

Project Centric without Project Management

To increase profitability and efficiency, more small and medium organisations are transforming to project centric operations. Unfortunately, many attempt the transformation without the dedicated project management resources and principles, resulting in perceived failure of the approach.

All organisations are under constant competitive pressures requiring the need to adapt and evolve and the progressive are turning to the project centric approach. The most forward thinking leaders have adopted the project centric approach, providing the ability to rapidly adapt to market forces and provided focused, detailed and timely information. With agility and information the organisation is able to affect the strategies to achieve the vision required to deliver, shareholder value.

Unfortunately many small to medium enterprises (SMEs) make the decision to take the project centric approach but significantly jeopardise the success of the chosen approach by not applying project management principles correctly or using the skills of professional practitioners. Often SMEs simply chose to use current functional management resources to run projects because of perceived financial savings. This is a false saving, as the functional manager and team are in effect asked to perform two roles, which generally are at odds. Projects by their nature will always be;

- Competing for scarce organisational resources and diverting them from their functional roles.
- New endeavours that are unknown, resulting in risk and change.
- Will have cross organisational focus requiring bespoke communication and negotiation skills.

The above are only a few differences of projects to functional roles, however they highlight immediately the conflict of interest that is created if the project, and in particular its management, is expected to be covered by a functional manager.

It is true, that it is not generally feasible for an SME of less than 500 people to have a fully dedicated project office and project

management staff, but this should not block an organisation from pursuing the value, as there are ways of addressing the issue.

An organisation can implement some relatively easy methods, namely;

1. Document the project procedures and use document templates.
2. Have a project champion.
3. Train key staff in project management principles.
4. Keep all team members informed of the project objectives.

The above will go a long way to improving the likelihood of project success, however it does not go toward guaranteeing success of the project centric approach. On sure way of this is to use dedicated Project Managers, who are skilled at maintaining

- Project team engagement
- Focus on project goals and objectives
- Perform communications role across the organisation
- Manage change and risk

Simply put, they take ownership and responsibility for ensuring success of the endeavour.

It might not always be justified or feasible for an SME to retain the skills of a Project Manager, but again there are alternatives. Organisations outsource a myriad of functions, from consulting to cleaning, why not Project Management?

The transformation to a project centric organisation, is important to the achievement of increased shareholder value. The use of professionally skilled project managers is important to secure the success of projects undertaken. The value added by a focused and skilled Project Manager will be far greater than the cost of engaging him/her.

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