

Introduction

No matter what stage you have reached in your career, or which profession you work in, you will certainly have been involved in many projects – some of them successful, others less so. Projects are universal, but they can also be highly complex endeavours that require some basic elements to be in place in order to be successful. However, most of us have not received training in the methods and tools that are vital to project success.

This book's purpose is to fill that gap and provide you with an easy-to-apply framework – the 10 Principles of Project Success – to help you and your organization succeed in the new project-driven economy.

The principles are based on my years of experience and research covering hundreds of successful and failed projects, ranging from the smallest to the largest and most complex. The 10 Principles can be applied by any individual, team, organization or government, and are suitable for any kind of project.

The principles cover the fundamentals of projects that everyone should know, and are practical and easy to implement. They will assist you in leading projects – big and small – more successfully and in making your dreams a reality.

Each principle is explained in detail. I will give you tools and techniques to help you in the design, definition and implementation of any project you are involved in. You may decide to

apply one principle after the other, or simply select those that your project might need to pay more attention to.

I recommend that you also use the principles as an evaluation checklist, either at the beginning or when the project is running. This will give you a sense of how well the project fundamentals have been taken into account, and whether the project has a good chance of being successful. It will also allow you to focus on what you really need to do.

This book provides you with the fundamentals required to be a successful project leader in today's fast-changing and project-driven world. I explain not only the skills and competencies needed, but also provide some guidance on how to acquire them.

More and more companies are focusing on building project implementation competencies. It has become a top priority for senior leaders. The last chapter explains how an organization, whether profit or non-profit, can put the 10 Principles to work. The end result can be personal and organizational transformation, leading to genuine change and the creation of project-driven organizations and project-savvy leaders.

I hope you enjoy, and learn from, reading this book, and that you put the ideas to work.

1 The emergence of projects

Projects help us reach our most ambitious goals. They can help us achieve more than we think is possible. There are few ways of working and collaborating that are as motivating and inspiring as working on a project that has a higher purpose, ambitious goals and a clear deadline. What people tend to remember most clearly from their working lives are the projects they worked on. Mastering the expertise to lead a successful project is becoming an increasingly crucial element of our professional skill set.

Research shows that project-based working is rapidly growing. One report by the Project Management Institute (PMI) found that the project management labour force is expected to expand by 33 per cent during the next decade. That means 22 million more project managers and a total project management workforce of 88 million by 2027. The value of economic activity worldwide that is project-oriented will grow from \$12 trillion (in 2013) to \$20 trillion (forecast 2027). That means millions of projects requiring millions of project managers every year. This silent revolution is impacting not only organizations but also the very nature of work, and our entire professional lives.

The project economy

The emergence of projects as the economic engine of our times is as silent as it is disruptive and powerful.

The project economy will be led by people. It will be led by people like you, tasked with the responsibility for delivering strategy and change that are likely to involve:

- new technology
- new ways of working across organizational (and geographical) boundaries, and
- new capabilities to learn, adapt and change.

You may already be a C-suite manager or a project sponsor, or you may be aspiring to this role.

Not so long ago, professional careers were made in only one or a handful of organizations. Throughout the twentieth century, most people worked for a single company, often solely in a specific domain, such as marketing or finance. However, research shows that the generation entering the workforce today are unlikely to remain with one company for extended periods of time, and retaining these workers has become a challenge for HR departments around the world. Today we are likely to work for several organizations and sometimes across numerous industries, and for part of our career we will most probably be self-employed.

LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman believes that careers are now simply ‘tours of duty,’ prompting companies to design organizations that assume people will only stay a few years. And data bears this out: 58 percent of

companies believe their new employees will stick around less than 10 years. (LinkedIn research shows that, on average, new degree-holders have twice as many jobs in their first five post-college years now as they did in the mid-1980s.)¹

The growing trend in self-employment, noted by Quartz Media amongst others,² may see workers needing to take on a number of roles at the same time. And when they do, they will effectively be managing a portfolio of projects. This sort of career is best approached as a set of projects in which we apply the lessons we have learned from previous jobs, companies and industries while at the same time developing ourselves for our next career move.

What does the project career mean for employers and employees?

My prediction is that by 2025, regardless of the industry or sector, senior leaders and managers will spend at least 60 per cent of their time selecting, prioritizing and driving the execution of projects. Even the world's number one management thinker, Roger Martin, argues that 80 to 95 per cent of jobs in the senior management and corporate offices are an amalgam of projects. We will all become project leaders, no doubt about that!

In this new landscape, projects are becoming the essential model to deliver change and create value. In Germany, for example, approximately 40 per cent of the turnover and the activities of German companies are performed as projects. This is only going to increase.³ Indeed, similar percentages can be found in most Western economies. The figures are even higher in China and in some of the other leading Asian economies, where project-based work has been an essential element in their economic emergence. The so-called gig economy is also

driven by projects. Make no mistake, we are witnessing the inexorable rise of the project economy.

To succeed in that environment requires a whole battery of skills: from leadership, negotiating and decision making, to emotional intelligence, empathy, communication and political wiles.

The good news is that projects are human-centric and cannot be carried out by machines alone; they need humans to do the work. People must gather together around the purpose of the project, dividing up the work, establishing working relationships, interacting and addressing the social and emotional aspects of working together in order to generate high performance. Technology will, of course, play a role in projects – it will improve the selection of projects and increase the chances of success – but technology will be an enabler and not the goal.

The 10 Principles of Project Success

The purpose of this book is to provide you with an easy-to-apply framework to help you and organizations succeed in this new project-driven world. Having studied hundreds of successful and failed projects – ranging from the smallest to the largest and most complex – I have developed a simple framework that can be applied by any individual, team, organization or government.

While you may not necessarily be managing the project yourself, you need to understand the principles that underpin successful projects if you are going to meet the requirements of the task.

My 10 Principles of Project Success cover the fundamentals of projects that everyone should know, and are practical and easy to implement. They will assist you in leading projects, big and small, more successfully and in making your dreams a reality.