PROJECT MANAGEMENT – A TOOL FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS

VACAR Anca

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania

Abstract:

A project is known as a sequence of connected activities, conducted in an organized manner, undertaken in a defined period of time and designed to generate a well-defined result. Considering the influences imposed by the external environment, often characterized by frequent changes that may have positive or negative effects, organizations have to react fast in order to take advantage of opportunities and to protect them from threats. Because of this, project management can be seen as tool of management used in operationalization and implementation of change in organizations. We consider important for this research to determine the use of project management by the managers of Romanian organizations, as the main element of operationalization and implementation of organizational change.

Key words: *leadership, project, project management*

1. Introduction

Researchers have observed that projects are only a small part of all the changes that each individual is involved often daily, at both personal and organizational level. Regardless of its source (internal or external) experts are drawn into the process of organizational change through the implementation of various projects which seek forecasting, planning, so is influenced and determined the change. Studies of the researchers revealed that the most important challenges when it comes to the implementation of projects involving change are the actions oriented on people because they are the ones who can stop them.

A project is an activity or a number of related activities that are conducted according to a prearranged plan in order to achieve the objectives set in a specific period of time (Androniceanu, A., et al., 2006).

According to author H. Kerzner, a project can be defined by any number of activities and tasks having a specific objective to accomplish within certain specifications; a start and an end date, explicitly defined as such; limits for completion; a consumption of human and material resources (money, labor, equipment); a multifunction nature (Kerzner, H., 2010).

In this way the project, its management respectively, can be seen as a tool used to achieve any result that is unique, which can be defined and which must be reached within a certain period of time.

2. The research's objectives

This research is the third part of a long cycle aimed to determine the knowledge and application of the leadership concept in the Romanian organizations under conditions imposed by the external environment which is characterized by frequent changes and variations with both positive and negative effects on organizations, and also to determine the response of the organizations to these changes (Văcar, A., Dumitrașcu, D.D., 2012).

We consider important for this research to determine the use of project management by the managers of Romanian organizations as the main element of operationalization and implementation of organizational change.

3. The research methodology

In order to achieve the objective there was a research conducted at national level with the help of a market research company with national coverage and the questionnaires were filled using the Internet.

The identification data of the subjects, namely the independent variables of the research are: the position of the subject within the company, the professional training of the subject, the subject's age and sex, the work field of the organization and its turnover, all of these are necessary in the observation of the knowledge mode and implementation of the concepts under analysis. The research shows that out of 102 managers who were analyzed, more than a half (55%) are women, and in terms of age, the most of them are between 26 and 30 years old (31%), followed closely by those aged between 20 and 25 years (30%). The majority of the interviewed managers hold an inferior leading position as follows: top management, those from the head of company (11%), mid-level managers, those who coordinates several teams or a department (23%) and lower-level managers, those who coordinate several people (66%). This can help us notice the influence of leadership in generating the change through projects. Most of the subjects who hold leading positions in companies are University graduates at a rate of 65%, followed by graduates with Masters Degrees (17%), college graduates (12%), graduates of secondary education (post-secondary and vocational school, 4%) and doctoral graduates (2%). Most of the companies they represent activate in trade domains (32%), followed by those in services area (24%). The majority of them had in 2011 a turnover of less than 1 million RON (21%) (Văcar, A., Dumitrașcu, D.D., 2012).

4. The results of the research

For a better understanding and a uniform interpretation of the analyzed topics, an informative text was displayed: *"A project is a sequence of connected activities, conducted in an organized manner, undertaken in a defined period of time and designed to generate a single result, well-defined (e.g., construction of a new production hall, the reorganization of a department within a company, a promotional campaign, etc.) ".*

To know the reality on the use of project management by managers in organizations as the main element of operationalization and implementation of the change, we consider necessary to know the projects undertaken by Romanian organizations within one year.

