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Projectizing and Organization: 8 Dos and Don'ts
Paul C. Dinsmore
Advisory Article

Projectizing an Organization: 8 Dos and 7 Don'ts[1]

Paul C. Dinsmore

Is your organization projectized? In other words, is project management a vital component of your company's culture? Is it an integral part of the organization's DNA, occupying a prominent role along with other organizational pillars like operations, quality and sales management?

If not projectized, or to the degree desired, then how can you articulate the transformation? What are the key elements? The following questions set the scene for identifying the dos and don'ts for projectizing an organization.

Q1: What is a projectized organization?

A: A projetized organization has a project management culture and uses project concepts throughout to make sure the right combination of the right projects are done right. The organization may be project-driven, where projects are the final product as in the construction or systems industries. Or, it may simply use project management as a way to produce products effectively (oil companies, consumer product manufacturers and such). This project management *mind set* co-exists with the operational processes necessary to support repetitive activities and administrative functions. Projectizing means fully incorporating project management into the organization's DNA.

Q2: Why make the effort to projectize an organization?

A: Project management is vital for transforming company strategies into bottom-line results. It helps secure organizational survival and bolsters future prosperity. Companies that aspire to obtain greater organizational agility, for instance, are more likely to achieve that desired competency as projectizing creates a culture for getting things done expediently and effectively.

So, how to go about projectizing an organization? Here are the dos and don'ts:

Do:

- **…take a helicopter view of the scenario**. Size up the situation. Does it make sense to create a projectized culture now? If not, what preparations are lacking? What are the organization's SWOTs (strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats)? What is the level of project management maturity? How can those factors lay the groundwork for planning?

- **… utilize a high-level champion.** A high-level champion as sponsor for the program greatly boosts the odds for success. If this sponsor already exists (perhaps the originator of the program), then great! If not, identify and cultivate the likely candidate,

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spotlighting the benefits for the organization and the chosen champion. Then involve that champion in the program's strategies.

- **…make change behave**. Change happens naturally, but often not the way we want it to. So, structured change management is required for projectizing an organization. Change has to be harnessed and directed through a program that focuses on the four components of projectization: governance, processes, competency and culture.

- **…plan, plan, plan.** Pinpoint the issues, raise the "what ifs", ferret out hidden agendas and lay out the game plan. Discover the stakeholders' expected outcomes for the projectizing program. Dedicate time, say, up to three months, to put together a Master Plan, and remember to involve key stakeholders in the planning.

- **…tackle governance concerns head-on.** A successful projectizing program puts project management governance and corporate governance in synch with one another. Policies are fixed for managing the 3 Ps – portfolio, programs and projects, as well as the interfaces with operational matters.

- **…map out a competency program.** Project management competency calls for a multi-faceted plan of attack, starting with competency assessments. The development stage follows with knowledge-based training programs, practical workshops and on-the-job field experiences. Job design completes the cycle which then leads to improved performance.

- **…provide a suitable toolbox** This sizeable tool kit includes processes such as project management methodologies, operational and support systems, and basic procedures. Legacy hardware and software may require upgrades or replacement to meet the needs of a projectized organization.

- **…keep the stakeholders tuned in.** Ways to do this include: informative workshops, house organs, virtual networking, and wide-sweeping endo-marketing programs. Internal forums, frequent mention in meetings by high-profile managers, and visual campaigns also keep stakeholders in the loop.

If you do the dos, the projectizing programs will likely achieve extraordinary success -- provided of course, that you don't do the don'ts, as listed below:

Don't:

- **…get in too much of a hurry**. A folksy saying goes, "You can't speed up a river; it flows at its own speed." Of course, a river can be navigated intelligently, taking advantage of currents and winds. And motorized power can move you along faster than the river. But since the river represents the pace of change, the program must be respectful of the natural flow of things.

- **…underestimate the bumps in the road.** Stuff happens. No matter how meticulous the plans -- bumps, blips and even bombs inevitably show up. Classic risk management,

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along with pocket *plan Bs* and a fine-tuned intuition make uncertainties easier to cope with.

- **…assume single sponsorship will guarantee a gold medal.** Multiple sponsorships may be the way to go, say, with a principal sponsor in the corporate stratosphere, along with a business-unit honcho and perhaps a well-positioned HR sponsor. A program steering committee is another slant for creating sponsorship synergy.

- **…go wild on technical training**. People need to know *why* -- why projectizing is a good thing and what its benefits are. So a training program packed with PMBOK-type technical principles is not the magic formula for projectizing. Focus is also needed on program context, and on behavioral skills such as leadership, negotiation, team building and conflict management.

- **…understaff the projectizing effort**. Involve full-time internal facilitators or external consultants. The projectizing program may well be the answer for an organization's survival and future prosperity, so, if it's going to be done, it needs to be done right, and with sufficient resources.

- **…begin by incrementally muddling along.** The program's success depends on getting the program ducks in order and appropriately articulated in the Master Plan, and then making a bandwagon-style launch. Up-front kickoff meetings and awareness forums help break the initial inertia and increase visibility.

- **…put the program on automatic pilot**. A pro-active stance is required throughout the program. Waning enthusiasm -- common to all change programs due to extended time frames -- is offset with a relentless and on-going push to follow through with the steps in the Master Plan.

Projectizing an organization calls for unwavering adherence to the maxims of change management and the practice of project management itself to speed the process along. By doing the *dos* and side-stepping the *don'ts*, projectizing programs are destined to carry organizations to greater results by insuring the right combination of the right projects are done right and on a timely basis.

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About the Author

Paul C. Dinsmore

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Paul C. Dinsmore is an international speaker, executive coach and consultant on project management and organizational issues. He has authored or co-authored 20 management books, and has written more than one hundred professional papers and articles. Mr. Dinsmore is Board President of DinsmoreCompass, a training and consulting group focused on consulting, outsourcing, training, coaching and IT support. Prior to establishing his consulting practice in 1985, he worked for twenty years as a project manager and executive in the construction and engineering industry.

Mr. Dinsmore has performed consulting and training services for major companies including IBM, ENI-Italy, Petrobrás, General Electric, Mercedes Benz, Shell, Morrison Knudsen, the World Trade Institute, Westinghouse, Ford, Caterpillar, and Alcoa. His speaking and consulting practice has taken him to Europe, South America, South Africa, Japan, China, and Australia. The range of projects where Mr. Dinsmore has provided consulting services include company reorganization, project start-up, and training programs, as well as advisory and coaching functions for the presidents of major organizations. He participates actively in the Project Management Institute, which awarded him its Distinguished Contributions Award as well as the prestigious title of Fellow of the Institute.

As executive coach, he has extensively coached company owners and C-level executives in the fields of oil & gas, construction, engineering, organizational consulting as well as healthcare and services.

Mr. Dinsmore graduated from Texas Tech University and completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School. He can be reached at paul.dinsmore@dc.srv.br, or pauldinsmore@me.com.