

Велброк Ванджа
професор, доктор,
Хайльброннський університет, Німеччина
email: wanja.wellbrock@hs-heilbronn.de
ORCID: 0000-0002-4882-029X

Миславська О. Г.
магістр кафедри
управління проектами та консалтингу,
Київський національний економічний університет
імені Вадима Гетьмана
проспект Перемоги, 54/1, Київ, Україна
email: Mislavskaya1352412@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-4854-5275

УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ РОБОТИ КООРДИНАТОРІВ ПРОЄКТІВ У КОНСАЛТИНГОВИХ КОМПАНІЯХ

Wellbrock Wanja
prof. dr. Heilbronn University, Germany
e-mail: wanja.wellbrock@hs-heilbronn.de
ORCID: 0000-0002-4882-029X

Myslavska Oleksandra
Master's student in Project Management and Consulting, Economics and Management
Faculty, Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, Kyiv, Ukraine
e-mail: Mislavskaya1352412@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-4854-5275

IMPROVEMENT OF THE WORK OF PROJECT COORDINATORS IN CONSULTING COMPANIES

Анотація. Координація — це повторюваний процес поступового встановлення довіри, розуміння і робочих стосунків. У статті вивчено досвід координації проєктів у консалтингових компаніях і будівельній галузі. Проаналізовано різницю між роллю координатора і керівника проєкту, їх основні обов'язки та фактори успіху в управлінні проєктом. Проведено співбесіди з координаторами та керівниками проєктів ТОВ «СІС» для глибшого розуміння проблематики та застосування прикладного характеру дослідження. За результатами співбесід запропоновано стандартизувати процедури управління проєктами для координаторів. Доведено, що СОП — важлива сфера ефективної системи координації, яка допомагає розвивати прозорі системи, впроваджувати заходи запобігання помилкам і сприяти коригувальним діям. Як результат, ураховуючи те, що ТОВ «СІС» надає послуги з реалізації проєктів компаніям у різних сферах діяльності, показано, що усі члени команди та менеджери повинні розуміти та знати свої обов'язки, щоб управління проєктами було ефективним — без зайвих затрат часу, грошей і ресурсів.

Ключові слова: координатор проєкту, управління проєктом, індустрія консалтингу, процес координації, СОП (стандартна операційна процедура).

Abstract. Coordination is an iterative process of gradually trust building, understanding, and working relationships. The purpose of this study was to review the experience of project coordination in consulting companies and construction industry. To analyze the

difference between the role of coordinator and project manager, their main responsibilities and success factors in project management. For a deeper understanding of the issues and application of the applied nature of the study, interviews were conducted with coordinators and project managers at SIS, LLC. Based on the results of the interviews, it was proposed to standardize project management procedures for coordinators. SOPs are an important area of an effective coordination system to help develop transparent systems, implement error prevention measures, and facilitate corrective actions. Given that SIS, LLC provides its services in project implementation to companies in various business areas — all team members and managers must understand and know their responsibilities to make project management effective — without wasting time, money, and resources.

Keywords: Project coordinator, project management, consulting industry, coordination process, SOP (standard operation procedure).

JEL codes: M15, M10, M19

Introduction. At the beginning of the 21st century, project management is increasingly becoming a standard way of doing business. In many companies, a significant part of the work is done in the form of projects. The substantial number of areas in which projects are carried out, the variety of teams working on projects, the difficulties of intra-team interaction, the variety of project implementation conditions, and the considerable number of project requirements lead to the need for further research in the direction of ensuring effective project management [1].

In the digital age [13] under conditions of globalization and economic instability, managers of enterprises all over the world are increasingly faced with problems that are characterized by fundamental novelty and require the adoption of non-standard decisions therefore, they foresee the use of the latest management tools to solve them and achieve the desired result. Currently, standard approaches to management do not always make it possible to achieve the desired level of efficiency. That is why the involvement of external intelligence of consulting companies to make management decisions has become a customary practice for both global and Ukrainian enterprises. Management consulting has a long story with lots of successful cases and, in the IT industry. Consultants can be categorized into three large categories: 1) Expert Consultants who recommend solutions, convince clients of their correctness, and help with implementation. 2) Process consultants who help their clients find solutions by stimulating their client's creativity by facilitating methods. 3) Inquirer or humble consultants working together with clients as partners to achieve the needed outcome [14, 15].

The innovative nature of today's world requires many companies to implement various projects to improve internal functions and reach international standards.

Any business or activity, the purpose of which is to obtain a certain unique result, is a project that involves the implementation of a few necessary measures and procedures. The project is a long-term process, and the implementation of these procedures and the effectiveness of the project itself depend on the quality of the project management process at all stages.