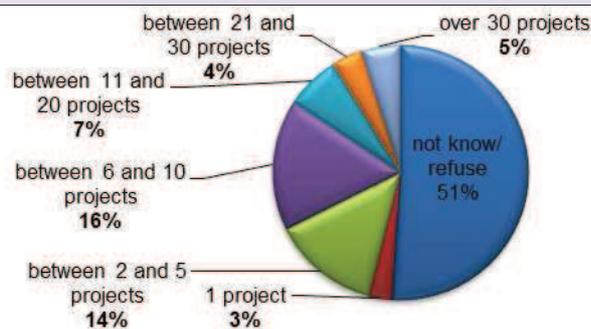**What is the average of projects your organization carried per year?**

Figure 1: The average of projects undertaken by organizations where these managers work in, within one year

In a large majority, 51% of respondents analyzed did not provide information on the number of projects implemented within one year. There are various reasons, either they do not know exact data on topic or they were unwilling to provide this answer or they did not know the importance of the question within the research. Dealing on the other remaining part, 16% of managers claim that the organizations where they belong are operating on average between 6 and 10 projects per year, 14% of respondents work in organizations that carry on average between 2 and 5 projects per year, followed by the 7% managers working in organizations that carry on average 11 to 20 projects per year (Figure 1).

Trying to understand the reality within organizations, most managers feel that they encourage enough the activities of organizing projects in the organizations where they work, with a share of 56%, but also the share of managers who are not satisfied cannot be neglected, is 40 % (Figure 2).

Do you consider that your organization encourages enough the activities of organizing projects?

Figure 2: The encouragement of activities of organizing projects in terms of managers

Interviewed managers indicate a significant share of people in organizations with training in project management, a rate of 62% (Figure 3).

There are trained personnel in project management within your organization?
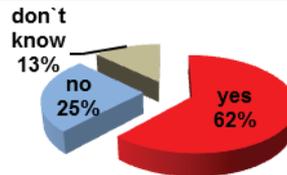

Figure 3: The share of trained staff in project management in terms of managers

Among the managers of the present research, a share of 75% of them were involved in at least one project, as part of a project team (Figure 4).

Have you been part of project team so far?

Figure 4: Share of managers which were part of a project team

And in terms of motivating employees involved in projects, managers consider it proper motivation (53%) (Figure 5).

Do you consider the motivation of employees involved in projects in your organization as being sufficient and appropriate ?
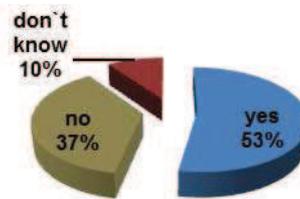
Figure 5: Proper motivation of employees involved in projects in terms of managers

Knowing that the projects implement an idea, a plan, a strategy, according to managers of this research, the main reason and the most common one that caused their occurrence is *the necessity* (45%), understood as the constant need to adapt the organization to the constantly changing environment in which it operates, to not only survive but achieve superior organization objectives with due regard for efficiency and effectiveness. A second factor that causes projects occurrence is *the opportunity* (26%), a favorable conjuncture from the external environment of the company that managers benefit to reach goals. The third in the hierarchy of causes that generate projects is *the management of the organization* (19%) with ideas, plans and strategies for implementing change (Figure 6).

Knowing that the projects are generating change what do you consider is the main reason that causes the occurrence of most?
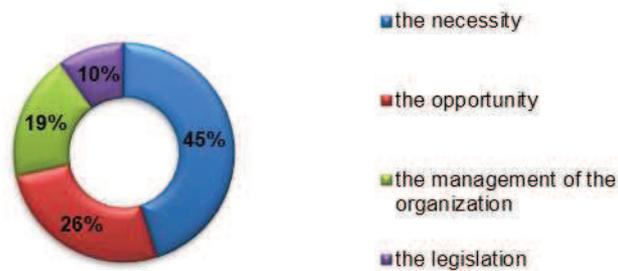

Figure 6: Causes that are generating projects in organizations from the perspective of managers

Knowing the specific methods and techniques of project management, namely the implementation stages of a project, most managers consider essential the plan execution from the start of the project, known as the detailed planning of project activities in the initial phase, before starting it (83%) (Figure 7).

When do you find it helpful the detailed planning of project activities?
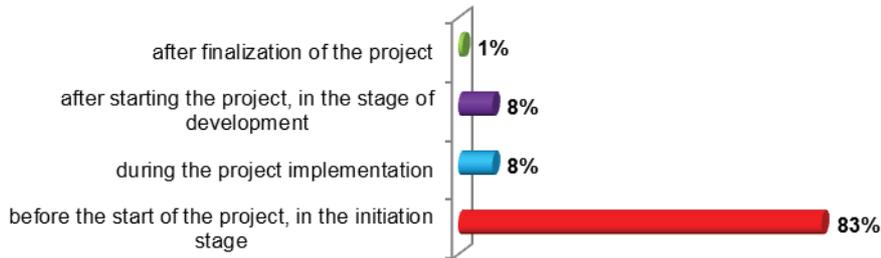
Figure 7: The time needed for the project detailing activities

