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How to Put in Place Comprehensive Project Success Measurements?

We are living in an era of globalization, where the world is continually shrinking down to be a small village in every sense of it. From ICT developments to ongoing economic integration efforts, each day is witnessing a step towards one world. Within all of the efforts, there seems to subsist a human desire to live in an equitable, peaceful, democratic, harmonious and sustainable world. Surprisingly, or unnoticeably, the desire could only be achieved, piece-by-piece, and block-by-block, though a thoughtful design, implementation and delivery of successful projects, as they are the smallest business execution units possible to be financed and managed independently.

As the profession of project management is being widely applicable, almost everywhere in the world from the remotest Amazon basin to Wall Street, one thing seems to be overlooked. How are we measuring the success of our projects, especially Development Projects? Is our measuring unit comprehensive enough to encompass all aspects of the project?

The answers to the above questions are undoubtedly important to all project managers, though they are more important to those who work in developing countries, as their projects take place in volatile and high-risk environments. Hereafter, I have tried to mention some of the important dimensions that a comprehensive success metrics (especially that for Development Projects) shall comprise, though a lot could be added on to it.

1. How participatory?

It is becoming customary to see the word “participatory” in development project reports. But how much participatory is the question that have to be answered properly. The participation of every stakeholder is essential for a project to be “really participatory”, though the type and extent of participation may vary between stakeholders. Hence, measuring the success of a project shall go beyond mentioning “participation” to look into (and objectively measure) the process, type, extent, worth and commitment of the participation of stakeholders.

2. Who made the rules?

It is sometimes ridiculous to see that those who made the rules of the game don't have a clue about the players, and the field, through which the rules will be applied to result in an orderly game. Power relationship has got an important role in the success of Development Projects. A success metrics that fails to take account of this will definitely be incomplete.

3. Through whose eyes?

The success metrics of a given development project shall always be designed in away that it could reflect the views, values and discernments of the beneficiaries. Otherwise, what is considered to be successful in official terms might, in reality, be a worthless effort.

4. How much sustainable?

What is the contribution of a project to the economic, social, cultural, political and environmental sustainability of the project locality? This is amongst the fundamental questions that have to be answered by the project success metrics.

5. To what extents is the project all-inclusive?

The success metrics shall also be able to include cross-sectoral issues like gender, population, HIV/AIDS, and environment. Else, its contribution to better decision-making will be little but none.

The world may be shrinking more and more day-in and day-out. But still we are far away from reaching our “desired world”. Provided that millions are going to bed hungry at this very moment, where millions are cherishing their bonanza, we should all work towards equity. In terms of project management, the crux of the matter is on how we measure our projects (beyond profitability) to look into their contribution to a better world. Hoping to see a more desirable success metrics!

Wishing you a happy PM Month!

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