Effective project management is a complex of actions aimed at establishing, ensuring, and maintaining the necessary level of project quality in the process of its development, justification, and implementation. An effective means of management

is the standardization of processes, which includes a set of norms, rules, and requirements for any project participant [2].

Literature review. Coordination is an iterative process of gradually trust building, understanding, and working relationships. The cooperation and coordination spectrum, conceptualized by Nan and Strimling [10], outlines the different degrees of coordination as in Table 1.

Table 1

DEGREES OF COORDINATION LEVEL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Communication	Coexistence	Coordinated Action	Integrated Action
Information conveyance between parties — limited to sharing.	Cohabitation, joint, context, and capacity analysis with developed partially. More than sharing.	Joint design and/or implementation of specific activities; sustain active partnership. Consider the other capacities.	Different parties working together. Collaboration in decision-making evolution mechanisms for goals.

Source: created by the author based on [2].

The coordination process has four overall levels of intensity process (communication, coexistence, coordinated action, or integrated action). To move toward coordination, it is important to understand the environment in which coordination will take place and the capacities and interests of the involved actors. It is essential to determine the degree of coordination necessary for the parties to develop a process to help in knowledge building and relationships necessary to meet these common objectives [2].

For consulting companies, the success criterion is:

- Project management efficiency — compliance with deadlines, budget restrictions, quality standards, etc.
- Business success — benefits (commercial) for the company, as well as changes in the organization's market share, etc.
- Future potential and growth — creation of innovations, application of accumulated experience, brand development, increase of customer loyalty, etc.
- Impact on the Customer — customer satisfaction, increase of the value of the final product.

In the past 10 years, PwC has conducted four global research projects management companies [11]. Through the data collected, it is possible to track the success of companies as well as the problems they face. These include poor planning, late implementation, changes in project size, changes in the project environment, lack of resources, insufficient management support, inaccurate definition of goals and objectives.

Poor implementation is primarily a matter of urgency, which in the future leads to over-expenditure of resources and increased project risk. All projects have a short implementation time, which is due to the high competition in the industry. However, it should be borne in mind that the main resource of this business specificity is human, and accordingly, in this industry, there is a strong over-expenditure.

The construction industry is in its infancy of coordination process. One of the unique characteristics of construction industry is that unlike any other industry, there

is a strong inter-firms coordination required across the entire project life cycle. Coordination is the process of getting all elements ready to enable crews to perform work in an effective and efficient manner from the first time. It is the guaranty for getting right information and material to right actor at time to improve productivity. Coordination is important for construction projects to manage the interfaces between the stakeholders. To enhance project performance, various coordination methods can be used, but coordination effectiveness needs to be assessed to find out if they are being used appropriately [12].

The basic processes of project management are the coordination of the coordinated work of the project team and the financial, material, and technical resources of the project during its life cycle of the project and are aimed at achieving the goals of the project by applying modern, effective practices, because of which the project is completed on time, achieves the set goals, and its result satisfies all project stakeholders. To date, the project manager and coordinator play a key role in project management [3].

The terms project manager, project coordinator, construction manager, project administrator, and project controller are used quite interchangeably and all of them appear to have similar kinds of roles, but the intensity of their job requirement and expectations from them vary” [5].

In fact, the project coordinator’s role is to augment the project managers’ visibility for larger projects [4]. A project coordinator is chartered as a representative of the project manager who proactively ensures future events will occur as planned. They signal problem areas and recommend solutions. According to Forsberg (1996), the Project coordinator’s function is to:

- Know how the organization «works».
- Expedite help to the project and support organizations.
- Provide an independent assessment of project information and status to the PM (Project Manager).
- Ensure planning and milestones are satisfied.
- Ensure control procedures are being adhered to.

In terms of hierarchy, Kerzner (2002) places the project coordinator in between the project administrator and technical assistants and finds planning, coordinating, analyzing, and understanding the organization as the required skill to carry out his responsibility [7].

To understand the project management procedure at the coordinator level, it is necessary to create and implement a standard operating procedure to improve such indicators as:

- Performance (indicate the quality and quantity of work results).
- Functioning (shows compliance of business processes with their execution algorithm).
- Productivity (shows the correspondence of the results to the time spent on them).

A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a document that provides clear-cut directions and instructions as to how teams and members within an organization must go about completing certain processes. SOPs (Standard Operating Procedure) are policies, procedures, and standards you need in the operations, marketing, and administration disciplines within your business to ensure success. These can create [8]:

- Efficiencies, and therefore profitability.
- Consistency and reliability in production and service.

