

Post-project reviews as a key project management competence

Frank T. Anbari^{a,c,*}, Elias G. Carayannis^{b,c,1}, Robert James Voetsch^{d,2}

^a*Department of Decision Sciences, School of Business, Fungler Hall 415, 2201 G Street, NW Washington, DC, USA*

^b*Department of Information Systems and Technology Management, School of Business, Fungler Hall 415, 2201 G Street, NW Washington, DC, USA*

^c*The George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052, USA*

^d*Bethesda, MD, USA*

Abstract

There is a general belief that post-project reviews are beneficial. However, such reviews are not conducted in a consistent manner, if at all, in many organizations. Therefore, there is a need to discuss post-project reviews as part of effective project management.

This paper explores the nexus of knowledge management and project management. It addresses the role of post-project reviews and their impact on the success of future projects, improvement of the overall performance of the organization and its long-term competitive position, and development of its learning processes. It discusses critical aspects and useful techniques in the implementation of post-project reviews.

The data gathered from post-project reviews provide the historical database from which future project teams can develop meaningful project plans based on their organization's project learning cycle. This database can provide project managers and teams with the information they need on specific staff skill set needs, and the profile of the customer and operating environment that can impact the ultimate success of projects and project management.

The paper discusses where post-project reviews fit into the project life cycle and project management processes. It assesses how such reviews can assist an organization in improving the manner in which its projects are conceived, planned, implemented, reported, and evaluated.

© 2008 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Project management; Knowledge management; Post-project evaluation; Lessons learned; Project learning cycle; Project success; Project failure

1. Introduction

This paper addresses and explores the linkage of knowledge management and project management in organizations. Specifically, it asks three core questions: What is the role of post-project reviews in projects? What is the contribution of post-project reviews to the development of new insights and project management knowledge in organizations? And, most importantly, what is the impact of such reviews on the emergence and development of

learning processes within the organization and the ultimate improvement of overall organizational performance?

To answer these questions, we need to discuss the content and purpose of the post-project review and its place in the project life cycle as an important component of advancing the organization's body of knowledge in project management and its effective implementation. In answering these questions, we discuss the nature of post-project reviews and where they fit into the project life cycle. We discuss the value of these reviews and how they can assist the organization in improving the manner in which its projects are conceived, planned, implemented, reported, and evaluated. Finally, we consider how post-project reviews might differ between knowledge-based, service-focused projects and other type of projects. We discuss post-project review as they relate to technical, financial, human resource, and project team organization requirements, as well as traditional versus virtual team composition requirements.

*Corresponding author at: Department of Decision Sciences, School of Business, Fungler Hall 415, 2201 G Street, NW. Tel.: +1 202 994 0404; fax: +1 202 994 2736.

E-mail addresses: anbarif@gwu.edu (F.T. Anbari), caraye@gwu.edu (E.G. Carayannis), dakrj@aol.com (R.J. Voetsch).

¹Tel.: +1 202 994 4062; fax: +1 202 994 5830.

²Tel.: +1 301 229 3826; fax: +1 202 994 2736.

2. Perspectives on post-project reviews

In modern project management thought, there has been a long-standing belief that post-project reviews are beneficial. Anbari (1985) maintains that “project evaluation needs to be implemented at various phases of the project life cycle” (p. 25). He further specifies “During the termination phase, a post-project evaluation needs to be conducted to measure the success of the project in terms of its original and modified objectives. This evaluation should contain explanations of major variances, lessons learned from the project, and recommendations to support further success of future projects” (p. 25). Cleland (1985) specifies that “project evaluation consists of three types: (1) pre-project evaluation for the selection of the project that best suits the overall strategy of the enterprise; (2) ongoing evaluation of the project during its life cycle; and (3) a post-project evaluation for the assessment of the success and efficacy of the completed project, particularly to develop a profile of “lessons learned” that can help guide the management of projects in the future. A project manager who neglects an ongoing evaluation is “at sea without a compass,” for without such an evaluation there is no check on whether planning, organizing, staffing direction, and control have been effectively accomplished.” (p. 12). Kerzner (1984) specifies that “the divestment phase evaluates the efforts on the total system and serves as input to the conceptual phases for new projects and systems. This final phase also has an impact on other ongoing projects with regard to priority identification” (p. 76). In later editions (e.g., ninth ed., 2006), Kerzner (2006) replaces the term “divestment phase” with “closure phase” (p. 69).

Collier et al. (1996) propose a standard process for conducting post-project reviews, describe the activities, roles and artifacts of this process, and suggest that successful post-project reviews require a management commitment to make such reviews mainstream activities. They state that the goal of a post-project review is to use the project analysis results to improve future project management methods and practices. They indicate that the tools used in this process are proactive problem-solving tools. The artifacts included are documented procedures and guidelines, established communication channels, positive/blame-free analysis, and a balance of the costs and benefits of post-project reviews. The model for the post-project reviews proposed by Collier et al. (1996) comprises the following phases: (1) design a project survey—in this phase determine the questions to ask in a survey form, distribute the survey to all persons involved in the project and then tabulate and evaluate the results; (2) collect objective project information—in this phase focus on areas with the greatest opportunity for improvement. Use the following metrics: cost, Schedule, and quality, then track the data collected in the survey; (3) conduct a debriefing—in this phase a meeting is led by a chair, a coordinator, and a facilitator to manage risks associated with this phase, which include monopolization of time and issues, and

maintenance of clear documentation of the proceedings; (4) conduct a project history day—in this phase participants should be responsible project managers and relevant project staff only. Activities must include a root-cause analysis of the problems identified, and results must be grouped according to their causal relationship to the problems experienced by the project; (5) publish the results—in this phase the results of the post-project review are published in the form of an open letter to project teams. The letter should include a description of the project as well as the good, the bad, and the ugly experiences of the project; and (6) establish an organic link between post-project reviews and future projects—in this phase all review output is documented and sorted according to the category of the lessons learned by project team function and the affected project management process or area. Senior executives must see the results during regular organizational reviews. Each lesson learned should be assigned to a staff member who is then responsible to further investigate the lesson and implement a solution.

Busby (1999) expressly states his dislike of the term postmortem reviews, reports on an analysis of post-project reviews, assesses whether such reviews should be conducted, and if so, how they should be conducted, and offers advice on how such reviews can be improved to become more useful. He states that the reasons to conduct post-project reviews are that: (1) people do not always automatically learn from their professional experiences, so the learning exercise needs to be prompted and structured to be meaningful and useful to most people; (2) the knowledge of what occurred in a project is usually dispersed among several people; and (3) it is essential to disseminate project management experiences and lessons learned within an organization to avoid repeating the same mistakes. He indicates that the potential drawbacks to post-project reviews are that they are time-consuming, can be embarrassing to project managers and project team members, potentially damaging to social and professional relationships, and rejected by people who think that professional experience by itself is sufficient to acquire lessons learned from a project. He describes two types of post-project review structures: (1) chronological reviews in which the lessons learned are compiled for each phase of the project life cycle, and (2) categorical reviews in which all lessons learned are compiled by all project team members on the basis of whether they were positive and negative experiences. Busby (1999) makes the following observations on the execution of post-project reviews: (1) such reviews are important and useful to staff members, project managers and organizations; (2) deep diagnosis of project shortcomings is highly recommended; (3) historical issues need to be addressed to determine what is unique to the completed project and what is systemic or structural to such projects or to the organization as a whole; (4) these reviews should examine the larger organizational and operational environment issues beyond the specifics of the project itself; (5) glib categorization of problems under

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات