

The Project Management Culture: International Lessons and Kazakhstan's Experience

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The development paradigm

It is obvious that in current dynamically developing economic environment, effective management system organization has become the key competitive advantage.

Project Management is a part of the management activity system. Moreover, Project Management assures implementation of purposeful changes in organizations, companies, and the whole social-economic system, being a powerful instrument for the development of new products and services. It could be seen as a "multi-purpose key" to the process of creation.

This feature of modern project management gives versatility to this kind of professional activity. Project Management is not confined only within project boundaries; it can be applied to management of any objects, even without obvious project features. About 40% of socially useful activity is implemented only through various projects and programs [1]. At the same time Project Management tools have been successfully applied for managing industrial processes, operational activities, and public administration. Due to its indisputable advantages this multifunctional approach is widely used in business management, government and society, both within the separate companies as well as whole economy sectors.

In other words Project Management has become systemic and provides tangible results in all fields of application, and this explains its growing popularity. Born in the 1950s of the last century in the United States, Project Management rapidly spread worldwide and has become the only globally recognized knowledge field that teaches one how to achieve goals. During gradual development of Project Management as an independent field of professional activity, its own standardized mechanisms, methodologies, tools and standards were developed.

We can confidently assert that the application of project-based management approaches in countries with developed economies to a great extent has determined their dynamic development and high competitiveness. Thus, currently this management culture is a kind of "bridge" for professionals for civilized business cooperation among countries from the different continents and historical context. This is a philosophy and a contemporary paradigm of managerial and professional activities. This way of thinking: "If I know this methodology, I will be successful in any business" [2].

Success Formula

Project management continues to possess peoples' minds. More and more organizations realize that this type of management is fundamental to the implementation of business strategy. In today's economy where it seems the competition is at its height, and life cycles of individual goods are calculated by months or even weeks, the application of Project Management technology is necessary not only for prosperity, but also for survival of almost every business enterprise.

The definition of management given by Terry Gibson, a known expert in the field of modern management as "the art of achieving goals with limited resources" [3] with good reason could be extended to project management. And this is the success formula: the right project management system following the creation and innovation path in various sectors of the economy and production allows one to properly plan and successfully implement projects, while optimizing costs time, money and human resources without deviating from planned quality of the final product. Triple bottom line (triple constraint) quality, time and budget are always manageable by one who knows how to apply Project Management tools. This is confirmed by the practical application of project management in various areas of modern management.

"Talking" facts and figures about the importance, scope and role of project management

Modern approaches in project management have emerged in the 1990s of the XX century. One example of project implementation based on standardized procedures was the erection of a liquefied gas plant and a marine terminal for its service in the State of Qatar on the Persian Gulf by the Japanese company «Chiyoda» from 1993 to 1998 with the participation of about two thousand companies-subcontractors from more than fifty countries. The budget was approximately \$1.7 billion and the project was implemented using professional management and modern information technology, including telecommunications via satellite Intel Sat and global Internet: Electronic Data Management System (EDMS), Global Communication System, Project Material Management System, New Project Management Tools, Project IT [4].

As a result of a careful project feasibility study, organizational and technological preproduction, integrated scheduling, continuous monitoring of project progress and its main control parameters, as well as timely decision making to resolve problems and unwanted deviations from the established indicators, the project, which was carried out in the harshest conditions of the Arabian desert with the absence of local staff (at the peak of construction work up to nine thousand people were engaged at the site) was successfully completed with the required quality. Budget savings amounted to 11%, and the project was implemented within eight months before the deadline. In 1999 this project was nominated for the "Project of the Year" award in the field of Project Management, held by Project Management Institute, USA.

In 2013 the winner of this award was a project of desalination plant in Adelaide, South Australia. Project with a budget of AU\$ 1.8 billion was completed 19 days ahead of the schedule and with 1% budget savings; planned capacity of plant exceeded twice [5].

