Successful Projects Deliver Successful Products: An Examination Of The Key Success Factors

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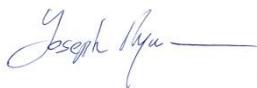
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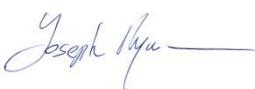
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the key elements of a successful project that, in turn, lead to a successful product. The research strategy used for this investigation will be in-depth **interviews**. These interviews will be conducted with three project management practitioners. Results supported the contention that leadership is paramount in achieving success. The results of this research also led to the conclusion that the following key elements of project failures; lack of senior sponsorship, poor leadership, uncertain scope and lack of adequate planning. The practice of factoring in customers to the project design and review appears from the qualitative research to be an emerging practice that has not always been a standard part of the project methodology.

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Chapter 1: Overview

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the key elements of a successful project that, in turn, lead to a successful product. As each project is designed for a customer, "the entity that provides the funds necessary to accomplish the project" (Clements & Gido, 2006, p.4). Companies and, more specially, project managers must ensure that the final product is satisfactory to the customer (Clements & Gido, 2006). 'Project Teams' targets the specifications/objectives of a project. "Projects can be large or small and involve one person or thousands of people" (Schwalbe, 2011, p.4). There are so many variations of projects that are carried out in the world today, such as building a shopping mall, designing and developing a new computer system, and even planning a wedding (Clements & Gido, 2006, p.5). This study will analyse the factors of a successful project; leadership, scope, schedule, cost and customer satisfaction. An evaluation of the elements of project failure will also be evident in this study. Project failures are mainly caused by due dates not being met, budgets being exceeded, the work not delivering the specifications, all of which lead ultimately to dissatisfaction from stakeholders/customers (Allen & Alleyne & Farmer & McRae & Turner, 2014).

1.1 Justification For Research

There have been many publications on what is deemed to be a project success (Kerzner, 2013) (Larson & Gray,2011) (Pinto & Mantel, 1990) (Pinto & Covin, 1989) (Whittaker, 1999) (Avots, 2001), as well as a number of literature regarding the success or failure of a product (Fatemi & Neumann, 2015) (Prajogo,2006) and (Fahy &Jobber, 2012). However, to this researcher, there does not appear to be a great volume of literature or studies that link the two together. That is the aim of this study, to examine the relationship between project success/failure and product success/failure. The statement above would suggest that there is a gap in the literature. While there have been studies on both subject areas, it is the intention of this research to correlate the two subject areas to deliver a conclusion on the question "Is Project Success/Failure the same as Product Success/Failure?"

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014, p.596), the literature review shows "recent (or historically significant)" data or studies that act as a baseline for a researcher and their study. This section should provide the researcher with the ability to manufacture their research question and enable them to carry out their research objectives to the highest level of efficiency. It is acknowledged by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p.61) that there are many articles, books, journals, etc on the research topic. While it is not necessary to study every single piece of literature before collecting your data, it is of paramount importance that the researcher reviews the "most relevant and significant research on your topic."

2.1 Major Company Failings

There have been many instances of major companies failing to meet expectations. In other words, great companies can actually have bad ideas or poorly executed ideas. Examples of this are New Coke (Coca-Cola), Google Wave, Coors Sparkling Water and Microsoft's Windows Vista (Thompson, 2011). Microsoft suffered greatly once again with the launch of its Xbox 360. High volume of returns, due to product defects, was evident. However, Microsoft still managed to gain a high level of market share. This is the basis for the research objective to uncover whether a project failure means that the product will be a failure in the market.

2.2 Project Life Cycle

There have been various definitions for the term 'Project Management'. Project Management is the organisation, direction, and control of company resources in order to complete a relatively short-term objective for an organisation (Kerzner, 2013). Reiss (1993) believed that a project is a "human activity that achieves a clear objective against a time scale." It is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a new product, service or result (Larson & Gray, 2011). This is classically achieved by using the project life cycle. There are four phases of this life cycle; defining, planning, executing and closing (Larson & Gray, 2011). The defining stage in a project life cycle is when the specifications of the project are established. According to Larson & Gray (2011), this includes specifying the objectives, formatting teams and assigning the major responsibilities to various members of the group.

Planning involves the establishment of clear and precise objectives that a project team must have in order to complete the tasks that will lead to the ultimate goal (Weiss & Wysocki,

1992). This idea of planning is developed further by Larson and Gray (2011) as they demonstrated that staffing, schedules, budgets, resources and risks should be considered in this phase. The execution of a project is where, Larson & Gray (2011, p.8) state, "a major portion of the project takes place." It is at this stage where the work that has been planned for begins to take shape. It is critical that this stage is monitored and maintained in order to complete the pre-established objectives. (Weiss & Wysocki, 1992)

The closing or completion of a project involves "confirming that all deliverables have been provided to and accepted by the customer, that all payments have been collected, and that all invoices have been paid" (Clements & Gido, 2006). Larson and Gray (2011, p.511-517) also discuss the importance of a post project review, in order to assess the performance of a project, as well as gaining the ability to implement any lessons learned into future projects.

2.3 Project Failure

Experts find it difficult to agree what exactly can be defined as project failure. (Pinto & Mantel, 1990) Projects are often deemed to be failures by those who have an empirical view on the subject matter (Pinto & Govin, 1989) and their success rates are based on observation or experience rather than pure theory. The various industries in which products are carried out are also very critical to the success or failure of a particular task. There are very different factors that influence results in the computer game industry compared to the construction industry. An example of delays or failures of projects in the construction industry are issues such as sewage and public water services (Ghalfy, 1995). These issues may be critical in cases in projects within the construction industry, but these delays in the case above are not relevant in most cases in computer and video game production. This illustrates the need for a project manager who has the technical competency for the particular field he or she is orchestrating a project. However, "preoccupation with any single aspect of the project may contribute to a failure" (Avots, 1969, p.79)

A survey conducted by KPMG (Survey of Unsuccessful Information Technology Projects, April 1997) revealed the three common reasons issues that cause project failure. The first reason was that the business case for the project was weak and not all of the components were taken into consideration (Whittaker, 1999). Another reason according to Avots (2001) is that the wrong candidate was chosen for the position of Project Manager. This can perhaps be a controversial factor, as lack of management support (Avots, 1969) can influence the project manager's ability to conduct his/her work to their full ability. Finally, the third reason is that

the correct strategy must be chosen (Alotaibi & Mafimisebi, 2016) as this is a plan for putting resources into the position most likely to achieve the specified objectives to the highest quality in a given situation (Cobb, 2012).

2.4 Project Success

However, the factors mentioned before may be a little outdated, as more recent studies have shown that while there have been many studies conducted into this area of Project Management failure, much of the in-depth focus has been on the factors leading to successful project implementation (Boakye & Liu, 2016).

Kerzner (1987, p.32) described the successful projects as those that are "managed consistently with excellence." Shultz, Slevin and Pinto (1987) classified factors for critical success of projects into two factors. These factors were strategic and tactical. In a study conducted by Alexandrova & Ivanova, they stated that the "strategic group consists of factors as project mission, top management support, and project scheduling." An example of an organisation recognising the need for an effective strategy is Apple. According to a case study conducted by Patanakul & Shenhar (2012), "The business background of Apple's iPod/iTunes initiative was the late 1990s environment when people started to use MP3 players to carry their music around and to download music files from the Internet. Apple identified a need for an easy-to-use player that also provided an efficient way to buy music, and saw this as an opportunity to use its strength in well-designed consumer products to create a new business for the company." This indicates a strong strategic perspective could reward the organisation when it comes to designing the project. Factors included in the tactical group mainly consisted of "client consulting, human resource selection and personnel training."

Kerzner (2001) expessed the view that project success was graded by the completion of a project within the allocated time, budget and quality.In his 2013 book, he develops this view specifically adding customer acceptance to the criteria for grading success of a project. Alexandrova & Ivanova (2014) concurred with this view.

 "Project Scope Management includes the processes required to ensure that the project includes all the work required, and only the work required, to complete the project successfully" (PMBOK Guide, p.105). Scope is essential to the success of a project, as it helps "improve the accuracy of time, cost and resource estimates" (Schwalbe, 2007, p.186) This would be particularly important when applied to large projects, for example, the

production of Microsoft's Xbox 360 Game Console. Project teams must be aware of the scope expanding too much – this is known as 'Scope Creep' (Schwalbe, 2007, P.201). There have been several cases of information technology projects going badly wrong due to creep, such as McDonalds trying to "initiate a project to create an intranet that would connect its headquarters with all of its restaurants to provide detailed operational information in real time" (Schwalbe, 2011, P.202). This is a classic example of a well-run organisation taking on too much work and losing focus on their primary objective.

