

Healthcare: Is it a Project Business or System Business?

By Almahdy Eltonsy

"It is not a project business; it is a system business..." This was the statement I had, even from big multinational manufacturers. Is it a true statement? Is it hard to see healthcare as a project business?

How do we define activities as a project?

Is it about complexity, criticality, impact, invested capital.....?

If we recall the typical definition of project and project management:
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_management#History). [1]

Project management is the process and activity of planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling resources to achieve specific goals. A project is a temporary endeavor designed to produce a unique product, service or result [1] with a defined beginning and end (usually time-constrained, and often constrained by funding or deliverables). [2]

"You just got a system from a shelf and put it in its location. Do you call this a project? If so then having a new TV will be a project, healthcare equipment is on a shelf product delivered and run, that is it."

That was a usual discussion I had; but that could be a valid argument 15 years ago.

The concept of healthcare has changed in the last two decades and that touched all healthcare components. This can be seen obviously in the last 15 years.

You can easily see the change of Major manufacturers' slogans from providing equipment to providing solutions for general healthcare.

Many mergers and acquisitions done in the industry have reshaped the market and opened a new era.

The healthcare facility is providing a function; the main scope in healthcare projects is to achieve the function, not just having running equipment.

Stakeholders are a real pivot in healthcare projects; dealing with physicians and medical professionals requires using their own terminologies and concepts. Knowing clinical work flow is mandatory.

Healthcare project management complies with the new healthcare concepts and the real aim of the project is providing for working and functioning facilities that combine all the engineering disciplines to meet the goals.

If we take a look at a hospital, it includes all the facilities that exist in any 5 star hotel including the pools for hydrotherapy in addition to highly sophisticated solutions.

The challenge is when the project manager gets involved, the typical scenario is that, architect makes the concept design and then starts the drawings based on the data existing at the date of design for medical equipment. That is a real challenge as the concept could differ dramatically from design to design and that includes the distribution of equipment and the location of different facilities.

The design starts at day one but the start of installation of equipment could start two years later; at that point the 1:20 drawings will not be valid any more. The process of change will take place, and in almost all cases, new solutions pop up and that will require a change in concept and changes of many things already put in place earlier.

Change will touch many solutions and that for sure will lead to changes in rooms to assure the fit-to-purpose.

Whole systems are integrated together in order to make a functioning facility and it is a real valid point to consider with the change process (computability and validity).

What to start with, when to implement, and what to delay are always valid questions with no unique answers.

People and patients are core stakeholders who will use the facility and in many cases a project manager faces a real stress from publicity, media, and even political parties. This is especially true if the whole project faced some difficulties or delays in early phases; accordingly the last phase (equipment) faces challenges and in some cases had-to-confront problems not related to the scope.

In the coming articles I will go deep into details of healthcare project management and how to realize a functioning facility.

References

- 1- <http://www.pmi.org/About-Us/About-Us-What-is-Project-Management.aspx>
- 2- Chatfield, Carl. "A short course in project management". Microsoft.

About the Author



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Almahdy Eltonsy, IPMA – B is a Senior Project Manager in the HealthCare industry, and the first healthcare PM granted the IPMA-B certification in Egypt. Starting with Siemens in 1993, Almahdy has extensive technical and managerial experiences, gaining the ability to work cross-functionally in a time-intensive environment. One of the most important milestones in Almahdy's project management career is Children's Cancer Hospital in Egypt (57357) (www.57357.com), a 30 Million Euro Project. As a GPM for this strategic pivotal project, the scope was not only project management but also the service management, in addition to work with accreditation bodies.

In 2012 Almahdy moved to GE HealthCare to work as a product service manager for Surgery – X Ray – Intervention – Ultrasound – Life Care solutions, using his experience in leading the service team with project management methodology. Almahdy's motive to change is to take a new challenge and exposure to new cultures and discipline, taking advantage of his technical and managerial skills and using the project management tool box in general management aspects.

In addition to his work in healthcare, Almahdy worked as an IT project developer with one of the largest media and advertising groups in Egypt. Almahdy was able to realize a new methodology and software for Media planning and advertising campaign planning. Almahdy holds a B.Sc. in Systems and Biomedical Engineering from Cairo University - Faculty of Engineering, and passed many specialized courses in Siemens, GE and Microsoft. LinkedIn: Almahdy Eltonsy. Email: Almahdy_eltonsy@yahoo.com