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Passion & IT Governance

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Two case studies suggesting
IT project success is determined by the “passion” of senior management

Abstract

An exploratory study has been conducted of two case studies to try to understand how senior management influences IS project success. The cases were analysed using frameworks proposed by McGolphin and Ward (1997), Alter (1999), Cooke-Davis (2002) and Akkermans and van Helden (2002) and also comparing with other case studies in the IS literature. A significant component of the analysis relate to IT governance issues.

It appears that senior managers effectively influence success by committing time to be made aware of issues and actively participating to resolve conflicts effectively. The cases suggest that the Board should take the role of monitoring to ensure that the benefits promised are actually delivered and they have the responsibility to terminate failing projects.

It is proposed that the “passion” of key stakeholders for a project is the key indicator of success.

Keywords

Passion, commitment, accountability, Senior management support, Top management support, IT governance, IS success, IS failure, Benefits management, work systems

Introduction

There has been intensive IS research effort over four decades. Significant topics were¹ management (60% of citations), problems (20%), success (10%) and failures (2.8%).

As long ago as 1975, Lucas identified three problem areas: technical, organizational, and project management. He added that the major attentions had been on technical problems, in 1975 they were starting to focus on project management but *“the major reason most*

¹ Using ProQuest, a cross functional online data base, it was found that 60 percent of the IS/IT literature used the word "management". Slightly over 10 percent of the IS/IT literature used the terms "success" (7.4%) or "failure" (2.8%) directly and around 20 percent of the literature used a broader term "problems". These statistics are evidence of a widespread concern about the difficulties of realising benefits from investments in IS/IT and an appreciation that management is major part of the solution.

information systems have failed is that we have ignored organizational behaviour problems ...” [original emphasis].

Organisational issues are complex because there are a large number of highly interrelated factors that are difficult to mathematically isolate and determine causality. Many researchers have tried (Delone and McLean 1992; The Standish Group 1995) and although the attributes of success or failure may have been identified, causality was not established and it is not clear from the factor research how to realise success and avoid failures. A compounding problem is that the definition of success or failure has never been agreed (Seddon, Staples et al. 1999).

“Senior management support” has consistently been found to be important (McGolphin and Ward 1997; Schmidt, Lyytinen et al. 2001) and more recently has been recognised to be a ‘meta-factor’ that encompasses other factors (Poon 2001). With the rise of IT networks senior management support has moved from being just a critical success factor (Lucas 1975) to becoming the most critical success factor (McGolphin and Ward 1997; Ward and Peppard 2002) because the issues are no longer confined to users in a single business unit but across the entire organisation and across organisations.

Despite the increasing importance of senior management support, the IS literature however, has made almost no progress in developing explanatory theories of how senior managers and organisational issues actually influence IS/IT success/failure. Most IT practitioners feel that this commonly held heuristic could not be very far from wrong (Markus 1983) but the IS literature has been extremely sparse. The importance of senior management support was indicated through two case studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Schmitt and Kozar 1978; Rockart and Crescenzi 1984), confirmed in the 1990s (Jarvenpaa and Ives 1991) and only recently have attempts have been made to conceptualise it (Bassellier and Pinsonneault 1998; Bassellier, Reich et al. 2001).

Researchers have variously conceptualised senior management support as personal energy, providing resources & authority, recognition & monitoring, attitude, and participation & involvement but there is no consensus on which activities require executive participation (Bassellier and Pinsonneault 1998). Research has tended to focus on IT in general but there are two models which try to explain the influence of senior management support on IS projects (McGolphin and Ward 1997; Akkermans and van Helden 2002). They do however not clarify what senior managers actually do to have this influence. There are also two models which do not relate to senior management specifically, but are relevant because they attempt to explain how projects succeed in the context of an organisation (Alter 1999; Cooke-Davies 2002).

