

MANAGING COMPLEX PROJECTS: THINK STRATEGICALLY, ACT TACTICALLY

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Project Management is a well-recognized discipline with high levels of standardization and certifications. Professional associations are continuously introducing an increasing number of methodologies and certifications such as PMI, APM, PRINCE 2, etc. Organizations, such as the College of Complex Project Managers, invest in training and there is a significant number of masters in project management taught by a considerable number of Universities. In spite of this, in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, projects continue to fail to meet their objectives and do not meet the required customer demands. What are project managers and their organizations supposed to do to resolve this dissonance? Is it time to review and reformulate our understanding of Project Management, especially when dealing with complex projects?

Project Management is more applied and interdisciplinary than other management disciplines. If Project Management continues to promote as an academic discipline and develop as a profession, and aims to be a key contributor to business success, new approaches that promote the generation of knowledge and increased levels of project performance should be used when managing complex projects.

Complex or complicated projects?

When can a project be considered a complex project? Does the project have many components, multiple interactions, non-linear feedbacks, and well-defined boundaries? Can the relationships between the components of a project and the interrelations across the elements be clearly identified and predicted? When the project is confronted with a rare event, how does it evolve? Can project behavior