

Unifying Approaches to Meet the Reality of Modern IS Projects

Christian LEMAN (AXESSIO) – cleman@axessio.com

Co-authors:

Frédéric GENDRE (AXESSIO) – fgendre@axessio.com

Grégory DELEMAZURE (AXESSIO) – gdelemaz@axessio.com

DRAFT - Version B1.7

Mapping approaches, such as RUP and PMI, lead to the most comprehensive framework ever designed to help Clients manage their information system acquisition projects.

0 Being an IS Project Manager on the Client side is no easy task

0.1 Introduction

When Steve met his boss Margaret three days ago, he had not expected so many changes in his professional life: "You know, Steve, this morning the Executive Committee approved the project for rebuilding our IS system. I am in charge of it. The CFO confirmed a budget of about 250,000 EUR for this year. It is not that much but we can surely implement a much better system. I proposed you as Project Manager and they agreed. I really think it is a good opportunity for you: You have great organizational skills, you're a hard worker and anyway you wanted to tackle something new... If you agree, I suggest you build up a plan, we'll discuss it in a few days and then I'll present it at the next Executive Committee meeting."

0.2 Intuitive process

Steve was actually pretty excited; his company is not that big (little less than 100 employees) but it has always provided interesting opportunities for young potentials and he was proud to have been chosen. This project will give him more exposure and experience. He is not an IT professional but this is not a major concern: his company outsources all IT activities and he feels comfortable about managing vendors.

It did not take long for Steve to build up an action plan. He established it would take about 2 months to collect project requirements and wrap things up in a detailed report, then reach a consensus with the Executive Committee. He already had several vendors in mind and he would find a few more on the Internet. It would not take more than a month to make the selection. The chosen vendor would then bring his methodology and consultants. This would leave about 9 months to implement the solution.

0.3 Foreseeable outcome

The following night, however, after a rather copious dinner, Steve had a bad dream. He dreamed that he was actually giving up after two years of hard work doing his best to manage the project. They had achieved some results but nothing was really up and running. Jokes about the project were spreading throughout the company. Collecting requirements happened to be much more time-consuming than expected; people were not always available and several topics were actually raising political conflicts. He finally submitted a functional requirement report but he realized that nobody had bothered to read it. The document was too big, and they had no time to deal with it. They approved it anyway, they trusted him but in a way that was making Steve feel uncomfortable. Selecting a vendor also made him rather uneasy: sales presentations were often blurred, it took longer than expected to set up meetings; some vendors, especially big ones, were often trying to bypass him to arrange direct contacts with Executive Committee members. They finally selected a mid-size solution provider: they brought in their own methods, which didn't really match the work Steve had done until then. Organizational changes also occurred and a lot of topics from Steve's document eventually became obsolete. The vendor implementation team ultimately stumbled on

several difficulties. They were trying to find ways of working around the problems, thereby accumulating additional developments. Deadlines and budget were overrun significantly.

0.4 Conclusion

When Steve woke up the next morning, he realized his action plan based on his own intuition was far too simplistic and unrealistic. He needed support to build up a much more comprehensive project environment. He finally got some precious advice: instead of reinventing methods, it would be more efficient to base his approach on well-proven standards and best practices. This would offer two opportunities:

- First, it would be a simple way of benefiting from the experience of thousands of projects that have shaped those best practices;
- Second, this would provide the credibility he needs to convince the Executive Committee on the worthiness of his approach.