

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT - APPROACH AND METODOLOGY

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### Abstract

Project management can be understood as the science, art or technique of achieving a certain goal. Its implications are not fully understood, although its importance in company development is undisputable. Therefore, we will present in this paper several aspects that will bring light upon notions like: project, project finality, project complexity, success premises, project launching.

### 1. Introduction

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has made all industry, trade and service companies face fierce competition on the global market and they had to use all their ability of innovation, organization and administration in order to survive. When striving for success creativity is an important, but not sufficient, asset. This potential needs to be accompanied by rigorous administration and flawless organization.

How to develop your business when you have to react very fast to change, what is the complexity, the inconveniences that appear when the politics, the values, the culture, the laws of social interaction are questioned? Creativity enables entrepreneurs to overcome a paradox: cutting investments to ensure survival on the market and launching cheaper products to ensure competitiveness.

Project management helps in overcoming this paradox by orienting the investment efforts involved towards a target and by combining the attention for details with creativity.

Therefore, a global vision of the project is necessary. In practice, we need to be able to develop a right methodology and to successfully apply in our project.

When technology and client requirements are stable, the key factor is performance at every level of a company. And since fast reaction to environment changes has become an important competition element, department coordination is essential.

General vision consists of planning the phases of the project, so that all the departments are involved simultaneously and the communication between them is augmented. Several domains of observation need to be taken into consideration:

#### CULTURE

- Fundamental principles
- Vocation

#### POLITICS

- Objectives
- Ambitions
- Values

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying decisions</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctrine and models</li> <li>• Guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions</li> <li>• Accomplishments</li> <li>• Results</li> <li>• Instruments</li> <li>• Management, project development</li> </ul>

*Fig. 1 Observation domains*

## 2. What is a project?

A project is basically the expression of a will, intention or ambition. It is also the expression of a necessity, of a future state ardently desired [1].

Any work, as a creation of the human mind, involves goals, objectives, actions, competences, means of evaluation and results, and can, therefore, become a project. From this point of view a project consists of argumentation, technology and evaluation of the activities necessary to achieve a fixed goal [2].

A company, nowadays, cannot afford to lose projects because they will slowly lose their profitableness, credibility, efficiency and their chances in front of the competition.

But satisfying this necessity is not enough. A project corresponds to the intention of mobilizing energies with the purpose of creating and developing interdisciplinary teams in an autonomous manner and in concordance with different specializations required by the project. These correspond better to the market and clients' requirements.

Working on a project basis implies putting into practice a methodology that determines company managers to conduct their business differently and to reanalyze the organizational structure.

The methodological content of the project is a preventive method with the role of minimizing the incompatibilities and organizing the team work. Therefore, it's not enough that the teams be created.

As we pointed out before, in order for a project to exist it has to start as a concept in the mind of a person or a group. At this point it is often a utopia, more or less far from reality. This incompatibility can be translated into a time gap that can take from a few months to several decades.

For a project to become reality two conditions have to be met:

- the decision of the project initiators to turn it into life
- the ability of overcoming obstacles that rise against the project; these obstacles can be psychological, social, economical and technical.

A project also responds to specific ambitions and intentions.

Project management and development are not arbitrary, because, when finished, it is a source of satisfaction for the participants (recognition, overcoming one's limits, confidence etc.). These aspects offer the energy necessary to overcome obstacles.

At a more pragmatic level, the project very often serves a technical, economical or social goal. It can refer to the identity, patrimony, company or individual actions.

	Human coordinate	Economic coordinate	Technical coordinate
<b>Premises</b>	- behavior and attitudes - management - personal development	- position - profitableness	- abilities and potential - innovation capacity
<b>Assets</b>	- human resources - mobilization - competences - organization	- market segment - financial resources	- technical patrimony - production units
<b>Actions</b>	- techniques and rules - social projects - formation	- plans of action and projects - new ideas	- new competences - new products

Table 1. The project and its relation with the enterprise

### 3. The finality and the complexity of a project

The finality of a project means, in the first place, solving a problem, innovating, changing (the organization, the practices, the methods), anticipating (a situation, a difficulty, a risk) so that a transition is made from the current unsatisfactory situation to a better one.

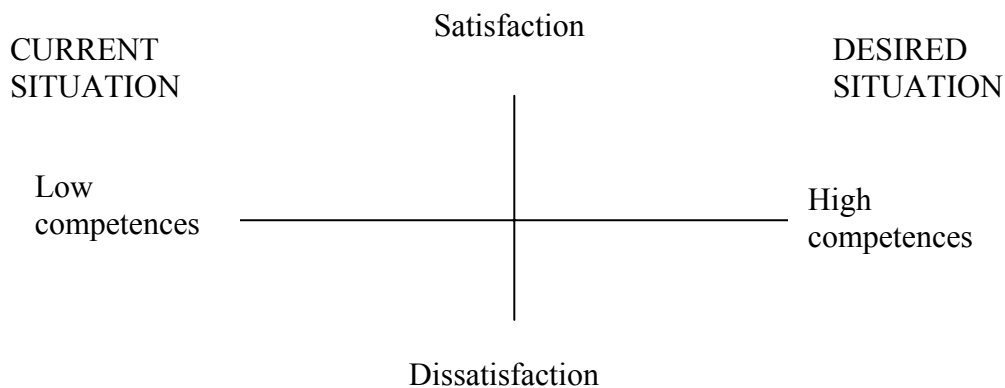


Fig. 2 Satisfaction as a project result

The project contributes to putting into practice a strategic plan. The project enables the development of:

- synergy, through a better use of the internal competences

- team spirit, since all the team members share responsibility for a common objective and therefore need to work together
- internal communication

Moreover, a project contains the changes necessary to overcome a blocking situation and requires a plan of action. A plan of action means visualizing the way of acting in the pursuit of the established goal and the expected results. It consists of:

- methodology
- knowledge, tools, technical, economic, human resources

The difficulty and complexity of a project depends both on the number of dimensions taken into consideration and on the distance between the project and reality.