- Fewer errors in all areas.
- A way to resolve conflicts between partners.
- A healthy and safe environment.
- Protection of employees in areas of potential liability and personnel matters.
- A roadmap for how to resolve issues — and the removal of emotion from.
- Troubleshooting — allowing needed focus on solving the problem.
- Value added to your business should you ever wish to sell it.

The process of developing an effective SOP is critical to its successful implementation and the process should be inclusive which considers the input of everyone [9]. The best practice to develop SOP calls for active involvement of workers.

Adler et al. claim that companies that test, refine, and implement workers' creative suggestions are likely to end up with higher quality SOP; they have the advantage to foster teamwork, and the motivational implications of SOP use are moderated by workers' ability to participate in the process. For continuous organizational improvement, established procedures need continuous enhancement; thus, requiring creative and novel ideas appropriate to the task from those individuals using those procedures [9]. The process of developing an effective SOP is critical to its successful implementation and the process should be inclusive and considers the input of everyone. The best practice to develop SOP calls for the active involvement of workers.

The research gap can be summarized as follows: Are project managers and project coordinators understanding tasks and responsibilities to realize the projects in the consulting company? Using example of the company «SIS,» analyze how the effectiveness of coordinators can be improved and how the process of project coordination can be standardized.

Methods. Company SIS (Strategic Industry Solutions) for more than 25 years has delivered project and service industry solutions believing that a company's project success begins with 360-degree visibility, easy access, and accurate reporting of the operational data needed to compete in today's competitive marketplace. SIS leverages our deep Project and Service industry experience enabled within fully integrated and industry-specific Microsoft Dynamics 365-based solutions to accomplish this [6].

Given the company methodology and the diversity of the roles of the manager and coordinator on projects, it is possible to summarize that:

- The project manager is a more senior-level role with greater responsibility. As a project manager, you are responsible for the project. Including the team, the tasks, costs, and relationships with internal and external stakeholders such as suppliers, contractors, local authorities, and so on.

- The project coordinator usually takes over the administrative and “mechanical” tasks in a project. To relieve the project manager so that he can focus on handling communication, making decisions, solving critical issues, or coaching team members — you can call this leadership work.

- Given many projects, the effective work of project coordinators is a key factor. As companies approach some degree of maturity in project management, it becomes readily apparent to all that some sort of standardization approach is necessary for the way that projects are managed [7].

Given that the tasks and responsibilities of project managers and coordinators are different, that an interview should be conducted at the "SIS" company and the following main points should be discussed:

- To identify if PC understands their impact and value on the project's health and how we can improve this.
- To clarify the role of PC on the project and the difference of responsibilities between PM and PC.

In an interview format, spoke with 4 coordinators and 4 project managers (table 2–3).

Table 2

INTERVIEW RESULT OF THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

Questions	Answer
1. Do you understand your role in the project as a Project Coordinator?	<p>PC1 — Yes, help the project manager bring the project to a positive result.</p> <p>PC2 — Considering I have been at the company a couple of weeks; I am having a demanding time answering that question. So far, I am just talking to the other coordinators, listening to their experiences, and training.</p> <p>PC3 — Never thought about it, they give me tasks and I fulfill them.</p> <p>PC4 — I do not really understand, to be honest. On each project it all depends on the Project Manager, what tasks will be given, and I do.</p>
2. What are your main responsibilities on the project?	<p>PC1 — I should communicate with the Team, to prepare a Report to the client, update forecast to the project resources and coordinate internal requests — problems, if any and daily to help Project Manager.</p> <p>PC2 — At this point, I am only responsible for communication with the team.</p> <p>PC3 — I do not have a permanent list of duties, they are constantly changing depending on requests.</p> <p>PC4 — I must hold meetings with the team every day and prepare a report for clients on Wednesdays, everything else — is unexpected.</p>
3. Are there any problems in cooperation/communication with project managers on the projects? Do they assist you?	<p>PC1 — No, everything is good. I have the best Project manager.</p> <p>PC2 — We have a weekly call that he sometimes does not even come to.</p> <p>PC3 — Sometimes it is hard to get the latest feedback from the project manager regarding forecast updates, approvals timesheets due to the different time zones. They help when they have time which is not good.</p> <p>PC4 — No problems.</p>
4. In your opinion, how can the work of project coordinators be improved?	<p>PC1 — Everything suits me. The coordinators need to work closely with the PM and gain experience.</p> <p>PC2 — As the new coordinator in the company lacks information resources. Operational documents to understand your daily tasks and responsibilities on the project.</p> <p>PC3 — I would like to have a document in the company, which would be written with all the instructions for the use of a tool, or the same tasks that will do PM and PC daily together on the project. I think this will increase the efficiency of any project.</p> <p>PC4 — It is possible to create SOPs for the project coordinators or pass certification, create training.</p>

Source: created based on author's professional experience in-depth interviews.