Another striking example of a construction project in China is erection of 30-storeyed skyscraper in 15 days! Through careful planning the project managers not only showed a fantastic construction speed, but also achieved high environmental sustainability 20 times higher than world standards! Moreover, a six-time material and five-time energy savings were achieved [6].

And there are many more examples to be cited. Why? The fact is that the application of Project Management systems in practice can be effective even for very small projects, and there is a clear trend in the world. This is an illustration of the wide dissemination of this technology.

Statistics say that the use of Project Management tools allows usual savings of about 20-30% of time and about 15-20% of budget spent on projects and programs [7] German Gref, the Russian Sberbank President believes that one additional minute spent at the initial stage of project, saves 10 minutes at its implementation phase, and each ruble invested in design, save 5-8 rubles. [8]

According to international experts estimates today more than 24.4 million professionals worldwide are involved in the project-oriented activities to implement the reforms in various fields and the development of new products and services. By 2016 this number will rise up to 32.6 million. [9]

About US\$ 10 trillion per year is spent on Project Management worldwide [10]. Practice shows that application of standardized Project Management technologies for large projects' implementation provides economic effect of 15-20%, taking that the cost of these technologies from 2 to 10 % of the project budget [11]. Therefore, by the end of 2020 about 30 % of the global budget, which is about US\$ 45 trillion, will be allocated to programs and projects implementation.

Project Management approach is currently being successfully applied by many leading companies. Among them are IBM, Motorola, Boeing, Intel, Hewlett Packard, AT&T, Volkswagen Group, Toyota Motors, TNK - BP, Gazprom, Rostelecom, Sberbank, Beeline, MTS, Severstal, Sibur, RIA "RBC", Integrated Business Systems (IBS), NK "YUKOS" Holding "Lanit".

In Japan, according to Japan Association of Project Management all investment and construction projects are evaluated and implemented using Project Management techniques [12].

In China, the penetration of Project Management practices began in the 1980s coming from the construction industry. Since 2005 the program of large-scale development of Project Management started in that country [13]. As a part of the program 600,000 people must pass training in Project Management and 100,000 of them should get a PMP certification. Only in 2005 3,000 people have been trained and more than 1,200 professionals have received the PMP credential. Analyzing successful reform of China's economy we can see clear signs of Project Management methodology

application. Even the economic transition of the 1980s can be considered as unique mega project of national or even international scale.

Recently PM methods and tools have been actively used in the public administration of the United States, Germany, Japan, France, China, Russia, Ukraine and other countries. In the U.S., for example, virtually every government official has PM software tools along with a set of standard software packages on his/her personal computer. They are used not only for federal projects and programs management, but also for implementation of administrative functions within the government machinery. [14]

In Canada a large-scale public project management office operates which performs regular monitoring of the process of natural resources usage. PM Office also exists in Singapore, which is the Centre for Public Project Management (CP2M) of the Ministry of Finance; in the UK it is the Centre for Major Program Management. The project approach in France allows the organizing of effective collaboration of interested government agencies [15]. Excellent national Project Portfolio Management system has been developed in Qatar. [16]

In Ukraine the State Agency for Investment and National Projects of Ukraine operates at the executive branch. The agency performs project-based activities, which means that the realistic timeframes and key performance indicators of a project's impact on the Ukrainian economy are defined [17]. There are many examples of successful Project Management application in Azerbaijan [16]. In June 2013 Russia started working seriously on integration of Project Management to federal executive bodies and Russian Federation public authorities. To this end the Ministry of Economic Development formed a special Council, which begins to implement pilot integration project in 2014 [18].

Project Management standards - the cornerstone of PM

Project activities have been standardized since the 80s of the last century. About 20 states have adopted national standards in the field of Project Management. Among them are the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland, India, Canada, South Africa and Russia. In the UK there are two national standards so far.

In 1987 still the most popular standard in this field of knowledge – *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®)* was issued. It was developed by PMI and offered to be used globally. Since 1999 this manual has been recognized as a national standard in America. The PMBOK is constantly updated, reflecting new trends emerging and enriching Project Management practice. Since January 2013 it has been the fifth version of the standard.

The PMBOK like the other 14 PMI standards is recognized as a book of pioneering methodologies in Project Management. Many countries have national standards for Project Management based on the PMBOK. A huge number of countries without national standards for PM simply use the PMBOK. Thus, it is a "de facto" standard that has become international.

Among managers there is also a demand for the IPMA Standard for Project Managers Certification of the International Project Management Association (IPMA), Switzerland, as well as the Japanese standard P2M - a *Guidebook of Project and Program Management for Enterprise Innovation*.

Special recognition of the importance of project management occurred in 2012, when the international standard ISO-21500 - Guide to Project Management was issued in September, which again was mostly based on the PMI® PMBOK® *Guide*. ISO-21500 can be used in organizations of all types including public and private, and projects of any type irrespective of their complexity, scope and duration. This standard is not the last in the series of Project Management standards. Currently, ISO is working on two more standards, which are "Managing Programs and Portfolios" and "Risk Management".

Therefore, it is fair to say that the countries without their own national standards in this field lag behind global development trends.

There is a profession - Project Manager!

In the dynamic world things are changing. And apparently the project manager profession was born just recently. But when you consider that projects have always existed in human activity you can safely say that the project manager is an ancient profession. At the head of all of the great achievements of the past explicitly or implicitly stood an inventive initiator and a gifted leader - project manager in the modern notation. This profession was just not considered as an independent one by humanity for a long time. The parallel could be drawn between the professions of management systems political analysts or expert-auditors, which also were not perceived as self-sufficient up to the middle of the last century. Like any politician who could call himself a political analyst, any organizational leader could consider himself a project manager. To some extent this is the case today. But at the same time society is gradually maturing in understanding that in order to be a project manager one needs to learn project management.

Indeed, a qualified project manager is a multifunctional position. He needs to have comprehensive knowledge in strategic and operational planning, finance and accounting, sales, marketing, manufacturing, research and development, personnel, and administrative work. Project managers must possess good organizational skills, be able to implement plans, make quick decisions, complete multiple tasks, and work with a large amount of information. The candidate for this position should have responsibility, decision making capabilities, an analytical mind, communicative flexibility and highest performance, tolerance to stress, and patience as well as to be result-oriented. And this is not the complete list of professional project manager qualities.

We should also highlight such characteristics as openness to learning and exploring new directions, sharing experience and the ability to clearly communicate ideas. The

latter is particularly important as a guarantee of correctness in setting tasks and managing multiple stakeholders.

All this is combined to make the profession of project manager one of the most popular and promising in the labor market and determines a very high demand for qualified project managers. As competition increases, it has become extremely important for companies to be prepared for unexpected turns of events, that is, for competent managers to be able to anticipate, plan and manage change. There are not many professionals in this field, although the annual demand for them counts to thousands for both commercial and government projects. Therefore, in practice project managers are often hired from external sources, which costs companies large amounts of money; moreover they are often "repurchased" from one company to another.

The best are evaluated

The level of Project Managers skills is confirmed by certification or evaluation of compliance to professional requirements. Cherished certificate possession characterizes the expert in the eyes of colleagues, competitors and officials.

So far, various certification systems of project management practitioners and project managers are developed. They hold both national and international status. The main objective of this certification is to create a community of professionals based on shared management culture, owning a standardized professional language for communication, recognizing a certain system of values, common requirements and approaches to project implementation. Such management culture does not depend on country-specific context in which the project is carried out, but in practice takes into account the socio-economic factors, traditions and national culture, religion, lifestyle and mentality.

The most prestigious international credential is considered to be the Project Management Professional - PMI PMP®. The remaining six PMI credentials are equally important, but less popular. They allow getting a status of Program, Portfolio, Risk, Time Management Professionals, and etc.

Well-known international certification system is also provided by the 4-level system of IPMA. It assumes candidates' professional growth starting from Project Manager Assistant and finishing with Projects Director. A competence-based approach to Project Management and a candidates' evaluation has allowed this certification system to gain worldwide recognition very quickly.

Some countries, for example China, develop their own national certification systems, thus expanding opportunities for assessment of Project Management practitioners.

In other countries market specialized companies provide this certification. In Russia, for example, a well-known center of Project Management competence, the PM Expert Company has developed its own certification system based on local peculiarities of Project Management, including national standards and the best international practices in this field [19].

The Perceived Need

How does Kazakhstan look like on the background of the global trend of dynamic cultural dissemination of Project Management, where this approach has already emerged as an important branch of professional activity?

Certainly, the global trends and environmental factors force local management to pay attention to international project, program and portfolio management practices. Such approaches began to penetrate Kazakhstan after it became independent. The idea gained support from the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the First Congress of Kazakhstan Engineers in May 1993. Addressing representatives from engineering science he said: "...I would like to draw your attention to one important aspect of modern engineering education and practice. I mean a specific aspect of engineering labor organization, which is called "Project Management". Its feature and advantage is that it focuses on continuous monitoring and engineering support of the entire investment cycle of a project from the idea to realization of profits..." [20].

The emphasis made two decades ago not only remain relevant for Kazakhstan, but has acquired new specific meaning in the context of the set goal to achieve a position among 30 most industrialized countries by 2050. Since 2010 as a part of the large-scale State Program of Forced Industrial-Innovative Development (SPFIID), more than 600 projects have been implemented [21]. However, experience of program realization along with the indisputable positive results allows concluding that lack of expertise in the field of Project Management exists in the country. The State has a compelling need for qualified specialists. This is a perceived need.

During the last ten years Project Management practices have been actively promoted in Kazakhstan, and primarily due to non-governmental organizations' activities. The acknowledged center of excellence in Project Management is the association of "Union of Project Managers of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (hereinafter - UPM RK) operating since 2003. UPM RK is actively communicating with government agencies, business community and civil society.

According to the research undertaken by UPM RK, the Republic of Kazakhstan has formed a productive environment for promotion of Project Management [22]. Recently the interest in application of Project Management practices has grown considerably in all sectors of the Kazakhstan economy [23]. Although in 2000s Project Management was perceived by the local community as a sort of newfangled idea, and the terms "project" or "project management" included into management lexicon were not filled with the true meaning. During the current decade PM has been seen as a necessary and useful management tool in many companies. Project Management tasks are tied to companies' business processes, organizational structures and development strategies.

Thus, the number of companies which have become project-based, engage their specialists in PM training, implement corporate project management systems and create project management offices is gradually increasing.

Since 2008, with the initiative of UPM RK, academic programs for Masters and PhD students with the major in "Project Management" have been developed. That year the first Master's degree Program started at the Kazakh National Technical University, named after K.I. Satpayev. UPM RK acted as a co-developer of the required documentation: public education standards of the profession, syllabus, course structures and materials. Currently there are five Universities in Kazakhstan preparing Masters of PM, two of those are national and three are private. Over the years 66 have graduated with Master's Degrees in Project Management from the Kazakhstani Universities [24]. The first PhD graduated was in December 2013.

Gradually, the importance of Project Management rises to the state level. In 2010 the UPM RK together with the "NurOtan" party initiated the concept of development Project Management system in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2010-2020. At the suggestion of the UPM RK in 2010, the Senators of the Parliament of Kazakhstan for the first time sent a deputy request to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the need for widespread implementation of Project Management in the country.

In Kazakhstan the tools and measures encouraging business to use this technology are included into portfolio of innovation and business development support. The issue of creating a fully-functional Project Management Office to manage SPFIID projects is considered in Government structures [25].

