

Examine consulting processes and techniques

Technology, Information Technology



Examination of Consulting Processes and Techniques C. K. Vani Chennai, India This paper examines the Consulting process and techniques that are essential to handle the implications of project shock and is based on the Book written by Wickham and Wickham. The article addresses the implications of the project shock, its affect on the careers of the team members and on the proposed design of the new IT systems. Some of the crucial steps that need to be taken in order to go ahead with the project and allocation of responsibility amongst the participants are discussed in brief. Key participants in the project include stakeholder Executives of the client (European holding company), IT Directors and Store Operations Directors from the retail chains in six countries and the Consultant. An examination of consulting processes and techniques in handling project shock The client, a large European holding company had acquired chains of do-it-yourself (DIY) stores in Belgium, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. The Consultant proposes the client to merge all the retail chains in the six countries onto single IT application platform so that the operations will become smoother. In this connection, the Consultant had put-in a great level of effort in setting-up teams to develop single IT application platform. At this point of time, the client conveys a project shock and decides to sell off these chains in the six countries, so as to concentrate on a few core businesses and competencies. The project shock has created a crisis within the organization and amongst the project team. The Consultant now has to play a major role in motivating the team and get them involved in the proposed project. Also objectives of the proposed project need to be redefined so as to suit the requirements of future buyers of retail chains. Project shock from the

client has created confusion and uncertainty amongst the project team members. With no clarity on the future buyers of the retail chains, team members are worried about the adoption to the new work culture and their future career prospects. Careers of the client team members will depend on the Management decisions of the acquiring company. While in many cases, the acquiring company will continue with the existing team members / employees, owing to their experience and long relationships with the previous employer, there could be some changes in hierarchy and the new employer / management may also bring-in their own team members. This may create some disturbances with the exiting team members and harmonious working atmosphere will be affected. If the acquiring company is from a different business group or from different region, there are possibilities of culture shocks amongst the existing team and the new team. With disturbed working environment and relationships, the team may not work in harmony, which will affect the development of new IT system. Lack of co-operation amongst the team members may result in poor quality work, delays and the end result may not meet the design requirements. During project shock, the Consultant should take charge of the circumstances by being in control and utilize all his / her past experiences and insights to attend the current issues. It is essential to help the project team in overcoming fear / confusion and motivate them to focus on the project and ensure smooth progress and successful completion within the stipulated time frame. Following actions should be taken by the consulting team to ensure progress of the project and successful completion : Redefine the study aims and objectives. Since the client has decided to sell retail chains in the six

countries, design of the IT application needs modification to suit the requirement of new buyers. Serious discussions and internal meetings are required to redefine the objectives. Evaluate the availability of resources. The project shock may affect the resources availability and hence it is essential to take stock of the resources available to go ahead with the project. If there are constraints on the financial aspects, budget allocated for the project will be affected. Accordingly project activities need to be modified or dropped in such a way that redefined objectives are met to its best effect. If the project team suffers due to lack of skilled person, possibility of hiring new person within the budget constraint should be considered. However, care should be taken to analyze the employee relationship with the client organization, his / her contributions to the organization, and effectiveness of bringing-in new employee and building new relationships, before making the decision to hire a new person. Communicate and be transparent amongst the project team. Communication plays an important role in handling crisis arising out of project shocks. Effective communication and being transparent will build confidence amongst the team members and influence them to be totally involved in conducting the project. This environment will motivate the team to bring-in their best ideas in handling the issues / problems. Allotting responsibility and making each team member accountable for their contribution will further aid the process. Consulting team should hold frequent brainstorming sessions to ensure that the project is progressing as planned. RACI chart. Planning and controlling complex project where multiple organizations are participating in a project poses several challenges. Allocation of task, responsibilities and roles played by the participating team

needs to be clearly defined prior to commissioning the project in order to overcome the challenges. Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RAM) is commonly used in such situations, which clearly defines the roles of each participating member. Proposed RACI chart for this project is depicted below :

RACI Chart Activities Stakeholder Executive - holding company IT Directors - 6 countries Store Operations Directors - 6 countries Consultant

Revised aims & objectives C C C R Project planning I C C R Finance / budget allocation R A A C Design & development of IT application I C C R Project supervision I I I R, A Implementation C C C R, A

References Wickham and Wickham, Management Consulting - Delivering an Effective Project, Chapter 8