

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Situational Sponsorship of Projects and Programs: An Empirical Review***¹

Authors: **L. Crawford, T. Cooke-Davies, B. Hobbs, L. Labuschagne, K. Remington, P. Chen**

Publisher: Project Management Institute, Inc.

List Price: \$29.95 Format: Softcover, 200 pages

Publication Date: 2008 ISBN: 978-1-933890-46-3

Reviewer: **Jemillatu I. Lewally, PMP** Review Date: Feb 2024

Introduction

This book examines the meaning, purpose, dynamics, and significance of situational sponsorship roles within an organization and its impact on the project/program management. Situational sponsorship in this context refers to the appointment of a representative referred to as the “senior responsible owner – SRO” by the sponsoring organization, with the main responsibility to make decisions on investments and to guide the direction of the business, in line with the strategic direction of the sponsoring organization. The role and influence of the sponsor is determined by the organization and project type.

The owner organization is referred to as the permanent organization and the implementing organization, the temporary organization. The sponsor is typically appointed to deal with a “situation”, drive change and make improvements for the successful implementation of the projects/programs.

The research presents the results of an investigation conducted by a team of six researchers working on five continents, using the methodology of a literature review, followed by empirical study organized in three phases: Phase 1, five preliminary studies conducted independently; Phase 2, case studies of 36 projects/ programs in 9 organizations; and Phase 3, validation workshops.

¹ How to cite this review: Lewally, J. I. (2020). Situational Sponsorship of Projects and Programs: An Empirical Review, book review, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XI, Issue III, March.

Overview of Book's Structure

The report is presented in 6 chapters. Chapter 1, which introduces the report, is followed by five additional chapters. The literature review is presented in Chapter 2. The research design and methodology are presented in Chapter 3. An analysis of the case study organizations, their projects and programs, and their governance arrangements are presented in Chapter 4. The analysis leads to the development of a conceptual model of the sponsorship role, which is presented in Chapter 5. The report closes with a conclusion in Chapter 6, followed by references and 4 appendices providing more details of the studies.

The report mostly focuses on the analysis at the project level, particularly on the relationship between the sponsor and the temporary organization, and less focus on the link between the sponsor and their permanent organization. The research methodology was purposely designed to take a holistic view of the sponsorship role within the projects/programs and organizational context and ensuring inclusion of the views and experiences of sponsors as well as those of project managers, team members, and other stakeholders.

Highlights

- Emphasis is made on two key dimensions to the sponsorship role - Governance and Support. In relation to governance, the sponsor has the responsibility of:
 - Governing the project.
 - Taking accountability for business case and realization of benefits.
 - Giving direction and making decisions.
 - Reviewing progress critically.
 - Managing internal and external interfaces.
 - Having sufficient seniority to represent the project/program.

In relation to support - even when projects/programs are doing good, support from the sponsoring organization is much required because the sponsor is in a position to

- Use credibility and networking ability.
 - Provide leadership.
 - Maintain effective relationships.
 - Provide availability and timely support.
- The sponsorship role can be considered as the point of liaison between the business or permanent organization and the project/ program or temporary organization, between senior managers and project/program managers, though the role and power/influence of the sponsor is defined by the nature of the organization and the project type.
 - The lack of clear senior management ownership and leadership is identified as a common cause of program and project failure, and the literature makes a strong

case for an executive sponsor, particularly in business systems, change, and renewal programs.

- The sponsorship role is important throughout the life cycle of a project or program, although the required emphasis in the role may vary by organization.
- The following characteristics were identified by project managers as the potential role of the sponsor:
 1. Responsible for budget allocation
 1. Supports project politically.
 2. Consults on decisions by the Project Manager.
 3. Approves the project plan.
 4. Provides project objectives.
 5. Makes major decisions for the project.
 6. Ratifies decisions made by the project manager or team.
 7. 8. Finds resources for the project
 8. 9. Responsible for the project's scope and
 9. 10. Responsible for issue and risk

Highlights: What I liked!

