

MAIN PROBLEMS IN THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND THE METHOD OF SIX THINKING HATS AS POSSIBLE SOLUTION

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Abstract

Nowadays, project management is divided in two thinking sides like fashion or passion. Both sides forget the main purpose of project management, to use PM methods for activities that have the nature of the project, which leads to problems. The traditional approach to PM establishes the main problems in areas like human attitudes, organizational shortcomings, supply's gap, professional deficiencies, financial problems, time framework's problems and technological issues. All are discussed in paper. The six thinking method used here could provide us looking at the problem from different angles, presented positive and negative arguments, which leads to a deeper understanding of problem. It is possible to solve problems also from other point of view, this is showed on more practical approach, where are solved problems like: client often changes the requirements, communication with client is very slow, delay on start of project and the main problem – spending lots of time by solving problems during the life of project.

Key words: problems, project, thinking, solution.

JEL classification: M10, M29, O22

Introduction

The success of project depends on lots of factors, how they interact between each other. Especially project depends on project manager, who

has to have ability to solve problems, ability to negotiate and communicate, he has to have self-assured leadership. We are also sure in the presumption that activities about solving any problem lead to pervasion of the project.

We have heard lots of about project and its parts, the development of the project, which right skills manager could have. We also know which parts of project cycle are the stones, which are only additional. But what can't be so clear are the problems that project can face and mainly their solution. We can imagine that every solution depends on situation where project occurs. But let us presume and establish the main problems and sketch the solution with using the six thinking hats. Could it be solved by this method?

The content of this paper is following. In the first part we will try to find out the current situation, what we think about projects, how we can look at them. Which problems can arise during the project management, and in other part we will figure out possibilities of creative solution. To not have all this paper about theoretical issues, we will focus on practical illustrations.

The current situation

At the beginning of this paper, we will try to figure out what form should project management have in a typical company. We can say that there are at least two important types of concept – we will call them the bureaucracy and enthusiasm (Edinburgh University, 2013). Bureaucracy is type most often in large companies. Its basic is that project management is implemented in a highly formalized or even bureaucratic form. This is usually under the influence of fashion management methods without deep knowledge of context and without a clear plan. Simply because it is so

"right" and it is supposed to do it. But like most incredible absurdities in firms, surprisingly majority of this at least somehow works out, and even that it tends to have a positive effect. (Haji-Kazemi et al, 2013)

The second type, access "passion" means that either the individual or the senior management group of middle management in the "ordinary business" is excited for the idea of using project management (Edinburgh University, 2013). When you use these methods of project management and team organization will work, therefore there would be lots of things resolved magically. Unfortunately it is not enough. Usually told that the project team and the organization of work requires much more qualified managers, formalizing the data, sophisticated support from the information technology, top motivational system, communication and social skills in managing teams and a number of other conditions (Williams et al, 2012; Haji-Kazemi et al, 2013).

But what is more important that employees have quite often do not realize that project management methods should be used for activities that have the nature of the project. And in this enthusiasm they try to convert everything that's going on in the company on projects. Very often when employees and managers try to find out the cause of problems, there emerges as a key issue that in company there is almost never created an appropriate organizational structure. If an important part of business activities is realized by projects, there must be reserved the part of corporate organizational structure. Defined functional areas within the structure may not be occupied, but when you start a new project in this folder you can transfer workers there. (Edinburgh University, 2013; Haji-Kazemi et al, 2013)

It is very important that the format of the project would not have basically routine activities (typical examples are contract service activities), even they seem unique. We can judge the factual character by the extent of the work and time involved. The form of projects would have truly exceptional, extremely large and very important goals (Athen et al, 2013). The ideal number of projects at a time is the only one, which means that in order to project management and project controlling effectively influence the success of controlled activities, there must be only as much work as they can handle. (Thamhain, 2013)

Most of the problems in project management are based on the malfunctional relationships between different parts of the organization, the inconsistencies of their objectives and the criteria for their evaluation. The seemingly or actually unsolvable problems arise from the incorrect allocation of powers and responsibilities, respectively from insufficiently consistently sophisticated organizational structure, defined relations, formulation of rules for communication and cooperation.