Groff and Jones (2003, p.6) define scope creep as "a phrase used to describe a situation in which project goals are altered or expanded so often that the assignment no longer resembles the original product commitment." This can occur due to changing requirements, specifications and priorities, (Larson & Gray, 2011, p. 105) which in turn can lead to added costs, possible project delays, and in some cases, the specifications not being achieved as was intended. Larson and Gray (2011, p.477) also describe the affect that scope creep has on the critical path of the project, as over-expansion of the scope can lead to the disruption of project rhythm, as well as having a negative impact on the productivity of the project team.

"Develop Schedule is the process of analysing activity sequences, durations, resource requirements, and schedule constraints to create the project schedule." (PMBOK Guide, p.152) This is another crucial element of a successful product as it can affect not only the due date of a project, but delay can lead to costs for an organisation, such as penalties and profit loss.

In reviewing Information Technology: Project Management (Schwalbe, 2011, p.283), It was discovered that controlling costs consists of "monitoring cost performance, ensuring that only appropriate project changes are included in a revised cost baseline, and informing project stakeholders of authorized changes that will affect costs". An example of this would be in the construction industry, where delays in project completion may lead to higher labour costs. This has to be illustrated to the stakeholders and approved.

Another factor that leads to a successful project is the customer satisfaction level. As seen with the scope creep, the final deliverables are what is essential to the stakeholders/customers. Their expectations must be monitored and this is achieved by negotiating the desire to meet project goals, by addressing problems that have not arisen as of yet and resolving the issues that have been identified (PMBOK Guide, p.261). The project manager's responsibility is to manage the expectations of the stakeholder/customer. By

actively managing stakeholder expectations, the risk of the project failing to meet its goals decreases, therefore, limiting the level of disruption throughout the project. (PMBOK Guide, p.262)

2.5 Product Success Factors

With the examination of case studies and statistics, this study will determine the reasons why products fail to meet the expected result for not only consumers, but for the companies as well.

Issues such as the withdrawal of a product from a market are particularly common within the food industry. According to an online article by (Fatemi &Neumann, 2015), market withdrawal applies "when a product has a minor violation that would not be subject to FDA legal action. The company removes the product from the market or corrects the violation." However, not all cases of market withdrawals are based on legal matters. Products may be removed from the shelves by organisations if they feel that their product may need further investigation, and would be re-released following the correct adjustments.

According to a study submitted 10 years ago (Prajogo, 2006), innovation is positively related to the benefits of an organisation. This can be in terms of the 'size, market share, and profitability and growth rate' (Deshpande & Farley & Webster, 1993). Upon reading an article about the Nintendo Wii U, a video game console released in 2012. We realise the importance of having innovation within your new product, especially in saturated markets such as the console industry. As Sony and Microsoft have always dominated the video game industry, this illustrates the need for innovation and a strong launch programme for the new product to be successful. According to an article on the Wii U by Forbers, from a consumer point of view, the Wii U was too "gimmicky" and had "lacklustre graphics and technical specs". This is an example of a product not being able to sustain a strong position in a market.

In most cases, the main aim of an organisation is to achieve market share and to make profit. Many of the world's leading brands do not come cheaply to the consumer, such as Apple, Coca-Cola and Mercedes. (Fahy & Jobber, 2012) These companies have a strong position in the market and are less vulnerable to retailers requesting a reduction in price. Therefore, these products will always have a stronghold on a market, and according to Fahy and Jobber (2012), these brands provide benefits to the consumer, such as features and benefits, reduction in risk of purchasing their product and the brand has a symbolic value. All of these factors would lead to profitability to the company.

2.6 Brand Perception and Customer Loyalty

With most markets, there are several brands trying to sell the same thing. This develops into competitive rivalry between many organisations. A study has shown that we should "imagine a group of people who arrive at a new restaurant, for example, all hoping to order their personal favourite dishes. Obviously, the more items offered on the menu, the more satisfied these customers will be, on average" (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000, p.996). Different companies will over a variety of options to the potential consumer, but it may be one thing that they do not have that may disappoint the customer. An example of this could be something as small as an app that you can download on an Android phone but cannot access on an Apple iPhone (Leap Card App). This could lead to brand loyalty.

In turn, delighted customers remain loyal and talk favourably to others about the company and its products" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011, p.48). Loyalty should work both ways however. Organisations must "work to hang on to the customers they have" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011, p.49). This is evident in the case of Microsoft, in the redesign of their Xbox consoles to ensure loyal customer satisfaction.

In relation to project management, it is critical that organisations learn their lesson in the evaluation of the completed project. "Lessons learned represent an analysis carried out during and shortly after the project life cycle; they attempt to capture positive and negative project learning" (Larson & Gray, 2011, p.516). This is important in terms of the perception of a brand. It would appear that Microsoft listened to their loyal customers and learned their lessons from products such as the Xbox 360 and Windows Vista. Due to the overheating issues that occurred in their Xbox 360, during the design of their Xbox One (Project Processes), they looked to learn from their past mistakes. It would appear that they implemented this design due to the customer's dissatisfaction with previous instalments of the product and their performance issues. Hence, showing loyalty to their customers.

2.7 Project Leadership

Clements & Gido (2006) believe that "project leadership involves inspiring people assigned to the project to work as a team to implement the plan and achieve the project objective successfully. Nokes and Kelly (2007) believed that if a team centre is run in a professional manner, then team "comradery" will follow swiftly and the team will be better equipped to deal with activities and/or needs. Good project managers have "leadership and management characteristics; they are visionary yet focused on the bottom line." (Schwalbe, 2011, p.25)

The use of Inspiration – Related Currencies (Cohen & Bradford, 1990, cited in Larson & Gray, 2011, p.345) describes people's burning desire to make an impact and to own a legacy. Larson and Gray (2011, p.345) describe inspiration as a magnet, "pulling people as opposed to pushing people toward doing something."

It is important that project managers establish a certain level of performance. According to Larson and Gray (2011, p.355) a good project manager should respond quickly to issues with the other members of the team, carefully prepare and execute smooth meetings, facilitate effective problem solving, as well as staying on top of all the critical issues.

The primary responsibility of a project manager is to ensure that the customer is satisfied that the work scope has been achieved with quality, within budget, and in the allocated time. (Clements and Gido, 2006, p.292) In order for this to be possible, the project manager must provide the leadership skills required so that the project objective can be achieved. However, they must have the support from the top management of their organization. Larson and Gray (2011, p.350) state that "visible top management support is not only critical for securing the support of other managers within an organization, but it is also a key factor in the project manager's ability to motivate the project team."

According to Larson and Gray (2011, p.340) a project manager does not always require strong leadership, although it would be largely beneficial. "Well-defined projects" require little leadership. This outlines the importance of having a clear project plan, in order for the project to have a chance of being a success.

Some issues that lead to conflict in a project need to be handled effectively by the project manager, this can happen in various ways. Kerzner (2013) suggests various strategies in order to resolve these conflicts. These methods include confrontation, designed to try work through disagreements between certain parties within a project. Focus on working together rather than arguing. Kerzer also discusses the possibility of creating a compromise, as well as the idea of reducing the level of emotion that exists within the conflict. Sometimes, the parties cannot resolve the issue mutually. Kerzner explains that some issues may go to higher management, which has a greater tendency to end up in a "win-lose" situation, where one party is more satisfied than the other.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Saunders, Lewis and Thronhill (2009) outline that the term 'research' has three characteristics:

- "Data are collected systematically"
- "Data are interpreted systematically"
- "There is a clear purpose; to find things out"

Research is defined as "something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge" (Saunders & Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). "The term 'research' refers to the systematic method consisting of enunciating the problem, formulating a hypothesis, collecting the facts or data, analysing the facts and reaching certain conclusions either in the form of solutions(s) towards the concerned problem or in certain generalisations for some theoretical formulation." (Kothari, 2004, P.1-2) These methods are to be followed in order to maintain a focus within the study and to achieve research objectives.

3.1 Research Problem Definition

It is very difficult as a beginning researcher to clearly define the research problem straight from the offset. This is acknowledged by Ary et. All (2010, p.44) as it is stated that "the difficulty is not due to a shortage of problems but, rather, to the fact that beginners must select a problem very early, when their understanding of how to do research is most limited." It can be difficult also to stay on track with such research problems. For example, as outlined by Kohari (2004, p. 26), "the problem to be investigated must be defined unambiguously for that will help to discriminate relevant data from the irrelevant ones. A proper definition of research problem will enable the researcher to be on the track whereas an ill-defined problem may create hurdles." For this study, the general research question is as follows:

Does a Failed Project Mean a Failed Product?