- The emphasis on the need for a present or involved sponsor where the situation requires it. A quote from one of the project managers interviewed states that "At times an issue can get beyond a project manager, simply because he doesn't have the clout to escalate. Then it's part of the sponsor's role to step in As a sponsor you have to recognize when that's happening. You need to keep an eye on what the issues are, so you know when you need to intervene."
- An example of the importance of a sponsor was shown in one of the case studies where an individual called in a review team from the organization's central IT department and as a result of their negative report, the CEO dismissed the CIO and appointed a sponsor for the program, with the title program director. The new sponsor worked closely with both the IT and business staff to generate a new plan, which was implemented successfully. An interesting aspect of this turnaround was the fact that, aside from replacing the CIO with the sponsor, the program was delivered with basically the same team that had been working on the program from the start. Interestingly, all the projects/programs in the sample qualified as turnarounds involved a new sponsor coming on board and saving the troubled project/program. This buttresses the point that a sponsor is highly essential in project success, especially where the project is failing and in dire need for a turnaround.
- Behavior as a key aspect of the sponsors role. The report highlights that effective sponsorship is largely dependent upon the behavior of the sponsors carrying out the role and it plays a significant role in determining the success of the programs/projects. It was concluded that the sponsor should have excellent

communication skills, the ability to handle ambiguity and the ability to manage self. Sponsors who are able to manage themselves are more effective in their role.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Project Managers
Program Managers
Sponsoring organizations
Business Analysts
Anyone who is interested in project governance and change management.

Conclusion

The research concludes the importance of the role of the sponsor in implementing effective projects/programs. Although there are variations in the organizational settings, contexts and interactions among the different projects and programs regarding the role of the sponsor, there are consistent themes. The sponsorship role is usually not the responsibility of one person. In most organizations the role is carried out by groups such as steering committees and project boards and by a hierarchy of individuals including an executive sponsor and program and/or project sponsor. There are two key aspects of the role which are identified –

1. The governance aspect which centers around the accountability for the projects/program delivery and realization of benefits, providing direction, and related decision making. This role is a requirement of corporate and project governance frameworks and the sponsor acts as the link between the permanent (business) and temporary (project) organizations.
2. The support aspect to the role involves providing leadership and managing relationships to create an environment that enables the project to succeed.

Excellent communication skills, the ability to deal with ambiguity, and self-management to handle multiple responsibilities and competing demands are behaviors that are directly associated with carrying out the sponsorship role, the circumstances around the project/programs will require the sponsor to place emphasis on different aspects of their role.

Until recently, the project/program sponsor role has largely been taken for granted. The increased interest in this role is associated, generally, with a shift from a focus on the individual project to more of a focus at the organizational level. It is also associated more specifically with an increased emphasis on corporate and project governance.

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Situational-Sponsorship-Projects-Programs-Empirical/dp/1933890460> or https://books.google.com/books/about/Situational_Sponsorship_of_Projects_and.html?id=PPOuDgAAQBAJ

About the Reviewer



Jemillatu I. Lewally

McKinney, Texas, United States



Jemillatu Lewally is a PMP certified, multi-skilled Project Manager, passionate about international development and ESG-focused project management. She has over 20 years of experience in international development management, public policy and governance, particularly in stakeholder engagement. She has coordinated and managed several socio-economic development projects in various sectors such as health, gender, agriculture and most recently construction. She volunteers frequently by providing project management services for nonprofits such as the PMI Atlanta Chapter, Community Consulting Teams of Atlanta. She also likes volunteering in her children's schools. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, a Master of Public Policy from the Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA and a Master of Arts in International Development Management from the University of Bradford, UK.

Email address: jemilla2@yahoo.com

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the PM World Journal and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide books to the PM World Journal Editor; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter where they are offered free to PMI members who agree to provide a review within 45 days; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. Reviewers can normally claim PDU's for PMP recertification upon publication of their book reviews.

If you would like us to publish a book review or are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.com.