Executive Summary

The purpose of the research in the preceding four papers was to study the effects of poor project management on the overall success of a project at SignArt, Inc., and develop the best solution to address the problem. The research is related to the author’s concentration in the Master of Science in Administration (MSA) program: project management. SignArt, Inc. is a full-service sign company located in Kalamazoo, MI. The organization is made up of approximately 60 full-time employees in office, manufacturing, and field settings. SignArt, Inc. provides services from design to installation and maintenance, with a team of sales specialists, sales support, and project managers who lead the projects completed for SignArt’s local and national accounts.

SignArt has experienced issues with project success as a result of poor project management behaviors and procedures. The areas of project management practices that were studied include organizational dynamic and human behavior, strategic planning, globalization and multiculturalism, and financial analysis, planning, and control. For each topic, sub-questions were developed to help address the overarching question. All aspects of project management can have different effects on the project’s success.

The purpose of this critical analysis is to summarize the research and conclusions from the preceding four papers, and to provide recommendations to address the research problem. A literature review was completed for each of the papers; key points gathered from the literature include the following:

- Organizational structure has a direct impact on factors such as communication, performance, and effectiveness of individuals and groups/teams
Lack of support for project management in a business strategy can have a negative impact on project success.

Diversity is present in project teams and, therefore, awareness of diversity is influential to efficient, effective, and productive teams.

Project managers are responsible for understanding financial concepts in order to make successful financial decisions and maintain strong financial performance.

For each of the sub-questions related to core topics, conclusions were developed, and a summary of the conclusions included in the analysis.

The author developed several recommendations for improving project management practices at SignArt to increase project success. The recommendations are separated into short- and long-term goals. To best address the problem, SignArt should strive to achieve the short-term goals within three months and the long-term goals within three years. The short-term goals include identifying communication needs, reviewing the current business strategy, and identifying project team diversity. The long-term goals include developing and implementing financial fundamentals training, increasing project manager participation, and implementing improved project management practices. Although the goals will require increased efforts in employees and funding, the author is confident the recommendations will lead SignArt to increased project success in the future.
Final Critical Analysis

MSA 698 Directed Administrative Portfolio

Central Michigan University

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Summary of Research

This paper summarizes the research problem and conclusions following a series of papers related to the Master of Science in Administration (MSA) core topics and presents recommendations based on the findings. The core topics of focus in the preceding four papers include organizational dynamic and human behavior, strategic planning, globalization and multiculturalism, and financial analysis, planning, and control. The organization selected for the research is SignArt, Inc. in Kalamazoo, MI. This organization is made up of approximately 60 full-time employees in office, manufacturing, and field settings. SignArt, Inc. is a full-service sign company providing services from design to installation and maintenance.

Research Problem and Questions

Recently, SignArt has experienced issues with project success as a result of poor project management behaviors and procedures. The purpose of the research was to determine how the key administrative areas impact project success and how to address such issues. The overarching questions related to the research problem are: What are the effects of poor project management on the overall success of a project at SignArt, Inc? What can be done to solve this problem? The sub-questions that were developed to address the major issue relating to the four key areas are:

1. What is the impact of poor communication between the project manager and project team members on project success, and what communication system can the project manager incorporate? (MSA 601)

2. How does the organization’s business strategy impact the project manager and project team members, and what needs to be changed on future projects? (MSA603)

3. How should project managers address cultural barriers within the project team? (MSA 604)
4. What impact does financial decision making have on the project manager? What are the results of such impact and what needs to change on future projects? (MSA 602)

The conclusions developed for each sub-question, summarized in the following section, are used to develop recommendations for the overarching research problem.

**Research Need**

Project managers play a vital role in the success of a project. The key issues SignArt has experienced, as they relate to the research problem presented in the preceding section, involve project manager’s actions and project needs. The key issues identified include project managers neglecting to pass along pertinent project information to key stakeholders (poor communication), organizational leaders neglecting to take project manager needs into consideration during strategic planning, project managers neglecting to identify cultural barriers within the project team, and ineffectively outsourcing within the project budget. The recent issues at SignArt have developed the need for change among project management behaviors and/or procedures.

**Literature Review**

Scholarly literature that is related the topics and concepts of the four administrative core areas was collected, analyzed, and presented in each of the preceding papers. The literature displayed a number of factors that impact project managers and overall project success. For each paper, the resources selected were organized into sub-topics that best relate to the research topic. Of these topics, the most significant ones to note are organizational structure, developing and implementing business strategies, effective diversity management, and financial management skills.

Organizational structure and employee behaviors can impact project success because of the how project managers and project team members are influenced by their organizational
environment. Organizational structure has a direct impact on factors such as communication, performance, and effectiveness of individuals and groups/teams. A study of three U.S. Navy organizations identified that group structure affects the ability to transmit information that is necessary to coordinate activities and make effective decisions. Evidence from the study suggests that “communication is affected by structure with subsequent impact on performance” (O’Reilly III & Robert, 1977, p. 675). Organizational behaviors stem from the type of organizational structure, and must be considered when forming teams.