3.2 Research Objectives

"Defining a research problem properly is a prerequisite for any study and is a step of the highest importance. In fact, formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution. It is only on careful detailing the research problem that we can work out the research design and can smoothly carry on all the consequential steps involved while doing research." (Kothari, 2004, P.26-27) With this statement in mind, the research objectives are outlined as follows;

- To Investigate The Influence of Leadership on Project Success

It is the aim of this study to investigate the influence of leadership on project's ability to succeed. According to Clements and Gido (2006, p.294) "Project leadership involves inspiring the people assigned to the project to work as a team to implement the plan and achieve the project objective successfully." It is the intention of this study to discover the affects that leadership responsibilities has on the project manager.

- To Identify Key Elements That Lead to Project Failure

This study looks to evaluate the key elements of project failures. Experts find it difficult to agree what exactly defines project failure. (Pinto & Mantel, 1990) Based on the literature review, it is the intention of this study to analyse the effect of time management, the appointment of the project manager and the strategies used by not only the project managers, but the business also. This research objective will be key for trying to identify if a failed project means a failed product in the market.

- To Investigate the Influence of Customer Loyalty on Project Decisions

Based on the literature studies, it is the aim of this research to investigate how customer loyalty affects project management decisions. "Good customer relationship management creates customer delight. In turn, delighted customers remain loyal and talk favourably to others about the company and its products" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011, p.48). Loyalty should work both ways however. Organisations must "work to hang on to the customers they have" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011, p.49).

3.3 Methodology Structure

In order to achieve the research objectives illustrated above, the researcher will implement a number of characteristics of the 'Research Onion' model. (Saunders & Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 138) This is a model comprised of six layers. These layers will act as a guideline for the research process of this particular study. These layers are known as:

- Research Philosophy
- Research Approach
- Research Strategy
- Research Choice
- Time Horizon
- Data Collection
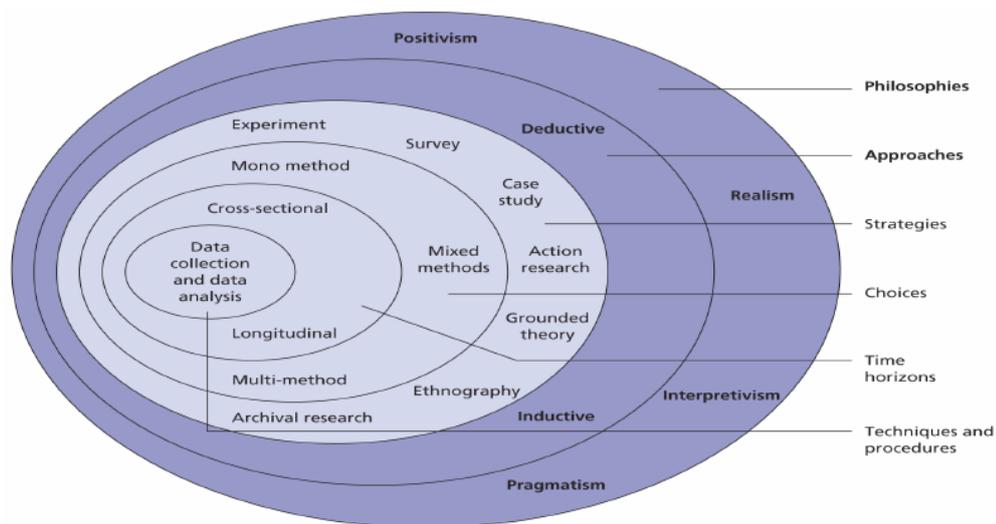
Figure 1: The 'Research Onion' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p.108)

3.3.1 Research Philosophy

This term "relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge." (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p.107) Furthermore, the research philosophy chosen will "underpin" the strategy chosen by the researcher, as well as the methods of that strategy. As cited by Saunders, Lewis and Thronhill (p.108), Johnson and Clark (2006) "argue that the important issue is not so much whether our research should be philosophically informed, but it is how well we are able to reflect upon our philosophical choices and defend them in

relation to the alternatives we could have adopted." Research can be performed in various ways, but it is important to understand why the method adopted has been chosen, and to be able to defend them against the alternatives that could have been selected.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), there are three different ways of thinking in regards to research philosophies. These various positions can influence the approach taken by the researcher in their given study. The three major ways, as outlined by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p.119) are as follows;

- Ontology - "the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being"
- Epistemology - " the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge"
- Axiology – "the researcher's view of the role of values in research"

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p.109-119) outline the different research philosophies that can be chosen for the study being carried out. ". Each contains important differences which will influence the way in which you think about the research process." According to the 'research onion' (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p.108) there are various philosophies that coincide with the above-mentioned research positions (ontology, epistemology and axiology). The philosophy selected for this dissertation is **interpretivism,** as the sample size is small and believed by this researcher to be the most beneficial philosophy for this study."Interpretivism is based on the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences..." (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.29) Bryman and Bell (2015, p.28) state that interpretivism is "concerned with having an understanding of the human of human action rather than with the forces that act on it." This philosophy suits this particular study, as qualitative data techniques (in this case, in-depth interview) are required. This method will allow the interviewee(s) to give their voice to their own experiences. This also allows the researcher to analyze the correspondence between real life practices to the theory (to see if they are fundamentally different).

3.3.2 Research Approach

The research approach is the second layer of the 'research onion'. Saunders Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 124) emphasise the importance of selecting a research method as "the extent to which you are clear about the theory at the beginning of your research raises an important question concerning the design of your research project." The deductive approach can described as developing a theory and hypothesis (or hypotheses) and designing a research strategy in order to test those hypotheses. An inductive approach may also be taken, which is known as the collection and analysis of data in order to develop a theory from the results and findings of the research. For this particular study, the **inductive** approach, due to the nature of the topic that is being examined. A small sample is more appropriate for this approach as "the study of a small sample of subjects might be more appropriate than a large number as with the deductive approach." (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 126)

3.3.3 Research Strategy

The third layer of the 'research onion' gives the researcher a wide variety of options, such as surveys, focus groups, case studies and in-depth interviews. It is important to consider the research philosophy and approach when creating a strategy in order to carry out the research efficiently and to achieve the research objectives. The research strategy used for this investigation will be in-depth **interviews**.

"Interviews demand real interaction between the researcher and the respondent. To be able to run the interview efficiently and without any disturbances, the researcher needs to know the respondent, his background, values and expectations." (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, p.131)

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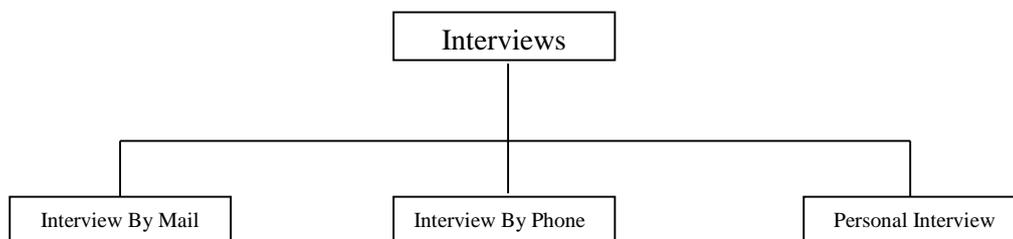
Figure 2: A Typology of Interviews (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, p.132)

It is important to consider what type of interview that should be conducted for the study in question. For the interviews in this **investigation**, the research will take an unstructured approach, in order to give the respondent "full liberty to discuss reactions, opinions and behaviour on a particular issue." (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, p.132)

3.3.4 Research Choice

For this layer of the 'research onion', the investigator can select one from three research methods: the mono-method, multi-method or the mixed method. The appropriate selection for this case is the **mono-method**, "a single data collection technique and corresponding analysis procedures." (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p.151) This study will use a single qualitative data collection technique, through in- depth interviews. These interviews will be **semi-structured**, as certain questions will apply to certain participants of the sample, although the themes of the interviews will remain the same.

3.3.5 Time Horizon

For this research question, a cross-sectional time horizon was selected, as this study will be carried out once and "represent a snapshot of one point in time." (Cooper & Schindler, 2014, p. 128) With the constraints of budget and time, this cross-sectional analysis strategy is best suited for this dissertation.

