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THE PROJECT MANAGER'S PROFESSION

Abstract. The article presents a new profession in the labour market: the Project Manager. Formal requirements and personal features of a project manager are discussed. Organizational transformations and training processes conducted at OBRUM in order to adapt to new organizational structures (Polish Armaments Group) and based on project management methodology are presented. The benefits of the project management system implemented at OBRUM are also reviewed.

Keywords: project, project management, project manager.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project management can be looked at in two ways: as a domain of theoretical and practical knowledge, which is applicable in project management, and as a set of managerial skills necessary for the effective and efficient implementation of the project [1]. Interrelations between these areas are close: the art of project management creates a knowledge base of managerial skills that are necessary to carry out projects of this type.

At the same time efficient and effective use of available theoretical knowledge requires interdisciplinary skills acquired both through education (knowledge acquisition), as well as through gaining practical skills in the course of professional work.

Remarkable progress in project management observed since the 1960s resulted in an increase in requirements for knowledge and skills of project participants. In order to satisfy these increasing requirements, associations [1] began to be formed in highly developed countries aimed at gaining and acquiring practical experience from the best specialists, developing model methods of conduct and training of specialists in project management. Best project management practices are becoming an increasingly popular topic in specialist publications [2]. And therefore it is just to say that during the recent dozen or so years a new profession has appeared in the labour market: the Project Manager [1].

2. PROJECT/UNDERTAKING MANAGEMENT

Project management [1], [2], [3] is a term that has become very popular. The beginnings of the discipline go back to the 1960s. Businesses found out that there are benefits in distributing and use of their resources, assigning defined tasks to separate units and using the expertise in many disciplines of the employees of various professions. Project management is a structured process of carrying out work and recording events, by means of which it is possible to ensure order and coherence of the tasks that have a predetermined goal, that is project accomplishment. It involves planning, scheduling, carrying out and monitoring of tasks necessary to accomplish a project, while minimising risks.

Project is a task or a set of tasks undertaken to gain defined advantages within defined time and cost (budget) limits. Every project is a temporary undertaking made to fulfil a defined need within a defined period of time.

Common to all projects are three stages thereof:

- 1) defining the needs or benefits,
- 2) task accomplishment,
- 3) capitalize on the effects.

Other factors that have to be taken into account are the main parameters, such as:

- 1) time,
- 2) cost,
- 3) quality.

Relationship between these factors is often presented in the form of a triangle [1], [3], where each of these factors is related to the other two.

An insight into these relations shows that:

- 1) a project has a defined lifetime, i.e. start and end date;
- 2) the goal of the project is gaining measurable benefits or creating products;
- 3) project is an appropriate set of actions to achieve benefits or to create a product;
- 4) a defined quantity of resources is assigned to a project.

Project management involves process groups, which come one after another in sequence. The first process is an "idea", that is project initiation, identification of project context, stakeholders and their requirements and the expected outcome of the project.

The second is project planning: definition of methods, rules, tools and ways of managing change.

Third process is project accomplishment according to the plan (time schedule, budget) while monitoring all events and factors that cause deviation from the project plan.

The fourth, and the most important process in project management is completion of the project, handing over documentation and summarize the use of project resources; This is the moment of the final completion and handing over of the project products to the customer.

2.1. Project management at OBRUM

The beginnings of project management at OBRUM date back to 2002 when the first training courses [5] were conducted to prepare the staff for the changes in the environment resulting from systemic transformations. During the years project management was implemented at OBRUM with varying success.

Project management is properly defined in appropriate dispositions [6], [7], [8], and there are common rules of running projects, but the methodology of conducting projects was and is highly dependent on the project manager and his or her qualifications. Plain characteristics of research and development projects conducted by OBRUM show the wide variability thereof, both in terms of their range, as well as cost. Project management often covered only selected parts of the projects.

Project management at OBRUM is determined by disposition [7] no. 3/2012 of 15 June 2012, which regulates all issues related to this subject, from basic concepts to specific obligations imposed on individual members of a Project Team.

At OBRUM projects are broken down into:

- strategic – of key importance for the company, involving more than one section;
- operational – short-term and of high importance for the company, where employees from other organizational units within OBRUM may be involved.

Under OBRUM's current organizational structure [8], the role of project management has been further strengthened through the subordination of the Project Management Department directly to the President of the Board. The general scope of activities of the Project Management Office includes:

- 1) implementation, maintenance and development of methodology and standards of project management;
- 2) development of risk management plans;
- 3) managing the portfolio of current projects;
- 4) supervision over and coordination of collaboration between organizational units which carry out the tasks;
- 5) collaboration with partners in joint accomplishment of projects;
- 6) implementation of IT tools to aid project management.

Those interested may find more detailed information on project management and methods adopted at OBRUM in article [9].

3. PROJECT MANAGER

Project manager [1], [3] is a specialist in project management with proper qualifications and professional experience. He/she is that member of the project team who has the largest influence on the creation, accomplishment and final effect of the project. Project manager is responsible for the success of the project. He/she is seen as the leader of an undertaking, who has to control and maintain the adopted stipulations on the budget, number of resources, time schedule, communication within the team; he/she should ensure a balance between the project baselines. Each project manager should have charisma, sufficient authority, enabling him/her to influence the project team members and decision-makers at higher levels. The project manager oversees the flow of information between the Steering Committee (which represents the client) and the project authors. He/she cooperates with partner companies and suppliers of materials and services.