Table 3

INTERVIEW RESULT OF THE PROJECT MANAGER

Questions	Answer
1. Do you understand how to work with project coordinator? What are your differences in responsibilities?	<p>PM1 — Yes. Our only difference is that we work directly with the client and manage the overall project, and the coordinators help to carry out small tasks, so that we at that time spend solving the global issue of requests.</p> <p>PM2 — As I am in the role of Project Manager at the company only for a few weeks, I am not aware of all responsibilities of the Project Coordinators. I assume that they can only help with setting up meetings and writing meeting notes. The project Manager is the main resource on the project and has nothing in common with Project Coordinator. It would be easier for me to work alone on the project.</p> <p>PM3 — I try to pass tasks on to the coordinators when I cannot do them myself. But I come here to spend a lot of time explaining how to complete a task. What surprises me is that they do not know how to create forecasts for the resources on the project or something like that.</p> <p>PM4 — I am trying to delegate as much work as I can to the PC, as I need to concentrate on the client-facing work. Any routine task can be and should be assigned to the Project Coordinator. The main difference — PCs communicate with the internal team, and PM communicate with the external team.</p>
2. How do you share the level of responsibility with the coordinators in the implementation of the project?	<p>PM1 — Coordinators handle all internal issues to ensure that everything is done in time at no extra cost.</p> <p>PM2 — If I understand that the project coordinator understands the root of the problem and sees how to solve it — I let him do it.</p> <p>PM3 — Coordinators should understand our company methodology and stick to it in the implementation of the project. Each phase of the project has its own deliverables which we implement and present to the client together.</p> <p>PM4 — In some cases, the coordinators take the lead in the task, sometimes we propose to take up and solve a problem and produce a result.</p>
3. Have you had experience with coordinators? What are the good and bad cases?	<p>PM1 — No, all is perfect. I like that they want to help and really contribute a lot to the projects with positive results.</p> <p>PM2 — I have not had much experience with coordinators. But I can say that they lack the understanding of how to perform a task quickly, without wasting time on study.</p> <p>PM3 — I believe that the coordinators lack a basic understanding of project management. But in general — I had no unpleasant experience with them, just wanted to give the task and so the person knows how to do it without further explanation.</p> <p>PM4 — Before you complete a task — all the requirements, questions are discussed so that then no problems arise. So, in general I like to work on projects with coordinators.</p>
4. In your opinion, how can the work of project coordinators be improved?	<p>PM1 — Implement certification or something like that.</p> <p>PM2 — Implement training based on our methodology of company and include the experience of the PM.</p> <p>PM3 — It is important for coordinators to understand their responsibilities and tasks in the project, so perhaps a job description would improve their understanding and save our time to explain.</p> <p>PM4 — I know that we have recently done SOPs for Analysts, we should do the same thing for coordinators. I see this document now while working on projects — it has an amazing result.</p>

Source: created based on author's professional experience in-depth interviews.

Results. Based on many do not understand the full list of tasks and responsibilities interviews with coordinators, and many do not understand the full list of tasks and responsibilities that they must perform daily at all stages of project implementation. All coordinators work closely with managers, helping them with reports and communication within the project. But it seems because they do not have an unobstructed vision of how the processes in the company should work, including the methodology of the company or the use of Microsoft products for reporting and communication, it all leads to the ineffectiveness of their activities, wasting project managers' time on explaining what they should already know. The managers are not ready to spend time on training coordinators, but they cannot entrust tasks when they must explain and control the complete process of implementing the project.

The creation of SOP — will increase the efficiency of all project coordinators at SIS and will respond to three important aspects of project management:

- Main responsibilities and how to interact with managers on projects.
- Main tasks which need to perform at each stage of the project and what the requirements are (step-by-step instructions).
- Role as a coordinator to successfully implement the project.

Conclusions. Given that SIS provides its services in the implementation of projects to companies in different areas of business — all members of the team and managers should understand and know their responsibilities (who is responsible and responsible for what) to make project management efficient — without losing time, money, and resources.

SOP is applicable to any entity, and it should be an essential domain of an effective coordination system to help cultivate transparent systems, implement error preventive measures, and facilitate corrective actions.

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