

Project and project management success criteria and factors



by Søren Porskrog, MBA, SCPM

The first three articles of this series investigated organisational success factors and criteria. This month the focus is on 'project' and 'project management' (PM) success criteria and factors. Next month Søren will compare his developed reference model with existing project management maturity models before wrapping up the series.

Project success criteria and factors

Dinsmore and Cooke-Davies put it very simply by stating that the ultimate success criteria are that all benefits have been realised to the stakeholders' satisfaction. In reality, they say the same as Turner (1999, 2005) and Wateridge (1995) before them (see below).

The success factors (11) of benefit realization seem to be:

- Systems that provide benefit realization data and information for projects and programmes are in place (Stanford University/IPsolutions),
- Information is readily available for the measurement of project and programme implementation effectiveness (benefit realization),
- The existence of an effective benefit delivery and management process that involves the cooperation of project management and line management functions (Cooke-Davies, 2001, PMI, 2006a).

Whereas the factors needed to achieve stakeholder satisfaction (12) are:

- To gain commitment from involved parties (Andersen et al., 2003; Turner, 1999, 2007),
- No bureaucracy (Baker et al, 1988),
- Client consultation, client acceptance and communication (Pinto and Slevin, 1988),
- The ability to handle conflicts and information (Lechler, 1998).

Table 1: Project success criteria compared

Dinsmore and Cooke-Davies (2006)	Turner (1999, 2005)	Wateridge (1995)
All benefits realised	Meets specification: functionality, flexibility, reliability, availability, maintainability, elasticity, security Achieves purpose	Meets user requirements, achieves purpose, commercial success
Stakeholders satisfied	Owner, sponsor, consumers, users, champion satisfied	Happy sponsor, happy users

Cooke Davies' worldview (2001)	Andersen et al. (2003); Turner (1999; 2007); Pinto and Slevin (1998); Baker et al. (1988); Lechler (1998)	IPsolutions (2005)
All benefits realised	Existence of an effective benefit delivery and management process that involves the mutual cooperation of project management and line management functions	Systems are in place that provide benefit realisation data and information for projects & programmes Information is readily available for the measurement of project & programme implementation effectiveness
Stakeholders satisfied	Gain commitment from involved managers No bureaucracy Client consultation Client acceptance and communication Handle conflicts and information Agree the success criteria with all the stakeholders before you start and continue to do that throughout the project	Management leadership assure support for smooth implementation of project & programme outputs based on stakeholder needs Managers and leaders of the organisation maintain continuity throughout the early phases of project implementation in operations

Table 2: Project success factors compared

Stanford University/IPsolutions put it another way, as they argue that management and leadership must ensure support for the smooth implementation of project and programme outputs based on stakeholder needs, and that this requires continuity throughout the early phases of project implementation.

In reality, they are all saying the same thing. All that these authors have found are the components needed if management is supposed to ensure support for smooth implementation.

The factors of successful benefit realisation and stakeholder satisfaction can be summarised as follows:

The smooth commissioning of projects to operations seems very important as it shows the role the interface between projects and operations plays for both stakeholder satisfaction and benefit realisation.

PM success criteria and factors

To distinguish project success from project management (PM) success may seem somewhat artificial. However, stakeholder satisfaction and benefits realised reach beyond the bounds of the project life cycle, whereas the time, cost, quality, scope, technical performance, safety and project team satisfaction (Turner, 1995; Wateridge, 1995; Dinsmore and Cooke-Davies, 2006; PMI, 2004) are all success criteria that are tightly linked to the efficiency of the 'pure' PM processes.

The success factors can be grouped into two major groups:

- Factors tightly linked to the factors already identified
- Factors linked to the traditional technical PM processes (13)

The first group consists of factors like capable project leader and team, participation and cooperation, adequate resources and funding and top-management support (Cooke-Davies, 2001; Andersen et al., 2003; Turner, 1999; Baker et al., 1988; Pinto & Slevin, 1988 and Lechler, 1998). All of these factors are linked to the identified leadership, culture, and HR practices.

The second group can be summarised as follows:

- Projects are managed by a well-established process that is supported by sound fundamentals of project management.

Figure 1: A reference model for organisational performance in project-based environments

- The IS tracks project progress and provides the information project managers need to make real-time decisions.

