



INTEGRATING PROJECT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT SUCCESS: A MULTI-DOMAIN ANALYSIS

SAKILA AKTER JAHAN^{1*}

^{*1}Illinois State University

MESBAUL HAQUE SAZU²

²Case Western Reserve University

***Corresponding Author: SAKILA AKTER JAHAN**

ABSTRACT

The effective application of various project management techniques to ensure successful project implementation has been well-documented, particularly in the domains of time, cost, and quality management. However, the distinction between a project and project management remains ambiguous. This paper aims to clarify the overlap between the definitions of these terms and examine how this confusion can impact their interrelationship. By identifying the different stakeholders involved in a project and project management, along with their objectives, expectations, and influences, this study demonstrates how a clearer understanding of these distinctions can enhance the likelihood of project success.

Keywords: Project Management; project Success; Stakeholder Management

DOI:-10.5281/zenodo.14249323

Manuscript ID # 190

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, project management has been recognized as a potent tool for managing novel or complex activities. Avots highlighted that project management is more effective than traditional management methods, such as hierarchical functional divisions, in handling such tasks. Implementing new projects and bringing them to market demands different management techniques than those used for routine operations. In these scenarios, where organizations undertake finite, unique, and unfamiliar tasks, project management techniques can be successfully employed. Such endeavors require quicker and more effective decision-making processes than those used in normal operations, making the right choices critical for the company's success.

The use of project management is often associated with addressing novel complex problems, commonly referred to as projects. Consequently, the success of project management has frequently been linked with the project's final outcome. However, it has become evident over time that project management and project success are not always directly correlated. The objectives of project management—typically time, cost, and progress control—differ from the broader goals of the project itself. Experience shows that it is possible for a project to succeed even if project management fails, and vice versa. For instance, projects like the Thames Barrier, the Fulmar North Sea oil project, and Concorde were relatively successful despite not being completed on time or within budget. This paper argues that the relationship between project management and project success is less interdependent than previously assumed, and a distinction should be made between the success of a project and the success of project management activities.

Definitions

To differentiate between a project and project management, distinct definitions must be established. A project is defined as the achievement of a specific objective, involving a series of activities and tasks that consume resources, and must be completed within a set specification, start, and end dates. In contrast, project management is the process of controlling the achievement of project objectives using existing organizational structures and resources. It involves defining work requirements, establishing work scope, allocating resources, planning execution, monitoring progress, and adjusting deviations from the plan.

While these definitions appear to overlap, the distinction lies in their focus. A project is concerned with selecting tasks that benefit the company in the long term, whether financial, marketing, or technical. For example, the benefits of a construction project can extend over 50-100 years. In contrast, project management focuses on planning and control, ensuring on-time delivery, within-budget expenditures, and performance standards during the project's development and delivery phases. Once delivery is achieved, project management activities cease, and a different management form takes over to control the project's use. Therefore, project management is short-term and oriented towards delivery, while the project itself is long-term, encompassing its entire lifecycle.

Project Success or Failure

A project's definition suggests an orientation toward higher and long-term goals, with key parameters including return on investment, profitability, competition, and marketability. Various factors influence the achievement of these goals, as identified by authors such as Cash and Fox, Baker et al., Kerzner, Wit, and Kumar. These factors include objectives, project administration, third parties, client relations, human factors, contracting, legal agreements, politics, efficiency, conflicts, and profit. Current literature, including Morris and Hugh, implies that project success depends on having a realistic goal, competition, client satisfaction, a definite goal, profitability, third parties, market availability, the implementation process, and the perceived project value. Only two of these items—goal definition and implementation process—fall directly within the scope of project management, indicating that project management techniques are just a subset of the broader project context. This helps explain why projects can succeed or fail independently of the project management process.

Project Management Success or Failure

The definition of project management suggests a shorter-term, more specific context for success. Outcomes of successful project management include completion within budget, adherence to schedule, adequate quality standards, and meeting project goals. Factors leading to project management failure include an inadequate project basis, wrong project manager selection, lack of top management support, poorly defined tasks, insufficient project management techniques, misuse of techniques, unplanned project closure, and lack of project commitment. Successful project management requires thorough planning, skilled project managers, adequate project definition, correct activity planning, effective information flow, adaptability to changes, alignment of employee goals with

performance and rewards, and addressing implementation mistakes. These factors collectively indicate that while project management is vital for project success, it is influenced by many external variables beyond the project manager's control.