3.3.6 Ethical Issues

According Cooper and Schindler (2014, p.28) ""ethics are norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others." The research population should not be subject to embarrassment, harm or any other form of material disadvantage. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p.160) In order to safeguard against risks such as physical harm, pain, embarrassment, discomfort, or loss of privacy, the researcher should follow these three guidelines;

- Explain study benefits.
- Explain participant rights and protections.
- Obtain informed consent.   (Cooper & Schindler, 2014, p.28)

For this investigation, it was critical for the researcher to be objective at all times during the study. The data collected in this study is only for the purpose of this paper. It is not the intention of this researcher to cause harm, embarrassment, discomfort or loss of privacy to those sampled. The in-depth interviews were designed in order to allow the interviewees to have the freedom, as well as their right, to refuse to answer any question that they felt was too intrusive.

3.3.7 Limitations to the Research

Limitations within an investigation/ research paper is known as " a section of the final research report in which all extraneous events that place certain restrictions on the report are fully communicated" (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2003, p. 675) Common limitations include financial limitations, time pressures, and bias from the sample. This research also had its share of limitations.

This researcher was impacted by the lack of research done in this subject area. While there have been a great number of studies in both project management and in product success, there was very limited access into studies that combined the two together and how they affect one another, which was the intention of this investigation.

There was also some degree of financial restrictions for this study. As the researcher is a student, they did not have the financial backing that may be required to dig deeper into this subject. Furthermore, as the sample consisted of project managers, there may be some bias in the research findings.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation paper, experts find it difficult to agree what exactly can be defined as project failure. (Pinto & Mantel, 1990) Projects are often deemed to be failures by those who have an empirical view on the subject matter (Pinto & Govin, 1989) and their success rates are based on observation or experience rather than pure theory. With in-depth interviews, this study has identified where real life experience correlate with the literature.

4.1 Findings of Qualitative Research

The purpose of this section is to outline the data collected, with qualitative, in-depth interviews. The chapters within this section will outline each objective and analyse the data along with the literature review. It is important to note that the research findings in this study are derived from the subjective opinions of those sampled.

4.1.1 *Objective 1: "To Investigate the Influence of Leadership on Project Success"*

The research findings within this objective were used to outline the influence of a Project Manager's ability to motivate their project team, whether or not that leadership is the key attribute of a Project Manager, and to identify a possible trend in poor leadership techniques.

4.1.1.1 Inspiration as a Key Attribute of the Project Manager

Respondents all had different beliefs when it came to the question of inspiration as the key attribute of project management. All interviewees do believe that while leadership in project management agree that leadership is "usually desirable" (Larson & Gray, 2011, p.340), the responses given also correlate with the theory that good project managers have "leadership and management characteristics; they are visionary yet focused on the bottom line" (Schwalbe, 2011, p.25)

> *"The project manager must prioritise focusing on the achievement of the goal of the project. While it is incumbent on a project manager to manage the team and provide, inspiration, motivation and support to that team, it should be recognised that to focus on this as the priority may lead to wandering off course for the project." (Joe Ryan)*

However, it is outlined by Larson and Gray (2011, p.340) that it is very difficult for a project manager to be able to perform both roles effectively.

> *"I agree that inspiration is the key attribute of the project manager [...] there's a huge reliance on influence on those people to achieve what they are looking to achieve."*   *(Brian Stanley)*

This illustrated to the researcher that there are multiple project management techniques that can be applied, all with the same end goal in mind. This correlates with the literature review, as it is evident that there is a difference between managing and leading a project. (Larson and Gray, 2011, p.340)

4.1.1.2 Challenges in Leadership

The responses indicated that the complex business relationships with team members and senior stakeholders are a common challenge in project management, and it is also evident in this literature reviewed.

> *"I would go as far as asking for someone to be removed from a project if they were causing such a negative impact on meeting the project timelines." (Brian Stanley)*

> *(Ms Temple McCrory) feels that the greatest challenge is being able to build a high performance project team. The crucial aspect of this is to have a coherent team structure, in which the project manager can speak one-to-one with members of her team and be able to speak about the performance of each team member. Self-accountability is a key issue in project management, not only for members of the project team, but also the project manager*

> *"In the three years that the programme is in existence, there have been three different Ministers for Health. The two most recent ministers are not as committed to independent trusts as the previous minister which has resulted in delays and inconsistencies in implementing key changes in hospitals"(Joe Ryan)*

The findings of this question illustrated the challenges that project managers may encounter over the course of a project. As stated in the literature review, a lack of senior stakeholder and management support (Avots, 1969) can influence the project manager's ability to conduct his/her work to their full ability. This could also affect the project manager's ability to motivate their team.

Different strategies for resolution were suggested in the responses to this question. Some found the method of having an individual of the project team removed, taking an assertive

approach to the conflict (Kerzner, 2013), while others place an emphasis on team members taking responsibility for their own performance.

4.1.1.3 Application of Techniques across Different Business Sectors

The respondents had different leadership challenges. Depending on the responses given to research question 1.2, different strategies are applicable in certain and/or multiple sectors, while others are more circumstantial.

Two of the respondents referred to team member performance and resolving those challenges.

> *"The person could be de-motivated, and therefore, you have to try and motivate that person. Sometimes getting a person removed isn't easy because they may be a subject matter expert in the area that you are working on, so removing them may have a bigger impact on the project, but you have to weigh up each of the circumstances before you make that decision." (Brian Stanley)*

> *Ms. Temple McCrory believes that her technique can be used "in any walk of life." She stated that most organisations in modern times have a performance management department. This was due to previous lack of feedback from members of the team to the organisation, and vice versa.*

Ms. Temple McCrory's view that her technique of striving to optimise team performance can be applied in any business scenario. However, Mr. Stanley's view was that his approach had limitations in terms of its applicability, due to individual circumstances.

The third respondent, Mr. Ryan, referred to an entirely different challenge and approach to resolution that focused on scope and interdependency, and is therefore, is not useful in this case for comparative purposes.

4.1.1.4 Causes of Poor Project Leadership

The interviewees were consistent with their view that project management leadership and responsibilities were lacking in the cases that they provided. Both leadership and goal-driven management characteristics (Schwalbe, 2011, p.25) are lacking in the examples provided by the participants of this study.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory spoke about the lack of an appropriate project plan was the main cause of poor leadership that she has experienced in her career, with the project manager seemingly not being capable of managing or leading the project towards its goals. There was also no project scope documentation in this case.

"[...] scope, cost and duration of the project began to expand. Once this became obvious, key stakeholders began to distance themselves from the project resulting in the primary stakeholder, i.e. the taxpayer through the political paymaster losing confidence in the project and demanding its closure." (Joe Ryan)

This research finding concurred with the theory that a develop schedule is necessary in order to analyse activity sequences, durations, resource requirements, and schedule constraints to create the project schedule. (PMBOK Guide, p.152)

4.2 Objective 2: "To Identify Key Elements That Lead To Project Failure"

The second objective of this investigation is to determine the key elements that lead to a project failing. Upper management support is a key issue in project management, as managers require senior support in order to have the tools in place to create a successful project. The respondents were also asked if they believed that project failure is the same as product failure.

Once again, these research findings are subjective and apply to the real life experiences of the respondents. With qualitative research, the answers will be specific cases, and may not apply to all project managers.

4.2.1 Poor Levels of Support for the Project Manager

The respondents in this case confirmed Avott's (1969) theory that a lack of management support can influence the project mangers ability to conduct their work to the best of their ability.

"If certain people, at a senior level, don't necessarily agree with what the project is trying to achieve, they can have a negative influence on how the project progresses. The negative impact is normally a reduction in resources [...]" (Brian Stanley)

This respondent also went on to correlate the suggestion that the establishment of clear and precise objectives that a project team must have in order to complete the tasks that will lead to the ultimate goal (Weiss & Wysocki, 1992).

> *"[...], you have to have a very clear, signed off project charter. Then you can utilise the tools within project methodology."(Brian Stanley)*

The loss of focus on a primary objective (Schwalbe, 2011, p.202) is evident in the following research finding;

"Senior Leadership in the HSE waivered and decided to cancel the shared services project as they felt it was attempting to bring about too much change in an environment where perhaps other changes around clinical practice and leadership needed senior management's focus." (Joe Ryan)

4.2.2 Positive Support for the Project Manager

The interviewees were consistent in their answering of question 2.2. The importance of good project leadership and upper management support are evident throughout their responses.

> *"[...] the HSE was determined to keep the programme moving apace in spite of any risk posed by not breaking even on our operational budgets as the programme was key to transforming the service in a systemic way that would ensure future service quality and efficiency. This unified senior support has been crucial in maintaining management and staff commitment to the major changes envisaged in our transformation programme."(Joe Ryan)*

Mr. Ryan's response concurs with Larson and Gray's (2011, p.350) view that top level management commitment is crucial for the project manager to be able to drive the team towards their objective. In this case this commitment supported the project in its goal to improve and transform services despite pressure to not invest in the project in order to assist in remaining within day to day operational budgets.