Traditional approach to problems

The traditional approach to project management established the main basic problems in few specifics areas. For our purpose we will assume the seven problems branches. (Barber, 2005) The first are human attitudes - unwillingness of people to work in a team, bad team selection, personal prestige is built over the interests of the team, revaluation of own abilities, lack of flexibility leading to an inability to compromise and resistance to any changes. (Sanchez, 2004) We can also see as a problem too much flexibility - the tendency for many poor compromises and excessive openness to change, conflicts with authority when deciding incompetent

people, vague and unrelated motivation system. The second main area is organizational shortcomings. Problem arises when there is lack of performance of management or the project manager hasn't the authority, lack of support for the project team by the management authority, lack of support facilities and equipment, poor institutional form of organization, inadequate organizational structure. The third area of problems is supply's gap it means for example non-complex delivery documentation, unclear sequence of priorities, bad delivery conditions (Ika, 2012; Sanchez, 2004). The fourth kind of problems is professional deficiencies. This includes that tactics and surgery is at the expense of strategy, there is lack of planned and design experience, project manager underestimates any of the factors like time, cost, quality. The fifth problem is financial one. There is no or unstructured project budget, there is underestimation and unclear risk associated with costs and prices (changes in prices, costs, rates), unclear or missing payment terms. The sixth is time framework, which can be too short, unrealistic, unsupported critical path analysis, which can underestimate the seasonal effects. And the last seventh most important problem is with technological issues, like failure to ensure compatibility of parts, incorrectly specified conditions and requirements on testing proposal, miscalculation of real operating conditions, underestimation of the impact of the environment, lack of environmental protection. (Ika, 2012; Barber, 2005)

“The solution of problems”

With the big range of problems during the life of project, it is good to have similar thinking style in our project team. For project manager is a big challenge to manage teams with different style of thinking, because team

members have always disagreements, disputes. So there is the need to raise the awareness of team that everybody of them contributes to the goal, everybody can put into it own individual effectiveness, but we need to think in the same way (Tullet, 1996).

The method of six thinking hats: Everybody of us knows the situation when relative successful seeming project or business meeting degraded. There arose the problem after everything was installed. Similar situation has unfortunately become different with also unexpected ends. So mainly in this area, there can be used the method of the Six Thinking Hats (STH) (Bono, 1999) This method enables you not only to prevent similar situations, but also to engage colleagues, workers and project teams to creative solutions seemingly intractable problems (Tullet, 1996). The method is based on the group's thinking and use of its advantages in comparison with conventional thinking individual to individual (Bono, 1999). The idea is to look at the problem from different angles and redirect excess negative energy criticizing team members in favor of the case. The principle of such a group's thinking is that all individuals in a given moment think about the problem in the same way. It presented together positive and negative arguments, which ultimately leads to a broader perspective on the problem. This method also allows us to direct the critically-minded people so that instead of senseless confrontation looking positively and negatively constructive arguments. (Ramos, 2011) The second important factor on which the six hats method is based is the way we think and evaluate what is happening around us. (Tullet, 1996) We can give an example: If in the past we have experienced a situation multiple times and this situation appeared again, we could assume that the running will be similar to situations in the

past. Most of us will not treat the situation as a new one and in this way it can be easily underestimated, and destroyed the all project.

Hats as different points of view on problem of reduction project's budget: STH method called illustratively different ways of thinking – hats - and during the solving of problem it uses all of their properties. At the end we obtain a complete group of facts, arguments and perspectives to which we would otherwise get probably very difficult. To present this point of view we can present example about car. When we see in the car lights up, which we had never seen before, most of us, at first perceives negatively without having to evaluate its true meaning. This illustrates us that we rely on our experiences.

Six hats method is primarily intended to group problem solving. But it can also serve as a form of brainstorming. With a little variation can also use it individually, in *evaluating the situation or problem*. (Bono, 1999) But here in our paper, we will focus on the group use, we will show it on a concrete example of project management - we have a project that we undertake, and we were just informed that his budget will be reduced by twenty percent. At first glance it looks like a problem, but if we look at this information through various hats, we find it again when such is not true.



Figure 1: Six thinking hats

Source: Mann, 2013

As hats represent different ways of thinking or processing information, the method also defines the order in which we can use these

hats. The white hat represents information and hard facts. During its involvement, we focus only on what we know and what we need to know. Postpone aside our positive and negative emotions, impressions and feelings. As we established our example, in this part, we need to focus on questions like: how much to reduce the budget? It's the final decision? Is a project reserve sufficient enough to cover the loss of funds? What are the impacts on dates, deadlines?

