

Sustaining Business Projects on Challenging Environment

Richard Isaac Mwangangi

ABSTRACT

For a progressive business, there are necessary projects. All business implements their growth strategic plan through the development of projects. The business projects can either be identified as financial or non-financial. Every type of project has its unique environmental challenges. These become amplified in the context of complex environments or when projects deteriorate to the point they should be killed or need recovery. This paper focuses on strategies how to sustain business projects in challenging environments. The pillars of all business projects are the project period, cost, and resources. Project environment challenges will always affect these pillars. To mitigate the environmental challenges the paper narrowed the scope to project identification/ initiation, planning, and implementation in order to successfully handle the project environment. Different types of environments are also discussed in this paper; macro, micro, and intermediate environment on how they affect business projects. All these environments are examined to highlight how best a project business can navigate successfully through its challenges. In an operating environment that is dynamic and highly challenging, business projects need to appreciate the importance of crafting and effectively executing strategies that can help them navigate the environment challenge to carry it through any unexpected and challenging eventuality. The paper concludes that good and sincere project identification/ initiation, and planning will ultimately ensure smooth project implementation through a challenging project environment.

Keywords: Project Environment, Project Identification, Project Implementation, Project Planning.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Business projects are developments/ capital investments companies carry out to enhance their business. According to PMI (2020), a business project is classified by content or purpose. Business projects are intended to achieve defined business objectives and are aligned with a company's business strategy. Business projects can be called many different names, such as internal projects, administrative projects, or functional projects. It's important to note that all projects, regardless of type, must meet certain criteria to be considered projects. The primary two requirements are that they are both temporary and unique. This means they have a defined end date and are not repeatable, ongoing tasks. The Project can be strategic, operational, or recurring.

Business projects should always prepare for all environments otherwise they can adversely affect their success. Project environment represents a connection, where the project is processed. It impacts the project and is, therefore, conditioned. Such an interaction is provided by numerous factors *such* as operational, physical, ecological, social, cultural, economic, psychological, financial, organisational, etc.

II. BUSINESS PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Administration is the strategic management of *the* organisation. These are the owners of the organization or the leaders of the organisation. For any business project to

succeed it should be having all the support from the administration. This means then the project should be in line with the strategic plan of the organisation. Studies have shown that many businesses projects which abort are as a result of administration support withdrawal (Gomes & Romão, 2016; Vrchota & Rehor, 2016). The key and important levels an organisation should handle keenly when dealing with *the* business project are initiation/ identification, planning, and implementation stages.

A. Initiation/ Identification

Administration is the strategic management of *an* organisation. These are the owners of the organisation or the leaders of the organization. For any business project to succeed it should be having all the support from the administration. This means then the project should be in line with the strategic plan of the organisation. Studies have shown that many business projects which abort are a result of administration support withdrawal (Gomes & Romão, 2016; Vrchota & Rehor, 2016). The key and important levels an organisation should handle keenly when dealing with *a* business project are initiation/ identification, planning, and implementation stages.

B. Budget

The business project budget is the estimated funding necessary to deliver the proposed project. The administration should be able to set aside the necessary project budget with adequate contingency to take care of all project risks. The funds should be available and secured for the project. The

bible also advises *that* suppose one wants to build a tower, one has to sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it otherwise would begin construction and fail to finish (Lk 14:28). Business project budget is always in two forms; works budget and management budget. The works budget is all the funds that will sink into the project deliverables while the management budget is all the funds that will take care of the overheads. During identification, caution should be taken to ensure *the* administration is well aware of the financial expectations otherwise huge diversion to early referred budget figures could jeopardise its performance.

C. Expectations

Success in projects is something much more complex than just meeting costs, deadlines, and specifications. In fact, customer satisfaction with the final result has a lot to do with the perception of success or failure in a project (Montequin, *et al.*, 2016). Further, Baker *et al.* (1988) book concludes that, in the end, what really matters is whether the parties associated with and affected by a project are satisfied or not.

As the organisation projects carry out their initiation process, they should ensure they are walking the same talk with the administration ensuring the identified project is the of most interest to the management and high benefit to the organisation. A case to refer to is the Nairobi Express Highway Project. Whichever government comes to power in 2022, it has to finish the ongoing project because its importance cuts across all political interests. Every organisation has got its own politics and management are seasonal, come and go. If the project is not of most importance to the organisation and crucial to the organisation performance, any change of guard can kill it. The requirements of the project for the business survival should be out most crucial. Identifiers and initiators of business projects should carry out enough preliminary studies to ensure the project can withstand any organisational political change.