By establishing a clear distinction between project management and project success, we can better understand the relationship between these elements and improve the likelihood of achieving both.

The Correlation Between Project Management and Project Success

The narrow definition of tasks in successful project management helps to explain why project management success and project success are not directly correlated. A project may still achieve its higher and long-term objectives despite shortcomings in project management. While project management may be perceived as a failure in the short term, the project itself can ultimately succeed because it fulfills a broader set of objectives beyond the narrow scope of project management.

Insights from Literature

Extensive literature on project management, including works by Kerzner, Duncan, and Gorsha, highlights the critical role of techniques in achieving project objectives. These authors emphasize that the successful implementation of project management techniques significantly contributes to overall project success. Avots, in studying the causes of project management failure, argued that failure could be mitigated by addressing the project management factors that lead to it. Duncan and Gorsha identified three key problem areas indicative of project success: under-costing, overspending, and late delivery. Effective project planning is essential to overcoming these issues.

Lackman discusses various tools available to project managers to achieve success, such as work breakdown structures (WBS), client information sheets, and project plans. Kumar stresses the importance of developing early strategies, philosophies, and methodologies tailored to specific project situations. By gathering sufficient site information and understanding project considerations and constraints, it is possible to formulate strategies that lead to successful project implementation.

The Hard and Soft Issues in Project Management

The focus on techniques can be considered the "hard" issues in project management, encompassing easily measurable and quantifiable concepts like time and cost. Other researchers have integrated "soft" issues, such as people skills, alongside these administrative functions. Randolph and Posner, Posner, and Jaafari have highlighted the importance of personal, technical, and organizational skills in controlling projects and achieving successful results.

Implicit in much of the literature is the notion that projects end when they are delivered to the customer, marking the conclusion of project management activities. However, this perspective overlooks the broader criteria affecting the project's long-term success. Wit and Nicholas distinguish between project success and project management success, acknowledging that good project management can contribute to project success but does not guarantee it. They also emphasize that a project can succeed despite poor project management performance.

The Broader Context of Project Success

If project management is viewed as a subset of the project as a whole, broader decisions in selecting a suitable project are likely to have a more significant influence on overall success than project management techniques alone. While these techniques can help ensure successful project implementation, they cannot salvage a fundamentally flawed project. Techniques may identify the project's infeasibility, indicating the need for abandonment or modification.

Individual Responsibilities in Project and Project Management

A clear distinction between the project and project management necessitates a corresponding distinction between the individuals responsible for success in each area. Kerzner states that the project manager and team should be the focal points of integrative responsibility. This suggests that the project management team should be the focus of success in both spheres, potentially excluding the client from any role in project success. However, the client plays a crucial role in early decision-making, which dictates project success.

Successful project completion requires input from various groups, including the client, project team, parent organization, producer, and end user. Each party has specific tasks and responsibilities that contribute to success. The client is primarily concerned with the project's long-term success, as financial and other rewards depend on its successful implementation. While the project team focuses on short-term objectives, the client must ensure that these do not jeopardize the achievement of the broader goals.

In summary, a nuanced understanding of the distinction between project management and project success, along with the roles of different stakeholders, is essential for achieving successful project outcomes. This distinction allows for better alignment of efforts towards both immediate and long-term objectives.

Understanding Stakeholder Roles and Project Management Overlaps

User and Stakeholder Perspective

The user is the entity, whether an individual or group, that utilizes the completed project or product. In some scenarios, this user may overlap with the client, but in many cases, especially in consumer markets, the end user and client are distinct groups. Project success for users is defined by the extent to which their needs are met, which may include practical requirements that differ significantly from those of the client. Satisfying user needs has become a crucial aspect of quality assurance. Oakland (1995) defines quality as "the satisfaction of users' needs," emphasizing that success from the user's perspective is focused on the long-term utilization of the project outcome rather than the project management process itself. Consequently, the project team, primarily involved in the development phase, may have little direct interaction with the end user and may remain unaware of their satisfaction with the management processes.

Role of the Parent Organization

The parent organization plays a critical role by providing the necessary resources and exerting control over various factors such as profitability, market share, quality, and scope of service. Their commitment and support are essential for project success. Without the dedication of organizational resources and administrative backing, project management becomes challenging. The parent organization has a dual interest: ensuring the efficient use of resources during development and securing a return on their resource allocation. Therefore, they are concerned with both the success of the project management process and the overall project outcome. The project team is accountable for resource utilization and must justify their effectiveness.

