

The Need for Improved IT Project Management in e-Service Projects and Beyond

The challenges associated with implementing and managing e-service projects are clearly no different than any other information technology (IT) projects managed in the global context facing organizations today. The ubiquitous Internet coupled with emerging information technologies and services that make up Web X.0 and the need for the right talent at the right place located and managed via highly distributed teams across the globe has added to the enormous complexities associated with project management in today's environment. Further exacerbating these difficult challenges are the issues of governance and policy, cultural, organizational and national differences, geographic dispersion, lack of effective knowledge sharing, the novelty of the technology itself, and the general trend of escalating projects beyond recovery.

In this special issue of *e-Service Journal*, we present five articles that address some of the above research issues that impact IT project management today. The papers selected for this special issue were originally presented at the inaugural *international research workshop on information technology project management* that was sponsored by the special interest group for IT project management (<http://www.SIGITProjMgmt.org>) of the Association for Information Systems. The workshop was held in conjunction with the International Conference on Information Systems in Milwaukee, USA, 2006.

Many organizations may choose to hire consultants to complete e-service projects, whether they are small Web site and marketing efforts or large enterprise-wide systems such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. A common problem in consulting relationships is that of agency. Bjoern Niehaves, Karsten Klose, and Joerg Becker apply governance theory and modern systems theory to analyze IT consulting projects. In their research, Niehaves et al. develop a framework to guide consulting projects and test this framework through a case study of an ERP consulting project. This research examines how the different participants in the project, such as senior managers, project managers, and team members, should consider the underlying politics and hidden agendas that may influence each phase of an information systems project.

A second common issue within IT project management is the need to identify key factors and skills that increase the chances of project success. The second article by Lorraine Lee and Rita Anderson argues and provides initial evidence for the notion that project management is a form of dynamic capability that in a fast-moving, technological environment can enable IT capabilities of a firm, which in turn generates customer value. The authors report the results of a Delphi study that was conducted to identify the top four factors that contribute towards developing project management capability within an organization. This research provides guidance to organizations on areas for improving their dynamic capability.

Both academics and practitioners alike realize the difficulty of executing IT projects on time, on budget, and with the required functionality. However, many project managers and senior managers fail to recognize the symptoms of a project that is in trouble. Douglas Havelka and T.M. Rajkumar present the “Troubled Project Recovery Framework” as a means for IT project managers to recognize and address a challenged project. Using the nominal group technique to analyze troubled projects across several organizations, the authors identify symptoms of a project that is in need of rescue and recovery. These symptoms can be used by managers to proactively recognize troubled projects.

Once those troubled projects are recognized by a senior manager, project manager, auditor, or team member, there is a need to examine if the project should be cancelled or if it should continue. Michael Cuellar, Mark Keil and Roy Johnson explore the novel issue of the “deaf effect response” to bad news reporting in IT projects. Using a role-playing lab experiment, they find that in IT projects the credibility of the person reporting bad news and the salience of the message are key factors in the determination of message relevance.

Throughout the entire lifecycle of a project, there is a need to share knowledge. For many organizations, the final component of any IT project is a post-mortem or self-reflection on the lessons learned during the project. Yet the prevalence of failure and repetition of mistakes suggests that we need to understand more about the nature of knowledge sharing within IT projects. Tony Jewels and Marilyn Ford examine the motivators and inhibitors of knowledge sharing across projects and within firms in a global context. Their quantitative survey based on prior qualitative case studies of global firms is used to develop “The Alignment Model of Motivational Focus,” which explains why people are likely to share or withhold knowledge within an IT project context.

In conclusion, this special issue examines many of the emerging challenges that plague academics and practitioners in the IT project management domain. We believe that the research presented in this special issue begins to address some of these interesting questions and poses many new ones for those interested in examining the success of e-service and other types of IT projects.

Guest Editors' Column

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ilze Zigurs, Editor-in-Chief, and the senior editors for the opportunity to do this special issue, as well as all the authors who put in enormous effort to revise and resubmit their papers with a very short turn-around time.

Happy reading,
Deepak Khazanchi and Stacie Petter
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Guest Editors

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