



IT Project Management

Lecture 2-2 – Project Culture

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Project Culture



Contents

1. Objective of the Project Culture
2. Outward Effect of a Project
3. Inwards Effect of a Project
4. Decision Culture
5. Learning in the Project
6. International Projects
7. Failure
8. Summary

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Objective of the Project Culture

Project culture: totality of the behavior of the people involved in a project, affected by knowledge, experience, and tradition, and how it is appraised by the project environment [DIN 69901-5:2009-01].

- The project culture of a project could be understood as “unwritten laws” of a project, for example:
 - How do the project members greet each other?
 - Do project members name each other by first name?
 - Do the project members eat lunch together?
 - Are there common activities beside project work?

Objective of the Project Culture

- Project culture covers the soft skills like
 - fairness and respect
 - ability to communicate
 - reliability
 - cooperation within the project and outward
 - conflict handling skills
 - activity level for the project
 - identification with the project
 - frankness
- Successful projects correlate with a good project culture



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Outward Effect of a Project

- A project is not a closed world, i.e.
 - public view for infrastructure projects,
 - departments that are not considered for projects in companies.
- **Environment** could influence a project



Outward Effect of a Project

- Good presentation of the project
 - Look for supporters for the project
 - Integrative approach: Make people concerned (passive) to people involved (active)
 - End users participate in testing
 - Operation is integrated in development
 - Inform stakeholders regularly
 - Conduct regular events, like a road show or a forum

2.3



Outward Effect of a Project

- Present a project to the environment and also facilitate the identification of project members with the project:
 - Value people
 - Project vision
 - Descriptive project name
 - Good atmosphere among project members
 - Project glossary
 - Project logo

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Inwards Effect of a Project

- Responsible and respectful interaction with each other
- All project members should be
 - fully in favor of the project
 - convinced about the sense of the project.
- Permanent task of the project manager: Motivate and persuade.
- A good moment to involve all project members is the **project kickoff**

3.2



Inwards Effect of a Project

- Motivation of project staff
 - Measurable goals to be able to decide when a task is done
 - Clear responsibilities
 - Prioritization of tasks
 - Support self-dependent work
 - Define what is expected, not how it is achieved
 - Change the view
 - ❖ Do not ask when the task will be done.
 - ❖ Ask what will be done by a specific date.

Inwards Effect of a Project

- Motivation of project staff
 - Common rules (of the game)
If you define rules, follow them yourself
 - Be authentic and honest
 - Respect the interests of people when distributing tasks:
what a person likes to do is what he will do well.
 - Conflict management
 - Take care that there is a good conflict management
 - Avoid unnecessary conflicts

Inwards Effect of a Project

- Depending on purpose of a project:
Eat your own dog food

Use programs or tools that have been developed for customers

- in the project or
- in the company as well.

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Decision Culture

- Successful project managers are decisive
- The issue concerning decisions are not wrong decisions, but missing decisions

Example

- A required program change is not approved by business
- Tests could start, when program is ready – with or without change
- The project manager will not order the program change without approval of the business, but will not forego the changes – he is waiting
- So, tests are blocked

Decision Culture

- Proposal: Establishing a decision culture
 - Empowerment
Transfer of the right to decide to lower levels in the project like sub projects and work packages
→ Increasing personal responsibility
 - No discussion of decisions already taken
Exception: New facts
Proposal: Documentation of decisions in minutes 
 - Automatic acceptance
Veto principle: If there is no objective until a specific date of decision making body, a decision is taken
=> Proceeding to be agreed in advance

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Learning in the Project

- Establishing a failure culture
 - Failing is okay, as we could improve
 - We work with humans in the project – those who work make mistakes
 - Deal positive with mistakes
 - Every error we fix now, saves subsequent costs and ensures the success of the project
 - No apportioning of blame – no finger pointing
- Working goal oriented:
How could we fix together mistakes?

Learning in the Project

- Learning attitude
- Use your and your fellows experience:
People know already – ask and transfer
- Involve people, e.g.,
 - end-user of a product,
 - operation.
- Feedback – Retrospective – Lessons learned
 - Use experience out of project team
 - Define and implement measures
 - Do it regularly

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International projects

- Cultural differences to be considered.
 - People from different societies may have different values or religions which have to be respected
- A common language should be defined and used
 - Typically English
 - Risk of misunderstanding if not all members of the project have the same language level

International projects

- Possible measures
 - intercultural training program to learn about aspects of foreign cultures
 - Language courses to improve communication
- Independent from that, respectful treatment is always the right choice.

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Failure

- How to deal with bad news?
What if a project fails or is threatening to fail?
=> No easy answer that fits any situation
 - Be authentic and frank and accept one's own weaknesses.
 - **Never** blandish your own project.
- As a matter of principle, an early failure is less expensive than a failure at a later stage.
- Very high avoidable costs if a project does not get stopped in time.

Failure

- In case: get in contact with principal or decision-maker in time
 - Name reasons for why the project is going off the rails
 - Offer proposals for measures
 - Request for decision to cancel a project, clarification of proceeding

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Summary



- The project culture describes the cooperation of the project members in a project
- Globalization results in international projects with different cultures and value systems converging
- Successful projects correlate with a good project culture
- Soft skills improve the project culture
- The image of a project plays a role
- Project failure:
If you discover you are riding a dead horse – get off