

The strengths and weaknesses of project management management essay

[Engineering](#), [Project Management](#)



In view of the challenge posted on managing global project management team, Polish IT Company has decided to revamp its project management system so as to effectively manage and handle the global project team.

Strengths and weaknesses of the current project management strategy (Arditi, et al., 2009) were examined and ways to overcome the weaknesses were suggested. In addition comprehensive stakeholder analysis (Social Development Department, 1995) was done to identify the primary and secondary, internal and external stakeholders. In light of their vested interest in the outcome of the project, strategies were determined to satisfy them.

As for the organizational structure, namely Autonomous Project Structure (Swamidass, 2000) (task force group) was proposed; couple with full support from operational team. And most importantly a project manager with vast experience and leadership was identified to lead the project team.

Communication plan, role and responsibilities were also identified as the top must do and spelt out clearly.

Finally a quality plan was also drafted to state the overall intentions and direction of project organization with regard to quality, commitment and full support from top management.

The context and environment of this project

Strengths and weaknesses of project management system are generally internal attributes, which we can address by changing either the system or

adopting the appropriate framework. Thus objective of this analysis is to build on the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses.

The table below details the strength and weakness of the company project management system:

Table 1: Strength and weakness

Strength

Fairly well defined project framework

Difficulty in identifying the commercial usage of platform and subsequent products

Using a contractor familiar with business re-organization combined with IT projects

Politically independent consultant

Strong parent company culture

Fairly well defined responsibilities.

Weakness

Unrealistic estimation of resource, cost and time frame & Inflexible meetings schedule

Environment of the project

Many stakeholders with complex relationships

Difficult communications due to cultural differences and rivalries

Parent company bureaucracy

Polish project personnel under duress

Lack of international experience within the project team.

Team members of different site have constant changing priorities (functional managers have different agenda)

Project methodology not common among the sites (countries).

Project Manager lacks experience in managing global team.

Project Management structure does not best suit global project team

As indicated from table 2; all weakness must be addressed.

Table 2 shows the list of stakeholders and the categories that they belong to (Savage, et al., 1991). Primary stakeholders are those that have a vested interest bound by contract to the company and secondary stakeholders are those without. External stakeholders refer to those outside the company, while internal stakeholders refer to those within the company.

Table 2: List of Stakeholders

Primary

Interest

Secondary

Interest

External

Customers

S/W &H/W Suppliers

Research Institutions (Partners)

Consultants and application developers

Resellers

Product Packaging Supplier

Office Furniture Supplier

wants good turn key IT solution

wants long term supply or contract with the company.

collaboration with the company

collaboration with the company

wants long term contract &competitive pricing to sell

wants long term supply or contract with the company.

wants long term supply or contract with the company.

Business competitors

Product Competitors

Regulation Authorities or Government

wants to keep their pricings competitive

wants to improve on their design

wants to make sure that is strictly according to laws.

Internal

Stockholders: Board of Directors of company and employees

Management team

Project Team members

Functional managers

Operational team

wants to make sure the company are making profitable margin

wants to manage the company in a active functional manner

wants to ensure that the project are well planned vganized

wants to ensure that each individual department function their department well

wants to ensure smooth running operation of the company

Global team 6

Global team 5

Global team 4

Global team 3

Global team 2

Global team 1

Project

Manager

Figure 1: Project structure (autonomous or task force)

After analyzing and understanding the stakeholder's interest and current project management situation, below are the recommendations to help build on the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of the current project team:

1. To change the current project structure to autonomous (autonomous or task force - see figure 1):

Reason for this structure due to nature of the project as speed is the focus (time to market). This is the best structure according to (Meredith and Mantel, 2006).

Strength of this structure: Team member concentration on one project (ie. A task force group is formed with no double reporting between functional manager and PM. Team members only reports to PM until they are release from project). This kind of structure is more likely to achieve project success if the time to market is important. (PMBOK, 2004)

Project Manager

H/w engineers

Configuration engineer

Planning team

Integration engineers

S/w engineers

Consultants

Consultants

Consultants

Consultants

Consultants

Figure 2: Project Organization

There would be no form of hierarchy in the structure as different members of the management would coordinate different aspects of the project (See figure 2). Each member would regularly feedback the progress to the team and interaction with experience consultants.

2. To define clearly on Project R&R (role and responsibilities) and interface (Training and Development Agency (TDA), 2007):

The reason is to spell out the role and responsibilities of project team members and the interface structure. In other words is to determine the interfaces:

Technical interfaces - Formal & informal reporting relationships among different technical disciplines.

Transition interfaces - Involvement with operational team before s/w commission phase. This is for smooth transition or handover of project end product to operational team.

Interpersonal interfaces - Formal & informal reporting relationships among different individuals working on the project.

3. To define a project communication and governance plan:

It is required to ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, dissemination, storage and ultimate disposition of the project information.

The project team disseminates the performance information to stakeholders with information on how resources are being used and where the project stands currently (eg. Project milestones).

4. To appoint an experience PM to manage the project and commitment from the top management & the project team involved.

A project manager with leadership (see next section), functional skills and experienced managing team in a multicultural environment need to be appointed to replace the current PM. The first task of this appointed PM is to re-work on the following below:

- a. Budget - what is the actual incurred cost and estimated cost for completion of the whole entire project
- b. Schedule - highlight the critical path and major project milestones which will affect the progress of the operation
- c. Resources - Ensure the right and sufficient resources to complete the project timely & smoothly
- d. Mechanisms (as indicated in communication plan) must be developed (by the PM immediately) to facilitate communication between the project team and the top management, operational areas and clients.

e. Project Charter – Last but not least, a project charter is required to be signed off by the senior management to show commitment and interest to see through the whole entire project.

Table 3: Checklist to overcome weakness

Weakness

Action

1. Unrealistic estimation of resource, cost and timeframe & Inflexible meetings schedule

2. Environment of the project

Many stakeholders with complex relationships and Team members of different site have constant changing priorities (functional managers have different agenda)

3. Difficult communications due to cultural differences and rivalries

4. Parent company bureaucracy

5. Polish project personnel under duress

6. Lack of international experience within the project team.

7. Project methodology not common among the sites (countries) and Project Management structure does not best suit global project team

- New PM to rework on budget, actual cost incurred, estimated cost to complete, resource required and time to complete.
- Propose new project structure. Autonomous structure whereby project members report directly to PM. While PM will report to relevant stakeholders.
- Communication plan will be drafted.
- An experience PM will be appointed and empower to carry out any necessary work to make the project a success.
- An experience PM with good leadership skill will be appointed. In addition with assistance from consultants.
- A PM with managing global team will be appointed. Interface requirement will be spelt out and consultants engaged.
- PM will be given the empowerment to use any project methodology to make the project a success. However the project management framework will abide parent company framework.

Leadership Issues relating to the project and Project manager's management

What are the main leadership issues relating to the project?

A leader is one in the group who is given the task of directing and coordinating activities. (Maylor, 2005)

Ability to get things done through others while winning the respect, confidence, loyalty, willing confidence and commitment

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Focus the efforts of a group of people toward a common goal and enable them to work as a team

Understanding the definition of leader, hence to be a successful PM, one has to possess the below skills, techniques and knowledge:

1. Understanding Maslow – hierarchy of needs

Maslow (1943, pp. 370-396) stated 5 levels – physiological, safety/security, love & affection, esteem, self-actualization; In order for the project member to achieve self actualization, the need of each level has to be satisfied. It begins with the lower needs. Example what PM can do:

Security – Provide job security even after project ends.