Project Team Dynamics

The project team is instrumental in shaping the project's implementation. Employing appropriate management techniques is vital for ensuring that planning, control, and communication systems are effectively in place. The team's focus is typically task-oriented, emphasizing the completion of work and timely project delivery. The primary goal for the team is to successfully conclude the management phase, after which rewards and recognition are received.

Producer's Perspective

The producer's commitment to the project is generally short-term, ending once the project is handed over to the client. Their focus is on the immediate tasks of project development rather than long-term goals. However, in another context, the producer uses information generated by the project team to manufacture the final product, with concerns over the ease of final assembly.

This analysis highlights the varied orientations of different stakeholders toward the project outcome. Each group views success through the lens of their expectations, which vary significantly. Kerzner's assertion that the project team holds integrative responsibility is contested; given their limited involvement, it is more logical for an individual with a broader perspective, such as the client, to hold overall responsibility for the project's success.

Overlap Between Project and Project Management

There is an acknowledged overlap between project management and the project itself, with the former being a subset of the latter. Three primary factors contribute to confusion between the two:

1. Time Frame: Project success is often judged at the end of the project management phase, where budget, schedule, and quality criteria are measurable. Long-term success indicators are not yet realized, making it convenient to equate project management success with project success.
2. Confusion of Objectives: The objectives of project success and project management success are often intertwined, creating a homogeneous set that blurs the distinction between them. For instance, 'completion to budget' (a project management issue) might be conflated with 'profitability' (a project objective).
3. Ease of Measurement: Objectives within project management, such as compliance with budget and schedule, are quantitative and easily measured, leading to a focus on project management success. In contrast, many project objectives are qualitative, longer-term, and harder to measure, making project management metrics a convenient proxy for overall success.

Mitigating Confusion

Understanding the distinct roles of project management within the broader project context can mitigate this confusion. Project management involves using resources efficiently to achieve a set goal within specific criteria, situated within the larger project framework.

Project Life Cycle Model

A six-stage model of the project life cycle encompasses:

1. Conception Phase: The idea for the project is conceived and its feasibility assessed.
 2. Planning Phase: Methods for achieving the project idea are planned and designed.
 3. Production Phase: Plans are transformed into physical reality.
 4. Handover Phase: The completed project is handed over to the client for use.
 5. Utilization Phase: The client utilizes the finished project.
 6. Closedown Phase: The project is dismantled and disposed of at the end of its useful life.
- The model highlights the interaction of various stakeholders throughout the project life cycle and introduces third parties, such as regulatory authorities and environmental groups, who influence project development and use.

Evaluating Project Performance

Project performance can be assessed through:

1. Implementation: Evaluated during the planning and production phases, focusing on project management techniques and their execution.
2. Perceived Values: Assessed during the utilization phase from the users' perspective.
3. Client Satisfaction: Evaluated at project closedown, considering all influences and the fulfillment of the original goals.

By appreciating the distinct roles of project management and the broader project, stakeholders can better align efforts to achieve both immediate and long-term success.

Comprehensive Understanding of Project Management and Project Success

Evaluation Criteria for Project Success

Project management techniques are not the sole determinants of project success. External criteria such as perceived values and client satisfaction are equally, if not more, significant for successful project implementation. During stage 4 (implementation), the focus is on measurable criteria, but as the project progresses into stage 5, the importance of project management techniques wanes. Consequently, different evaluative criteria become more prominent over time.

The natural inclination of the project management team is to focus on completing stage 4 within predefined criteria. This results in an emphasis on short-term targets, as reflected in project management literature focused on planning, estimating, quality, and control—all aimed at meeting stage 4 criteria. Less emphasis is placed on stages 5 and 6, as the team is typically no longer directly involved, causing parameters like return on investment, profitability, competition, and marketability to become secondary considerations.

Project and Project Management Success

The relationship between project and project management success is complex. Consider a scenario where the project fails despite successful project management. Here, the project fails because it was not utilized as intended, could not be marketed, or did not achieve its return on investment, even though it was delivered on time, within budget, and according to scope. This discrepancy arises because project management criteria are a subset of overall project criteria. The project management team cannot prevent project failure if the broader objectives are not met. The only critique of project management might be the failure to identify potential project failure during feasibility studies and warn the client accordingly.

In such cases, project management success holds little value to any party other than the project team, unless they are involved in the utilization phase. Implementation success is irrelevant if the client cannot use the investment. For instance, an unoccupied new factory represents a failed investment despite successful project control.

