

Discussion of the Evaluation for Completed IT-Projects

Bachelorarbeit

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1. Introduction

Businesses in many parts of the economy are frequently confronted with the need to stand out from their competition. One way of doing so is to adapt and take advantage of the rapid advancement in the technological environment. This can be done by creating new and individualized software solutions, buying them from third parties or upgrading the existing systems. The emerging, unique processes of software engineering and implementation are known as IT-projects. Since this process will however only happen once, there is a special complexity in having a successful IT-project. Leading scientific authors and practical IT-project management have therefore worked together in the past to overcome this uncertainty by defining universally applicable best practices. This research process often includes assessing whether or not a suggested method contributes to the success of an IT-project. To find out if a project was successful and why, an a posteriori evaluation needs to be conducted. The a posteriori evaluation of completed IT-projects is not only a tool to measure when and why a project is a success, but may also help the business to gain confidence in their IT-project management capabilities. Advantages of evaluation is not tied to being successful, as even failed IT-projects provide valuable lessons for subsequent software undertakings. To use these benefits however, IT-project management sees itself confronted with the challenge to define project success: Where does being successful end and producing a failure begin? What criteria have a large impact on whether or not a project is successful and how are these performance indicators measured?

This paper strives to answer all these important questions and concerns itself with IT-project evaluation of completed projects. As a necessary introduction for the subject, a critical literature review about the state of the art definition for IT-project success is conducted first. Thereafter the question of whether the measurement of succes is economically feasible will try to be answered. To gain better insight into the subject, a broad variety of methods for IT-project evaluation are then described before the author presents his process model of a posteriori IT-project evaluation. Lastly the state of the leading literature in the subject field will be reflected on and research recommendations are given.

4. Discussion and research recommendations

With this paper the author initially tries to illustrate what IT-project success means, what the process of success measurement looks like and whether it should be done at all. In the course of the literature review surprising answers were found to each of these questions.

Since there was no universal definition for IT-project success available, the author proposed a unique definition himself, which represented a helpful direction for the rest of the paper. Such a strong positive impact is sadly missing in the leading literature of today and therefore may pose as valuable field for future discussions. While trying to define project success, it already became clear that project evaluation can not only be a process that takes place at the end of the project. A well thought out and clear ex-ante definition of success criteria, with important stakeholder groups in mind, proved to be crucial not only for a smooth end of project evaluation, but also the positive outcome of the project as a whole. It is therefore not without reason that most of the studies found concentrate their efforts in the field of project success and success criteria definition. Less documentation was encountered in the field of actual performance measurement for certain stakeholders. While a lot of researchers like Wateridge (1995, 1998), Karlsen et al. (2005) and Bannerman (2008) focus their efforts on defining success criteria, only a few studies like Yu et al. (2005) specialize in formulating calculatory methods to measure the project success from a stakeholder point of view. This indicates another starting-point for future studies. Lastly the utilization of project evaluation efforts in lessons learned systems seems to have great potential for companies with a large amount of IT-projects, yet practitioners seem sceptical. This field of research might therefore also . A posteriori IT-project evaluation for larger projects as a whole however, appears to be generally accepted as economically feasible throughout the business landscape. Only the relationship between a project manager and his company may stand in the way of improvement through evaluation. This comes down to the fear of personal consequences by the project manager versus the value of evaluating a project. To solve this dilemma, companies should strive for a policy of leniency in case of comprehensible project failure and thereby use every opportunity to improve project management for a more successful future.