

The Importance on Communication in Project Management Strategy

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Abstract: Project management strategy is having a strong impact on planification in global society and the long-term success is interconnected with the communication skills of all the shareholders. Its main objective is to anticipate as many as possible weaknesses of the project evolution and to synchronize, organize and fulfill the tasks, despite all the problems. The process is based on a long-term collaboration between the major factors of the project with positive impact of the communication skills. The aim of this article is based on presenting the role and influence of communication in project management diachronic evolution. We also have intended to define and characterize some common aspects of the inspirational role of Public Relation (PR) department in the long-term evolution of a project. The potential of communication is constantly flourishing, and a decisive inspirational and visionary performance orientation in project management founds its integrity in synergy with a strong PR.

Keywords: project management; communication; Public Relations; logical matrix; risk

1. Project Management Specificity

In present, it is very common to achieve performance not only with the help of your own strategic vision, but under the guidance of a supervised team with experience in strategical work. The project management strategy is having a very long tradition and we can trace its history since the emergence of civilizations. The pyramids, the great Chinese wall, the Roman road network were constructed under the guidance of specialized teams of ancient engineers and scholars. Even the etymology of the word is Latin, *proiectum*, something which is thrown forward, meaning the planning of a pre-established actions (Pirju, 2017).

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Project management consists in planning and controlling the firm resources to accomplish a short-term objective which was established for achieving real results. Project Management is using the systematical approach of classical management and distributes the specialized personnel on a determined project. According to Project Management Institute, Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements.

There is a difference between a program and a project, generally a European program represents a set of measures taken by European Commission to support a country or a group of nations, and the aim is to implement the assistance in a certain field (Ștefănescu, 2006). On the other side, each project is having a specific objective and is based on a strict methodology. It must respect the financial plan and operate with a reasonable amount of resources (human capital and materials).

A successful project is having a variety of multifunctional objectives which constantly need to be updated under the pressure of time limits and money expenditure. Every project must be seen as a unique managerial entity, and even it is possible to find projects with identical objectives, there are significant differences between them like it is the variety in human fingerprints. Each project assumes from the beginning the awareness of new risks and the fact that some clients could come with extra demands.

Because the project development is limited in time (Ungureanu, 2013) respecting the basing elements, the correct analyses of necessary resources it is a precondition for success because every independent action of a project is constructed upon those pillars. It is recommendable that each team to have only one leader with enough authority to determine the strategy and to take proactive actions in adapting the costs, time and benefits to increase the final effect.

The open communication based on specific strategies has an important impact in the improvement of the original goals (Popa, 2011), and with its aid the process of control and evaluation is more standardized and accessible. A project manager should be skilled in communication stile which is a real aptitude with high impact on the project elaboration and implementation, actions who can be better realized after direct, and sometime strong negotiations. The communication is helpful in achieving an egalitarian position between the negotiators (Panisoara, 2015).

A successful project manager is always a skilled communicator because he is the person who respond for everybody activities and the pressure of the deadline it is upon his/her conscience. As part of his strategic and communicative plan, it is

recommendable for the manager not to make to employees any promises regarding possible promotions, salary increases, future responsibilities or possible changes of the initial planes. This strategy is extremely important, because a project manager is acting in a different way than the promoter, a manager always is working in collective and not individual, he is assuming the general risk and his work strategy is to accomplish his duties not to exceed it.

A person who is excelling in this activity, using persuasion and a high specific cultural background will know how to choose the best strategy, to obtain support from leadership and to respect the objectives related by cost, performance and time.

There are also a series of disadvantages for a project manager, he is always on the run, extra working hours and the impossibility to spend enough time with the family. In USA in the period when was initiated the military programs for space rockets the number of divorces among the engineers and project managers was double compared with national average (Kerzner, 2010). Those disadvantages are not always representing a failure, because the essence of a project it is inside of a unite team, and it is well known that a person can always find a short-term substitute.