Love – Show concerns to team member's especially their welfare

Esteem – Praise and show appreciation to team member's contribution and reward good job done

Belongings – Show concerns & attention to team member and let them have a sense of belonging in the organization

Companionship-Build close friendship with team members to establish closer relationships with one another

2. Understanding Herzberg motivation & hygiene theory

Herzberg (Internet Center for Management and Business Administration, n. d.) stated that motivation/hygiene; hygiene factors need to be maintained; motivators or satisfier are a sense of achievement and a sense of recognition

for things done, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, growth, and so on; the dis-satisfiers or hygiene factors are company policies, relationships with supervisors, salary, relationships with peers, personal factors, status, security, and others; maintain the hygiene factors by having a good personal policy and good leadership practices; feeling of achievement and recognition for work done; responsible and empowered.

3. Enthusiasm and Energy

Display interest in the job and has a positive effect on team members. To motivate them and steer them up to achieve end result always.

4. Decision Making

Gather necessary information, analyze, select and implement the decisions. Be firm in decision making and not to be fickle-minded.

5. Tolerance for Ambiguity and Change

Project managers must be able to manage in an unstructured environment where they must deal with ambiguity, constant changes and bring order out of chaos. Although there will be times when argument & disagreement occurs, PM must be able to discern the problems & help to sort up the differences & come out with a solution to ease the chaos.

Vision

Need to inspire the team members. Implies believing in the project and having a clear idea what the client wants. Inspire every individual member to share the share goals & visions.

Application of Project Management Process

It must be able to provide effective leadership in the basic project management functions in order to meet the objectives of the project and the organization as a whole.

Effective Team Development & Conflict Resolution Techniques

It must be able to quickly develop a cohesive team with a set of common values and a vision sufficient to bind them together. Also effectively manage any conflict arises either through win-win negotiation, compromising, collaborating, withdraw or by demanding (forcing)

Interpersonal Skills

Able to create a cultural and conducive environment to innovate higher performances not only by using their own human skills but also with their effective interpersonal skills.

Conceptual Skills

Ability to see the big picture and analyze the project environment

How would you handle the leadership issues if you were the project manager of this project?

A leader plays a very importance role in every organisation (Turner & Müller, 2005). Without a leader, an organisation would not have been able to function accordingly so smoothly.

Thus as noted that the project has a 'terrible' start, it is important for a new project manager to make amendment and start making progress. Thus if I were to be appointed as the PM, these are what I will do (leadership style):

1. Team building

Include both enhancing the ability of stakeholders to contribute as individuals as well as enhancing the ability of the team to function as a team. Thus as the project team is situated globally, it will be best that all team members to come together to build rapport and enhance cohesiveness. This will build up the team to have more sense of belongings and also to increase participation of each member to be more involved in the discussion to help them to build stronger team spirit among themselves. Not only that, member will tend to assist & support each other in turn of problem and obstacles coming their way.

2. Build relationship with members and among members

Relationships among members are very crucial and important in a group. Members should share their personal experiences and even past work experiences with one another during working. There are all from different cultural and life-style background. It will help increase the knowledge of every individual member and also improve the productivity of the organisation by reducing the risks of taking the wrong pathways and help to reduce unnecessary conflicts and also most importantly increase team member unity among one another.

3. Understanding the individual aspiration

Involve everyone to plan and think towards the same goals to achieve better final results. This will help one to stay focus towards the final goals. With the aspiration of each individual, self-motivation will be put into place to increase the morale of the person. These not only help to get everyone to stay focus but also help team member to move on to the next level of their career path. With the understanding of their aspiration, PM can make plans to assist them in their career aspiration (eg. Promote or reward) in view of their good performance.

Communicate clearly on the project mission, objectives and status

After understanding the individuals aspiration and team building, next is to communicate project critical milestones and objectives to all stakeholders (upward, downward and laterally).

Upward (Abbott, n. d.) - Primarily contains information that higher management needs to evaluate the overall performance of the projects for which they are responsible, or to refine organizational strategy.

