



# Study on the Role of Project Manager in Improving the Project Performance

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## Abstract

A project manager is the person who has the overall responsibility for the successful initiation, planning, design, execution, monitoring, controlling and closure of a project. Project manager is responsible to complete the project within time, cost and quality towards making the project a success. Construction industry plays an important role in the economy of the country. The industry, however, is beset with many challenges, including delivering projects within cost, time and quality. Therefore project manager is a critical resource in the project to achieve its objectives. Sadly, the role of the project manager is often overlooked. It is assumed that the leadership role of the project manager is measured against time, cost, quality, and customer satisfaction. The importance of this study is to find various roles that project managers ought to play for improving project performance. Good project management practices and competent project managers always deliver better result.

**Keywords:** Project manager, construction industry, responsibility, project performance

## Introduction

A project manager has to be professional in project management. Project managers can have the responsibility of the planning, execution and closing of a project. Project managers are organized, passionate and goal oriented, and their strategic roles drive the project to be succeeded. A project manager is the person responsible for leading a project from its inception to execution. This includes planning, execution and managing people, resources and scope of the project. Project managers must have the discipline to create clear and attainable objectives and to see them through to successful

completion. The project manager has full responsibility and authority to complete the assigned project. Project managers must have the ability to influence other team members in a very personal way. According to Bresnen and Marshall (2011), one of the ways of influencing other team members is presented in the form of feedback provided to subordinates.

Teo and Loosemore (2011) identified four critical factors related to projects. These include project management, project manager, organization, and the external environment. Project management was related to size of projects, its life cycles,

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competencies and skills of project members, support of top management, organizational structure and political, economic, social, and technological issues. Sami Consulting (2013) who identified project management as the most important critical success factor in construction projects and considered project management to be composed of strategy, people, process, schedules, resource and budget allocation and management of risk, tools, standards, and procedures.

Interest in project management is growing significantly these days. It is important to take for upgrading and enhancing the management capability is vital for growth and expansion in the construction industry. The management is the ability of managers who are able to manage risks that occur in the construction sector. Effective project management techniques are important to ensure successful project performance. The project managers are responsible for the overall success of delivering the project within the constraints of cost, schedule, quality and meeting the requisite safety requirements.

### **Objective of the Study**

Identify the competency skills that a project manager should have to influence a successful project performance.

### **Role and Responsibilities of Project Manager**

A project manager is one, who looks into the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to plan, organize, manage and control the various project processes. A project manager is the person who has the overall responsibility for the successful planning and execution of a

project. In most cases, a single project manager is accountable to the success of a project and is responsible for its planning, allocating, directing and controlling project activities. The roles and responsibilities of a project manager differ from company to company. Jha (2013) said that the main role of a project manager lies in the preconstruction stage where planning is the key task. Here the main role of the project manager is the preparation of schedule in accordance with the target, project requirement, and allocation of resources, plan review, and goal setting. It is important to understand the role of a project manager in a company or organization. Some role and responsibilities of a project manager are:

- To make ensure that the customer is satisfied, the work is completed in a quality manner within the budget and time.
- To run day to day business.
- To provide leadership in planning, organizing, and controlling the work effort.
- To coordinate the activities of various team members.
- To motivate the team.
- To plan, control and monitor the project effectively to meet objectives within the constraint of resources.

### **Project Performance**

It is the project management concept where project efforts must be aligned with the strategic long term goals of the organization. Project should be completed in accordance with specific objectives which involve the utilization of resources. The project success is a complex and

often misleading, which primarily depends on effective project implementation. A successful project management implementation leads to overall successful of project performance.

### **Essential Skills of a Project Manager**

#### **a. Planning**

One of the key leadership skills that project managers need to develop is planning and goal setting. Planning is the ability to set goals and then formulate action steps to achieve that goal. Turner (2012) in fact considered planning to be the creating expression of a leader. Project Managers needs to deeply understand what the project requirements are and then accordingly plan, clearly define the project objectives, reaches agreement with the customer and communicate this objective to the project. He or she develops policies in-order to help the team understand clearly what is expected from them and how it will be achieved. Planning is an essential duty of a project manager to determine what needs to be done, who is going to do it, and when it needs to be done. Some key planning duties include:

- Define and clarify project objectives.
- Develop the project plan.
- Develop the project schedule.

#### **b. Organizing**

Organizing is about setting up the project team's structure. In this stage, project manager needs to plan the team structure based on organization resources available. It covers all the personal resources required either as a full-time or part time. Some of the key organizing duties include:

- Determine the organizational structure of the project team.
- Identify roles and positions.
- Decide which tasks should be done in-house and which to be done by subcontractors or consultants.
- Define team hierarchy and define roles precisely to each human resources involved and delegate authority.
- Create an environment in which individuals are highly motivated.

#### **c. Leadership**

A project manager is expected to be a good leader of a chosen group of people working for a common objective. These people may belong to various functional disciplines who are guided by the leader. Project manager's success is at managing the project that is dependent on project manager's competence, particularly the leadership comprising emotional intelligence, management focus as well as intellectual capabilities. Drucker (2010) said that decision-making abilities, intelligence, and communication skills are essential traits of any leader. Some of key leadership abilities of project manager include:

- Coordinate activities across different organizational function.
- Inspire the people assigned to the project.
- Establishes the parameters and guidelines for what needs to be done.
- Involves and empowers the project team.
- Keep team motivated by setting clear cut targets and transparency in the system so that all of them are well informed and

perform to their best.