The project management activities are developed by persons with good insight in psychology, a transformational and visionary approach capable to follow and accept additional information from the stakeholders. The effectiveness in this field is influenced by external and internal environments and the actions must be process oriented, collaborative and the expression of adaptability to any sort of problems. In project management process a person always attempts something new, is determined but not individualistic, takes the risks but in the same manner is able to execute well and shows integrity. The competitive advantage is achieved by promoting in the welfare for others because the project management is an activity centered on investing in the future of all the shareholders.

2. The Influence of Communication in Developing Stages of Project Management

As central piece in managerial strategy it is the development of the logical framework matrix, an excellent tool for following the objectives of a project (Larson & Gray, 2018). The matrix is strictly linked by the application form and its general aim is to assess: general objectives, the desired results, the evolution of activities, the implementation of the project, the costs etc.

The logical frame presented in the next figure it is especially used when a project is evaluated, and the strategy is used for solving the contradictions between general objectives and the final result.

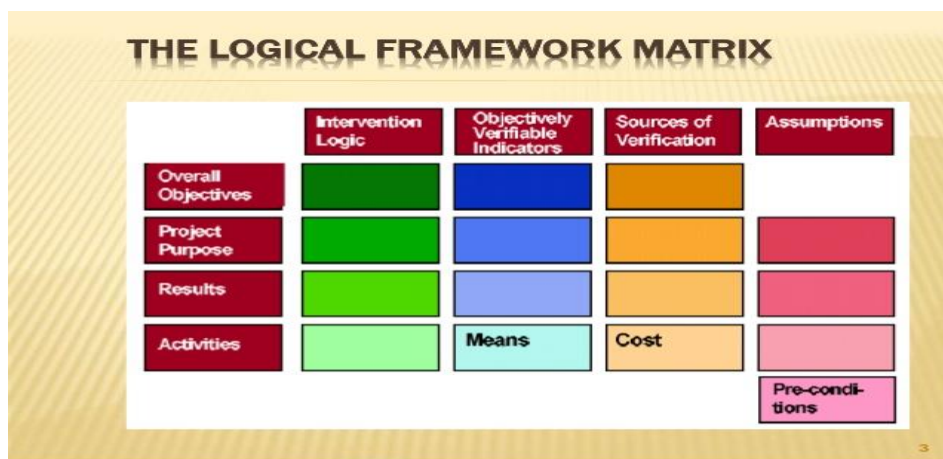


Figure 1. The logical framework matrix¹

The logical frame matrix is based on two stages: the first it is represented by analyses period and the second it is the implementation phase. In the analyses period it is studied the objectives of the project, the indented desire of the beneficiary. This stage is based on the study of the reality before the implementation of the project, and on this previous research the project team can improve the vision and the business plan. As characteristic, in this period it is formed the reliance of the team and are established the procedures, norms and rules with impact on the future action. It is no room for individualistic approach, the logical framework matrix is encouraging collective involvement which performs more credibility.

In the implementation stage there are 4 steps: the analyses of the stakeholder's opinion, the analyses of the objectives, the analyses of the problems (existing and possible) and the visualization of a stage when new strategies can improve the existing situation.

The stakeholder's opinion analyses it is of paramount importance because the persons who are managing the capital are developing high expectation from a project and their attitude is, in most of the cases, a must do approach. You cannot persuade

¹ The Logical Framework Matrix
<https://www.google.com/search?q=logical+matrix+for+project+management+images&client=firefox->
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a stakeholder by having only an excellent and elevated vocabulary, the base of the conversation is rooted in numbers and real information which can be materialized during the project implementation. It is possible to find investors with different cultural background who are not skilled in project management or even in general management, so your “intelligence in conversation” could be the premises for doing business. A stakeholder is the owner of the capital, he sometimes will have the attitude similar to a “lord of the project” and depends only by the persuasion and communications skills of project manager to create a working synergy with them. In most of the cases, the stakeholders are educated persons with an academic background, who are not interfere in project diachronic evolution, so the team can accomplish its goals.

The attention for identify and solve the problems is the cornerstone for the success of a project. There are a large variety of the problems and it is a titanic work to cope with them in an unobtrusive and decent manner. The technical problems are having a great importance for the future evolution, but under the aegis of technology and information, solutions always can be found. Another set off preoccupations is caused by the cross-cultural adaptation because cultures as a “collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede & Hostede, 2005) can be respected even are not always understood. There are feminine cultures with high degree of collaboration, like the Nordic Cluster, or dominant cultures, where the influence of the men is extreme for example Middle East, and the cross-cultural adaptation it is an imperative. The project manager must be highly skilled in communications for not molesting the sensibilities of the employers, because it is possible that the last ones to “create extra problems” by adding new requirements during the implementation phase. For example, when skyscrapers are built in the Middle East it not unusual to receive extra demands, like the construction of an unexpected heliport on top of the building. In this situation the project manager must be the person who is using lateral thinking, a controller but who can fully understand the human nature and can make compromises because it is customer oriented.

The objectives are a top priority because they are based on the analyses of concrete data, and the measurement of those could be the path for succeed. It is not recommended to have large and complicated objectives, because the logical framework matrix is a useful tool, but the success it is sometimes interconnected with a simple strategy and not with a variety of secondary goals.

The analyses of the risks, even we are talking about hazard risks, control risks or opportunity risks (Hopkin, 2010) is a form of recognizing the fact that we are dealing

with uncertainty in our contemporary world and even the best framework matrix can be affected by it. It is important to learn how to deal with the risk situations with the hope that in the future, the investments in business – risk management will be transformed in profit. The risk management can be controlled by using the SMART indicators, an “intelligent” acronym, who can be seen as always present in project management implementation (Fournier, 2017):

- Specific – every objective it is highly related with the final goal and is a helping tool in achieving the performance;
- Measurable – the actions are analyzed through performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative);
- Achievable – every “intelligent” objective is having its chance to succeed;
- Realist – are selected only those projects who can be transformed in successful actions;
- Time bounded – The best cost benefit relationship it is time related.

The SMART indicators are helping to run a project more efficiently, enhance the efficiency and take the unpredictable changes in the planification as part of the life. They are related with the risk management because only a morale booster leader can create a very complex team, communicative to everyone and capable to work under pressure. Exceeding the risks demand a performance orientation attitude which can be described as the “extend to which high level members of organizations and societies encourage and reward group members for performance improvement and excellence” (Chokkar et al., 2008). The persons must be dominated by persistence and high standards, giving hope, excellent experts in their domain of activities and most at all consultative. The risks can be solved through common actions, qualitative actions of and decisiveness in shifting actions.

3. The Benefits of Public Relations in Projects Development

The dissemination of information is an excellent condition for the implementation of the projects and it is recommendable to be selected a direct communication style since the beginning of the projects. The Public Relations (PR) are determined to catch every valuable information, so in Project Management (PM) it is necessary to know the feedback of your actions, to be focused on the reality. As secondary function of management “PR means responsibility and insight in establishing future

policies of information to acquire the most noble interests of an organization and its Public” (Newsom, 2010).

Through PR a public project is having the possibility to adjust his perception in the society and is helped to develop a trustworthy climate among the shareholders. In the corporative space, the communication is helping the managers to persuade the partners for having thrust in their strategy and to understand the particularities of the project. A good communicator it is in the same time a visionary person, he speaks about the future plans and not about what everybody knows. It is important to cope with the events but most important is to persuade (in a good sense) the partners in order to better cope to future events.

A good strategy of PR in Project Management is helping to implement an organized plan of action, to realize a synergy between the objectives of all the shareholders, to gain trust and to pass the unexpected situations. In this field it is very important to tell the truth and to offer a clear and correct image about the situation of the project. It is also very important for a team-leader to listen the team, to understand their concern and to create the future strategy after a dialogue with the most closed work-partners.

The harmony inside an implementation group is determined by the stiles of communications, and this cohesion is always a path for enhancing the performance. The true character of a team is the expression of the strength of the people and the personal opinions are affecting the quality of work.

It is the Project Manager’s responsibility to create respect and inclusion to valorize the honesty of each person as an excellent asset for the evolution of the work. The communication inside a project management team is creating a sense of conscience by sharing the responsibility and accepting the common goals in a united manner.

