Minitrack on IT and Project Management

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Project-based working forms a major component of information technology (IT) activity in most companies, especially in relation to the design and implementation of new IT systems. Yet evidence suggests that many IT projects do not meet cost, schedule and functionality targets. This has significant negative implications for individual companies and for national economies. For example, Johnson [1] estimated that $81 billion was spent in the USA on IT projects that were abandoned before they were completed. Moreover, IT tools and techniques are seen to be central to the management of projects of all types across the diverse range of industrial sectors.

With the evolution of technology and its penetration into almost every sector of organizational activity, projects have become more complex and demanding regarding cost, schedule, and technical performance. Professionals managing these projects must understand the organizational concepts and the methods, tools, and techniques, which support modern project management. The new breed of project managers see themselves differently from traditional, conventional managers. They perceive themselves as being in a more demanding role, requiring more sophisticated people and organizational skills as well as specific technical job knowledge and IT competency. This applies to service-oriented industries as well as more traditional manufacturing industries. Thus, today, many service-oriented projects are as technology-based, capital intensive, and complex as their manufacturing or R & D counterparts. This includes projects in transportation, communications, finance, advertising, health care, consulting, and education.

Knowledge of modern project and technology management provides the foundation for effective role performance in a project-driven business and is often crucial to personal advancement in today's demanding organizational environment. Leading and managing stakeholders across organizational boundaries is also an emerging competency for project managers as well as business managers. In fact, project management has become one of the most important tools for successfully implementing technology-based systems. Decision-makers in organizations today require the managerial skills and perspectives necessary to enhance the innovation process and to bring technological advances to the marketplace. They must acquire substantial knowledge, not only in managing and directing the technological and market developments themselves, but also in utilizing and directing the professionals involved in these developmental efforts. They must be able to understand, inspire, and guide professional and technical employees and integrate them with the marketing, manufacturing, and financial functions of the organization. Moreover, this must be done without limiting the creative potential of projects and the technical employees involved – command and control type management and rigid project management systems are not viable options. Therefore, it is not surprising to find a strong interest among managers in technology-based firms for information and skill training in this area.

Given this context, this minitrack will provide a forum for discussing advanced concepts, tools and techniques for managing projects (both IT and non-IT projects) in today’s dynamic business environments. More specifically, the six papers selected for this minitrack will explore the latest techniques for tracking and controlling projects, compressing the time-to-market cycles, managing innovation under cost and time pressures, managing diverse project teams in decentralized organizations, capturing and transferring learning across projects, and dealing with interruptions, risks, conflict and commitment.

References