D. Viability

From *a* business perspective, a project is economically viable if the economic benefits of the project exceed its economic costs. The viability application in this paper refers to the project practicability; which is able to carry out regardless of any challenging environments. This implies that all risk analyses should be carried out and necessary mitigations should be taken. The right project process and method should be employed from the start to ensure the size of the project won't stress the Project Management and the Organisation Administration.

According to Construction Kenya website (2020), mega dam projects in Kenya, the Arror and Kimwarer stalled in 2020, which were to be built by Italian firm CMC di Ravenna at a cost of Sh38bn and Sh28bn, respectively. The Arror and Kimwarer Dam Projects turn out to be a stress to the Project Management and the government of Kenya. Arror and Kimwarer Dam projects were too huge to be viable and the right process and methods needed to have been worked out early during *the* identification and initiation of the projects by the drivers of the project to make the projects practical.

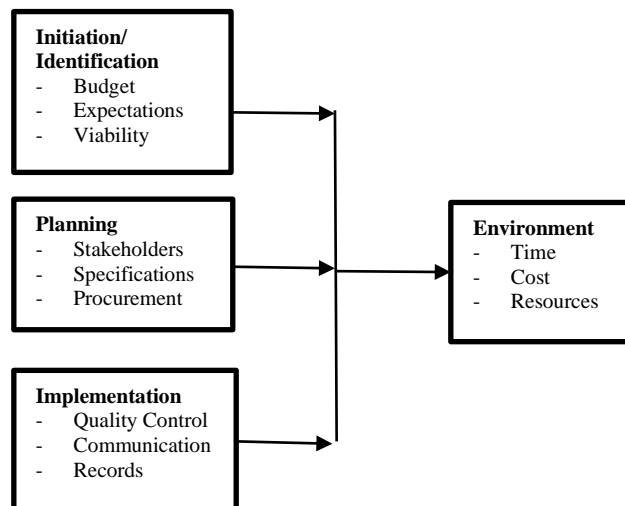


Fig. 1. Business Project and Project Environment.

E. Planning

Project planning is a discipline addressing how to complete a project in a certain timeframe, usually with defined stages and designated resources. Project planning is the heart of the project and builds all necessary project teams with definite responsibilities. The business owners usually bring in a competent, experienced, and reliable team/s to process the technical aspect of business project planning, however, not distancing from the process. Any mistake or miss in planning is a challenge to the implementation of the project and could be very costly on time, money, and all other resources. During planning, time, money, and resources are tied together.

F. Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a party that has an interest in a company project and can either affect or be affected by the business project and can affect the projects either positively or negatively. There are primary stakeholders; those who benefit directly from the project, and secondary stakeholders; those who don't benefit directly from the project but can affect the project delivery. When carrying out the project planning it's mandatory to ensure you understand all stakeholders involved and consult them on their areas of interest. This ensures that all interests are taken into account and no surprises during the implementation of the project. Therefore, the evaluation of stakeholder influence is an important task to enhance the likelihood of project success (Cleland & Ireland, 2007).

According to Nauman and Piracha (2016), it's important to assess stakeholder attributes properly to fully understand the dynamics of a project. When all stakeholders' interests are captured during planning its ease during implementation to fit in the project and avoid conflicts. The success of the project will depend on how well you handle all relevant stakeholders and ensure they are happy. Project stakeholders are the triggers of the project environment challenges.

G. Specifications

A project specification is a document, used for successful project management, that defines the management plan of a

project as a whole. It lists the needs, objectives, constraints, expected features, deadlines, and budget as accurately as possible. Specifications state the quality, grade, and standards expected on the project. It's from the specifications that all project tools hang from. Specifications build up the scope of the project and dictate the cost and time.