Conversely, consider a scenario where project implementation is delayed or over budget but ultimately profitable and useful for the client. Here, short-term project management failure is insignificant in the long term. Although delays and cost overruns may cause temporary embarrassment or financial strain, they do not negate the project's eventual success.

Key Issues in Project Management

Three critical issues must be addressed by all project stakeholders:

1. **Project Definition:** Early decision-making is crucial to overall success. A project doomed by poor early decisions cannot be salvaged by project management efforts, although poor project management can jeopardize a potentially successful project.
2. **Client Role:** The client is responsible for generating project ideas. Project management can aid in this process by ensuring feasibility studies identify and recommend abandoning unfeasible ideas. Feasibility should extend beyond development to include subsequent use.
3. **Evaluation Process:** Project success and failure must be evaluated beyond the implementation phase. The short-term success of project management does not necessarily equate to long-term project success.

Distinguishing Project and Project Management

Understanding the overlap between project and project management is essential. Three factors contribute to confusion:

1. **Time Frame:** Project success is often judged at the end of the project management phase based on measurable criteria like budget, schedule, and quality. Long-term success indicators are not yet realized, making it convenient to equate project management success with project success.
2. **Objective Confusion:** The intertwined objectives of project and project management success create ambiguity. For example, 'completion to budget' (project management) might be conflated with 'profitability' (project), reducing the importance of project objectives.
3. **Ease of Measurement:** Project management objectives like budget and schedule compliance are easily measured, leading to a focus on these metrics. In contrast, many project objectives are qualitative and longer-term, making project management success a convenient proxy for overall success.

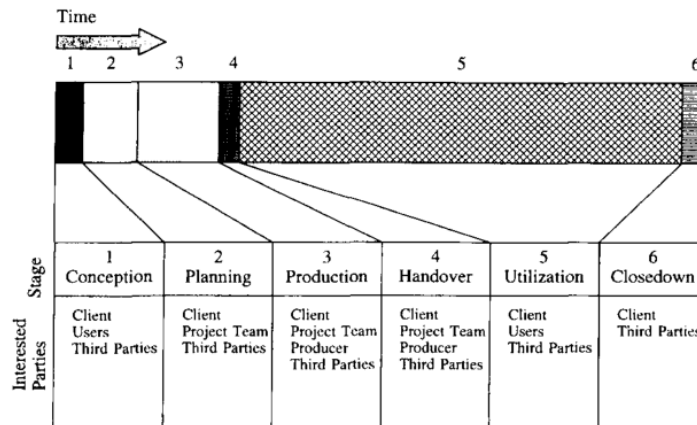


Figure 1. The stages in a project life cycle, and the parties interested in each stage

Six-Stage Project Life Cycle Model

The project life cycle includes six stages:

1. Conception: The project idea is conceived and its feasibility assessed.
2. Planning: The method for achieving the project idea is planned.
3. Production: Plans are executed to create physical reality.
4. Handover: The completed project is delivered to the client.
5. Utilization: The client uses the project.
6. Closedown: The project is dismantled and disposed of at the end of its useful life.

Throughout this life cycle, stakeholders interact with the project, each with different roles and perspectives. Evaluating project performance involves:

1. Implementation: Assessed during planning and production phases, focusing on project management techniques.
2. Perceived Values: Assessed during the utilization phase from the user's perspective.
3. Client Satisfaction: Evaluated at project closedown, considering all influences and the fulfillment of original goals.

By appreciating the distinct roles of project management within the broader project context, stakeholders can better align efforts to achieve both immediate and long-term success.

