feilim Harvey, Portfolio and Programme Manager leader at PwC

Ireland.

“In fact, it is clear that Project Management disciplines have been key to organisations having the ability and agility to adapt to these times. Despite many challenges, many, many projects have been successfully completed through the pandemic; and project managers are looking to the future with optimism. There is also a wave of investment in technology and people which is changing the project management landscape. The results of the survey also highlight it is also more important than ever to protect people and their wellbeing while navigating the new ways of working.

“Whilst Covid-19 has caused widespread disruption, it has also provided momentum and an opportunity to reconfigure the business model for the long term.”

Future role of the project manager

The survey highlights the important role of the project manager. A large majority (74pc) of respondents said that project management capabilities have been very important in addressing a crisis such as Covid-19.

A similar proportion (73pc) agreed that the role of the project manager will become even more important over the next two years. However, from previous surveys we know that developing the necessary skills to exploit efficiencies and opportunities arising from digital tools has been a challenge.

Despite some challenges, Ireland’s project management industry is resilient and confident about the future. The top three concerns for the year ahead, according to participating project managers, are adjusting to new ways of working following the re-opening of the economy (72pc); the health and wellbeing of their workforce (64pc) and the availability of key skills (62pc).

At the same time, over nine out of ten (93pc) are ‘confident’ about their organisation’s prospects for future revenue growth in the year ahead, including 58pc who are ‘very confident’. 65pc expect to increase headcount.

“These survey results show that the project management community is resilient, optimistic and adaptable,” said Jackie Glynn, President of the Ireland Chapter of Project Management Institute.

“Project managers have had to draw on and develop their skillsets – the ability to manage change, adapt to external and internal disruptions, and continue to deliver projects that perform, within budget and on schedule. In a post-pandemic work environment, organisational flexibility, a greater emphasis on transparency and leveraging emerging technologies will be key to ensuring businesses stay ahead of the curve.”

By [John Kennedy](mailto:john.kennedy3@boi.com) (john.kennedy3@boi.com)

Published: 8 June 2021