

UCT course to help projects beat the crunch

With pressure mounting on managers across South Africa to bring more value to the table with fewer resources, the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) is offering a course to help ensure projects deliver value even in the most trying times.

According to Dennis Comninou, director of the course Project Management - A Business Focused Approach at the UCT GSB this March, South Africa has been slightly insulated from the global recession but those working on projects are facing greater pressures.

"The pressures are numerous for everyone involved in project leadership and implementation – there is a greater scrutiny of project expenses and of the business value to be gained. The message is clear for 2009: do more with much less," he said.

The UCT GSB course, which runs from 16 – 19 March, is directed at middle to senior management, project managers and relevant to engineers, IT professionals and to those in public service.

Comninou said project success is still quite possible for these individuals – it is possible to use the lack of money, time and resources to their advantage and show their mettle and capability to their organisations.

"The course will instil in these individuals a deeper understanding of how to deliver value by looking at projects from a business perspective and gives participants an understanding of how a project is conceptualised and initiated in support of the strategy and business plans of the organisation," said Comninou.

Comninou explained that broadly there are three key steps required to improve the delivery of project value.

"The first step is to be proactive. The mantra should be anticipate, anticipate, anticipate. Many South Africans still say 'it's not going to happen here' when it comes to recession talk – but just because it's not happening now doesn't mean it won't happen. The reality is we are already feeling the impact and we may get hit harder still and therefore leaders should not be sticking their heads in the sand. There is no room for being pedantic either else, by the time our businesses react, it will be far too late.

"Secondly, focus more on value creation than deliverables. This requires a move away from the traditional project management trade-off triangle of Time, Cost and Quality with its focus on project deliveries to a trade-off quad of Time, Cost, Quality and Benefit, which focuses on the delivery of business value," he said.

The third step is optimising resources – this is not just about financial resources but about people as well.

"Projects are managed and implemented by people not machines/technology and therefore the selection and development of the right people is a critical part of ensuring the value can be maximised. South African firms have been spoilt a little too much in recent years – there has been a good growth curve for many businesses and money has been flowing into projects. The good times are over though and its time to be a lot leaner when it comes to resources. Aligned to this is the need for rigorous and accurate cost-benefit analyses and project metrics," said Comninou.

Ultimately, the best place to start, he added, would be empowering people with the right tools and knowledge – increasing their expertise with relevant up-to-date knowledge is critical to making the right decisions for project success today.

The programme is being offered by the UCT GSB Executive Education unit, which in 2008 was listed by the International University Consortium for Executive Education (UNICON) – the leading global body for the advancement of executive education – as one of six global innovators in executive education learning methodology.

For details on the UCT GSB course, contact Mario Pearce on 021 406 1268 or email mario.pearce@gsb.uct.ac.za.

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