It is paramount to ensure that you get the best specifications possible with respect to the quality, grade, and standards expected by the business. A good specification would be determined by the quality of brief you get from the business owners. When the technical team is drafting the specifications, they should regularly go through it with the business designated persons to ensure they understood the brief and the owners check if they gave the correct brief. Drawings, sketches, models, and like helps a lot of the Client (business owners) to appreciate the product

H. Procurement

Procurement is the act of obtaining goods or services for the project implementation. All means of acquiring goods and services for the project must be planned early before the implementation of the project. This enables the business to get the best cost benefits. All necessary suppliers and contractors must be identified and agreed upon in the planning stage so that the relevant contracts and terms of engagement are developed. All necessary warrants and guarantees must be provided during planning. Samples where necessary are supplied for approval and agreement.

The procurement aspect must consider all project environments. Payment terms must be practicable and achievable. Pricing must consider any economic changes to avoid unnecessary variations. The study of Opolu and Kimaru-Muchai (2021) noted that the independency of budget provisions ensured ease of accessibility and timely disbursement of funds interpreting to smooth payment to suppliers and contractors.

I. Implementation

The Business project implementation is where the project teams actually do the project work to produce the deliverables. The deliverables could include all of the products or services that the team is performing for the client, customer, or sponsor, including all the project management documentation put together. To achieve the proposed project, the project will require proper monitoring and control, good communication and coordination, and a proper records management system.

J. Quality Control

Quality control consists of inspection, measurement, and testing to verify that the project outputs meet acceptance criteria defined during quality planning. It is focused on preventing problems from being passed on to the internal or external customer. There are tools and methods which are used to ensure the quality of the deliverables. There are scheduled assessments and unscheduled inspections however, monitoring and control are performed throughout the duration of the project.

The emphasis of business project quality management frameworks and standards is to a large extent on processes rather than on tools and techniques. Where tools and techniques are addressed in standards, *the* material is often

borrowed from high-volume production and, while these techniques do have some value, they are only applicable to certain types of projects and are even limited to specific phases of those projects. In the case of system development projects, techniques mentioned in existing standards need to be supplemented by other techniques (Steyn, 2008).

All through the implementation process, monitoring and control mechanism should involve all stakeholders to avoid game-changing during the process. Some stakeholders appreciate the deliverable after it is physical and sometimes, they can be disappointed but if they have been part of the quality assurance team, they accept the output as it is what was planned for and in case of any need for improvement of quality, the other factors change is easily absorbed. All quality control mechanisms are tied to cost, time, and standards of the deliverables.

K. Communications

Communication is a key component to the success of a business project. Communications management is about keeping everybody in the loop. Communication is the process of acquiring all relevant information, interpreting, and effectively disseminating the information to persons who might need it. All stakeholders need to be kept in the know all the time so that they move with the project. In business projects avoid surprises to stakeholders otherwise you could end up being the one surprised. Therefore, communicate project progress and issues to the project stakeholders, team members, and leadership. Though the communication schedule may differ by the audience, it is paramount to establish a regular schedule for informing the target audience.

Communication is so important to project success that it has been referred to as the lifeblood of a project by more than one practitioner (Awati, 2010). Communication is the function that integrates cost, scope, and time to achieve a quality product and may be seen as having a cornerstone function (Zulch, 2014).

L. Records

A record is a document or electronic storage of data in an organization that acts as evidence or a guideline. Project Records are the only mechanism for maintaining traceability of various activities done and decisions made during the course of a project. Project record management is a systematic process, which allows people to retain records for future use. There should be good recording systems that are able to keep the information as long as it could be required for whatever reason.

Business benefits tend to be centered on time, cost and quality. Many of the system benefits are biased towards time and quality as measuring cost benefits within the business projects is notoriously difficult due to the lack of available costing models although cost savings could be estimated through examination of data input and reporting timescales (Craig & Sommerville, 2007). Although much of the business project communications are done electronically and more so verbally, proper records have to be generated for the purposes of auditing the project processes and ensuring proper quality assurance systems.

III. PROJECT ENVIRONMENT

The project environment is often referred to as a 'temporary organisation' where social interactions occur to deliver projects (Algeo, 2014). All business projects operate within macro, micro, and intermediate environments. When identifying, initiating, planning, and implementing a project all three environments should be evaluated in order to establish how they will affect the project time, cost and resources. The three environments have to be managed in favour of the project. The project environment represents a connection, where the project is processed. It impacts the project and is, therefore, conditioned. Such an interaction is provided by numerous factors such as operational, physical, ecological, social, cultural, economic, psychological, financial, organizational, etc. The environment not only formulates the project but also estimates it. Although the project environment analysis is held since the identification of the project, it has to be maintained throughout the project process.

