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## Bridging the skills divide

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Published: 28 May 10

The current global skills shortage, which is also a challenge for the project management industry, could have detrimental long-term consequences for this industry if a greater effort is not made to bridge the skills gap, says software development company Dariel Solutions MD **Malcolm Rabson**.

"One of the contributing factors to the skills shortage is that the entry barrier into the information technology (IT) project management industry has been lowered – therefore, the industry is suffering. Project managers lack the scientific building blocks, which impacts on the quality of projects," he says.

Rabson says it is critical that project managers are adequately equipped with the skills to deliver a project successfully from start to finish, which ultimately impacts on the economic growth of the economy. "If not, companies will turn to alternative offshore production and delivery channels."

He explains that, during these tough economic times, both the public and the private sector have cut back on training budgets, which is a challenge for industry. "When the economy picks up and there are more projects in the pipeline, project managers could possibly struggle to cope and there could also be a potential problem of eroding this industry," he adds.

Rabson says that these problems need to be tackled at grassroots level. "There needs to be more initiatives from government to aggressively create a software project management industry," he says.

Association of Construction Project Managers (ACPM) executive member **Tim White**, who is also the MD of project management company Profica, echoes Rabson's concerns. He believes that the correct systems are not in place, preventing skills transfer from taking place.

"Project management has collapsed at public-sector level in the absence of the right project management skills. Tenders are not being run according to contingent processes and small businesses with proven records should be given the opportunity to work on large infrastructure projects to facilitate a more structured skills transfer process," he says.

The ACPM has a number of corporate members with the systems and procedures in place to be able to effectively transfer skills and knowledge to emerging project managers.

The ACPM is a voluntary association of specialist, practising project management professionals, working in the built environment with various membership categories. The association aims to promote and facilitate the adoption and use of project management in the construction industry and serve and protect the interests of construction project managers.

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