

### Special Interest Articles:

- Don't Forget the Data
- Project Management in Korea

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Global Project Strategy (01) (603) 862-3374

## Don't Forget the Data

In almost every situation, effective project planning starts with good data. Planning a promotional campaign, designing a new web site, all require timely and relevant data if project results are expected to contribute to the competitive position of the firm.

Most of us won't disagree with this, but data collection is often shortchanged in the interest of getting started

under time and budget constraints.

Sometimes the failure to collect data can be blamed on the bureaucracy, sometimes it can be blamed on overconfidence. There are those who feel that internal data is all that is needed. They contend that they know the market, their customers, and even the technology.

While data does not guarantee project

success, a lack of it can lead to disappointing results. A lack of data, for example, may mean that the project is focusing on the wrong problem, and when this happens, even the best project manager employing the best honed skills may produce nothing more than expenses.

I was recently involved with an organization that was experiencing significant declines in the demand for their services. *See page 2*

## Project Management in Korea

I just returned from two weeks in Seoul, Korea where I taught Project Management in a graduate program sponsored by the University of New Hampshire. In addition I spent some time with people at several high-tech companies.

Korea is very different from many countries in Asia. Driving on the highways (traffic in this city of over 20 million people is always intense), working with Koreans, and shopping in the malls, is a

constant reminder of the vitality of this country. The economy is strong; per capita income is among the highest in Asia; and the workforce is extremely capable. While growth rates in the past have been higher, they are currently about 5 percent.

Korea and the Koreans are definitely in the modern age. And they continue to grow their infrastructure. While I was there, the English language newspapers printed several front-page stories on plans to

significantly increase English language education in the public school system.

During my visit I spoke to many business professions from the High-tech companies. Here is what I learned.

In general the high-tech industry is very competitive within Korean markets and there is considerable interest in becoming even more competitive in world markets.

### Don't Forget the Data

They decided to meet with a few customers who no longer purchase from them, and some other customers who still do. However, they were somewhat reluctant to spend the time learning how the best firms in the field did it.

For them, failing to look outside the firm reflected a bureaucratic culture that looked inward not outward. The challenge

was to help them focus outward as well as inward.

Once you acknowledge that data will be useful, the rest is relatively easy. I have used a software package called Websurveyor (several exist). It is user friendly and I have built questionnaires in a very short period of time, sent the questionnaire through email and by the next day have enough responses to

help me plan and design my projects.

**Lesson Learned:** Sometimes it is uncomfortable to look outside the organization. You might not like what you see. But unless you learn what customers expect and what competitors are doing, the project you are planning may have little chance of success.

### Project Management in Korea

One conclusion is that projects have to look beyond the domestic market and focus on the development of products and services capable of competing internationally.

For some companies I spoke with this will require a different way of collecting data, new approaches to defining project scope, and a different way to organize project teams. Data collection, for

example, needs to focus externally, on what the competitors are doing and where technology is going.

Now, here is the big challenge for Korean firms, and for many firms throughout the world. Project teams must be opened to outside participation. Suppliers, contractors, and customers cannot be kept out of the project process if innovative and

competitive products are to be created. Even if the project just focuses on cost savings, these other constituents must be invited to participate. The competitive environment is such that no team can do it by itself. Strategic alliances, for many projects, must be created with suppliers, contractors and customers.

**Lesson Learned:** World-class project results require world class strategic alliances.

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“Unless you learn what customers expect and what competitors are doing, the project you are planning may have little chance of success.”

### Project Idea of the Month

How would you rate your company website? Begin by looking at the websites of your competitors. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Are they dynamic or static sites? Do they use blogs, or streaming video?

Now put together a simple questionnaire. Using the

information you obtained by studying your competitor's sites, create between ten to fifteen questions. Find out if customer blogs and customer ratings might be helpful? Can users navigate through your site efficiently? Do they find the information they are looking for or would a

search engine be helpful? How could streaming video be incorporated into the web site?

Send the questionnaire to thirty customers. Summarize the results. What is your conclusion? Is it time to start a web site redesign project?

91 South Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
USA

PHONE:  
(603) 862-3374

MOBILE:  
(603) 767-0480

E-MAIL:  
bshore@globalprojectstrategy.  
com

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See us at:

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## Welcome to the Newsletter

Welcome to the Global Project Strategy Newswire. It is my intention to provide you with useful stories every month that can help you become a more effective project manager.

Two features will appear every month. The first, Project of the Month, will report on a project

success or failure that provides us with a useful lesson. The second feature will be the Project Idea of the Month. It presents an idea that you might actually find useful in work, but, above all, its intention is to provoke thinking about the range of activities that can be managed using project management techniques

and to give you a chance to think about how you would plan and manage a new project.

Please feel free to contact me and suggest topics for future letters or even submit a one page written summary of an article for inclusion in the newswire.

### Project of the Month

Just when we were recovering from the failure of the Denver baggage handling project failure (the project was finally abandoned after 15 years of trying to get the automated system to work) the opening of the new terminal at Gatwick reminded us that large complex projects can easily fail.

It seems that the software managing the baggage handling system had "glitches." It had been modified just prior to the opening of the airport but

there was apparently little time to fully test the system.

As a result of the 'glitch' baggage couldn't be transported to planes, the baggage system became saturated and the airport came to a standstill.

Baggage handling systems are extraordinarily complex and complex projects of all kinds present very different project management challenges.

In project management we

know that complexity is linked to scope and scope is linked to feasibility. So perhaps it wasn't the last stage of the project that failed, it might have been the first.

Lesson Learned: Scope and feasibility can kill a project but often you have to wait until the end to suffer the consequences. Don't shortchange Scope statements.

## Real Teams and Real Work

One of the early steps in PM is to put together a team or several teams. Often, however, they are teams in name only, and only achieve conventional results.

But a Real Team gets better results. Real teams are customer driven, listen carefully, respond effectively, achieve total

quality, empower team members, and partner with suppliers and customers.

Katzenbach and Smith in their book, *The Wisdom Of Teams* (Harvard Business School Press) describe high performance teams as those that bring together complimentary skills,

overcome barriers to performance, deal effectively with resistance to change, and have more fun

People resist Real Teams for many reasons. They resist because the creation of these teams requires extra effort that may not be seen as 'real' work.

Others may resist because they are loners and do not like to work in a collaborative mode. Still others may not have a strong performance ethic.

But the evidence is clear. Real Teams are worth the effort because they often go the extra mile.