Chapter 6: Project management as a powerful tool

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SYNOPSIS

This chapter concludes the study and summarises the outcome of the research. The research done is compared to the research objectives to ensure that these objectives have been met.

The discipline of project management plays a key role in competitive global business. A professional project management organisation provides immeasurable benefits to organisations. Significant growth in membership of the PMI reflects greater understanding of the organisation’s relevance, and broader recognition of its value and credibility. A rapid growth in the membership of professional associations is strong evidence of the popularity and use of project management in business success.

Projects are critical to the success of any organisation. They are the activities that result in new or changed products or services as well as increased sales and reduced costs if completed successfully. The temporary nature of projects, combined with the very limitations on power and discretion most project managers face, constitutes the core challenge of managing projects effectively.

Most organisations do not follow a systems approach when selecting project managers. Project managers who manage the project by accident are the cause of most project failures.
Chapter 6: Project management as a powerful tool

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study and summarises the outcome of the research.

6.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section reviews the objectives of the study to ensure that they have been met.

6.2.1 Objective 1: To investigate project management as a profession

Project management is used world-wide by most organisations as a means of meeting their business goals. As a result, highly desirable and skilled persons (professional project managers), who can effectively manage projects, are needed. The exponential growth in PMI membership and PMP certification is a clear indication that there is a bright future for organisations using professional project management principles.

The research also shows that professional project management plays an important role in an organisation’s business success. Furthermore, 92% of businesses utilise professional project management as an effective way to ensure the success of their business.
6.2.2 Objective 2: To investigate the role of projects and project managers in business success

The study found that most organisations are increasingly project-based, meaning that the work they do is split into programmes of related projects designed to achieve the organisation's strategy and to add value. Good management of these projects is also found to be essential, thus proficient project managers are required to manage the projects successfully. A project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to achieve a particular aim and to which project management can be applied, regardless of the project's size, budget or time frame.

Portfolio Project Management is about ensuring that the right projects are carried out, that a balanced portfolio is created addressing all areas of business development, and that best use is made of resources.

The following were found to be the factors to be considered when selecting a successful project manager:

- **Personal characteristics:** Must be flexible and adequate; preference for initiative and leadership; confidence, persuasiveness, verbal fluency; effective communicator integrator; be able to balance technical solutions with time, cost and human factors.

- **Behavioural skills:** A project manager needs strong behavioural and interpersonal skills. He/she must know how to build trust, promote team spirit and reward cooperation through praise and credit. He/she must know the jargon of the speciality in order to facilitate communication and integrate technical work.
• **General business skills**: Understanding of the organisation and the business; understanding of general management: marketing, control, contract work, purchasing, law, personal administration and the general concept of profitability; and the ability to translate business requirements into project and system requirements.

• **Technical skills**: The project manager must be able to grasp the technical aspects of the project in order to make an informed decision. The project manager must be capable of both integration and analysis, and must understand that rigorous training of professional technologists with its emphasis on analysis sometimes impairs their integrative ability.

**6.2.3 Objective 3: To identify the challenges faced by project managers**

The introduction of project management techniques by organisations presents some challenges to those who are going to manage the projects. The following were found to be the challenges that project managers face during the life cycle of the project:

- **Understand** the context of project management.
- **Recognise** project team conflict as progress.
- **Understand** who the stakeholders are and what they want.
- **Accept** the political nature of organisations and use it to your advantage.
- **Lead** from the front; the view is better.
- **Understand** what "success" means.
- **Build** and maintain a cohesive team.
• Enthusiasm and despair are both infectious.

• Remember what you are trying to do.

• Use time carefully or it will use you.

• One look forward is worth two looks back.

• Above all, plan, plan, and plan.

In order to manage the interface with operations effectively, project managers must:

• ensure that all participants understand and are committed to the project’s goal;

• ensure that the project’s systems and documents are understood by all; and

• create cooperation between projects and operations by communicating project plans in a form in which the project and its consequences are understood and accepted.

6.2.4 Objective 4: To investigate the appointment of an accidental project manager as a sure path to project failure

The study found that engineers, salespeople, technicians, and countless others are placed into the role of project manager every day. Most of these people may be good in their respective jobs, but many of them lack knowledge of the project management context.

Project manager can be defined as the person ultimately responsible for the success or failure of a project. An accidental project manager is a person who is
placed in the role of project manager by organisational necessity and chance, rather than by design or through choice of career path.

The study found that financial investment within training and development programmes typically have good returns. Career path systems within organisations help project managers improve their skills and capabilities with each project they manage.

A common mistake by organisations is the appointment of a project manager who has excellent technical skills but weak managerial skills or training, which leads to the failure of most projects. The study found that most organisations use trust in a person, not ability, in selecting project managers.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The future is bright for professional project management organisations. Many successful organisations have already implemented professional project management and have realised the tangible benefits of better cost control, time, high performances and customer delight.