

## **Project Management in “Spring”**

**By Almahdy Eltonsy**

Spring used to mean a season of hope and shine. What does Spring mean for a project manager when it is the "Arab Spring"?

Real unusual circumstances!

How to deal with change, and how to deal with what looks like "force majeure"?

When it comes with projects in hand with millions USD and with governmental bodies, you will keep ask the questions: Who will be in charge? What could be the changes in the project? What about the cash flow and what about payments? Are we going to have problems if we have exported items? Are we going to have problems with expats?

All these questions and millions more just jump into your mind in addition to your personal perceptions, you can never ignore your own perceptions, at the end a project manager is a member of the project and human, so the perceptions cannot be ignored.

What to do? That was the conclusion of the series of questions, even the conclusion was a question.

At that point of time and as a project manager, I decided to use two concepts that I learned during my MBA study, they are: business dynamics and agile production.

But before it was a must to neutralise the situation with team members and to act based on the situation. It was a real challenge to deal with ambiguity and in an environment that changes each minute; after no news for about 30 years there was a flood of news and changes. It looked as though the 30 years of events were saved for this moment.

Healthcare industry and big projects with ministry of health and large scale hospital (private or university) were a real challenge. At the beginning there were a lot of demonstrations, some strikes and a fluid situation, but for me these were not enough to stop working and stop delivering the projects.

Healthcare means the easiest tool to be used in any political argument either to finger point or to show achievements.

Facts not perceptions!

What if you decided to go to a certain movie with your friends and suddenly you discovered that they changed the movie out? That was a question I asked to some of my team members and sure I got different answers like I will go with them to

restaurant or go to coffee shop or go back home or find another movie or reschedule the outing.

Whatever the answer, it was based on actual facts, the overall situation and on-the-ground alternatives. In all cases the first step was going out, not staying at home.

Going back to the business dynamics, it is about using the control systems we studied in universities and in business cases.

You need to put all variables in the process, not your work package elements and not risk plan, and make relations between them to see which will ones will have a positive impact on your project and which will have a negative impact, and in addition how they relate to each other.

Example: strikes or road cutting will definitely affect your project negatively, but will they affect your chance to approve a claim positively.

Change of owner management will affect your project negatively, but could it affect the change of order either positively or negatively.

Business dynamics provided me with a systematic way to deal with risks and opportunities, but with much wider and holistic approach that gave me the eye of project manager and business manager; actually it was an interpretation of the whole situation using the systematic way.

Let us do it fast and finalise the product, everything should be done with the JOT (just on time). That was the other approach I used with the concept of agile production. The idea was clear; each day new products needed to be released and the releases must be fast and accurate, not just to fit with all quality regulations.

The main idea of agile production is to have highly customised with short lead time. In other words the national science foundation defined it as "the ability to rapidly alter any aspects of the manufacturing enterprise in response to changing market demands."

The twin of agility is flexibility; flexibility is the capacity to deploy or redeploy production resources efficiently as required by changes in the environment.

Do these look familiar? Can we see the flexibility and agility as real characteristics for the projects in the "Arab Spring"?

Simply we can say "for the field of production," agility and flexibility are the hallmarks of the ability to adapt rapidly and efficiently.

Now let us see what needed to be agile or to have the capabilities to be agile:  
Responsiveness - Competency - Flexibility - Speed

Can we apply the business dynamics concepts and agility to treat the " Arab Spring " environment as a fast changing market, and each milestone you need to achieve considered as a product you need to launch?

Using the business dynamics will enable you to see better and understand better the complex environment and be able to see things clearly; with agile and flexibility concepts you will be able to deal with changes in faster way.

I assume all project managers do the same naturally; they all know how to deal with changes and with different difficult situations. But dealing with all these variables in a systematic way and as normal not exceptional makes the focus more clear and the stress less.

I have experienced many situations where the use of the above two concepts helped me a lot, not just in implementation but also in describing the situation to the sub-project manager and project participants. It is something like putting a name on a picture or naming symptoms.

## About the Author



### **Almahdy Eltonsy**

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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](http://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](mailto:Almahdy_eltonsy@yahoo.com)

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