Two of the respondents discussed the execution stage of a project. There was a consistency in the thinking that mapping progress throughout the execution of the project was crucial, as well as having the support of their superiors.

> *(Yvonne Temple McCrory) outlined how the CEO of the company sponsored the project and how all members of the project team were "on their game." Weekly meetings were arranged to discuss any issues and how to address them.*

> *"Collectively, everybody had a single vision and they were moving in the same direction. To manage that was quite easy. Every month, I would have a meeting with the steering committee, and I would update them on progress, on any areas that were challenges, and then they would ensure that the roadblocks were removed." (Brian Stanley)*

It appears to be of paramount importance to monitor and maintain certain levels of scope and performance in order to meet the pre-established objectives. Weiss and Wysocki (1992) have also confirmed this analysis. Achieving this is easier with the levels of support from senior management, as demonstrated by the respondents.

4.2.3 Failed Project and the Link to a Failed Product

Although many experts find it difficult to agree on the definition of project failure (Pinto & Mantel, 1990), there is the classic belief that project failure can be related to the adverse affect on cost, time and quality (Clements & Gido, 2006, p.292). This research question intends to identify is a failed project necessarily means a failure of the product in the market.

> *"More recent concept about the realisation of benefits of a project being a true measure of the success of a project is in my view paramount." (Joe Ryan)*

> *"A project could fail, in that it doesn't meet all of the objectives that were originally laid out. Sometimes external business reasons can have a direct impact on a project. That could be for example, if you were launching a new product, it could be a change in the overall strategy in the company. To me, a project needs to have very clear focus on what it is trying to achieve, but has to be very comfortable to do a re-alignment through the project" (Brian Stanley)*

There is an overall belief that the end goal being achieved determines if a project is a success or failure. Although financial, duration and quality issues do arise; a project's success or failure rating does appear to correlate with the suggestion that success rates are often based on experience rather than pure theory (Pinto & Covin, 1989).

The respondents views on whether project failure is the same as product failure, there is some variability in the views expressed;

> *"If we build a product, to specification and within cost and time, and yet that product was the 'wrong' product for the purpose of why we started the project in the first place, then it is both a failed project and a failed product. It is not inconceivable that a failed product may find a use however, but that is coincidental, in my view."*
> *(Joe Ryan)*

> *"No I don't think that it always means a failed product." In the case of Microsoft's Xbox 360, "They didn't spend the right level of time for testing the product. The decision was made, that 'Yes, we're going to release it now, knowing that there may be problems with it.' However, when you look at it, the overall objective was to gain market share." (Brian Stanley)*

> *"A great project may end up being a poor product, as it didn't reap the benefits that were sought after. Perhaps project management success/failure and product success/failure is not as linked as they should be." (Yvonne Temple McCrory)*

Mr Ryan and Ms Temple McCrory concur on the importance of the desired benefits envisaged by the project being achieved. They acknowledge that the more traditional measures of time cost and quality (Clements and Gido, 2006, p292), (Kerzner, 2001), while important, do not capture the paramount goal of creating a product that realises the benefits, i.e. *why* we did the project in the first place. Mr Stanley's response indicated that while there were shortcomings in the project and indeed the product, the goal of increasing market share for the company was achieved. This response however did not address whether the gain in market share was at an acceptable overall price, which is not the focus of this research.

4.2.4 Abandoned Projects

One of the respondents has never had an abandoned project. This, in his view, was due to his organisation's high level of due diligence prior to the commencement of a project.

"You see a project doesn't just begin. There are a lot of steps that happen prior to the project." Brian Stanley)

Two of the respondents have had situations where the project that they were working on has had to be abandoned or postponed. In the case of Ms Temple McCrory, this was due to changing priorities for the organisation, resulting in the decision to abandon being for the greater good, despite perhaps, the desire of the project manager to complete the project.

"As much, as a project manager, you want to fight this, maybe it is the right thing to do."
(Yvonne Temple McCrory)

In Mr Ryan's response, he referred to a situation where the underlying cultural resistance to certain changes overwhelmed the commitment by the organisation to the project. This again reinforces the importance of senior management support (Larson & Gray, 2011, p.350).

"In reality it was a resistance to being measured that was the problem. [...] The project did not take adequate account of this and fell victim to the old adage of culture eating strategy for breakfast" (Joe Ryan)

4.3 Objective 3: To Investigate the Influence of Brand Perspective & Customer Loyalty Factors in Project Management

The third and final objective of this study was to analyse the influence of customers on project management decisions and strategies. Please note that that not all the end users in this study are directly named 'customers'. They may be referred to as consumers, patients or service users

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4.3.1 Customer Loyalty Influence on Project Management Decisions

Communication with the end user of a product or service is evident in this research finding. Mr. Joe Ryan believed that the service user's loyalty does have a major influence in project management. He states;

> *"Another way in which "customer loyalty" influences the project management strategies is the need to engage our customers in the design and reconfiguration of services." (Joe Ryan)*

Mr. Brian Stanley also strongly believes this to be true. When discussing the impact of customer loyalty in the re-engineering process for Microsoft's Xbox 360, he explained that the re-engineering;

> *"[...] led to a dramatic decrease in the number of returns because the quality of the product was a lot better. In turn, that started to drive higher market share. People want reliability, they don't want to buy a console and then have to return it and then wait a period of time and they get frustrated, etc." (Brian Stanley)*

This level of customer loyalty resembles Armstrong and Kotler's (2011, p.49) findings that organisations must ensure that they hang on to the customers that they have. This is evident in Mr. Stanley's case for Microsoft, implementing changes to ensure a greater quality product for their customers. Mr. Ryan also speaks of the importance of engaging with the service user, especially in the designing of the services offered by the HSE. This stands out in particular, as this researcher found it difficult to correlate this with any of the literature provided. This may show a lack of customer impact influencing project management decisions and strategies, as we know them.

4.3.2 How Lessons Learned in the Project Closure Phase Affects Project Management Decisions/Strategies

There is a consistency in this research finding in that including customer input into the project closure process is of value to an organisation. The respondents all agree that a post project review, in order to assess the performance of a project and to gain the ability to implement lessons learned into future projects, is of paramount importance (Larson & Gray,2011, p.511-517).

> *"I think it is an extremely important element of a project, and it's an element that not all projects do." (Brian Stanley)*

When asked if customer reviews were taken into consideration in the post project review, there is an acknowledgement that this was not always the case.

> *"Yes we do, but we haven't always. [...] We are involving our patients and service users in the design, implementation and benefits realisation reviews of all of our*

projects. It is critical to ensuring that you are changing/building the right things."
(Joe Ryan)

"[...] you would have customers as a stake holder, you would have internal people as a stake holder and then you identify what the lessons learned were. That can then carry over into the next project that would have similar objectives." (Brian Stanley}

When asked if customer reviews are taken into consideration, Ms. Yvonne Temple said;

"Yes we definitely listen to what our users have to say. I think that what the customer does say about us adds value."(Yvonne Temple)

While it is evident that project managers write up a project closure document, it is acknowledged that in recent thinking, the customer's review of the product is becoming more and more relevant in modern business.

4.3.3 Examples of Incorporating Customer Feedback in Lessons Learned

Mr Stanley's view is that a project manager is responsible to ensure that the lessons learned are implemented into the next project. When asked to provide an example of such a scenario, he discussed the case of Microsoft's Xbox 360.

"With such a huge project and so many customers, you have to take their reviews of the product into consideration." (Brian Stanley)

While the product could be seen as a success, as the intention to gain market share was successful, Mr Stanley acknowledges that they perhaps sacrificed elements of product quality, in order to achieve that market share gain. He also refers to this in a question 2.3 in the appendices to this document, as the company decided to release the console, knowing that there may be issues with the final product.

Ms Yvonne Temple McCrory concurs with the premise that implementing lessons learned in following projects is important. Her view is that an organisation should implement what the customers have to say on their products, and that failure to do so could adversely affect customer retention. While this may not apply to her particular area of work, hers and Mr Stanley's points correlate with Armstrong and Kotler's (2011, p.49) view that organisation must work to retain their existing customers.

Mr Ryan also discusses the importance of engaging with the service users of his organisation. The HSE emphasises not only listening to the "customer's" feedback but aims to involve the customer in the design of the service to increase the chance of that service meeting the customer's needs.