In 2012 Kazakhstan developed five national standards for research, technology and innovation activities (R&D&I), one of them is ST RK R&D&I 166001-2012. It provides links to the basic terms and establishes only minimum common requirements for R&D&I projects scope and development. Accordingly, its current level of detail is not enough to properly understand and apply a project management system.

In this regard in 2013 the UPM RK signed a tripartite Memorandum of Cooperation with the Committee for Technical Regulation and Metrology (CTRM) of the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kazakh National Technical University named K.I.Satpaev to promote PM in Kazakhstan. For this CTRM MINT RK included the UPM RK in the Technical Committee for Standardization 54 - "Quality Management Systems"(TC 54). As a member of TC 54 the UPM RK will be engaged in regulatory provision in the field of projects development and management.

In 2014 it is planned to develop a national standard, which is harmonized with the international standard ISO 21500:2012 – A Guide to Project Management. Consequently, the country will join the number of states with national standards for Project Management.

In the future it is planned to develop the national standard based on PMBOK, which has been widely used during the last thirty years in a number of countries. And then, the development of set of national standards for Project Management to meet the requirements of ISO standards is planned.

According to growing demand for PM professionals the network of organizations conducting training seminars in Project Management expands in Kazakhstan. UPM RK,

for example, provides short courses for Kazakh companies' staff and already has trained 4 thousand employees.

In 2013, as a part of specialized budget program, RSE "Kazakhstan Institute for standardization and certification" training center held four regional workshops on promoting the implementation of management systems standards, as well as professional training for business and organization managers and professionals. The seminar program included the topic "Project management: standards, tools and methods", which was addressed by UPM RK training.

Training in Project Management has also started in the public service. PM relevant issues are included into the test exams of the new selection system for personnel reserve of the Government service officials. And this is another important sign of recognition of the PM role at the state level.

As a non-governmental Development Institute, the UPM RK established a Forum "Project Management in Central Asia" as collegiate authority of PM community in the region, acting on a regular basis and being held once in two or three years (www.pmforum.kz). Its main objective is to promote the development of PM maturity in Central Asian countries. UPM RK with its partners has already held two forums - in 2009 and 2012 [26].

But challenges in promoting Project Management practices in Kazakhstan still exist. The status of Project Management in the country rises slowly. The main reason is lack of Government attention. Since all transformations in the country for the last twenty years come under the supervision of the State Government, the lack of higher-level support dooms innovation to fail or sluggish development.

Actually, this could happen with the promotion of project management, if there was not an initiative "from the bottom". Several non-governmental bodies such as the UPM RK, Kazakhstan Association of Project Management and PM training companies make serious efforts to allow Kazakhstan to take its place in the world of professional Project Management.

However, with the adequate State attention, such as in the Russian example, would contribute to institutionalization of PM maturity in organizations and the country as a whole. And this in turn would dramatically increase Kazakhstan's competitiveness that meets the objective of entering the 30 developed countries.

Prospects of development

Over the past ten years preconditions for large-scale development and application of Project Management in the Republic of Kazakhstan have been created. But what will take the country in the upcoming years towards the development of Project Management? The answer to this question can be quite specific:

- Develop a national policy for promotion of Project Management and integration into the global project management community;

- Ensure the development of national standards for Project Management and their harmonization with relevant international standards;
- Develop academic and vocational education in PM;
- Intensify training leaders at all levels to develop the methodology and tools for PM;
- Create systems of incentives and encourage application of PM;
- Introduce Project Manager profession into qualification handbooks of managers, professionals and other employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kazakhstan;
- Develop a domestic system of PM certification for professionals and organizations;
- Build clear communication, organizational and economic mechanisms for interaction of international and Kazakh organizations involved in the promotion of PM in the country.

With certainty we can assert that this work package will require State support as well as business, public and the mass media efforts. Project management should become a priority for socio-economic development of Kazakhstan in the third millennium.

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