Knowing the specific methods and techniques of project management, the most commonly used among managers in Romania are: *cause-effect diagram* (46%) for determining the causes of project problems but also the effects generated, *provisional budget* (43%) to estimate the total and specific costs of the project, method used in the initial stages of the project, *brainstorming technique* (38%) used for the generation and collection of new ideas needed for the project achievement in optimal conditions, *SWOT analysis* (38%) for a thorough analysis of all factors that act positively or negatively on the project, factors that are found both in the internal organization (strength and weaknesses) and its external environment (opportunities and threats). Less used by managers are the *problem tree technique* (21%) and *Gantt chart* (13%), so necessary in detailed planning of activities and time required achieving them, but also in checking on the activities (Figure 8).

Choose from the following methods, techniques and tools used in planning, implementation and control of projects, those that apply in your organization?
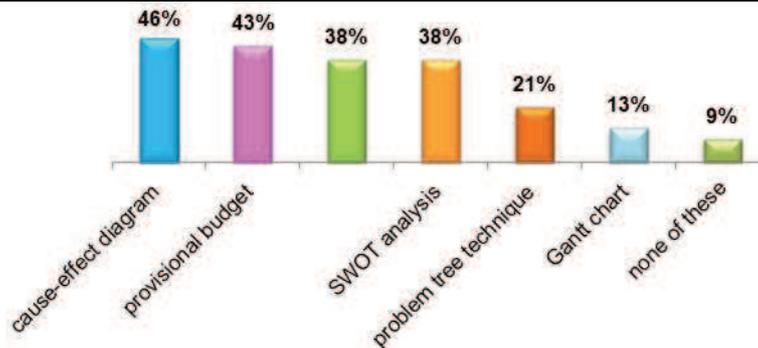

Figure 8: Methods, techniques and tools used by managers to handle projects

However, as observed in previous analyzes, namely small number of projects taking place in organizations, due either to lack of personnel in project management (25% of respondents confirmed that there is not enough personnel), or poor encouragement to organize the launching of projects (40% of respondents stated that they are not enough incitement for organizing projects in the organizations they are acting in), or poor motivation of employees, in proportion of 75% of respondents who

were part of a project, of whom 37% considered they were not properly encouraged and motivated for their actions. We will present next a synthesis of the main causes identified by managers that led to low or no use of specific methods of project management: *lack of financial resources sufficient to encourage projects* (50%), *lack of interest expressed by employees* (48%), *lack of long-term plans and strategies* (39%), *lack of theoretical knowledge about project management* (34%), *lack of time to organize projects due to a small number of employees in the organization* (27%) and *lack of specialists on project management* (25%) (Figure 9).

Choose from the following list the main causes identified in your organization, causes that lead to low or no use of specific methods of project management in the process of change implementation.

Figure 9: The causes that led to low or no use of specific methods of project management in organizations from the perspective of managers

5. Conclusions

According to this part of the research, in conclusion we can state that, most respondents, who knew the exact data on the number of projects undertaken by the organization each year, said that the average is performed between 6 and 10 projects per year. The main reasons that have led the most common projects in organizations are the necessity, then the opportunity and then the management of the organization with came up with ideas, plans and strategies for implementing change.

Most managers surveyed feel that the activities of organizing project are enough encouraged in the organizations in which they work and as for motivating employees involved in projects, managers consider there is a proper motivation.

Interviewed managers indicate a significant share of people in organizations that have been trained about project management and have theoretical knowledge about it and a share of 75% of them were involved in at least one project, as a part of a project team.

According to the managers of the research, the main specific methods and techniques of project management used by in organizations are in order: cause-effect diagram, provisional budget, brainstorming technique, SWOT analysis, problem tree

technique and Gantt chart. The main causes identified by managers that led to low or no use of specific methods of project management are: lack of financial resources sufficient to encourage projects, lack of interest expressed by employees, lack of long-term plans and strategies, lack of theoretical knowledge about project management, lack of time to organize projects due to a small number of employees in the organization.

In order to exploit the strengths and to minimize the weaknesses, in an turbulent environment with frequent opportunities and threats, organizations should develop influential people that can guide others in order to achieve certain goals and to be competitive as long as possible.

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