



The Human Factor as a Project Risk!?

Has your company ever been involved in projects that just didn't want to progress? Projects that started with great ideas and big goals, but still haven't made it past the test stage or have been completely abandoned altogether?

The University of Cologne surveyed companies on the success of corporate-wide Supply Chain projects: More than 50% of these projects were abandoned before completion or did not meet the project objectives!

The reasons for this, you might say, are clear - such as failures on the part of project management or not enough qualified members in the project team. Not the case - this survey stated that the main reasons Supply Chain projects failed were without exception due to the human factor: Differing views of the project objectives, unconvinced members in the project team or not enough support from management in carrying out a project were the most common factors leading to the success or failure of projects.

And how a project begins is often all too human. The salesperson tries to trick the project planner to come to a lower estimate for the total amount of work. The project planner knows this game and, in turn, estimates the total amount of work to be twice as much or more. The salesperson makes the next move, once again lowering the estimated amount of work. The customer takes the salesperson's word on how much work there is to do and when it will be completed, and is also deceived. The reason is - from the start - these promises cannot be kept. The project team has to deal with this situation and is now confronted with "motivating" challenges because of it, such as finishing a two-year project within a six-month timeframe. Top management quickly removes all doubt about the project, enthusiastically promising complete support for the duration of the project. But not too long after the project has begun, this support often disappears again - the scope and duration of the project are simply ignored and management usually just doesn't have the time to keep its eye on the project.

There are surely a number of you who could speak of experience like this – but what is really the cause?

The human factor plays a crucial role in every project. Human relations and communication have a great impact on the success or failure of projects. The human factor as a project risk can often be minimized using simple, targeted measures: At the beginning of a project, for example, it is helpful to pay very careful attention in putting together the team as well as to agree on rules for communication. Team events and trainings during the course of the project can also lead to considerably improved collaboration. For particularly sensitive projects, it is recommendable to hire a coach whose only task is to ensure positive relations and communication within a project.

On this note, I would like to wish you much success in "risk minimization" and many more successful projects in the future.

Yours,
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