> *"A Lean Project around improving catering and reducing food waste at a major hospital was driven by engaging patients around what was important to them.[...] This resulted in; a) reduced waste of food; b) happier/healthier patients and c) reduced cost." (Joe Ryan)*

4.3.4 Resolving Tension between Company Objectives and Customer Expectations

The importance of change management and communication with the customer is evident in this research finding. In the examples provided by Mr Stanley and Mr Ryan, they engaged with their respective customers or service users, to arrive at an appropriate agreed solution. This would reflect a proactive change management engagement, as this approach is n line with the PMBOK Guide (p.262) on the importance of managing expectations.

> *"I would have the conversation with the customer to identify exactly what the scope is, and in some cases, remove some functionality to be able to ensure that you could support what the company was looking for, and what the customer was looking for." (Brian Stanley)*

> *"[...]resolved through a) consistently and continuously engaging with the public and political system to drive home the message that it was far more important to save lives than to have a cancer centre on everybody's doorstep, and b) engaging with clinical staff at all of these centres and supporting them through the changes needed to move services to the 8 centres of excellence. Essentially, applying good change management practice." (Joe Ryan)*

Ms. Temple McCrory's response would appear to indicate, in that specific case, less direct customer engagement on the issue. The response received appears to indicate an unresolved tension between the organisation and the customer.

"[...] very difficult because of the differences in opinion on what is reasonable for the company, as well as the customer. There were many in house discussions about how to justify their strategy in this case." (Yvonne Temple McCrory)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Given the extensive knowledge available in terms of project success and product success, there were limitations in terms of research that synchronises the two topics. In order to develop a deep understanding of the research question, the results of this study were derived from a series of in-depth interviews with various project management experts in both the private and public sector and relating individual elements of the interviews to the available literature pertaining to project and product success.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results of the research objectives and findings found, in order to deliver a legitimate conclusion to this dissertation. This researcher will closely examine all three research objectives and provide some recommendations for future research, for both academic and business practitioner use.

5.1 Research Objectives

In Chapter 3 of this study (Research Methodology), three research objectives were produced, with the purpose of understanding the key elements of project management, and how they are linked to the criteria of a successful product. The three objectives and their respective research findings are as follows;

5.1.1 To Investigate the Influence of Leadership on Project Success

The literature reviewed for this dissertation was unanimous in prioritising the influence of leadership on achieving a successful project (Avots, 1969) (Clements and Gido, 2006) (Nokes and Kelly, 2007) (Schwalbe, 2011) (Cohen and Bradford, 1990) (Larson and Gray, 2011) (Kerzner 2013). The qualitative research conducted through the in-depth interviews with the three senior project management practitioners supported the contention that leadership is paramount in achieving success. This was expressed clearly through the examples of where strong leadership supported these practitioners in achieving the project goals and equally where weak leadership was cited by them as causing project failure.

This research would support Schwalbe's (2011) view that good project managers have leadership and management characteristics such as vision and inspiration but remain focused on the core project objectives.

Two out of the three interviewees concurred that the greatest challenge was in maintaining a high performance level in the team which is a product of strong leadership. The third cited again senior leadership and sponsorship as the greatest challenge.

5.1.2 To Identify Key Elements That Lead To Project Failure

The qualitative research identified the following key elements of project failures; lack of senior sponsorship, poor leadership, uncertain scope and lack of adequate planning. These findings would confirm that literature reviewed in relation to project failure. Sponsorship and leadership (Avots, 1969) (Clements and Gido, 2006) (Nokes and Kelly, 2007) (Schwalbe, 2011) (Cohen and Bradford, 1990) (Larson and Gray, 2011) (Kerzner 2013) are clearly the greatest cause of project failure. Uncertain scope (PMBOK Guide, 2008) (Schwalbe, 2011) has the effect of increasing costs and durations and was also indicated by the interviewees as having an effect on senior sponsorship, thus compounding the effects. Poor planning (Cobb, 2012) was particularly cited by one of the interviewees as having had a severe detrimental effect on their project where the Chief Technology Officer specifically objected to the application of project planning methodologies to the project.

The correlation between Project and Product Failure was really only addressed through the qualitative research for this dissertation as the literature review did not reveal substantial evidence or consideration of this topic. The conclusion regarding this correlation is that where the product of the project does not achieve the stated or desired benefits expected of it, then the project itself should be considered to be a failure. Benefits realisation is a key measure of success of projects in addition to the more tradition measures of cost, time and quality.

5.1.3 To Investigate the Influence of Brand Perspective and Customer Loyalty Factors In Project Management

The literature reviewed emphasised the importance to all organisations of customer loyalty (Iyengar and Lepper, 2000) (Armstrong and Kotler, 2011). The impact on project managers of ensuring continued customer loyalty is that projects need to involve the customer or service user in the design of the product or project. They should also involve the customer in the lessons learned process in project closing. This practice of factoring in customers to the project design and review appears from the qualitative research to be an emerging practice that has not always been a standard part of the project methodology.

This involvement results in tensions existing between what the customer expects of the project and product versus what the organisation expects of the project (PMBOK Guide, 2008). Resolving these tensions is best achieved through good change management and engagement with the customer.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

While this research sheds some light on the relationship between the success and failure of a project, and how it relates to product success or failure, there are many areas where this research can be developed further. This research is capable of acting as a strong foundation on which to build an even greater body of knowledge on this topic. This researcher recommends the following actions that may be used to further develop the research question;

5.2.1 Sample Size & the Use of Quantitative Research

A larger population may be accommodated in future research of this topic. The use of quantitative research to measure behaviour, knowledge, opinions or attitudes (Cooper & Schindler, 2014) may also be appropriate. Such methodology could be used in order to examine customer attitudes and understanding of the projects, in the form of a questionnaire or survey.

5.2.2 High Profile Product Success/Failures

This researcher would recommend future study examining both high profile product successes and failures with the view to investigating the characteristics of the projects that led to their delivery. This research recommendation could contribute valuable insights for both academic and practitioner purposes into the important relationship between successful products and the projects that delivered them.

5.2.3 Benefits Realisation

It would appear that the emerging practice of measuring project success by measuring and evaluating the realisation of benefits from projects, merits further investigation. This future research should examine the various approaches being taken by organisations to measuring benefits. The objective is the future research would be to identify the optimum approach to this key project performance indicator.

To Conclude,

This research set out to try bridge the gap in the literature between project success measurement and product success measurement. The study has raised questions on how academics and practitioners examine the success or failure of a given project or product. It is the hope of this researcher that this investigation has shed some light on the relationship between the project processes and the measures of the success of the final output of that project.

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Interviews: Qualitative Research

> *Objective 1:* **To Investigate the Influence of Leadership on Project Success**

Question 1.1: Do you feel providing inspiration for the team is the key attribute of the project manager? Or do you place greater focus on achieving the goal itself?

Mr. Brian Stanley

No, I agree that inspiration is the key attribute of the project manager. The reason being is that they don't have the direct responsibility for those on the project team. They are normally reporting into other managers and there's a huge reliance on influence on those people to achieve what they are looking to achieve.

Mr. Joe Ryan

The project manager must prioritise focusing on the achievement of the goal of the project. While it is incumbent on a project manager to manage the team and provide, inspiration, motivation and support to that team, it should be recognised that to focus on this as the priority may lead to wandering off course for the project. This is particularly the case when the project is encountering issues and problems. The Project Sponsor is perhaps a more appropriate role to focus on inspiring the team.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

The respondent spoke about the need for balance in project management. She believes that a good project manager should be able to incorporate a good level of leadership, as well as having the competence to achieve the project goal. She believes that this "natural blend" makes a project manager the total package. However, she herself is very goal focused and that projects are "all about the results and benefits."

Question 1.2: What has been your greatest challenge in leadership and what principles/techniques did you use to resolve the issue?

Mr. Brian Stanley

I think you have to build the correct foundation when you are doing a project. So you have to have the correct tools in place and you have to set the correct expectations with the project team. Like the previous question, you don't have the control over the project team so if individuals are not achieving what they are supposed to achieve and (when I was a project manager) I would go as far as asking for someone to be removed from a project if they were causing such a negative impact on meeting the project timelines.

Mr. Joe Ryan

The Programme for Health Service Improvement is a very large programme with multiple projects falling under it. The greatest challenge so far for me as a leader has been to keep senior hospital executives engaged in the programme as they have tended to focus on the political elements of the programme pertaining to making their Hospital Groups into independent Hospital Trusts. In the three years that the programme is in existence, there have been three different Ministers for Health. The two most recent ministers are not as committed to independent trusts as the previous minister which has resulted in delays and inconsistencies in implementing key changes in hospitals as their senior management remain focused on independence over systemic transformational change and integration with the community services. In order to resolve this, I pursued two tactics; a) focusing hospital based services on implementing integrated models of care that are largely agnostic to corporate structures such as Trusts and b) using the Programme and Project Governance to guide and persuade stakeholders to engage with the core objectives of the programme which is to improve patient and service user care.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Ms Temple McCroy feels that the greatest challenge is being able to build a high performance project team. The crucial aspect of this is to have a coherent team structure, in which the project manager can speak one-to-one with members of her team and be able to speak about the performance of each team member. Relying on other people is another challenge, according to the respondent. Self accountability is a key issue in project management, not only for members of the project team, but also the project manager.