The red hat is the opposite of white. It focuses exclusively on emotions and feelings in the problem or situation. (Bono, 1999) It gives us questions like: What was the first impression from receiving this information, the perception of the situation premonition. In our specific project, there arise questions like: Do you feel that the project is still possible to bring to a successful conclusion? Will the budget cuts on the mood of the project team? The solution will be delivered by the project sufficient?

The black Hat is a supporter of the so-called negative logic. It focuses on the search for negative arguments. We seek and evaluate risks and disadvantages of the situation arisen or may arise. Now is the right time to update the risk register. In example: Is it still under current conditions to achieve all project goals? Stay a reserve to mitigate other risks?

The yellow Hat on the other hand uses positive logic. It identifies the strengths and benefits of the situation. It may seem unlikely, but seemingly much negative news can have a positive impact on the project. In our example we can see the positives in: if removed sources from the project funds are used for the purchase of new technology or investing in the skills of people, will it be impacted positively on the project? How? Did not change the priority of project objectives in our favor? Was not the budget

cut because of reduction in the scope of the project? The green Hat represents creativity, new ideas and thoughts. (Bono, 1999) We look for ways to mitigate the risks identified in the black hat, or the overall design optimization project. It gives us the space to come up with new ideas and thoughts that arose during previous involvement hats. In the example of budget cut: How can we streamline the process of project? Where it is possible to create additional reserves? What are the alternatives? How to avoid new risks? (Bono, 1999)

And at the end blue hat itself does not represent another way of thinking, it just coordinate and moderate previous hats. It manages and directs the process of thinking and at the end it summarizes the findings of other hats. In project with budget reduction, we need to ask: Do you still feel that the information on the budget reduction project is black and white?

Application

What remains is to shortly look on problems from another view, from the more practical side and for all these problems we will propose the solution, some deal. This kind of access could help us to avoid the outcomes, which we don't want. (Williams et al, 2012; Clear, 2011; Turner, 2000)

I. We have a client which provides us often changing and unclear requirements. What does it mean for our project? That every time when we finish part of project, client complains on the outcomes. The clients don't have clear vision of what they want. So as a solution, we need to have "clear path map" which provides us the way from beginning to our goal. This enforces them to be very specific about their requirements. We need also to ensure that we understand the technical requirements, the communication

between client and project manager must be addressed and both have to know the engaging to the strategy of client. (Clear, 2011)

II. Delayed answers from client, very slow communication. Everybody is always busy and it is very hard to move the project forward without the answers from coworker. Easy solution is not waiting on the answer, but start to move in direction, which you think is the best one. And then only ask for verification. The best thing on this is that the client can't find out some new decisions, they only say yes or no, it is also much faster. Client's thought is that hired professional is here to provide out the best solutions not him. But we must still have in mind that it is needed to use "sound judgment". (Clear, 2011)

III. Delay on start of project. We have everything for project, just thinking that we will not have enough time to do all these pivotal things. This way is going to delaying of project. So the most important is just to start with something, to jump into the project. We need to give our client the feeling that the project has started by discussion of their expectations. (Clear, 2011)

IV. We don't have the same way to manage all the projects. Every project has different needs, requirements, circumstances, different goals. We try to use in project traditional literature approaches to simplify the managing. (Clear, 2011) But this only makes project more predisposed to fail. If the circumstances and the schedule is changed, the project has to change also.

V. We spend lots of time by solving problems during the life of project. It is obvious that during the project, there must be some unexpected problems, because nothing is perfect. So problems were, are and will be. But we spend lots of time by solving them. (Clear, 2011) We can use 2 ways

to solve them. The first solution is based on the presumption that we have to test our projects more time before it starts. Maybe it prolongs the testing time but it saves the time after. The second way is derived from the client's part. The clients want constantly to improve the goals. So we have to be very clear about what is included in our work and services. (Turner, 2000)

Conclusion

Everything what was said in this paper was established on assumption of cooperation between several people. So we need to come off that the interaction is basic of every good project. We established the overall view on main problems in project management and we presented the method of six thinking hats as possible solution.

So our main question was: could method of six thinking hats help us with solving problems in project management? The answer is yes. We presented the application of this method on problem with cutting project budget. We found out that this method is good for solving problems in project management, because it provided us looking at the problem from positive and negative site, which led to a broader perspective on the problem.

We also provided other specific solutions on most often problems like client often changes the requirements, communication with client is very slow, delay on start of project and the main problem – spending lots of time by solving problems during the life of project.

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