This paper is part of a PhD research project to understand how senior managers influence the success or failure of IT projects. The project has already built links from to the IS literature to the literatures of the Board and senior manager (corporate governance, risk management, organisational behaviour and IT governance) (Young and Jordan 2002). It intends to draw on existing case studies of IT success and failure to build theories of how the Board and senior managers influence the success or failure of an IT project. It is currently developing new case studies to describe governance practices in successful and less successful IT projects, to build theories and propose IT governance guidelines for the Board and senior managers.

This paper is a presentation of initial findings from two case studies undertaken as part of the larger research project. The cases were analysed using frameworks proposed by McGolphin and Ward (1997), Alter (1999), Cooke-Davis (2002) and Akkermans and van Helden (2002) and also draws from case studies in the IS literature.

Methodology

In this research, our objective is to test existing theories of senior management support and generate new theories. The case study method has been chosen for its strengths in exploratory, theory building research (Yin 1988; Eisenhardt 1989).

A number of cases have been undertaken as part of a PhD to explore the Board's role in the success and failure of IS projects, and as part of a Standards Australia working group to develop IT governance standards.

The main criterion in selecting cases for this study was that organisations had to have a reputation for successful IT projects (because there are already a number of well documented project failure cases in the literature). Nominations were initially sought from the members of the Standards Australia mailing list for IT Governance. This committee is composed of more than 100 of the more influential members of the IT community in Australia and members of the key management organisations such as the Institute of Company Directors, ASIC, APRA etc. Initially there were only two recommendations and with much prodding eventually 10 organisations were suggested. This implied that almost no organisations in Australia are consistently successful with IT projects.

The second major criterion for selecting cases was simply access. Of the 10 organisations suggested, cases were undertaken as access was given. As access was gained (through either personal contacts or through recommendations of members of the Standards Australia IT Governance committee), discussions were held with potential case study sponsors within each organisation. The main objective of the discussions was to identify a project that the organisation had undertaken and was considered successful. The case study would focus on the project but the intention was to try to include as much organizational context as possible and in particular describe respondents past experiences of success and failure and how the organisations IT governance practices had evolved as a response to these experiences.

Reliability was addressed primarily by having multiple sources of data. In the first case documented in this paper, there were two interviewers interviewing multiple members of the organisation, and findings were corroborated against project documentation and the case write up was validated with interviewees. Interviewees were recommended by an initial contact and others were added on the recommendation of the interviewees. In the second case in this paper, interviews were conducted with a single interviewer and tape-recorded and followed up with a review of project documentation. Further interviews conducted with the same people by a member of staff conducting a post implementation review. Interviewees have not yet validated the case, but it has reached the point of saturation where no new findings are being reported.

Interviews followed semi-structured frameworks customized for each interviewee. Essentially they asked for details of the organisation, the significance of the project, the project history, how and what decisions were made, and sought interviewee perceptions of why some things worked well and why others did not. An effort was made to allow the interviewee to describe and draw on their experience of other projects and each case study was used to gain an insight in all projects an interviewee had experienced.

At the time of writing, three case studies have been completed. Two cases were of similar projects (ERP implementations) with similar complexity and in similar sized organisations (approx \$100M annual revenue and less than 200 staff). The outcomes of the projects were

significantly different and the authors considered it appropriate to analyse them to see if the reason could be identified.

The analysis has deliberately chosen to underplay explanations of success or failure based on critical success factors because explanations based on these models have not shown themselves to be effective in increasing the success rates of IT projects. The analysis has chosen instead to use frameworks which attempt to explain how senior management influence IT projects (ie. McGolphin and Ward (1997), Alter (1999), Cooke-Davis (2002) and Akkermans and van Helden (2002)). The analysis has also drawn on well-known case studies of success and failure where relevant.

Firm X

Firm X has been in operation since 1920 in a niche market of the media industry. It has an extremely conservative culture and is organised functionally with limited interaction between departments. In 1996 a new CEO from the finance industry was appointed and he was successfully using technology to make the organisation more efficient. Y2K provided a convenient trigger to replace the financial system and further modernise the organisation.

A team of the organization's most senior managers chaired by the head of MIS was put together to evaluate the options. The CEO felt that he was too far away from the operations to be heavily involved in the final choice but he knew that ownership and commitment from the business was crucial.