Downward (Abbott, n. d.) (Vertically or diagonally) - Provides direction and control for project team members and other employees and contains job-related information. (Eg Using Gantt Chart (Wikipedia, 2010) to indicate the critical milestones and critical path - see figure 3)

Laterally (Abbott, n. d.) (Peers) - Flows between the project manager and his peers: functional managers, line/staff personnel, other project managers,

contractors, subcontractors, clients, service/support personnel and other project stakeholders. It involves negotiating resources, schedules, and budgets and coordinating activities with contractors, regulatory agencies and clients as well as developing plans for future operating periods.

Figure 3: Gantt Chart (Wikipedia, 2010)

Acquire power and authority (from top management)

Reasons to acquire power and authority:

With formal authority given by top management, this will enhance PM ability to influence stakeholders (especially team members) so they will respond favorably to the instructions issued to them. Ability to command through the influencing of others and also to get them to do the things you want them to do, and also when you want them to do it, they will also do it in the actual manner that you propose.

4. Quality Plan of the Project

Identify and explain on the main features that you would expect to find in the Quality Plan for this project.

According to PMBOK, Quality planning identifies which quality standard and activities that are relevant to the project and determine how to satisfy them. (PMBOK, 2004)

As such quality plan should spelt out clearly on overall intentions and direction of the project with regard to quality and project management team is responsible for ensuring that the project stakeholders are fully aware of it.

The contents of the quality plan would include the following:

S/No

Content

Description

1

Quality plan and System

The quality plan and management system that is relevant to the nature of project and to customer and regulatory requirements. Eg. requirements of ISO 9001: 2008

2

Design and process control

The company S/W Development Model is described. There are Quality Management System procedures governing each of the processes.

Design Control is assured through implementation of the various reviews, analyses,

approvals and testing.

The s/w programme modification instructions together with the relevant source code shall be approved by the Design Signatories

3

Inspection & Testing

To introduce guidelines for Engineers to develop the System Software Acceptance Test Plan and Procedures.

The test involves scenarios to validate and verify the operational software under test in a laboratory or system setup environment where the customer/operational team will witness.

4

Control of records

The following records shall be maintained:

- a. A complete and current technical data file for each modification including source code, s/w programme specifications, s/w test plans and test reports.
- b. Complete inspection records showing that all inspections and tests required for compliance have been properly completed.

Work accomplishment records (e. g. completed work)

5

Product identification and traceability

The objective of identification & Traceability Tool is to provide an efficient method to generate Identification & Traceability Matrix for each product or software code and customer requirement.

6

Contract Reviews

To outline procedures for proposal / contract review so as to ensure that:

- a. Customer's requirements are adequately defined
- b. The proposal adequately addresses the defined requirements
- c. Project Team has the capability to meet contractual requirements
- d. Records of proposal/contract reviews are maintained

7

Training

The PM shall determine the competence level required for members performing work affecting product quality and take actions to provide the necessary training or exposure.

8

Audit

Audit plan is necessary to ensure compliance to requirement and zero tolerance to non-conformance.

How might they have influenced the outcome if implemented?

This Quality plan establishes the processes, procedures and activities that are necessary for the success of the project. All project procedures and processes shall be promulgated in line with the respective of the parent company policy statement stated herein.

Project Manager must bring its contents to the attention of all his/her team members he/she must ensure that the requirements are understood and carried out by them. Each team lead or members is responsible for enforcement of the requirements within his/her own area of jurisdiction.

This manual is under the control of the PM. Proposed changes, additions or deletions shall be brought to the attention of PM to ensure proper coordination, review and approval.

As such if the all methods, procedures and systems herein stated in the quality plan are established and practices; It is very certain that the project will conforms to the requirements of customer requirements or ISO 9001: 2008 requirements (refer to stakeholder analysis table 2). In other word, stakeholder needs satisfied and achieve full customer satisfaction!