

Comprehensive Project Management

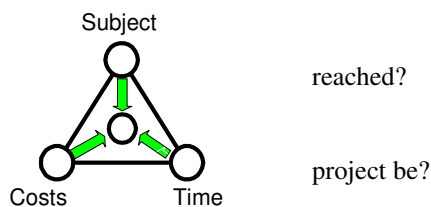
Projects are nothing new. Just the opposite, in fact - there have always been projects. The construction of the pyramids or the Great Wall of China, the erection of the Eiffel Tower, and the organization of the Olympic Games are examples of challenging achievements with the character of projects. But there are negative examples as well, such as the Great Train Robbery in Great Britain - unfortunately, that was a project too.

Projects are characterized by the following features:

- clear statement of tasks, with risks and a certain uniqueness
- declaration of responsibility and setting the goal for achieving the overall result
- specific time frame (clear starting and ending dates)
- various interrelated, interdependent partial tasks or units
- limited use of resources
- special organization adapted to the undertaking

The success of projects is determined by three goal specifications:

- Subject goal:
What is to be planned and achieved?
What functions must be fulfilled?
What quality goal should be reached?
- Costs goal:
What should the total cost of the project be?
- Time goal:
When should everything be completed?



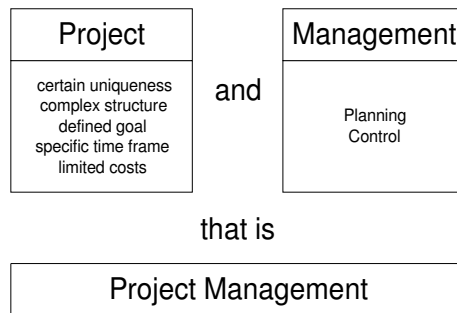
All three goal variables influence one another. They form competing relationships, a so-called "Magic Triangle". If increasing demands are placed on the "objective goal" within a project, this generally means extended execution. Longer execution time results in higher costs.

Based on these relationships it is not advisable to consider the individual goal variables as isolated units.

The greatest challenge of project management is the integration and control of these competing goal variables.

The many and often mutually influencing project elements are not left to coincidence or to the resourcefulness of individual project stakeholders, but are adjusted systematically in relation to each other.

To do this, one should use the methods of Project Management.



Before the individual methods are presented in detail, here's a note on a common risk. Do not lose sight of the final goal. The success of a project is not the perfect application of these methods, but rather reaching the project goal.

Thinking and acting must take place comprehensively. Relationships within a project, a task or a problem must be identified, understood and placed in relation to one another. For this purpose the project is broken down into partial projects, the tasks into partial tasks and the problem into partial problems, until every relationship has become clear. This procedure is called structuring. Structured procedures make complex tasks more transparent and easier to handle.

In order to keep the overall goal in sight, individual aspects should not be viewed on their own, but rather as a part of a complete whole.

This means daring to look beyond one's own backyard! This basic approach to thinking is described as "systematic thinking" or "comprehensive thinking".

Thinking in relationships and going beyond the boundaries of one's own area of expertise and scientific specialization make it possible to avoid "group-constrained solutions".

The greater the complexity of the task, the more important is the analysis. By means of expanded observation methods and well-planned procedures it is possible to recognize the threat of failures early enough and to take appropriate steps to keep them under control.

Take enough time at the beginning to discover these relationships.

Formalized courses and processes - which will be presented in the chapter "Planning" and which include the goal variables from the Magic Triangle - are only one part of the equation. In the day-to-day course of the project, non-formalized "human factors" also play a role.

This means that communication problems, employee fears, status and prestige thinking, lack of team rules, etc. often hinder work on a project and place the overall success of the project in question.

"Comprehensive Project Management" integrates the applied processes and methods with the psycho-social processes of project work. At the same time it takes into account

- structural prerequisites of the organization
- specialized knowledge of the project stakeholders
- correct application of the methods and
- knowledge about the behavior of the team members



Pretty dry stuff, isn't it?

Take a short break. In the next chapter you will learn how we apply Project Management at Noell Stahl- und Maschinenbau GmbH.