The team travelled to various sites around the world to investigate different implementations. They saw their final choice as being the better system for their future because the next release was fully Internet enabled. The team felt "that it could do everything you could ever want it to do", but they would need to implement the current release as an intermediate step to meet Y2K requirements.

The reason for the final selection criteria was not however transparent to the organisation. "We never really understood why the ERP was selected or what it was supposed to achieve."

The preferred choice was presented to the Board, but they were unconvinced and wanted to know why they needed such a major system. The Board kept asking for more figures and delayed making the decision over many months.

In the process of obtaining approval the senior managers identified and individually signed off against \$6 million of benefits to be realised over 5 years. Consultants reported 'these savings as conservative ... reflecting only 50% of the available savings' but noted in the Board submission to justify the ERP "[Firm X] will need to re-engineer their processes to take advantage of the opportunity offered in the technology selected".

The Board "was eventually forced into making a choice by Y2K" but the delay "reduced the amount of time available to implement".

The project was subsequently implemented in two stages. Stage 1 was to meet Y2K compliance and stage 2 to implement the value adding processes. The nine-month deadline for implementation of stage 1 was very aggressive and the project followed their consultants methodology to select key staff for the project, and gave the project manager direct access to the CEO.

During stage 1, “the team was motivated, incentivised and driven to achieve Y2K compliance by the targeted date.” It was outstandingly successful being one of the fastest implementations in the world.

By stage 2 however, “the team was tired” and the issue of ownership was causing many difficulties. Steering committee minutes noted two risk items (potential loss of key staff and following up on business process reengineering) but these were allowed to stay open for the entire length of the project without resolution.

“Management were reluctant to get involved. It was sometimes difficult to get sign offs for software design changes and almost impossible to get commitment for changes in the business process. As a result, too many customisations were made to the ERP package to make it fit with the existing business processes.”

Sometimes there was ownership, but accountability for the results may not have been thoroughly considered. It is rumoured that during stage 2, some business users were pressured to sign off on design specifications that would not provide even the functionality of the existing systems. When queried about this one of the business unit managers said, “At the time, it seemed like the way to go”.

There was one particular manager who was particularly difficult. He would always state that he was committed to the project but he allowed the ERP to be implemented in his area with a number of shortcomings. This particular manager was very senior and a project team was unable to force issues with him. It became apparent that only the CEO had sufficient authority to resolve this matter but it was not clear that he needed to get involved until it was too late. It turns out that the manager disagreed with some of the early design decisions and felt that he was “being shouted down by the other members of the steering committee” so he withdrew psychologically from the process.

From a project management perspective, the project was an outstanding success. From a business perspective however, the project is only a moderate success. 2½ years after the implementation, only half of the promised benefits are expected to be realised, and this is less than a quarter of the potential benefits and the upgrade to the Internet enabled release has still not taken place.

Firm Y

Firm Y operated in the fast paced finance industry. From its roots as a finance department within the government, it had dramatically changed after being purchased by an investment bank in the late 1990s. It had trebled in size and many more times than this in complexity over 4 years and the rapid growth was imposing operational stresses on the organisation. The CEO was concerned because poor operational systems had undermined investor confidence in two competitor organisations. He personally recruited and appointed a COO and a business manager (BM) to review the situation and implement changes.

The BM started by interviewing all 40 staff to identify the major issues. He discovered they had bad systems, bad processes, bad support structure and inappropriate skill levels. A briefing paper was prepared but at the senior management meeting it became apparent to the CEO that the majority of the senior managers had not read it and were not able to fully participate in the discussion. The CEO decided the best way forward was for the BM to further summarise his work and identify the major projects that needed to be undertaken.

Eventually seven projects were identified, one of which was to replace or enhance the operations and accounting systems. The CEO officially sponsored the project and the COO took responsibility for implementing the seven projects.

The COO and the BM first developed a governance structure according to what they thought would work. They identified 10 key stakeholders who should be involved in the selection process, made the assessment that this group was quite large and decided to create a smaller steering committee consisting of the COO, the head of IT, the head of finance and the BM.