The project manager should demonstrate skills which may be broken down into:

- 1) Substantive skills:
 - a. planning project aspects,
 - b. cost, efficiency and quality monitoring,
 - c. application of management rules,
 - d. hiring proper people,
 - e. seeing that tasks are fulfilled properly and on time.

- 2) Interpersonal skills:
 - a. team leadership,
 - b. negotiating project terms,
 - c. motivating personnel,
 - d. communication with all,
 - e. building an organized team, and proper relations within it.

The project manager is responsible for meeting all formal and substantive requirements related to the spending of funds assigned for the project in line with the contract and with company rules. The basic duties of a project manager at the project implementation stage include in particular:

- 1) indicate people to carry out specific tasks for the project;
- 2) verify the substance of completed and running tasks;
- 3) compare task accomplishment with the adopted time schedule;
- 4) convene working meetings of the project team, when necessary;
- 5) approve appropriateness of expenditures;
- 6) manage the project on a running basis;
- 7) supervise over proper cost classification;
- 8) draw up financial reports.

In addition, according to Disposition [7] no. 3/2012 of 15 June 2012, the project manager:

- 1) arranges with the Commercial Manager the scope of required actions, documents and persons responsible for settling and selling the outcome of the project;
- 2) applies to the Technical Council in matters related to changes in the concept of project accomplishment;
- 3) represents the Project Team in front of organizational units of the company or members of a consortium.

4. PREPARATION OF NEW STAFF

Nowadays, a well-functioning company cannot exist without a well-trained staff. Under the circumstances of increasingly fierce competition in the labour market, staff that does not correspond to today's needs, and is not prepared to work under new conditions, poses a serious threat to the existence of the employing company, and consequently to development projects.

The wealth of the company is not only its property, assets and liabilities, but above all the potential of its employees.

Analysis of the capabilities of businesses with regard to current market requirements, shows that the level of skills and professional qualifications of the staff is the most important

condition for competitiveness. Ambitions of the employees to develop their skills and deliver the best results in their jobs are also important. Training courses for the managing personnel of the lower, intermediate and higher level are an essential investment in the development of the entire business.

4.1. Personnel training at OBRUM

The experience of completed projects [2], [3], especially in Western countries, clearly shows that a person thoroughly trained in project management can largely contribute to the success of a project, and thus – to the financial success of the company. Acquiring knowledge in project management by learning from own mistakes may be very costly for the company.

OBRUM has been devoting much to employee training in recent years.

The training involved both individuals acting as project managers, candidates for managers and project team members, middle and senior management.

Classroom training courses lasting 2-3 days are conducted by specialist training companies, with years of experience in organizing training, having highly qualified instructors with experience in teaching, holding the relevant certificates and having working experience in project management. Upon completing the training, the trainees receive certificates of participation in the training.

Over the last four years (2011-2015), project management training courses were attended by a large number of employees, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Item	Training course	Year	No. of trainees
1	Project management	2011	15
2	Project management acc. to Prince 2 methodology	2012	2
3	Project management	2012	15
4	PMI Project Management Methodology	2013	11
5	MS Project 2013	2014	22
6	Project management	2014	17
Total:			82

As part of the process of improving professional qualifications OBRUM employees also participate in postgraduate studies in project management.

5. SUMMARY

The success of any company depends largely on skilful and effective project management. Today, almost every company, institution or organization carries out various kinds of projects – from small projects to those worth millions zlotys. Acquiring key skills in this field ensures trouble-free process, reduces costs and increases the benefits achieved, and at the same time it promotes good collaboration and commitment between the parties to the project. In order to efficiently manage projects it is worth taking into consideration the following:

- 1) proper definition of project goals,
- 2) project management triangle (triple constraint),
- 3) proper assignment of Project Manager and Project Team.

Due to time pressures and client's requirements, project management is a big challenge for both the Project Manager and the project team. Effectively completed project is a source of satisfaction for project team members, resulting from the creation of something unique. Employees should be encouraged to participate in this work, to take part in new challenges, expand their skills, knowledge and experience.

The Project Manager's profession has been developing intensively in recent years. One who decides to work as a Project Manager must acquire and demonstrate extensive knowledge, which is why more and more universities and colleges are organizing postgraduate studies in project management.

In addition to expertise, the so-called soft skills and competencies are also important. The proper combination of all these skills makes up the art of project management. It's not only the hard knowledge, but also a feeling for the subject, current trends in the consumer market and human resources, something that can hardly be read from books.

Every project manager should also have his or her unique style of managing. Success in project management depends on many interrelated and interdependent factors. The project manager is undoubtedly a key figure in the entire undertaking. Studies [10] have shown that there are three major success factors applicable to the position of a project manager:

- assigning a project manager – 93%;
- his/her competencies – 88%;
- high authority – 85%.

At OBRUM project managers are assigned to specific projects and are responsible for these projects; they report to the Project Management Office Manager, who supervises the budgets and time schedules of the projects.

Thanks to the recently implemented organizational structure and trained project management staff (which apply Prince 2 and PMI methodologies) provided with a modern IT tool (EPM), OBRUM is in a position to run interdisciplinary projects together with other members of the Polish Armaments Group, acting as their rightful partner.

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