After the unity of the project team was strengthen, and the activity is progressing, the manager and the shareholders will promote the project to increase its value among the society. It is necessary to be presented in front of the public the respect for the regional values, because even a project is trying to implement new patterns of actions, those cannot create distrust among the people. By the way the publicity of a project is received by the shareholders will depend the long-term success of it. This means the creation of a continuous flow of communication between the PR of the project and the persons who will be interested in the future services. In essence, the best approach is the win-win strategy and the PR department is interested to increase the cooperation in a non-conflictive environment.

To succeed in the future planning the PR department of a project should be trustworthy, the first step in gaining the confidence and maintaining the reputation of the shareholders. It is impossible to implement a project after low performance in your field of activity, for example Lehman Brothers who provoked the financial crisis from 2007, will never be eligible for future financial planning. The credibility is of paramount importance in project management long term evolution and performance. The quality of the message transmitted is the expression of the good will and always will be adaptable to the necessities of the market. If a feedback it is received the possibilities for future collaborations can be started as soon as possible.

The most important projects (urbanism, infrastructure, political lobby etc.) are normally having a press agent who will constantly inform the public about the future intentions. A poor information will not control the audience, and only the publicity without feedback is not always the answer to increase the possibilities of communication. The two-way asymmetric communication is focusing on analyzing the feedback as central part for the future relations (Turow, 2014) and is a reliable win-win situation for a long-term partnership.

The PR department it is always in the front line of the management, so in the case of long term projects it is very recommendable to take the risks to some extent and not to be afraid to make informed declarations, because the PR specialist has better understanding of people and the business than the average project manager. An excellent communicator is helping the team to achieve results beyond given expectations, it is an articulate and persuasive person but always customer oriented.

For this department performance is paramount, the stability is seen only in the same equation with the success. The success is not an obsession for a good PR and either a selfish satisfaction, it is rather the harmonization of the plans between all the shareholders. A specialist in communication is seeking harmonization, a win-win situation because only a satisfied clientele is making the best promo among the future clients. It is not about to be the first it is about to be part of an integrated team (stakeholders, clients, managers, society) who has been achieved the highest level in a specific domain.

A skilled PR specialist is a person who, beside the educational background is having a natural ability to convince the others to follow his vision because he is a committed and self-confident person. In project management his vision is including the others, because his broad vision is always capable to improve the existing situation and to create real paradigm shifts. He must be an excellent team player, because every

project is like a beehive where everybody is knowing the importance inside the organized structure and can understand the process through flexibility and adaptability. At the end of this third part we can infer that it is recommendable to adapt the project objectives to the necessities of the shareholders and the message will be the perfect incentive for the future success.

4. Conclusions

An authentic project management strategy should be human oriented, inspired by reality and open to improvement in all its dimensions. A project is mastered only by dynamism and enthusiasm, good administration and clear vision with an equalitarian business ethic. For a project manager leader, communications skills are of paramount importance because helps him to become inspirational and to build confidence among the employees. A coaching attitude it is suited for the situations where it is possible to find inspirational persons with outstanding desire to make career in this field. We can infer that the project management it is a rule-based discipline and the decisions, the established procedures must be taken in a collaborative manner. The communication skills are good incentives to stop a domineering elitism from some managers with individualistic goals. Only the personal abilities to inspire the others by the power of your own example are demonstrating to have an excellence orientation and are strong incentives for being accepted by the team.

There are a wide variety of projects, a living proof of a cosmopolite variety of our global world and their success it is linked with communicational skills. The communication style could help a manager coming from abroad to be easily integrated in a working team and helped to achieve step by step the desired preformation. The in group based working rules are the effect of integration which cannot be achieved without proper dissemination of the objectives. The proper conversation is useful to decrease the differences based on gender and are helping in dealing with shareholders and working according to the strategies. An inspirational project manager will always realize the logical framework matrix respecting the plans but in the same time having a liberal approach. This article is not an exhaustive one, it only presents a very small part from the transformation which communication style is having on the project management approach. The importance of communication is central in business administration and particularly in management and leadership. The general trend in management is not to demand and in project management the tendency is for an increased collaboration based on excellent

communications skills, because only excellent communicators can perform in the complexity of the global cultural network.

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