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Strategies To Improve Project Management Maturity Processes

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Abstract

Information technology (IT) organizations lose significant competitive value when business leaders fail to use project management maturity (PMM) processes that enhance market delivery, reduce costs, and increase profitability. This multiple-case study involved 20 project leaders that used successful strategies to improve PMM. Thematic analysis and cross-case analysis revealed 6 strategies to improve PMM processes, which are (a) Project leader development, (b) customer focus, (c) standard methodology, (d) interactive communication, (e) organizational structure, and (f) continuous process improvement.

Problem

IT companies lose considerable competitive value when business leaders fail to use PMM processes to enhance market delivery, reduce costs, and increase quality to optimal levels.

The failure rate of IT projects in the public sector is 84%, a figure that represents approximately $150 billion lost in the United States each year.

The general business problem is that IT project leaders are often unable to manage processes in the PMM model, which results in a lower ROI.

The specific business problem is that some IT project leaders lack strategies to improve PMM processes.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore in-depth experiences of project leaders to determine the strategic implications of PMM processes employed within the federal government, for-profit, Not-For-Profit Organization (NFPO), and Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) within the U.S. defense industry.

Relevant Literature

Project management and the organization refers to project, program, or portfolio management as part of a practice management system within the project management office (PMO) as a set of, processes, procedures, frameworks, methods, tools, methodologies, techniques, and resources used to manage the project life cycle from beginning to end.

The PMO influences project outcomes (Pemsel & Wiewiora, 2013; Spalek, 2013). The success of projects center on an investment in the PMO (Spalek, 2014). Investing in the PMO to provide project management support using PMM processes is more important as projects become more complex (Spalek, 2014).

The PMM level of an organization defines organizational evolution based on industry, technology, or professional standards (Stevens, 2013). Neverauskas and Raitaite (2013) posit that it is the investment to increase the organizational PMM levels that has the most significant impact for achieving strategic goals.

Realized beneficial value are the measures associated with the project deliverables that has an impact on the organization (Lappe & Spang, 2014).

Research Questions

What strategies do IT project leaders use to improve PMM processes?

Procedures

A case study protocol was designed to explore the experiences of IT project leaders working in the different PMO types: governmental, for-profit, NPO, and NFPO.

The study included semi-structured, open-ended interview questions and responses, key organizational documents, email correspondence, and field journal notes.

The 20 participants were current project leaders that have 3 years of experience working IT projects. Five respondents were interviewed from each case. All the respondents worked in the southeast United States.

Completed interviews were transcribed to begin initial jottings to code the transcripts, and organize the code to nodes for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done through thematic analysis, for which I identified and labeled 1,038 segments of text as codes in 42 thematic nodes. Further thematic data analysis reduced the data nodes to 4 major themes and 6 subthemes.

For this cross-cases analysis, an individual case study was treated as a separate study, and the findings were aggregated across a series of single case studies, and analyzed using a framework matrix technique.

Findings

The 4 major themes that PMM processes have a strategic impact are:

- profitability factors,
- project success factors,
- challenges to PMM processes, and
- strategies to improve PMM processes.

Subthemes directly attributable to improving PMM processes are:

- project leader development,
- customer focus,
- standard methodology,
- interactive communication skills,
- the project office organizational structure, and
- continuous process improvement.

Limitations

Potential limitations to the study include:

- Use of an interview protocol for data collection.
- Participants may not have been aware of recurring patterns or nuances that I explored to.
- The questions did not inspire sufficiently long narratives and storytelling.
- Participants may not have had the verbiage to adequately describe their experiences surrounding their environment.

Conclusions

Strategies to improve PMM processes have:

- a direct impact on providing the beneficial value to the project sponsors and end users,
- a positive effect on the project success rate, and
- demonstrated improvements in on-time delivery, cost reductions, organizational efficiency, and improved profitability.

Recommendations are to:

- professionalize the project leaders through training and rotational experience,
- adopt a customer-focus PM culture,
- establish a standardized methodology within a formalize PMO for improved communication,
- enhance emotional intelligence practices, and
- practice continuous process improvement.

Social Change Implications

Implications for change include the potential to:

- improve the economic conditions in local communities supported by benevolent groups,
- expand charitable, socially responsible projects; and
- realize economic benefits and economic transference to local community small business.