The BM then conducted three to four detailed interviews with each of the key stakeholders. The interviews formed the basis of a final requirements document with a prioritised list of functional requirements. Potential vendors were alerted of Firm Y's intentions but a number of major events lead to the project implementation to be deferred to the next financial year.

The delay had a number of beneficial effects. The workload increased and business users grew increasingly frustrated with the existing system. The need for a better system became firmly fixed in everyone's mind. The finance team was also extensively restructured with a new boss and many staff replaced with much higher calibre staff. The new appointments knew they would have responsibility for implementing a new system.

During this time, Board approval for the project was sought but it was initially rejected for budgetary reasons. The CEO and COO then spent significant time lobbying the board both individually and collectively to seek approval for the project. The input of the individual board members was actively solicited to allow them the chance to contribute to the project and feel that it was also theirs. They persisted because "It's a matter of passion and what you believe [needs to be done]".

Approval was eventually granted and the project was recommenced. During the kick off meeting the COO stated "this is the biggest project we are doing this year". This was particularly significant because the company had just completed a major acquisition that had almost doubled the size of the company yet the new system was considered an even bigger project. It was made individually significant with the addition of project performance objectives into each person's annual review criteria. "We were really strong with accountability. Everything was signed off."

The first key task was to review the software of potential vendors against the requirements document. None of the interviewees mentioned any difficulties except for the difference in preferences between IT and the business. "We had to work through issue by issue before IT signed off on the final package." The project manager was very risk oriented and always made sure that he and the key stakeholders understood what the package could not do.

The general approach followed was to discuss and try to convince. Many of the interviewees commented "we always felt like we were heard ... there were lots of meetings and sometimes they went over time [to discuss issues there were important to us]... we accepted the pressure to meet the deadline but we were never pressured into accepting something we couldn't accept".

There were times when the BM and the COO would be less conciliatory. The COO admitted to saying "we don't want to hear this sort of argument" and it was reported that the BM would occasionally put a user in his place based on his knowledge of the overall business process and not allow someone to insist on an inefficient current practice. The final choice was formally signed off by each of the ten key stakeholders and the overall sense was that everybody was satisfied because all the issues had been properly resolved.

The governance structure and the attitude of the decision makers was important. Sometimes senior management would formally acknowledge acceptance of certain risks, risks that the individual department could not accept. In these cases the BM would talk to the COO (who would in turn talk to others as necessary), get approval in principle, and formalise acceptance of the risk. In other cases, IT would develop a workaround solution even if it would cost them more time operationally.

In addition to the detailed functional analysis, the entire senior management team had attended a separate strategic briefing session with the potential vendors to evaluate their suitability as a long-term partner of the business. The vendor commented later on the level of support at such a senior level, "as soon as I walked in, I knew this would succeed".

After selecting the package, a detailed project plan was developed in conjunction with all the stakeholders and implementation commenced soon after. The project was very closely monitored against the project plan with daily informal communication and frequent review meetings in line with the governance structure. It was a very intense period with a few staff working past midnight seven days a week and the majority just working very hard.

The COO was constantly kept up to date but only intervened once when the project was slipping behind. He called a meeting of the responsible people and said "if you can't do it in time, we'll find someone who can". He said "you have to know how hard you can push having regard for people [their ability and what they are committed to achieve]... We had a desire to improve, we knew what we wanted from day one, and we had everyone's buy in".

Everyone was pleased with the outcome and the project team won a company award for outstanding work. It was on time and under budget. Almost all the business requirements were met (96% to 97%). The overall objective was met with a much higher level of confidence in the data. The accounting close off on the 31st December was a far cleaner process and the processes are maturing.

Analysis

Management’s role in success or failure

The assessment of success or failure depends on the perspective the stakeholder (Seddon, Staples et al. 1999). This paper is interested in the senior management perspective and will draw on the concepts of Lyytinen and Hirschheim (1987) and McGolphin and Ward (1997).