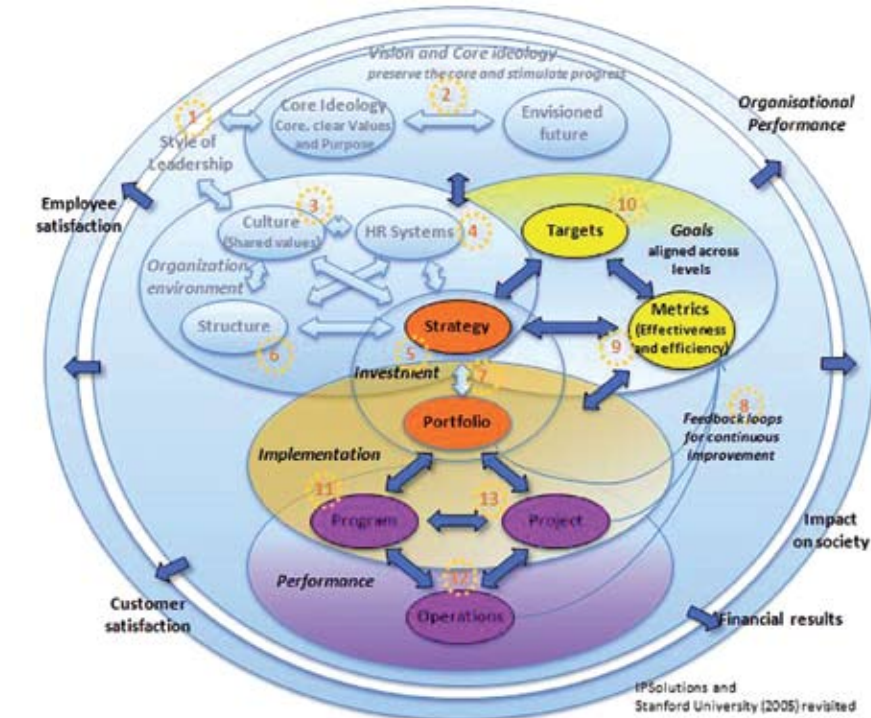
A model for success in project-based organisations

I showed in the last two articles how leadership, vision, cultures, HR systems, strategy and structure contribute to the success and performance of the project-based organisation. In this article, we have briefly looked at what is needed at the project level to achieve success and how the traditional technical PM process contributes to the efficiency of projects. This can now be summarised in the revisited Stanford University/ IPSolutions model for organisational project management maturity:

As this model seems to cover all the factors needed to achieve organisational success and performance, when this is achieved through a web of projects, this will form the baseline against which a selection of existing organisational project management performance models will be evaluated. This evaluation will be the topic of the next article.

References

Andersen, E. S. and Jessen, S. A. 2003. Project maturity in organisations. *International Journal of Project Management*. 21 (6), 457-462.
 Baker, B.N., Murphy, D.C. and Fisher, D. (1988) 'Factors affecting project success' in: D.I. Cleland and W.R. King (eds.) *Project Management Handbook*. New York: Wiley, 1988, 902-19.
 Cooke-Davies, T.J. (2001) *Towards Improved Project Management Practice: Uncovering the evidence for effective practices through empirical*



research. PhD Thesis. Cranfield University, School of Management.
 Dinsmore, P. C. and Cooke-Davies, T. J., 2006. *The Right Projects Done Right! From Business Strategy to Successful Project Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
 Lechler, T. (1998) 'When it comes to project management, it's the people that matter: An empirical analysis of project management in Germany', *Proceedings of the IRNOP III Conference*, Calgary.
 Pinto, J. K. and Slevin, D. P. 1988. Critical success factors across the project life cycle. *Project Management Journal*. 19 (3), 67-75.
 PMI, 2004. *A guide to the project management body of knowledge (PMBOK guide)*. 3rd edition. Newtown Square, Penn., USA: Project Management Institute.

PMI, 2006a. *The Standard for Program Management*. Newton Square, PA, USA: Project Management Institute.
 Turner, J. R. (ed.), 1995. *The Commercial Project Manager*. London: McGraw-Hill.
 Turner, J. R., 1999. *The Handbook of Project-Based Management*. Second edition. London: McGraw-Hill.
 Turner, J. R. 2005. Investing in project performance. *Project Manager Today*. February, 12.
 Turner, J. R. 2007. Leadership & Projects – Project success: success factors. *Project Manager Today*. February, 14-17.
 Wateridge, J. 1995. IT projects: A basis for success. *International Journal of Project Management*. 13 (3), 169-172.

© 2008 *Project Manager Today* All rights reserved. By downloading this pdf file the recipient agrees to use this information for personal use only and may print one copy. This pdf may not be copied, altered, or distributed to other parties without the permission of the publishers. First published in this form in *Project Manager Today*.