Question 1.3: Can this technique be used in a wide range of sectors?

Mr. Brian Stanley

No I don't think that technique can be applied everywhere. I think each project has to be taken in its own merits. Of course it depends on that person as well. The person could be de-motivated, and therefore, you have to try and motivate that person. Sometimes getting a person removed isn't easy because they may be a subject matter expert in the area that you are working on, so removing them may have a bigger impact on the project, but you have to weigh up each of the circumstances before you make that decision. If somebody wasn't performing on the project, I would have a conversation with them directly, to try and understand why. If they were just being evasive or difficult, that is when I would move to an escalation. The big problem is if you do that straight away, it may have an impact on the overall team morale. Those people may see the project manager as somebody that is much more dictatorial. If you are too dictatorial, it could have an adverse affect on the project.

Mr. Joe Ryan

It is probably a technique that works best in large programmes of work where, while there are interdependencies between projects, these have a greater degree of flexibility and tolerance of delay. Within a specific project however there is a much more limited scope for defocusing on one element of the project while advancing other elements without impacting the critical path.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

The interviewee believes that her technique can be used "in any walk of life." She stated that most organisations in modern times have a performance management department. This was due to previous lack of feedback from members of the team to the organisation, and vice versa.

Question 1.4: Could you give me an example of poor project leadership that you may have experienced in your career? If so, what factors do you feel caused this?

Mr. Brian Stanley

I was managing a project and it had to with a software implementation, and the Chief Technology Officer was causing a massive problem on the project. The problem was that he was so senior that you couldn't necessarily remove him, and he didn't agree with a certain project methodology approach, for example, he didn't agree with having a project plan. This caused a massive amount of friction between me and the Chief Technology Officer. To get over that challenge, I was actually working for the CEO at the time, so I actually had a quiet conversation with the CEO, who then in turn had a quiet conversation with the Chief Technology Officer. The problem was that he was so frustrated at me because I escalated above his head, but I had to take account of the business need over his requirements, and I just didn't agree at all with his requirements.

Mr. Joe Ryan

The implementation of a single national personnel and payroll system for health was not fully implemented across all services and ran significantly over budget and time. While a number of factors came together to negatively impact this project, it is my view that the project failed primarily due to a lack of strong leadership and ownership. The project faced difficult implementation challenges such as the extraordinarily wide and inconsistent range of grades and allowances across the various health boards and voluntary providers. Tackling large and complex changes such as unifying and aligning grades and structures requires strong and clear leadership. This was absent in the case of this project and so the scope, cost and duration of the project began to expand. Once this became obvious, key stakeholders began to distance themselves from the project resulting in the primary stakeholder, i.e. the taxpayer through the political paymaster losing confidence in the project and demanding its closure. This was despite the fact that project implemented the system to cover approximately 50% of the health and social care services.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory spoke about the lack of an appropriate project plan was the main cause of poor leadership that she has experienced in her career, with the project

manager seemingly not being capable of managing or leading the project towards its goals. There was also no project scope documentation in this case.

Question 2.1: Could you give an example of when you felt that you maybe didn't have the support required to lead your project team towards a successful project?

Mr. Brian Stanley

Yeah, it happens quite a lot in projects. What I always found in projects is that number of stake holders that have an invested interest in the success of the project. If certain people, at a senior level, don't necessarily agree with what the project is trying to achieve, they can have a negative influence on how the project progresses. The negative impact is normally a reduction in resources, so they don't allocate sufficient resources to be able to drive the project from your own team, or they're having a negative direct influence on the resources that are on the project. In my experience, one of the senior managers was trying to have a very negative impact by pushing his resources that were on the project to meet his goals, and not necessarily the overall goals of the project. I always find that the biggest impact on projects isn't necessarily what you are trying to achieve, it is other people's external influence, trying to push down on the project team. To combat that, is quite straight forward, you have to have a very clear, signed off project charter. Then you can utilise the tools within project methodology. For example, with a project charter, you can have a steering committee set up, so that if something like this happens, it is up to the project manager to make sure that they can push back in a very constructive manner, based on pre-documented activities, to show there's no scope creep, etc;.

Mr. Joe Ryan

Yes. In 2006 my project was to implement shared services across the newly combined health boards within the HSE. The scope of the changes envisaged under the project included major changes to peoples' jobs across the country as certain administrative and processing based functions were centralised in to national shared services centres. When the project passed from the design and planning phases to the implementation phase, local senior managers, who had felt that the changes proposed would not be implemented as they were in their view too big a change, started to resist the changes and would not release staff to be redeployed. Senior Leadership in the HSE waivered and decided to cancel the shared services project as they felt it was attempting to bring about too much change in an environment where perhaps other changes around clinical practice and leadership needed senior management's focus.

This project was cancelled due to a lack of senior leadership resolve to tackle difficult yet not insurmountable challenges. Ultimately the HSE did reinstate the shared services project and has delivered it in full. However 3 years were lost

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

The example given was a project that was risky on a corporate level. The respondent said "this project should have had the maximum support. However, the senior sponsor in this case, was not supportive at all." Ms Temple McCrory goes on to explain that everything was ready, the project plan was done and approved, all elements were prepared "to a tee", but a few members of the team operated outside of the plan. These members veered off the plan so much that the plan was subject to premature closure.

Question 2.2: Could you give an example of when you felt high levels of support from upper management and how that influenced your ability to motivate your project team?

Mr. Brian Stanley

One of the projects that I ran was the implementation of an ERP System. This was company-wide, so it was going to impact every single function within the company, from Operations, to HR, to Finance. What happened was that there was a very clear project scope put together, a business requirements document and a project charter were also put in place. The sponsors were made up of all the senior managers for each function. Collectively, everybody had a single vision and they were moving in the same direction. To manage that was quite easy. Every month, I would have a meeting with the steering committee, and I would update them on progress, on any areas that were challenges, and then they would ensure that the roadblocks were removed. This could be resources, money, slippage in time lines and how we were going to address them. That was probably one of the most enjoyable projects that I have ever worked on.

Mr. Joe Ryan

Late last year, while preparing the HSE's Service Plan for 2017, a letter from the Minister was received suggesting that any funding for the Programme for Health Service Improvement

might be withheld until such time as there was greater certainty on the ability of the HSE to break even on its budget. I prepared a report for the HSE Leadership team clearly describing the severe negative effect of suspending a programme of this size and complexity. Foremost in the report was the fact that such a suspension would lead to widespread disengagement of senior clinical leaders across the entire health system who we had invested so heavily to engage as champions and leaders in the transformation of our services. The analogy of marching everyone back down the hill would result in not being able to get these crucial leaders to back a programme for several years to come. The Director General and my colleagues on the Leadership Team accepted my report and responded to the Minister's office that the HSE was determined to keep the programme moving apace in spite of any risk posed by not breaking even on our operational budgets as the programme was key to transforming the service in a systemic way that would ensure future service quality and efficiency. This unified senior support has been crucial in maintaining management and staff commitment to the major changes envisaged in our transformation programme.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

The respondent said that she "once worked on a fantastic project. The CEO of the company sponsored this project and absolutely everybody was on their game. We had weekly meetings to discuss any issues and how to address them. Any problems that arose were sorted out very quickly."

Question 2.3: What would you define as a 'failed project'? Does this necessarily mean a 'failed product' in your view?

Mr. Brian Stanley

No I don't think that it always means a failed product. A project could fail, in that it doesn't meet all of the objectives that were originally laid out. Sometimes external business reasons can have a direct impact on a project. That could be for example, if you were launching a new product, it could be a change in the overall strategy in the company. To me, a project needs to have very clear focus on what it is trying to achieve, but has to be very comfortable to do a re-alignment through the project, due to those external influences. It could be financial impact, the project could be running way over what was originally budgeted, so then you have to go back and address 'why is it running over budget?' Therefore, some of the scope

may be removed from the project. Ideally, you would try to push to meet the overall, original objectives but you have to have an understanding that business landscapes change and you have to change with them. An example would be the Xbox 360; the push was to get it to market. Microsoft got it to market with not necessarily the highest quality of product, with the Ring of Death being a major issue. From a strategic point of view, they were going after market share with Sony and they were behind the curve before they had even hit the market. They didn't spend the right level of time for testing the product. The decision was made, that "Yes, we're going to release it now, knowing that there may be problems with it. But when you look at it, the overall objective was to gain market share, so they had to weigh up what the return of investment was going to be against a high volume of returns.

