



How successful is your project? Time, cost, and quality can't really tell you that

by Marleen Hammel and Tomer Lanis

In times of constant change, delivering successful projects is essential to any business. How often, though, is this the case? More importantly, how do we know whether a project has succeeded or not? We encourage any project sponsor to challenge the informative value of the traditional iron triangle (time, cost, quality) and recommend to measure success in one additional dimension. We bet that incorporating 'deployment' will unleash your project's full and lasting business potential.

How do we define whether a project was successful or not?

Project leaders may answer this question along traditional project efficiency metrics: Was the project delivered on time, within the set budget and at the expected quality level? Accountable project owners, however, tend to focus on the human factor: Are people actually using it (new processes, tools, roles & responsibilities)? Will they continue using it to realize the projected benefits?

The misperception of project success: Once project deliverables are completed the focus on benefit realization vanishes.

According to a study conducted by the [Project Management Institute](#) (2018), organizations waste on average 10% of every dollar spent on projects that perform poorly. A major reason for this poor performance results from organizations undervaluing the strategic competence of project management to lead change (Project Management Institute, 2018).

Let's take a closer look at each stage of a project to understand what is missing to achieve successful, value generating projects. Projects consist of five stages each aligned with clearly defined measurements that tell us how well a project is progressing and used in practice.

- 1. Idea Generation:** A business case is established in order to weigh the costs and benefits of the intended project.
- 2. Development:** Once the target is set, we start building and constantly evaluating it.
- 3. Deployment:** The solution is put into practice. Now it is time for employees to apply it in their daily work.
- 4. Benefit Realization:** Eventually it is time for pay-off. Once the solution has been developed and people are using it projected benefits will be realized.
- 5. Continuous Improvement:** Regular feedback loops and key performance indicators (KPI) are put into place to drive continuous improvement of the solution.

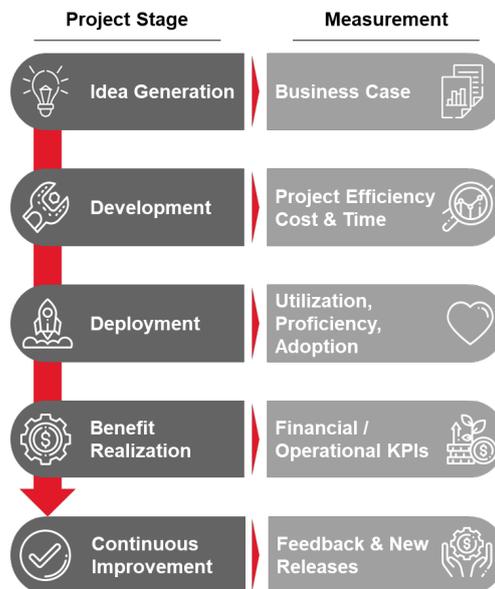


Figure 1: Measurements change along each project stage

Each stage focuses on different measurements to enable effective progress and success tracking. Let's take the example of generating a project idea. Here the goal is to come up with an estimation of what should be done as well as related costs and benefits. As there is nothing tangible yet, we cannot measure project progress but instead establish a business case. Once the defined deliverables go into production, we start measuring efficiency along the production process. Finally, the deliverables transfer into business as usual with the goal of generating the projected business value.

Every single project stage and respective performance indicators are crucial for determining project success and thus require equal attention. But what happens in practice?

From idea generation to development attention levels are high but then suddenly drop once deliverables are completed. The solution is tested, signed off, handed over and the project team is released. While organizations show a strong ability and expertise in managing projects to that point, the power of what is to come after all project deliverables are produced is neglected.

Once the solution is built and all project efficiency criteria (time, cost, quality) are met, the project is claimed to be 'successful' regardless of whether it has generated any business value. And even if the project will end up generating value, these benefits are seldom tracked and communicated.

What is missing?

We are missing a common understanding of value drivers in a project. We are also missing the behavior and mindset changes, which are necessary for a successful deployment.

A new approach to generating successful projects: Deployment as a key success factor for realizing project benefits

While project management expertise is widely spread and much of the attention is put on the traditional approach of the iron triangle (cost, time, quality), we seek to shift the focus. Move away from pure project efficiency performance factors towards deployment and benefit realization. The key success factor lies in identifying what contributes to project success at the start and then integrating it in each project stage, from development to continuous improvement.

A crucial enabler of value generating projects are your people. These are the people that need to change their routines and apply the built solution in day-to-day business. Thus, closely helping employees in adapting new mindsets and behaviors is a central success factor of projects. Actively engaging end-users and key stakeholders in the process is an effective way to ensure business value generation in the future.

It does not matter how exciting and innovative a project is, human resistance is natural and inevitable. This is simply because people are moving out of their comfort zone into something new and unknown. As such, multiple concerns arise: What will that project mean for me, my role, my future tasks? Will I still be needed?

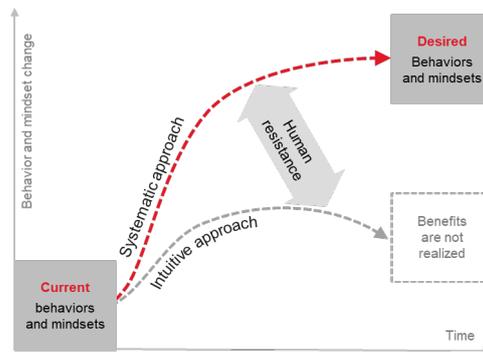


Figure 2: High adoption indicators contribute to desired behaviors and mindsets

Instead of following gut feeling and intuition we take a systematic approach in supporting organizations to successfully achieve a change in behaviors and mindsets. What lies at heart of this approach is a proven method of involving people throughout the project and helping them prepare for and go through the necessary changes. In addition to impactful, tailored communication schemes, we pay special attention to proactive resistance management and feedback loops.

Let's illustrate this approach by using some examples:

Example 1: A new CRM system has been introduced with the goal of driving sales and reducing manual work. Clearly, the tool's functionality will not generate more sales – the people using that functionality and building their sales pipelines will. In order to make that change visible suitable KPIs are defined at the start. On the first day of go-live, the number of log-ins to the tool are measured and transparently communicated – the target of 40% of log-ins by key users has been achieved. Throughout the next 4 months utilization rates are frequently tracked and trends analyzed to understand to what extent and how well people work with the new tool.

This supports a smooth transition from go-live to business as usual. Moreover, it triggers a continuous improvement process to further develop modules and improve userfriendliness.

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Example 2: An international organization restructured its procurement processes in order to leverage global synergies. As a result, procurement activities are centralized in one shared service center. To measure the extent to which staff engages in the newly designed structure adoption rates are tracked. As such, the number of purchase requisites handled by the shared service center as compared to the number of total purchase requisites is measured on a weekly basis. Additionally, a monthly report is developed to track typical procurement KPIs such as cost savings generated and Maverick Spend.

Adoption KPIs help to effectively measure how well new tools, processes, and solutions are put into practice and how well they are accepted by users. Moreover, they create transparency through regular communication schemes and make staff an active part of the implementation process.

Consequently, acceptance and engagement are increased and resistance is continuously lowered.

Get your people excited to adopt new solutions. Transparently share their progress. Run truly successful projects. Realize their benefits. Connect with us to feel the difference.

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