



## Our tribute to Rodney – And the importance of Goal Directed Project Management

Erling S. Andersen <sup>a,\*</sup>, Kristoffer V. Grude <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo, Norway*

<sup>b</sup> *EuroConsult AS, Drøbak, Norway*

Received 15 September 2017 accepted 25 September 2017

Available online xxx

### Abstract

The book “Goal Directed Project Management” has had great success over the years and contributed to the development of project management scholarship. However, the story behind the first English edition of the book is also important in explaining the role Rodney Turner has come to play in the project management community and his decision to choose an academic career in this field. Below, we trace these events and outline the main ideas at the heart of the book.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. APM and IPMA. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Project management; Milestone planning; Mission breakdown structure; PSO

### 1. In the beginning

Rodney Turner has had great success within the academic field of project management. This issue of IJPM is celebrating his achievements. But how did it all start? We will highlight in this article that in some ways, we contributed significantly to getting Rodney interested in an academic career. To explain how, we need to go back to 1984.

We (Erling and Kristoffer), together with Tor Haug, had published a book on project management in Norway. It differed from traditional textbooks at that time, which focused on waterfall models and activity planning. Instead our work advocated top-down planning; focus on the results (goals) you want to achieve. The book was successful in Norway, and the authors were of course eager to have it published in English.

Rodney started his education in Auckland, New Zealand and finished by getting his DPhil in Engineering Science at Oxford University, UK. He was introduced to project management while working for ICI Agricultural Division as a mechanical engineer

and project manager in the petrochemical industry. By the mid 1980s, Rodney was working as a management consultant for Coopers and Lybrand and doing consultancy work across many industries.

At this time in Norway, Kristoffer and Tor had started a management consultancy firm which entered into partnership with the Norwegian branch of Coopers and Lybrand. Erling was pursuing an academic career and ended up as Professor at the University of Bergen and later at BI Norwegian Business School in Oslo.

Through Coopers and Lybrand, the three Norwegian authors connected with Rodney and asked if he might be willing to work on an English version of the book, checking the translation and making his own impression on the text. Rodney agreed, and in 1987 *Goal Directed Project Management* was published by Kogan Page (Andersen et al., 1987). The book is often referred to as GDPM.

After the book was published, Rodney and the three Norwegian authors wrote an article in IJPM to give an overview of the main ideas of the book (Turner et al., 1988).

In 1989 Rodney became Professor and Director of the Project Management Program at Henley Management College.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [erling.s.andersen@bi.no](mailto:erling.s.andersen@bi.no) (E.S. Andersen).

His very successful academic career had clearly started, and we like to believe that his work on GDPM, and our cooperation with Rodney, play some role in his pursuit of an academic life. Certainly Rodney contributed over the years to the international spread of the GDPM ideology and methodology, through articles, lectures and his handbooks (Turner, 1999; Turner and Simister, 2000).

## 2. The main ideas of GDPM

As for the book that started it all, GDPM is still very much alive and well. It has been published in nine languages (Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian and Russian) and in UK, the book is on its fourth edition (Andersen et al., 2009), although Rodney contributed only to the first edition.

When discussing GDM, Rodney often refers to a review of the 1st English edition which stated: “How can this be a book on project management. It does not mention Critical Path Analysis?” And indeed, it does not. Instead, we looked at other areas we considered fundamental to project success. While there have been some changes over the years since the first edition, the main ideas of GDPM are:

- A comprehensive method of philosophies, tools and processes, where each component may be used in context or stand alone
- Simple and “nonprofessional” language, allowing for broad collaboration
- Not just technical activities, but PSO: Balanced development of People, Systems and Organizations
- Top-down planning: Focus on the purpose/mission of the project, then on the results/goals that need to be achieved, and then on how to do it
- Special emphasis on communication: communicating results with top management, project owner and future end users, and tasks with the project participants
- Milestone plan with milestones on management level, combined with a responsibility chart showing who are responsible for achieving the milestones
- No detailed planning before it is necessary
- Bottom-up control

We shall briefly look at some of the different aspects of GDPM.

## 3. PSO: balancing changes to people, systems and organization

We use as a paragraph header the words that Rodney used to present this idea in the IJPM-article, and we argue that the successful project develops people, systems and organization in a balanced way.

Companies are in a competitive world, facing the challenge of continuous change, and projects are required to manage those changes. The most common pitfall occurs when the project focus is on planning the detail of tasks required, and less on defining clear goals. The result of this is that while the

technical change required might be achieved, the cultural change needed is often ignored.

In the past, Rodney has illustrated this point by way of stories. Once (back in 2003) he spoke on the last day of a five-day project management seminar. He was told afterwards by a delegate that he was the first person to mention people. In another account, he told of doing interviews in an airline company which revealed that project team members spent their lives complaining that the project managers were task-focused, and not people-focused. But, on the day they themselves were appointed to as project managers, they also became task-focused.

GDPM is an approach which seeks to balance the technical and cultural objectives at the heart of projects. To master change the company has to develop people (educating, training, motivating), develop the organization (making changing to the organizational structure, improving the relationships between the staff members) and, of course, to develop systems (the technical solutions, routines and procedures).

A classic example is the introduction of new technology. A change in technology means that people need to change too. They need training to use the new technology. This may affect the organizational structure, because people might demand higher pay and better positions. The new technology may also change old tasks, for example, if the change automates old processes. As a result, the work that people do will be different. That said, even if we have PSO, or other frameworks, we continue to experience a lack of focus on people development and organizational development in projects.

## 4. Value creation and focus on mission achievement

GDPM has always focused on results and on what the project should achieve. Traditionally, project success has been viewed as the achievement of intended outcomes in terms of time, cost and quality (design specifications). It is now recognized that a broader set of outcome measures are needed. Project success is primarily the achievement of the project’s mission or purpose. The mission should be expressed as a future desired situation for the organization receiving the deliverables from the project. The project should lay the groundwork for value creation in the receiving organization.

The project’s mission (the future desired situation for the receiving organization) cannot be achieved solely by the efforts of the project itself. It depends on actions from the base organization (the receiving organization) and its utilization of the deliveries of the project. It might also depend on the actions of different external stakeholders. We need a tool to discuss and determine what the project should do and what others (especially the base organization and external stakeholders) have to do. GDPM has such a tool. It is called Mission Breakdown Structure (Andersen, 2014).

Fig. 1 illustrates that the desired future situation of the base organization has implications for what we need from artefacts, what will be demanded of the different functions of the base organization, and how we would like stakeholders to feel and behave. Further breakdown into sub-areas is also indicated.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6748107>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6748107>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)