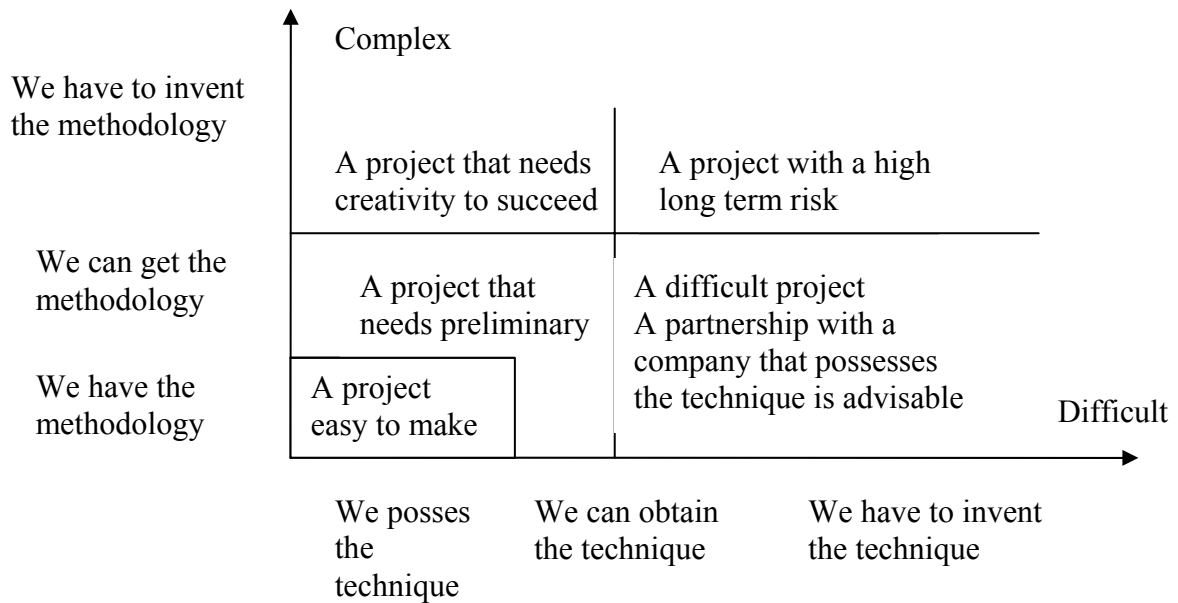


Fig.3 Difficulty and the complexity in a project

#### 4. Success premises of a project

The first condition is the *will to succeed*. Generally, it is understood as an intention or ambition that directs the company towards what it aspires to be. In most cases, the will to succeed offers the enterprise a fixed direction and, in needed, reorients its vocation.

The expression of the will and ambition of a project is a discourse that describes a desired, even ideal, future situation. But this discourse will always face a difficulty: the comparison that the participants (team members) will make between current reality and the goal of the project. Therefore, the discourse might lose credibility. We recommend that the following suggestions be used for a more convincing discourse:

- understand the importance of involving the participants in the discourse
- don't hide the distance between the actual and the desired situation, but try to explain it instead

- demonstrate the actual involvement of management:
  - by putting into practice the activities that promote change
  - by an interrogative attitude
- introduce a system of evaluation the success of all participants
- recognize and put into good use the actions that get the team closer to the goal.

The second premise of success is the *accuracy of the design*. To well understand the situation, the management needs to have all the data regarding the internal and external problems. This involves knowing the internal and external warranties in case of success or failure, the obstacles that have to be overcome, the chances of success, the available or potential resources and, last but not least, the will to face obstacles and find solutions.

The third condition is related to *project management*. Leading a project implies seeing further, knowing the destination, the way, the tendencies, the obstacles to be avoided, the team and how to motivate it. The basic rules include: knowing when to launch a project and to guide its evolution, to follow its development beyond temporary success or failure.

## 5. Project launching

The launch of a project stands between two time limits: the initiation of the project and the moment of finalization.

<b>UPSTREAM DEVELOPMENT:</b>
EXPRESSING THE WILL FOR DEVELOPING THE PROJECT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- content (ambitions, will, options)</li> <li>- background (limits, constraints)</li> <li>- participants (decisions, understandings, implications)</li> <li>- expected results</li> <li>- conditions of contract</li> </ul>
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS DIAGNOSTIC PROBLEMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- current situation</li> <li>- desired situation</li> <li>- differences</li> <li>- success conditions, failure probability</li> </ul>
STRATEGIC THINKING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing a plan</li> </ul>

<b>LAUNCHING THE PROJECT</b>
DEFINING THE PROJECT AND THE PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- establishing the final objectives</li> <li>- intermediate objectives</li> <li>- activities and the way to accomplish them</li> </ul>

- methodology
- defining the mission
- organization
- management

#### **DOWNSTREAM DEVELOPMENT**

##### **MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROJECT**

- communication inside the project boundaries
- launching the project
- putting the actions into practice
- development
- evaluation
- updating

*Fig. 4 Project development milestones*

## **6. Conclusions**

Accessing the impressive number of not reimbursable funds offered by the European Union represents a real challenge for the public administration and for Romanian private companies.

This objective can be reached only by institutional construction at European standards, by encouraging the public-private partnership and by training management experts, including project managers.

## **References**

- [1] Raynal, S., "Le management par projet", Les Éditions D'Organisations, 1996
- [2] Cocârlă, T., Pocinog, G., "Metode și tehnici moderne folosite în conducerea și organizarea întreprinderilor", Editura Facla, Timișoara, 1983