- Creates a supportive working environment.
- Fosters motivation through recognition.
- Sets the tone of trust, high expectations, and enjoyment.
- Has self-confidence and inspires confidence.
- Leads by making things happen.
- Conflict resolution as it happens in most of the project.

#### **d. Controlling**

Controlling is all about keeping the project on track. Any plan, encounters various problems during implementation phase. Some key controlling functions include:

- Defining project baselines.
- Measuring project progress.
- Track actual progress and compares it with planned.
- Takes immediate action if progress or costs change.
- Project status reporting.
- Finding faults and take corrective measures to overcome loop holes causing the project delay.

#### **e. Management Knowledge and Skills**

Managers consider some management skills as being more important than others. These pertain to management of time, quality, contracts, inventory, and finance. Some management skills include:

- Finance and accounting;
- Sales and marketing;
- Research and development;

- Manufacturing and distributions;
- Strategic planning;
- Tactical planning;
- Operational planning;
- Organization structures;
- Organizational behavior;
- Personnel administration;
- Managing work relationships.

#### **f. Technical Knowledge and Skills**

The project manager absolutely does not need to know how to do everyone's tasks within the project, but needs to appreciate all the processes being carried out and be able to confidently challenge others at a level of informed understanding. Technical aspects of the project management role would include computer skills, project management tools, technical tools, as well as knowledge of construction equipment.

#### **g. Team Building**

According to Kwakye (2012), project managers have to have the ability to build team. Team building is essential to make everyone in the team understand why decisions have been taken and communicate key expectations, foster learning, and knowledge sharing. It is the ability to work with and through other people. The project manager is a key ingredient in the success of a project with:

- Committed to the training and development of people.
- Uses the project to add value to each person's experience base.
- Believes that all individuals are valuable to the organization.
- Stresses the value of self-improvement.

- Provides opportunities for learning and development by encouraging individuals to assume the initiative, take risks, and make decisions.
- Provides assignments that require individuals to extend their knowledge.
- Identifies situations in which less experienced people can learn from more experienced people.
- Ability to develop people.
- Good interpersonal skills.

#### **h. Communication Skills**

Communication refers to the ability of project managers to listen, understand, and persuade others. Effective and frequent communication is crucial. Some communication skills include:

- Communicate regularly with the project team, subcontractors, customer, and own upper management.
- A high level of communication is especially important early in the project.
- Good oral and written communication skills.
- Spend more time listening than talking.
- Establish ongoing communication with the customer.
- Communication should be timely and honest.
- Effective communication establishes credibility and builds trust.
- Provide timely feedback to the team and customer.
- Create an atmosphere that fosters timely and open communication.

#### **i. Interpersonal Skills**

- Good interpersonal skills are essential.

- Develop a relationship with each person on the project team.
- Try to learn about the personal interests of each individual without being intrusive.
- Should use open-ended questions and do a lot of listening.
- Empathize with individuals when special circumstances arise.
- Maintain relationships throughout the duration of the project.
- Use good interpersonal skills to try to influence the thinking and actions of others.
- Use good interpersonal skills to deal with disagreement..

#### **j. Ability to Handle Stress**

- Cannot panic; remain unruffled.
- Able to cope with constantly changing conditions.
- Act as a buffer between the project team and the customer or upper management.
- Have a good sense of humor.

#### **k. Problem Solving Skills**

According to Skoyles (2011), project managers who are also leaders must have the ability to make informed judgments where they use data and experience to draw conclusions and make decisions that lead to the solution of problems when they arise. Early identification of a problem or potential problem is important. Encourage project team members to identify problems early and solve them on their own.

#### **l. Time Management Skills**

- Have self-discipline.
- Be able to prioritize.

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- Show a willingness to delegate.

### **Developing the Skills Needed to Be a Project Manager**

According to Barnes (2011), empowering of project managers is critical for them to assume leadership position, because they do not play the roles of implementers or managers only, but also take decisions and delegate authority. They have an enhanced role to play in the control and distribution of resources and give them more freedom and flexibility of action. By empowering project managers, project standards can be enforced, discipline maintained, and all aspects of the project appropriately monitored. Gain experience work on as many projects as you can; each project presents a learning opportunity.

- Seek out feedback from others.
- Conduct a self-evaluation and learn from your mistakes.
- Participate in training programs.
- Join organizations, such as the project management institute.
- Read and subscribe to journals.
- Volunteer and contribute to the community or a specific cause to develop leadership skills.
- Keep in mind learning and developments are lifetime activities there's no finish line.

### **Conclusions**

In order to increase the project performance, which is increasingly complex in nature, it is essential for project managers to be able to use a variety of managerial skills. The most important knowledge and skills that a project

manager should have are: planning, organizing, monitoring, control, leadership, problem solving, communication, developing people, time management, etc.

The role of the project manager in improving the projects performance and techniques to the organization is to control all aspects of the project and to optimize the use of resources to produce a well designed and soundly constructed facility which will meet the client's requirements of function, cost, time and future operation as well as maintenance.

Overall, how the project will shape and reach its desired goal depends upon the skill-set of project managers and the entire systems rely heavily on his human management qualities. It is important for the project manager to be well experienced, qualified, and technically competent. However, it is also equally important for the project manager to possess good communication, influencing, team building, problem solving, conflict resolution, planning and goal setting, visioning, and human skills. The performance of a project is measured in terms of time, cost, quality, and customer satisfaction. The projects handled by the project manager having these skills results in better project performance.

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