



The Project Manager and the Cost Engineer – the need for education.

Historically, Cost Engineers have provided a critical function in the development of Studies and delivery of Projects. There has always been a close, almost symbiotic relationship between the Project Manager and the Cost Engineer.

The Cost Engineer was the eyes and ears of the Project Manager, driving change management, forecasting, progress measurement and mitigation of risks.

With the recent resources and construction booms, we have seen this relationship suffer if not fall apart. With the massive influx of resources, we have experienced a dilution of skills within the discipline, a change in function from predominantly a forecasting role to one that is closer to an accounting function as well as the advent of inexperienced project managers, the understanding of what the true role of a Cost Engineer is on a project has suffered.

This has, in my experience and opinion, been a significant contributor to the demise in effective project delivery seen within the industries over the last years. I believe we are facing a legacy effect, where Project Managers who have not worked closely with Cost Engineers and often don't understand nor appreciate the importance of the role, will continue to head down this pathway.

To combat this, I believe we need to address the problem in both directions. We need to begin to entice young engineers and other qualified personnel to the role through education, workplace engagement and operational support. Cost Engineering was always seen as a career development step towards becoming a Project Manager. Secondly, and in my opinion, most importantly, we need to work with project managers to better understand what a Cost Engineer's role is and why it is vital to a project's success. Education, training and certification are more important than ever.