In project management terms both cases were on time and on budget thus avoiding ‘process failure’. In the case of Firm X, the project is even used a reference site by the vendor as one of the fastest implementations in the world. Despite the success at this level, it is arguably a ‘correspondence failure’, a failure to realise the stated objectives. It is arguable because in the mind of many senior managers, including the CEO, ‘this was never a business process engineering project’ and the objective was simply to ‘consolidate 23 separate systems’. This however is at variance with the BPR requirements stated in the board justification document.

This observation points to a deficiency in Firm X at the board level. They did not have a mechanism in place to monitor whether the management team delivered against their business case. The cases showed that senior management support at board level includes input in the development of a business case and authorizing funding for resources. In the case of Taurus, the failed London Stock Exchange trading system, the Board was somewhat dysfunctional in preventing escalation because of the need for an acceptable political reason to terminate the project (Drummond 1996). Keil (1995) argues that escalation is common with IT projects so it is postulated that **senior management support at board level includes input in the development of a business case, authorizing of funding, regular monitoring of delivery against the business case and responsibility for termination of projects.**

According to the McGolphin & Ward model (shown below), Firm X was only a moderate success while Firm Y was a success. The model suggests that the main reason for such a difference is whether responsibility for delivery of benefits was allocated to senior executives and whether there was a comprehensive approach to benefit management initiated in the planned phase.

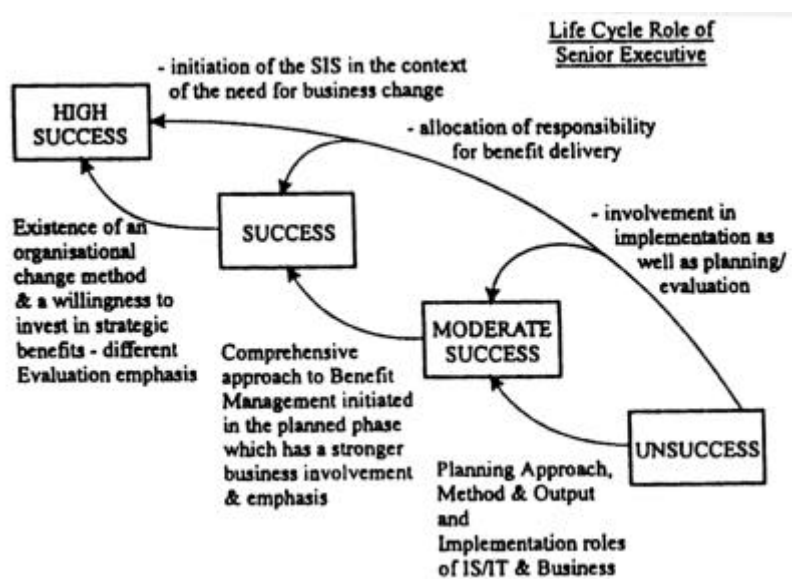


Figure 1: Senior management role in high success (McGolphin & Ward, 1997)

This explanation is insufficient to explain the difference in outcomes. Both firms allocated delivery of benefits to senior executives and although there were differences in level of detail, both had a business focus in the planning stages to identify the benefits to be realised.

The analysis will now look to the concept of work systems to see if they provide a better explanation for the difference in outcomes.

Work systems

Alter (1999) recognises that information systems are subsets of work systems and argues the business must take the lead to define what constitutes success.

Both Firm X and Firm Y would appear to be business-led. Their projects were CEO-led, and senior management were heavily involved in defining objectives and the selection of the package.

The main differences were that Firm X had more senior management input with its top down selection process while Firm Y was characterized by a few senior managers willing to get involved in detailed input of its staff. It is unclear how much difference this made, because managers in both firms were able to state what steps were required for the business. What is clearly different is that managers in Firm X conceptualised the objective in IS terms (i.e. the consolidation of 23 systems) while the managers in Firm Y stressed business activities. The COO and BM in Firm Y both emphasised that it was important that the business takes the lead to develop the requirements rather than IT.

