

How personalities and motivations impact IT projects

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Disclaimer

The paper is built upon experiences both within and outside the pharmaceutical industry and the character types are built upon the sum total of many different people rather than individuals. On no account should the audience attempt to identify themselves

Project Failure Rates

Project Failure rates are extremely high

- 68% of companies are more likely to have a marginal project or outright failure than a success - [IAG Consulting](#)
- Their report blames most failures on the way organisations approach business analysis
- They picked projects that involved major business change, so that might be a skewed analysis.

Project types – Business Sponsor Led

Strategic projects

- Aligned with the overall organisation's strategy
- Clear understanding of future state and desired outcome
- Usually successful
- Can fail if business requirements are uncontrolled

Tactical projects

- Often initiated to deal with an immediate crisis or to make a small incremental efficiency gain.
- Can proliferate where there are restrictions on project initiation - leads to inefficiencies
- Sometimes characterised by in-house builds and poor validation practices

Project types – External Led

Software led

- Initiated when a new software package is seen as the simplest fix
- Initiated by the business or IT
- Initiated at many different levels of the organisation

Systems Integrator led

- Almost always associated with senior level sponsorship
- Usually have good ROI cases
- Usually associated with strategic business requirements.

The main characters and their motivations

The Permanent Employee

The Newbie

- Only been in post a little while
- Sometimes unsure of their ability to meet expectations
- Often see change as a threat and may become defensive

The Experienced Contributor

- Often cynical due to experience of many change programs
- Maybe good evangelists for the project if aligned
- Can be vital to the success of the project
- First line managers will often rely upon their opinions

The Corporate Climber

- Aspires to become a manager
- Projects are opportunities or threats... react accordingly
- Opinions strongly influenced by their perception of their managers' opinions

The Contract employee

The Positive Contractor

- Looks for new opportunities to enhance role or capabilities
- See projects as an opportunity to gain a new skill

A Defensive Contractor

- Sees change as a potential threat to their position
- Look for tactical opportunities to cement themselves in an organisation, particularly through in-house applications

An Incompetent Contractor

- Just about manages to do the tasks required and will see any change as a threat
- May attempt to undermine projects to avoid being exposed as incompetent.

First line manager 1

A Defensive Manager

- Try to ensure projects are not a threat to themselves or their team
- Will not oppose projects if no perceived threat
- Will support projects if they or their team become stronger

An Ambitious Manager

- If they see personal advancement then they will champion projects
- At any sign of failure they will distance themselves rapidly
- May take a political stance on a project; if it has no direct effect upon them but is good for a rival they may oppose the project.

First line manager 2

A Goal Oriented Manager

- Will ensure that the project is delivered and will champion the success of the project throughout its lifespan.
- More focused upon delivering business needs than furthering their own personal ambitions

A Peter Principle Manager

- Generally incompetent, has been promoted to a level where they can do no more harm
- Tend to survive by being not being associated with either success or failure, delegating everything to subordinates and only managing upwards
- Can adversely affect projects by failing to focus requirements gathering on the important elements and allowing minutiae to distract progress.

Senior Business Manager

A Leader

- Will direct both strategy and implementation
- Will not shy away from making uncomfortable decisions
- Will bring the business along with them and ensure that the project is well supported during implementation and roll-out.

A Politician

- Will be less clear in their decision making
- Will ensure that the opinions of (other) senior executives are reflected in their actions.
- Will ensure that other stakeholders are aligned to its success.

A Guided Leader

- Takes advice from an external party, usually a Systems Integrator but occasionally a software vendor
- They tend to have a strong previous association with the third party
- Can ensure a strong relationship with that organisation.

IT Business Partner

- Role to meet business needs
- Must maintain IT architecture and software standards
- Can act as gatekeepers and prevent IT projects being initiated
- Mostly ensure that IT projects have a realistic chance of success

IT Architect

- Encompasses a number of roles
 - Those who design systems for a particular project
 - Those who design the enterprise IT infrastructure
- Tend to create and enforce software and hardware standards
- Should prevent dysfunctional architectures

IT Decision Maker

- Often the project budget holder
- Keen to ensure any project with his or her name on it will succeed and have a positive impact on the business
- They will seek the guidance of their architecture standards team
- Support is often the difference between project success and failure.
- Some are One Trick Ponies...

Vendors

Software Salesperson

- Must sell in the current year or sometimes quarter
- Failure means they lose their job...succeed or move on
- A good salesperson can have a massive impact on a project - the software will be fit for purpose and the commercials arranged in a mutually beneficial manner.

Software Technical Consultant

- Technical consultants (presales or implementation) have longer term relationships with customers
- Can properly understand companies
- Can act as honest brokers (although will benefit from sales)

Systems Integrator

- Measured on the number of hours they can bill to projects
- Large SI's have a very driven culture
- Most consultants are incredibly hard working and develop very good business skills.
- Place high value on reputation
- Can try to over deliver on customer expectations, not always sufficiently critical of customer requirements

Company Culture

Notoriously hard to change a company's culture

- Common advice: "come back when they've retired"

When implementing a project this must be considered especially in the adoption phases

- Need to work within not against prevailing culture

Some organisations are overly political

- Project can become a pawn in political manoeuvring.

Powerful combinations

An Ambitious Manager with an Experienced Contributor

- Can be incredibly effective for a small tactical project
- Experienced Contributor delivers the project
- Ambitious manager sweeps away objections and corporate inertia
- Core relationship between the two major players is key
- Ambitious Manager ensures that any success is well recognised

A Leader and a Goal-Oriented First Line manager

- Possibly the most powerful combination of all
- Leader ensures project support across all levels of the organisation
- Goal-Oriented FLM concentrates upon the success of the most important deliverables

A Guided Leader with a good Systems Integrator

- Might seem like a recipe for thousands of consultants on site delivering nothing but documents...
- If the SI is good and the guided leader has sufficient background with SIs this can be incredibly effective

What Success Looks Like

Strategic Direction

- Aligned with operating model/company strategy
- Explained in common language
- Functional collaboration with all levels of the business
- Pick the most negative and the most positive for pilot teams

An uncompromised technical solution

- Closest to COTS as can be managed
- Used in the way it was designed

Well managed change

- Either guided by a Systems Integrator or through capable management
- A capable organisation to take the solution forward post-implementation
- Train, skills transfer, on-going support

Conclusions

Technology is only a very small part of the success or failure of projects

- People factors have a far greater impact
- Cultural/organisational factors must be factored in

I have hardly touched the surface of this subject

- Team personality types (e.g. Myers Briggs)
- KPI alignment
- Organisational Capability

I hope this promotes discussion among the audience.

A powerful combination!