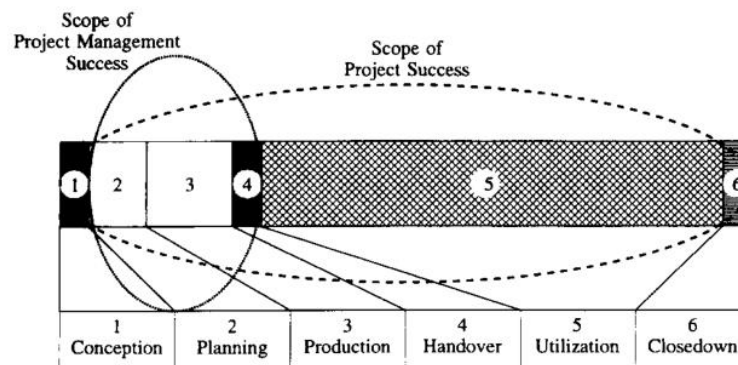


Figure 2. The scope of success within the project life cycle

Enhancing Client Involvement and Comprehensive Evaluation in Projects

Client Involvement in Projects

Clients have two primary strategies to enhance project success: increasing their involvement in the planning and production phases, or extending the project team's involvement into the utilization phase. Active client participation during planning and production ensures that broader objectives are emphasized consistently. Although this approach may incur additional time and resource costs for the client, these are marginal compared to the total project cost. Extending the project team's responsibility beyond handover into the utilization phase is not a novel concept. For instance, the 1730 contract for the Tunnel Bridge required the contractor, providing a turnkey solution, to maintain the bridge for 20 years, correcting any failures at their expense. This ensured the project team and producer considered long-term objectives. However, imposing such responsibilities demands adequate compensation, and the associated costs may surpass those of increased client involvement during earlier stages.

Comprehensive Project Evaluation

A holistic evaluation process, encompassing the entire project from conception to close down, is necessary to complement the project management evaluation. This process should address broader issues such as project economics and viability, rather than focusing solely on schedule, budget, and scope. By concentrating on economic, financial, and utilization aspects, this evaluation technique may necessitate greater input from producers and the project team during the utilization phase, fostering closer partnerships and potentially creating a 'win-win' scenario. Consequently, the term 'project management' may evolve into 'management of projects,' shifting the focus from tools and techniques aimed at meeting schedule, budget, and performance criteria, to a broader perspective on how to successfully manage the project throughout its lifecycle.

Conclusion

This paper has elucidated the overlap between projects and project management, and the resulting confusion. It has also underscored the distinct objectives of projects and project management, highlighting the latter's focus on specific, short-term targets compared to the broader aims of projects.

It is inappropriate to place sole responsibility for project success on the project management team. Instead, clients should take a more active role in the development and utilization phases. A clearer distinction between project and project management success is necessary, with project success assessed using a combination of project management techniques and external criteria vital for successful implementation from conception to close down.

To ensure project success, it is crucial to recognize the role of project management within the broader project context, considering other external criteria and long-term expectations. Project managers must facilitate active client participation during planning and production, while extending project team involvement into the utilization phase. This can be effectively managed through a comprehensive evaluation technique that examines implementation processes as well as economic and financial performance.

Ultimately, while successful project management techniques contribute to project achievement, they do not guarantee success. A well-chosen project will likely succeed regardless of project management success, though effective project management can enhance its success. Therefore, selecting the right project from the outset and screening out potentially unsuccessful ones are paramount to ensuring overall project success.

References

1. Avots, I 'Why does project management fail?' California Management Review 12 (1969) 77-82
2. Wit, A D 'Measurement of project success' Project Management 6 (3) (1988) 164-170
3. Kerzner, H Project management..., a systems approach to planning, scheduling, and controlling Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York (1989)
4. Cash, H and Fox, R 'Elements of successful project management' J Systems Management (1992) 10-12
5. Baker, B N, Fisher, D and Murphy, D C Factors affecting project success National Technical Information Services, N-74-30092 (September 1974)
6. Baker, B N, Fisher, D and Murphy, D C Project management in the public sector: success and failure patterns compared to private sector projects National Technical Information Services, N-74-30092 (September 1974)
7. Kumar, D 'Developing strategies and philosophies early for successful project implementation' Project Management 7 (3) (1989) 164-171
8. Morris, P W G and Hugh, G H Preconditions of Success and Failure in Major Projects Templeton College, the Oxford Centre for Management Studies, Kinnington Oxford, Technical paper No. 3 (September 1986)
9. Duncan, G L and Gorsha, R A 'Project management: A major factor in project success' IEEE Transactions on Power Apparatus and System 102 (11) (1983) 3701-3705

10. Lackman, M 'Controlling the project development cycle, tools for successful project management' J System Management (February 1987) 16-28
11. Randolph, W A and Posner, B Z 'What every manager needs to know about project management' Sloan Management Review Summer (1988)
12. Posner, B Z 'What it takes to be a good project manager' Project Management Journal 28 (1) (1987) 51-54
13. Jaafari, A 'What every top manager should know about organizational set ups and policies for successful project management' Proceedings of the 10th INTERNET World Congress on Project Management 1 (1990)
14. Nicholas, J M 'Successful project management: a force-field analysis' J System Management January (1989) 24-30
15. Oakland, J S Total Quality Management Heinemann, Oxford (1989)