It would seem that the level of business focus influenced the outcome and this may have been influenced by the willingness of senior management to involve themselves with operational details. **It is postulated that ‘correspondence success’ is predicated on the correspondence between the objectives communicated by senior managers to the organisation and the objectives communicated to the board.**

Neither organisation followed the work systems methodology advocated by Alter, yet Firm Y achieved a successful outcome. We will now look to the project management literature to see if it offers a plausible reason why.

Project Management

Cooke-Davis (2002) like Alter (1999), differentiates between the IS project and the business project. This is shown schematically below. He points to the need for the business to take ownership for realizing the benefits and like McGolpin and Ward prescribes an effective benefits delivery and management process. Cooke-Davis does not however describe the details of an effective process.

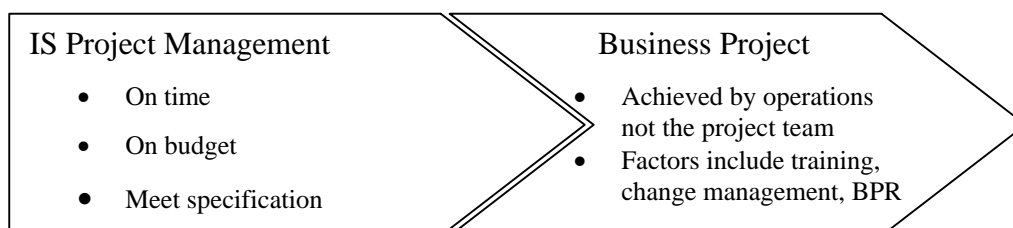


Fig 2: Differentiating between the IS project and the business project (Cooke-Davis, 2002)

A comparison of Firm X and Firm Y is instructive. Both projects had strong project managers, competent and highly motivated project teams and good methodologies. Cooke-Davis adds that risk management is also necessary for on time performance while scope control is necessary for on cost performance.

The tight management of scope change is confirmed in the cases but example of Firm X would appear to refute the need for risk management. Two key risk items were left open without resolution and they did eventuate with the anticipated negative consequences. It is highly plausible that the competence and dedication of the project team overcame the deficiencies of the governance processes to reach a moderate success.

It seems inappropriate however, to separate mechanisms to facilitate project management success and mechanisms to facilitate project success as Cooke-Davis has done. He has a project manager focus and his framework does not adequately recognize that if the business is to have real ownership of projects, conceptual frameworks must have a business orientation. **It is postulated that project management and risk management in the context of IT governance is the most suitable framework senior management can use to influence successful outcomes.**

The IT governance framework has an additional benefit in being able to address the factors Cooke-Davis has identified with organisations consistently realising successful projects (Portfolio management practices to fully resource a suite of projects that match the corporate strategy and business objectives, measurement of current project performance, anticipated future success and mechanisms to learn from experience).