A. Time

Every business project has got an estimated project period. Project time management involves analysing and developing a schedule and timeline for project completion. Formalized time management processes provide a buffer for things like unexpected roadblocks and mis-estimated project timelines. These time management plans determine what tasks to adjust, and how to allocate and manage resources throughout the project. Project time management directly impacts the quality, scope, and cost of a project, making it one of the most important projects management knowledge areas. Managing time helps to secure project completion time and budget. It also clarifies how much time a project requires, what stakeholders (internal and external) to involve, and at what point to include their expertise. This process provides a framework for developing a sequence of activities, activity durations, resource estimations, and how these fit into the overall project management plan.

Proper estimation for project period tools should be employed to take into consideration all the environmental factors the project is likely to face. In macroenvironment, we have nature, where we have seasons that affect projects whether indoors or outdoors project. In the microenvironment, you have to consider the organisational structure and ensure all departments or divisions are brought in and their interests are taken care of. It has been noted business projects halt due to complaints from other non-user departments who were not briefed on the project and at some stage feel the project affected their performance.

The intermediate environment can also affect the project time if the suppliers and contractors were not well thought out and sourced. A proper discussion needs to be done otherwise you can have a supplier or contractor who within the project period goes for religious recess which they consider as a Devine Command at expense of the project. The environment affects the quality of the project because the success of the project depends on how the risk factors in the environment were treated (Abraham, 2010). The success of any project business would be measured by how well the environment was handled and done within the estimated project period.

B. Cost

Overall, project costs are the total funds needed to monetarily cover and complete a business project. Project costs involve; direct costs which are those directly involved with, and necessary in order to complete said project and Indirect costs which do not directly lead to project completion but are still vital for the company or individual working on said project. As such, they are a part of individual project costs.

In many business projects, their identification is based on the capital expenditure expected. In arriving at the business project budget, there must be a critical analysis of the environment so that all risks are mitigated not to affect the final cost of the project. In macro environment all economic and political influences need to be mitigated and ensure they won't affect the cost of the project. Good assessment tools like PESTEL or PEST could be employed to ensure risks to the project have been evaluated and mitigated. The success of the project would be measured by how it was completed within the projected cost despite the challenging environment it was implemented on.

C. Resources

Business Project resources are the people, capital, and/or material goods required for the successful execution and completion of a project. In a nutshell, project resources are what you depend on to get work done. They differ depending on the type of project environments involved. It is at this point where one needs to analyse the project environment and employ all resources necessary to cut through the environment.

The project environment dictates the type of resources required at every particular project time for optimum production of the project. The project environment has to be analysed well during planning to avoid surprises during implementation and for smooth production of the project. Any effect on the resource management due to the project environment challenge will affect the project time and cost. It is therefore paramount to have put in place all necessary environmental risk mitigations to ensure the project overcomes any environmental challenge on the resources' utilisation and provision.

IV. CONCLUSION

The success or failure of any business project depends on its identification/ initiation, planning, and implementation despite the prevailing project environment. Empirical evidence has shown that the survival of any business project depends on how the project cost, period, and resources were arrived at and maintained through the project process. This could be summarised as follows:

During project identification/ initiation, adequate preliminary study analysis should have been carried out to ensure that the project is the top priority to all stakeholders. The initial cost, time, and scope estimate should be practical and acceptable to the stakeholders. All possible project environment challenges should be listed for further analysis and mitigation measures.

The business project planning needs to be carried out under trust by competent, qualified, and experienced team to ensure

enclosure all necessary details. Likewise, all stakeholders need to be involved and all views taken into account, and proper briefing done to avoid surprises during implementation. The team should not lose focus on the identified/ initiated business project details to avoid divulging the key important pillars of the business project, cost, time, and resources.

Project implementation is actualising the planned dream. During this process, all aspects should comply with the planned details otherwise any change from the planned with implicating on time, cost and scope. Because most of the possible project environment challenges were handled and mitigated during planning, the implementation process is likely to be executed with minimum or no handles to its success.

In conclusion, despite the type of project environment challenge, the success of any business.

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