Mr. Joe Ryan

Traditionally project failure has been viewed as being where one or more of the three traditional dimensions to a project, i.e. Cost, Time and Quality were not adhered to. More recent concept about the realisation of benefits of a project being a true measure of the success of a project is in my view paramount. It could be argued that benefits are implicit in quality, but my view is that they must be treated specifically in the process of initiation through to closure. They are "why" we do a project in the first place and if they are not realised then yes I do believe that the "product" of the project is a failure. If we build a product, to specification and within cost and time, and yet that product was the "wrong" product for the purpose of why we started the project in the first place, then it is both a failed project and a failed product. It is not inconceivable that a failed product may find a use however, but that is coincidental, in my view.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Ms. Temple McCrory spoke of the "classic examples of reasons why projects fail; time, costs and plans." However, she went on to explain that maybe project management failings are not that simple. She states that "a great project may end up being a poor product, as it didn't reap the benefits that were sought after. Perhaps project management success/failure and product success/failure is not as linked as they should be."

Question 2.4: Have you a situation where the project had to be abandoned and for what reason?

Mr. Brian Stanley

I don't think I have, no. You see a project doesn't just begin. There are a lot of steps that happen prior to the project. If somebody comes up with a strategy that they want to do something, like launching a new product, implementing new software, building a warehouse and so on, there has to be a lot of due diligence done before hand. On all the projects that I've worked on, that level of due diligence would have been done and then the agreement would be at a very senior level which trickles down into the organisation. Depending on the scope of the project, a small project could be within a department, but if you're managing a very large project, it has to have the support at a senior management level. They have to commit to resources, money, etc.

Mr. Joe Ryan

A project to implement performance measures on services was started and stopped twice. Many arguments were posited around the number of measures being sought, the ability of the services to supply the data, the reliability of the source data etc. In reality it was a resistance to being measured that was the problem. The culture of the services was very resistant to oversight, evaluation and direction. The project did not take adequate account of this and fell victim to the old adage of "Culture eating strategy for breakfast".

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

The respondent said that she has had a couple of cases where a project had to be abandoned. "Sometimes, projects would have to be out on the shelf, as the organisation has a change of priorities. As much, as a project manager, you want to fight this, maybe it is the right thing to do, as you have to look at what the organisation is trying to achieve. There are perhaps urgent cases that need attention before your own project, which may take up time and resources."

Question 3.1: Does customer loyalty have a major influence on Project Management strategies/decisions in your particular field?

Mr. Brian Stanley

Without a shadow of a doubt. For example, at the launch of Xbox 360, there was a massive amount of failures within the market (i.e. The Ring of Death) and there were a huge percentage of consoles sold being returned. This was causing a huge amount of customer dissatisfaction. Microsoft had two options. The first option s to leave the product the way it is, and try to manage that customer dissatisfaction with the likelihood of losing more market share to the competitors, or to address it head on. Microsoft decided to address it head on. How they did it was twofold. The first piece was that they put a project in place to build a site of a repair centre, to speed up the turnaround time of units being returned as defective, and then getting the customer satisfaction up , this would be getting a new console back to the customer as quickly as possible. The second piece, in the same factory was to establish a root cause analysis to identify where the console was failing. It was actually a mother board failure. Once they identified where the fault was with the actual product, there was a project put in place to reengineer those components, in order to make the console of much higher quality, and therefore, fix it at a root cause. You do lose a number of your customer's loyalty because they're not happy with the quality of the product but if you don't address that, you're never going to increase your market share. What Microsoft did was they released a different version of the Xbox 360 which was much more stable, by doing the analysis on the previous version of the console. This led to a dramatic decrease in the number of returns because the quality of the product was a lot better. In turn, that started to drive higher market share. People want reliability, they don't want to buy a console and then have to return it and then wait a period of time and they get frustrated, etc.

Mr. Joe Ryan

Yes, although we do not normally refer to patients or service users as "customers". However their loyalty can manifest itself in a number of ways. Sometimes we are trying to change their behaviour, such as always going to an acute hospital regardless of the seriousness or not of their ailment. We have to plan within the project to engage with "customers" to try to

understand why they behave this way and define what the project needs to include to change this behaviour. Another way in which "customer loyalty" influences the project management strategies is the need to engage our customers in the design and reconfiguration of services.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Yvonne Temple McCrory believes that customer loyalty is a difficult element to take into consideration in her area of work. A lot of the issues that rise and most of the decisions are made internally.

Question 3.2: As you examine your 'Lessons Learned' contribution of the project closure process, do you take into account what your customers say in their review of the product?

Mr. Brian Stanley

Definitely. I think it is an extremely important element of a project, and it's an element that not all projects do. What I've seen in my career is that people finish a project and then they say that it's done. You have to do a project closure document, which identifies all the lessons learned. The way I would do it is I would group up my stakeholders. So you would have customers as a stake holder, you would have internal people as a stake holder and then you identify what the lessons learned were. That can then carry over into the next project that would have similar objectives.

Mr. Joe Ryan

Yes we do, but we haven't always. The mantra of our transformation programme is that we are building a "person centred" health and social care service. We are involving our patients and service users in the design, implementation and benefits realisation reviews of all of our projects. It is critical to ensuring that you are changing/building the right things.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Yvonne believes that what the customers so say about them have an impact on their considerations for their next project. When asked if customer reviews are taken into consideration, she said "Yes we definitely listen to what our users have to say. I think that what the customer does say about us adds value."

Question 3.3: If yes, (3.2) could you provide an example of a project where the customer's influence was taken into consideration?

Mr. Brian Stanley

I would have to say the Xbox 360 example that I gave you would be the best case. With such a huge project and so many customers, you have to take their reviews of the product into consideration. So yeah I would say the 360.

Mr. Joe Ryan

A Lean Project around improving catering and reducing food waste at a major hospital was driven by engaging patients around what was important to them in terms of inter alia, choice, allergies, portions, timing of meals. The result was the introduction of allergy specific menus, colour coded trays to assist catering staff in delivering meals safely to patients and to preferred times. This resulted in; a) reduced waste of food; b) happier/healthier patients and c) reduced cost.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Yvonne spoke about how there was a huge impact from local authorities at the end of a project. She felt that this input should have been throughout the project. This led to changes in their approach for any future projects. This is very important as you could lose customers if you don't apply what they have said in a way that can improve your next project.

Question 3.4: Can you describe where projects you have worked on have had difficult tension between what the company wants to achieve through the project, and what the customer of the company expects? How did you resolve this?

Mr. Brian Stanley

Yeah actually the very last project that I worked on was rolling out automated voucher validation software for a very large retailer in the UK. The company that I was working for was a start up, so there wasn't a huge amount of financial backing. What the company was trying to do was utilise the existing resources to deliver a product. However, the customer wanted a product with a lot more features in it. To me, as a project manager, you have to

weigh up both sides. I don't believe that you can just focus on the customer because you may focus on the customer to the detriment of the company, and vice versa. What I did in relation to that was to clearly understand what the requirements were from the customer and then relay them back within the company to see what we could achieve. I would have the conversation with the customer to identify exactly what the scope is, and in some cases, remove some functionality to be able to ensure that you could support what the company was looking for, and what the customer was looking for. That can be quite difficult. But I don't agree that a customer can just support the customer or the company, they have to be able to provide for both.

Mr. Joe Ryan

The Cancer Control Programme was focused on transforming cancer services in Ireland to improve cure / survival rates and improve overall efficiency. Part of doing this was to introduce the concept of Centres of Excellence based on international best practice. This involved reducing the number of centres treating cancer, surgically and medically from well over 20 sites to 8 centres of excellence. Local political and social interests view this as being a retrograde step and vehemently resisted this. This was resolved through a) consistently and continuously engaging with the public and political system to drive home the message that it was far more important to save lives than to have a cancer centre on everybody's doorstep, and b) engaging with clinical staff at all of these centres and supporting them through the changes needed to move services to the 8 centres of excellence. Essentially applying good change management practice.

Ms. Yvonne Temple McCrory

Ms. Temple McCrory spoke of a case where customers had no water, and they had to try coming up with a suitable location that customers could access water easily. "This was very difficult because of the differences in opinion on what is reasonable for the company, as well as the customer. There were many in house discussions about how to justify their strategy in this case." This to some tension between the company requirements and the customer expectations.