

PRODUCT, PROCESS AND BENEFIT

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The science of project management revolves around three issues: product, process and benefit - although not necessarily in that order. The problem I wish to raise lies in our definition of what we do as project managers. By describing the function of project management, we frame our role in terms of the deliverable. As a result, we limit our criteria for success to internal factors of performance: time, cost and quality. We apply them to the work of the project, and so only measure process efficiency and product standard - and then, mainly, just from the contractor's perspective! The approach lacks depth. It limits the search for more complete evaluation criteria and thereby weakens the structure of the project to ensure appropriate monitoring and control.

We forget that projects are undertaken with the prime purpose of achieving strategic objectives. Our measures of success, therefore, should at least be tied to project outcomes as well. But, even this approach can lead to a two dimensional result. Every project should also leverage broader organizational policies and goals *by the manner in which it is undertaken*. It is this matter I wish to address.

At the time I was invited by the Editor to write the forward to this edition, he posed this question: Where is the project management profession positioned with regard to stated government intentions of using infrastructure and clean energy projects (among other things) to generate employment and develop skills capacity? A direct answer to the question would only really be of interest to a small sector of the project management community. The principle it raises, however, applies to every project professional in every industry. It draws attention away from the issues of efficiency and outcome and adds a third dimension: sustainability.

Government is focussed not only on the deliverables of its projects but also on the socio-economic transformation that can be achieved *by its projects*. To ensure the outcome, it has even introduced a raft of legislative measures to ensure compliance by every tier of government and by all its entities in the public sector. However we may feel about this modus operandi, we must concede that the approach is forward looking. It is focussed not only on the purpose of Government to meet direct needs but also on the leverage each project affords to fulfil the broader political mandate.

The private sector and the "third sector"(i.e. the voluntary, community and non-profit sector) are both in similar positions. They too have imperatives that go beyond the direct purposes of their projects. It is these imperatives that

must also be fulfilled to ensure organisational sustainability. The approach requires an understanding of the context in which the organisation functions and the impact its operations have within that context. It makes sense therefore that the organisation should seek to make a positive contribution to that context from the position of the core nature of its operations. Regrettably, corporate social investment projects do not often translate in this way. They are frequently too remote and unrelated to the value chain of the organisation to have any sustainable impact other than a quick win for public profile. CSI is not the same as corporate responsibility.

The project management profession, therefore, should be positioned to help the organisation realise the wider imperatives that stem from its function and not just the deliverables for which each project is conceived.