

1112 Management of International Projects

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The work of Project Managers is challenging:

- Projects can be defined as Tasks facing uncertainties and high risks
- Projects need the cooperation of many people coming from different departments
- Projects Teams need to be creative and "invent" new Ideas or Products
- the skills needed by a project manager are based on experience of many years and the newest information and knowledge of the state of the art of all topics related to the project
- Project Managers have to handle internal problems and to convince the bosses/ Customers
- Project Managers have to address strategic, operational and political problems

Successful Project Managers need a lot of skills and support by the project team and the Top-Managers who assigned the project. Therefore a good project team, a supportive Top-Management, the best methods for the project work, a conducive environment and last but not least clear goals for the project are needed



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But the challenges increase more and more by the changing social and political circumstances. The people involved in a project are a part of the society that changes on a national level but also in the global context:

Projects get more and more international by

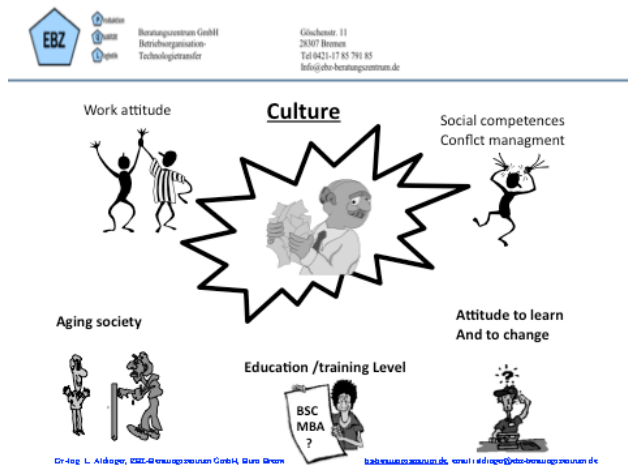
- considering markets with different cultures and developments globally
- being a cooperation between companies or partners in different locations/ countries
- project members coming from different cultures

This increases the complexity of projects.

A study of weak points of the companies facing the challenges of the economic crises of 2009 (see also Staufen 2010) came to the conclusion that project management needs special attention and improvements. Successful companies do in all aspects of the project management perform better than not so successful companies. Therefore it is very important to be on a high level of competence regarding complex projects.

Successful companies have

- a high commitment of the leadership,
- b good communication,
- c high levels of creativity,
- d sophisticated skill to solve problems and conflicts,
- e can handle different cultural influences.....



Especially the element of different cultures seem to be e very important. A study of 2002 (Gesellschaft für Projekt Management) came to the conclusion the cultural problems have the biggest impact on the success of an international project.

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Project Management

The most important Factors influencing the succes of Projects:
 results of a survey conducted by GPM* in 2002
 (Interviews of international Projectmanagers)

1.) Culture	45 points
2.) Political, legal Problems	25
3.) Project Manager	20
4.) Problems with the language	18
5.) Technical Problems	15
6.) Infrastructure	12
7.) Miscellaneous	6

* Gesellschaft für Projektmanagement
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As a consequence we have to consider more specifically the cultural elements in our project work. This affects all aspect of the work of a Project Manager:

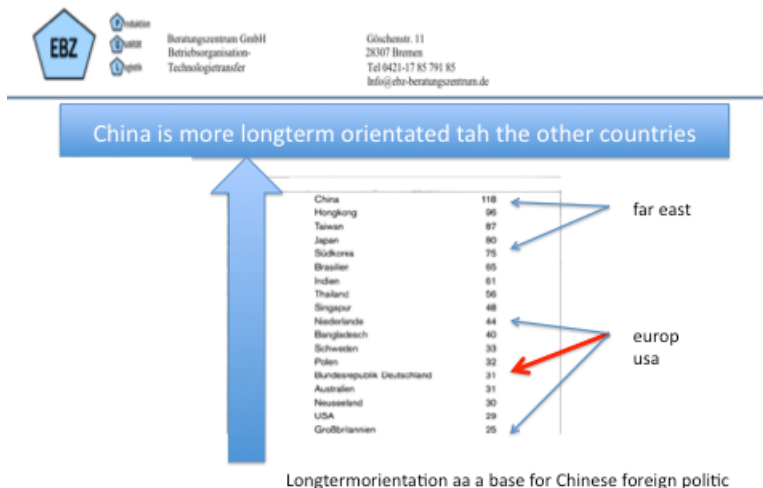


Some Cultural aspects to be considered by a Project Manager

Communication	Verbal	or	in writing
	direct	or	indirect
Agreements	Strict	or	more intentionally
Problem- and conflictsolving	technical	or	personal
	adamant	or	relaxed
Leadership	big distance	or	peer related
	focused on facts	or	emotional

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In the world of science the question about how does the culture influences' the interaction of people is discussed by some very famous people like Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars ,.....For them it is obvious a project manager has to have a better understanding of the differences.



Quelle: Hofstede (2001)

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Despite all the cultural differences human being have all the same basic needs. In the field of

neuroscience a lot of work is done by many scientists to find out why homo sapiens was so successful despite the obvious weak points. Some of the findings in respect of our interaction with other persons can be simplified and summarized –

- We need confidence in our leadership,
- we must be able to trust our colleagues,
- we must understand the rules of our interaction (influenced by the culture and the represented values),
- we should feel safe,
- we should be encouraged to develop and test new ideas,
- we should push the limits of our capabilities,
- we should get support if needed,
- we should get recognition
- we should be part of a team

This list can give project manager some guideline what is needed in all project with people from all over the world.

In addition some methods how to plan, control, review, solve problems i.e. should be applied to overcome the problems of many projects (see Aldinger, Kämpf: Führung in volatilem Umfeld, Kohlhammerverlag, 2011). But to explain these methods an additional article is needed. Also some ideas could be found in our article "1005 FMEAs zum Erkennen von Projektrisiken"

Nevertheless experience is a very important asset for project work. To read articles and books is very important, but if you lack experience or the circumstances are very volatile and a lot of work has to be done it can only be recommended to get a good partner to work together with or at least to get somebody who is neutral to discuss the issues of a project. This helps to overcome the problems of the projects (due dates, budget, costs, quality,...).