



28th IPMA World Congress, IPMA 2014, 29 September – 1 October 2014, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

The Early Warning Procedure in an International Context

Sara Haji-kazemi^{a*}, Bjørn Andersen^a, Ragnhild Eleftheriadis^a, Alvaro Capellan^a

^a*Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 7491 Trondheim, Norway*

Abstract

The globalized business and organizational environment is creating a growing need for project managers that can operate in a variety of cultural and socio-economic settings and are capable of handling the complexities that arise while working in an international context. It is of course a very important aspect to be considered by project managers to identify the early warning signs of problems timely enough to take preventive actions in order to avoid undesired consequences. This act can be more challenging when performed in an international context which in nature is more complex. In this study we endeavour to scrutinize the early warning identification process as part of the management system in international projects and the possible obstacles which exist within this procedure. A real ongoing international R&D project will be used as an example to help us better clarify the concept.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of Scientific Committee of IPMA 2014.

Keywords: International projects; project management; early warning signs; filters; preventive actions

1. Introduction

Delivering new products and solutions successfully to the market is vital for many organizations but it is also a very complex and difficult task (Balachandra & Friar, 1997). Although carrying out these type of projects, in an international context, has a remarkable impact on the development of technological potential and international competitiveness for organizations all over the world (Wortmann, 1989), these projects have a high probability of failure. This high probability derives from the fact that not only international projects are usually highly complex

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +47 73590147; fax: +47 73597117.
E-mail address: sara.hajikazemi@ntnu.no

and are likely to face many challenges regarding various areas, but the nature of R&D projects is complex too. The combination of these creates many more challenges for the project managers which need to be dealt with and puts the project in a quite vulnerable situation. The areas which make international projects complex can be physical distance, language barriers, cultural differences, etc. While the planning phase of international projects does not considerably differ from planning of local projects, project controlling, project organization and project communication present extra challenges for the management of international projects.

Due to vulnerability and complexity of these types of projects it is ever more crucial for project managers to be able to adapt to the project context and enhance their ability to react to unforeseeable events. Treatment of international project as a standard project, lack of sensitivity to local cultures and ignoring the project context are examples of causes of failure of international projects.

Von Zedtwitz et al. (2004) in their work on global R&D projects state that although there are no unique solutions for challenges of global innovation, the management has to however make a choice on how to perform the project in order to face fewer threats of failure.

This article presents an overview on the concept of early warning signs and argues on how identifying and acting upon these signs timely enough can aid project managers in better coping with the uprising challenges and preventing as many problems as possible. We will also scrutinize the possible barriers against identification and response towards early warning signs in international projects due to the specific characteristics of these types of projects. An ongoing international R&D project including 5 different countries and 15 partners from both academia and industry sectors will be used as an example to aid us in better clarifying the concepts. This project will be looked at from the point of view of the single partner which carries out the management and coordination responsibility within the project. The research objective of this study is to explain the importance of awareness of project managers of possible future problems and their actions in order to prevent undesired consequences.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Early Warning in Projects

The general idea of early warning is a broad concept. It applies to almost any area where it is important to obtain indications as early as possible of some development in the future, usually of a negative nature. The concept of early warning in a management context was first discussed by Ansoff in 1975 and was later supported by Nikander (2002). A weak signal was defined by Ansoff as "...imprecise early indications about impending impactful events...all that is known is that some threats and opportunities will undoubtedly arise, but their shape and nature and source are not yet known" (Ansoff, 1990).

In Nikander's words (2002), "an early warning is an observation, a signal, a message or some other item that is or can be seen as an expression, an indication, a proof, or a sign of the existence of some future or incipient positive or negative issue. It is a signal, omen, or indication of future developments". In his study he devises a preliminary model illustrating the character of the early warnings observations (See figure 1). This model sees project events as a time-bound consecutive stream of events. At a given moment, information about this stream can be obtained (e.g. early warnings of potential future project problems). This information is processed and responses are required in order to influence the flow of the project. A crucial factor in choosing a response appears to be, according to Ansoff, time available for responses before the potential problem significantly impacts the project.

Not much has been mentioned in the literature about the exact time the early warning sign identification should start in the project life cycle. According to Lewis (1993), the prerequisites of project success are the things that must be in order before the project is initiated. We believe that in case early warning signals are identified in the early stage of a project, the available time will be rather long enough for project managers to take the right actions in the subsequent stages of project. For example in case some warning signals related to cost and time limitation are identified in the early stage, budget estimating in the initiation phase can be done more accurately. Identification of early warning signs related to technical issues, can aid the responsible persons to make better decisions on risk management and production of key variables in the execution phase. Of course the challenge lies in the possibility of detecting the early warning signs and their level of reliability.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1109433>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1109433>

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