

CSIR expands knowledge service offering

CSIR Knowledge Services has added another offering to its current range of expertise. The newly established project management services area is designed to improve project success rates in terms of the three-dimensional goal of project management, i.e. within scope, budget and time.

The new area joins the ranks of other CSIR Knowledge Services activities: forensic fire investigations, food and beverage analysis, environmental analysis, engineering forensics, wire rope testing, mechanical testing, fires and explosion testing, and sports technology and analysis.



Sumeshan Govender

Gerhard Smith, General Manager: CSIR Knowledge Services, explains the value proposition of the new services, "Effective project management from the start of a project has numerous benefits, including improved cash flow, earlier generation of revenue, the flexibility to position resources for other work, and higher success rates for billing and tender processes. Project management services will make a significant contribution to the success of any project - and therefore the bottom line of any organisation."

"We are currently busy with process optimisation within the laboratories of CSIR Knowledge Services," adds Sumeshan Govender, newly appointed manager of the project management services area, "and through the application of theory of constraints (TOC), we enable our research laboratories to operate as production labs thus reducing costs significantly. TOC shows that local optima do not add up to the supremacy of the system as a whole."

"The key to know what to do locally is the realisation of the role the system constraints are playing. We can't know where the system constraints are without proper subordination. In the production environment, the focus is on releasing work at the lead time necessary to ensure that the constraint is utilised effectively and to monitor and measure the work that doesn't arrive at the constraint in good time. This will tell us where the next true constraint is. Without that knowledge, we can't make a decision on how to elevate the current constraint and will probably over-estimate the anticipated increase in productivity. This is the systemic or global optimum approach."

Govender's vision for this area is to become the pre-eminent channel for project management services in the CSIR as well as for external clients. He has extensive project management experience, and holds a BSc in electronic engineering from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and an MEng in project management from the University of Pretoria.

Service offerings include:

- **Specialised programme and project management**

A project management professional will work with clients to apply a proven project management process incorporating, amongst others, effective communication, conflict resolution and team coaching skills. Three types of scheduling expertise are offered: development, review and critical chain scheduling. This technique gives a heuristic framework and guidelines on how to plan, schedule and control projects.

- **Project management consulting**

The establishment of a project management office to client specifications includes enterprise project management offices to facilitate the achievement of the organisation's strategy or project support offices to act as custodians of the organisation's project management processes and standards. The aim is to dramatically improve the way that clients manage their projects - ensuring that the focus remains in the right places. The services are designed to fit the culture of the business and level of project management maturity. The team also investigates whether the capability requirements of the client's various project management disciplines are what is needed and that relevant guidelines exist to ensure successful implementation.

- **Project systems diagnosis**

This service studies the project procedures and systems being used (or those to be used) and recommends improvements.

- **Project optimisation or re-engineering**

Results related to current and previous work are observed and reviewed, leading to a set of findings and actionable recommendations for process improvement. The team absorbs the current work processes and works with the client to identify work activities, roles and responsibilities involved in performance and management. It will also facilitate pilots of the processes to verify its effectiveness and assist the client with training and implementation, playing an ongoing advisory role to ensure success.

For more information contact:

Gerhard Smith, email gsmith@csir.co.za

Sumeshan Govender, email sgovender2@csir.co.za

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Tel: + 27 12 841 2911, technical enquiries: + 27 12 841 2000, fax: +27 12 349 1153, web site feedback: [web team](#)