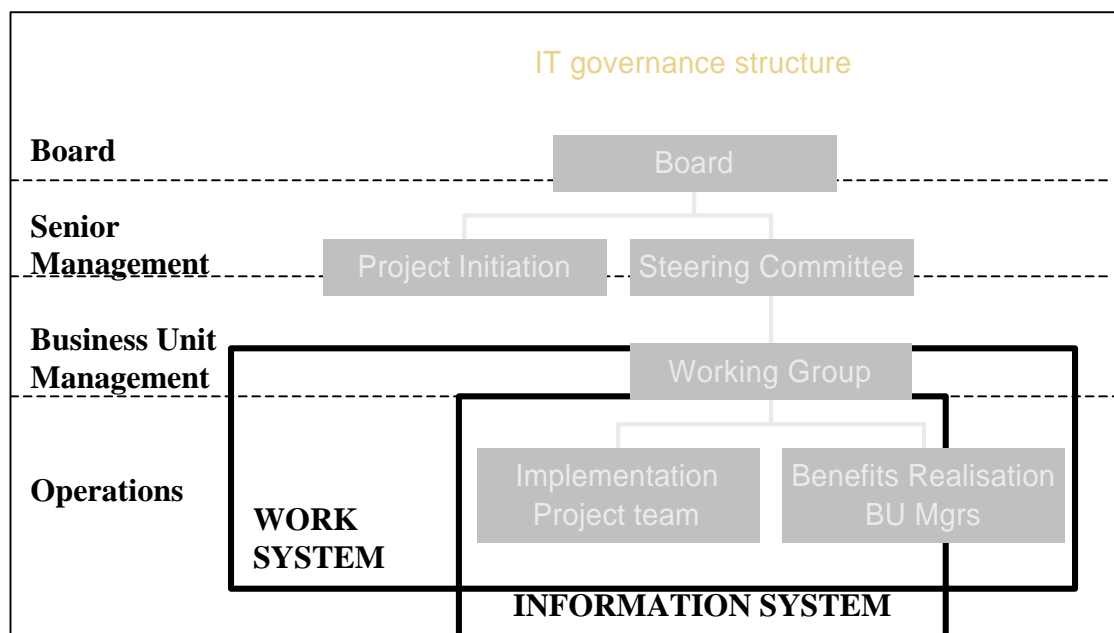


Fig 3: Relationship between IS project, work systems and IT Governance

The diagram above shows how the processes inter-relate structurally. IS project management occurs in the context of work system(s) in the horizontal dimension and affects mainly MIS and business unit operations. Risk management occurs in the vertical dimension through the IT governance process and spans stakeholders in all organisational levels.

IT Governance – structural & political frames

IT governance however is an emerging field with unclear directions. Keyes-Pearce (2002) has made the following assessment:

“Given confusion about IT governance, the already diversified notions in the literature, and the disparity of focus between academics and industry consultants as to why IT governance is of any importance, it would seem that the issues of transparency of decision-making and accountability for IT might be worthy of more attention.”

The authors believe the key issue to address is the different perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Firm X and Firm Y had very similar IT governance structures but they were much less effective in Firm X because the sponsor did not have the appropriate authority to guide the resolution of issues. This and the process followed by Firm Y demonstrates that effective IT governance structures are designed according to the political considerations of the people needing to be governed, their interests and the objectives to be realised.

It is postulated that mature IT governance is characterised by accountability to transparently resolve conflicts of interest between multiple stakeholders.

IT Governance - HR and symbolic frames

Bolman and Deal (1991) suggest that in addition to the structural and political frames discussed above, there are also human resources and symbolic frames of reference which need to be considered. The case studies of Firm X and Firm Y confirm this is the case particularly with the need to find the right people.

Firm X demonstrated that having good people was not enough. The previous discussion has also highlighted the importance of having effective governance structures but there seems to be another factor that is more important. Senior managers in both Firm X and Firm Y referred to it as ‘passion’ while less senior managers tended to describe this key success factor as ownership or accountability.

Passion indicates an emotional commitment. The implication is that passion determines how much detail you are willing to get into to make something work. Passion determines how hard you fight for a project to be funded and for the right people to be on the project. Passion determines how hard you are willing to sell a vision, how you motivate other people and influences how objectives are communicated.

It is postulated that the amount of passion / ownership / accountability (emotional commitment) managers have for a project determines success.

IT Governance and senior management support literature

The introduction noted that senior management support has become the most important success factor. It is plausible that ‘passion’ may be the meta-success factor that underpins success and this metaphor is the main contribution of this paper to the literature.

This modest contribution would not be complete without trying to understand how the ‘passion’ of senior management influences all the other success factors and influences successful outcomes. Akkermans and van Helden (2002) have developed inductively a model of how the top 10 critical success factors influence each other and tested the model against a case not unlike Firm X or Firm Y.

Their case was initially failing because it had an IT focus and tried implementing an ERP without changing the business processes. The project was turned around by refocussing on the business processes and gaining the active participation of senior management. Governance structure played a significant role in turning around the project but it was not recognized in the model proposed.

