

The following is a list of some of the most popular attributes, skills, and qualities that have been sought when selecting PMs:

- A strong technical background
- A hard-nosed manager
- A mature individual
- Someone who is currently available
- Someone on good terms with senior executives
- A person who can keep the project team happy
- One who has worked in several different departments
- A person who can walk on (or part) the waters

These reasons for choosing a PM are not so much wrong as they are "not right." They miss the key criterion. Above all, the best PM is the one who can get the job done! As any senior manager knows, hard workers are easy to find. What is rare is the individual whose focus is on the completion of a difficult job, a "closer." Of all the characteristics desirable in a PM, this drive to complete the task is the most important.

If we consider the earlier sections of this chapter, we can conclude that there are four major categories of skills that are required of the PM and serve as the key criteria for selection, given that the candidate has a powerful bias toward task completion. Moreover, it is not sufficient for the PM simply to possess these skills; they must also be perceived by others. Both the fact and the perception are important.



Credibility

The PM needs two kinds of credibility. First is *technical credibility*. The PM must be perceived by the client, senior executives, the functional departments, and the project team as possessing sufficient technical knowledge to direct the project. A PM with reasonable technical competence seems to be associated with project success and is seen by project team members to be a "positive" leadership characteristic (Zimmerer et al., 1998). We remind the reader that "technical credibility" includes technical knowledge in such arcane fields as accounting, law, psychology, anthropology, religion, history, playwriting, Greek, and a host of other nonhard sciences.) The PM does not need to have a high level of expertise, know more than any individual team members (or all of them), or be able to stand toe-to-toe and intellectually slug it out with experts in the various functional areas. Quite simply, the PM has to have a reasonable understanding of the base technologies on which the project rests, must be able to explain project technology to senior management, and must be able to interpret the technical needs and wants of the client (and senior management) to the project team. Similarly, the PM must be able to hear the problems of the project team and understand them sufficiently to address them, possibly by communicating them to upper management.

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