

Nicole BIRCKS: **MULTI-PROJECT MANAGEMENT AS A MEAN TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY FOR THE INTEGRATION AND FUNCTIONAL CAPABILITY OF ARMED FORCES**

This article represents a short synopsis of the dissertation “Multi-project management as a mean to increase the capacity for the integration and functional capability of organizations” (Bircks, 2008) and relates its founding to armed forces.

INTRODUCTION AND QUESTION

Multi-project management (MPM) is a highly contemporary issue for the conceptual design of an improved (multi-) project organization. It is based less on a uniform standard but rather on a variety of ideas for improved and integrated project work. Existing approaches vary in relation to their areas of application, consistency, and operationalizability through which the creation of a uniform multi-project management design is only partially existing [1]. Armed forces are now facing the challenge to realize diverse and complex projects such as the introduction of a quality management, the implementation of multiple valuations and surveys of personnel, finance controlling, IT projects, and process optimizations. Multi-project management can be the concept utilized to respond to these challenges. The purpose of this work is to demonstrate how this concept must be designed and used to support the project work and how it can result in an increase in efficiency and significant cost savings within the armed forces.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We begin the process by establishing a general perspective and examine the tasks aided by use of MPM, regardless of whether it is the introduction of new software, the execution of patient surveys, or the expansion of a department. Therefore, we have extensive literature studies [2-6] [13-21] and the isolation of problems as well as the allocation of measures and tasks.

We define the components of MPM to ensure a common understanding of the concept. This includes the naming of the main roles and the allocation of their duties. The interaction of all MPM parties can only function, if there is a clearly defined role description [7]. Accordingly, the primary focus of this approach is to define the line of activities that reflect the essential theme of this work: the "*integration and functional capability of MPM*" (Bircks, 2008). These tasks must then be determined in a suitable way so that they do not overlap between the project- and multi-project management as well as among themselves. Only under this condition, MPM can make a major contribution to the improvement and effectiveness of project work [8-11].

RESULTS

We define project management as the "management of individual projects". The people involved are in a hierarchy, the so-called structural organization. It combines the basic organizational elements (position, authority, and division) of an organizational structure and shows the relationship between these elements [12]. The process organization on the other hand deals with existing organizational processes or procedures. The concept of integration refers to the possibility of the involvement of the multi-project

management in the organizational structure of the armed forces. In its broadest sense, it is about answering the question: where and how should the MPM department be integrated in the organizational structure of the armed forces so that it can maximize benefits. In contrast, the term “functional capability” refers to the role allocation within the multi-project management and the basic duties which this department has to accomplish. Furthermore, the tasks which emerge with the introduction of MPM have to be described distinctively and be known within the armed forces. There must be a clear delineation of these activities in comparison to the tasks of the project management in order to avoid and eliminate misunderstandings and ambiguities. The functional capability should therefore ensure that the multi-project management works as a separate business unit and should be able to make a significant contribution to the improvement of the project work. In order to make project changes or to prevent unnecessary expenditures, a clear representation of the total project costs (per project portfolio) serves as a basis for decision-making for the armed forces management. The task of the MPM is to provide a uniform and standardized project cost method so that an adequate calculation of the costs can be guaranteed. Furthermore, the monitoring of whether this procedure is applied uniformly, the collection and processing of identified target costs, the determination of the cumulative project costs, and the reconciliation of all project budgets with the organizations management, are also duties of the MPM. The MPM has the following tasks regarding the allocation of resources: the development of a written concept which determines the decision-making powers regarding the allocation of resources, and accordingly the reconciliation and approval of this concept with management, and the establishment and implementation of a cross-project capacity planning.

An evaluation of the project appraisal, project potential, and project attractiveness [18] shall generate a selection process which assesses objectively the "real" urgency and importance of the individual projects. The execution of the project valuations is also part of multi-project management's responsibility, because it is a neutral authority that can undertake impartial verification. Another task of the MPM is the introduction of a project portfolio management, which is a superior method of planning and controlling the project landscape.

Interdependencies within the project portfolio must be visualized and dissolved. Furthermore, it is essential to establish a uniform standard regarding the award of priority and to introduce a risk management, outlining the requirements of a risk assessment and determining a suitable project manager or applicant to be responsible for that task. Project risk reports have to be collected and during the project selection process, which is the process by which a project is determined to be part of the project portfolio, the respective risk status of a project has to be considered. The efficiency of the project entirety has to be assured through regular controls. Therefore, one has to establish a standardized reporting process and the adjusted data has to be controlled regularly. Likewise, a success evaluation for each project and a report of the actual profitability of each project has to be generated. A determination of the multi-project management's decision-making authority has to be made in consultation with the company management. Other tasks were analyzed but fall beyond the scope of this paper. Through the defined tasks an operational and process structure have been developed which can directly provide advice to the management.

DISCUSSION

Multi-project management if used effectively can contribute to increased efficiency and effectiveness of project work. But these improvements can only be achieved when the multi-project management starts, where the individual project management reaches its limits or when problems arise which require a higher-level of control. Both, multi-project management and project management are complementary. However, the areas of activity but must be considered in isolation insofar as the multi-project management will never be engaged in the actual tasks of the project management.

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