“the following rule was agreed by all parties concerned ... if a business issue remained unresolved after 5-10 minutes it would be flagged as a senior management issue ... [and a senior management team attended a workshop] where all these issues would be resolved”

Akkermans and van Helden proposed ‘the core process on any successful implementation consists of mutually reinforcing communication and collaboration between project team members from different departments and business functions’. They proposed that ‘if this core process ... is under-performing, it is highly likely that presence or attitude of several of the key stakeholders (top management, project management, project champion, package vendor) are also insufficient’.

The authors would argue that conflicts of interest almost always exist between departments and business functions hence communication and collaboration will tend not to be mutually reinforcing, especially with changes to information systems. The core process must therefore include both interdepartmental communication (horizontal) supported by IT governance (vertical) to facilitate collaboration. Senior management support therefore includes:

- Passion
 - Actively participating in shaping of an initiative to be personally meaningful (reaching an understanding of why it must be done and emotionally committing to getting it done)
 - Communicating the need
 - Monitoring progress, intervening where necessary
- Commitment of time to be made aware of issues.
- Active participation to resolve conflicts effectively.
 - Redefining issues (to align them with stakeholder interests and to explore alternative solutions)
 - Lobbying peers & superiors
 - Authorising / formally accepting risks (that subordinates cannot)
 - Providing funding and resources to resolve problems

The authors admire the model proposed by Akkermans and van Helden but do not feel that it is the right framework nor that it is concise enough to reach the senior management audience. The above points try to contribute to the senior management literature by proposing within an IT project governance framework the areas senior managers need to participate. It is not appropriate to go beyond this in this study to comment on senior management support of IT in general.

Summary

The propositions that have been developed through the analysis have been summarized and reformulated below.

Passion of competent people within an effective governance structure balanced by board oversight determines project success.²

Conclusion

While senior management support is often touted as essential for project success, this concept has seldom been operationalised in research studies. This study acts as an initial step in such an investigation.

An exploratory study has been conducted against two case studies to try to understand how senior management influence IS project success. The cases were analysed using frameworks proposed by McGolpin and Ward (1997), Alter (1999), Cooke-Davis (2002) and Akkermans and van Helden (2002) and also comparing with other case studies in the IS literature. It has suggested that a business-focussed project (rather than IT-focussed) can improve outcomes. It has also illustrated the link between senior management support and IT governance. It is proposed that senior managers support by committing time to be made aware of issues and actively participating to resolve conflicts effectively. It has also identified that the Board supports by monitoring to ensure the benefits promised are actually delivered and has the responsibility to terminate failing projects.

The existing success models based on critical success factors were found to be inadequate to explain the different degrees of success in the case studies. Another model was found to be too complicated. An alternative explanation is proposed based on the metaphor of the 'passion' of key stakeholders for a project, effective project governance structures and board oversight mechanisms.

² The relationships between this statement and the propositions as they were developed are shown below.

1. Passion / Ownership / Accountability
 - 1.1. It is postulated that the amount of passion / ownership / accountability (emotional commitment) of project stakeholders determines project success.
2. Of competent people
3. Within an effective governance structure
 - 3.1. that senior management support by
 - 3.1.1. Commitment of time to be made aware of issues.
 - 3.1.2. Active participation to resolve conflicts effectively.
 - 3.2. It is postulated that IT governance (including project management and risk management) is the most suitable framework for senior management to influence successful outcomes.
 - 3.3. It is postulated that mature IT governance is accountability to transparently resolve conflicts of interest between multiple stakeholders.
4. Balanced by Board oversight
 - 4.1. senior management support at board level includes input in the development of a business case, authorizing of funding, regular monitoring of delivery against the business case and responsibility for termination of projects.
 - 4.2. It is postulated that 'correspondence success' is predicated on the correspondence between the objectives communicated by senior managers to the organisation and the objectives communicated to the board.
5. determines success.

The research was conducted within the limitations of the case methodology. One such limitation is the identification of organisations that are genuinely better than others. Further case studies should be undertaken to develop theories and seek theoretical generalization. It may also be possible to develop or find measures of 'Passion' as a key indicator of success, but it seems prudent to seek theoretical generalization before developing any prescriptive models.

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