Where businesses are furthering incorporation of project management, they must also develop business strategies that support the need for project managers and project teams. “Making the connection between your business strategy and project management isn't easy, but it is necessary if projects are going to serve a purpose and meet inherent business needs” (Alexander, 2017, para. 1). Alexander suggests that for business goals and project management to align, leaders from the project management office (PMO) should be included in strategic planning and everyone in the business must understand where they fit into the strategy. Lack of support for project management in a business strategy can have a negative impact on project success. In addition, project managers are more recently expected to keep projects aligned with a company’s strategic goals (Rockwood, 2017).

Effectively managing diversity is crucial when managing project teams. Diversity in project teams is important because different backgrounds and experiences are valuable to project success. Cavico, Muffler, & Mujtaba (2012) stated, “Greater awareness of the diversity of employees and showing greater respect for the employee's cultures, will benefit the employer by achieving a more tolerant and harmonious workplace and one that is accordingly more efficient, effective, and productive” (p. 46). The role of a project manager includes understanding cultural
variables of individuals on a project team and how any cultural barriers must be addressed. Cultural barriers, such as language barriers, religious barriers, or ethical barriers, can negatively impact project success if not properly addressed.

Project managers are responsible for making financial decisions concerning the project. Therefore, project managers are responsible for understanding financial concepts in order to make successful financial decisions and maintain strong financial performance. Financial knowledge needs vary based on position; financial knowledge of a project manager includes being familiar with the basic financial statements and key accounting terminology, ability to analyze and act on the financial reports prepared for internal use, and ability to analyze and justify capital investments and strategic projects, including cash flow management, asset impairment, and depreciation (Bigas, 2018, p. 36). It is important that project managers understand how the financial decisions they make are impacting the organization as a whole.

**Research Conclusions**

For each of the sub-questions related to core topics, conclusions were developed and presented. These conclusions are useful for developing a solution to the problem that SignArt has been experiencing. The conclusions from the preceding papers will be summarized in this section.

One of the key components of organizational structure and human behavior is communication. SignArt has experienced poor communication in the form of project managers neglecting to pass along pertinent information to the project team. The impact of poor communication between the project manager and project team members creates delays in the project schedule. Project delays can lead to added costs and customer dissatisfaction, which can impact SignArt’s relationship with the customer. Poor communication by a project manager can
also lead to lack of team member participation and productivity, reduced owner/project sponsor participation, and increased project risk. To help maintain strong communication throughout the life of a project, the project manager should develop and implement a communication plan that fits the project needs.

The importance of the alignment between an organization’s business strategy and project management components has become increasingly significant in the last ten years (Milosevic & Srivannaboom, 2006). Project managers at SignArt are impacted by the differentiation business strategy and how the organization operates. While focusing on attributes to help gain a competitive advantage is important to the organization, it can hinder project success. Project managers are presented with the additional challenge of effectively managing the project team members so that they accomplish not only their project goals, but also uphold strategic goals of the organization. Leaders in the organization do not always take the needs of the project manager into consideration during strategic planning. Effective communication must be utilized by project managers and business leaders to ensure both ends are holding up their part to support the organization and future projects.

As diversity in the workplace continues to increase, diversity in project teams will also continue to increase. Failure to identify cultural barriers within project teams has resulted in poor communication among project managers at SignArt. Cultural barriers are a primary aspect of diversity management in the workplace. Poor diversity management at SignArt has led to lack of communication among team members, discrimination or stereotyping, and decreased productivity. These negative attributes impact project success through schedule delays and increased costs. Therefore, project managers must take the necessary measures to understand the backgrounds of each team member, so they can properly identify cultural barriers. In order to
grow from the advantages of workplace diversity, and overcome cultural barriers, the project manager must establish a diversity management plan.

Financial decision making impacts the project manager and project team in multiple ways. Project managers are responsible for financial decisions making within a project and the allocated budget, and also are impacted by financial decisions made within the organization. Project managers at SignArt must allocate resources and complete the project deliverables within the agreed upon budget. Poor financial decisions by the project manager can lead to a lack of necessary resources, schedule delays, and increased project costs. To successfully execute and maintain financial management throughout the life of a project, SignArt’s project managers should develop a financial management plan for future projects.

**Research Recommendations**

Recommendations were presented in the preceding papers in response to each of the sub-questions. The author has analyzed the recommendations and selected final recommendations to address the problem of poor project management practices at SignArt. These recommendations will be presented in this section in short-term and long-term goals. The short- and long-term goals should be achieved within the designated timeframe in order to eliminate or reduce the effects of poor project management on the overall success of a project at SignArt.

**Short-Term Goals**

Short-term goals are defined by Business Dictionary (2018) as “objectives that a business expects to achieve in the near future” (para. 1). To best address the research problem, SignArt should strive to achieve these goals within three months. These recommendations are short-term because they are small changes that should help the organization and project managers in achieving larger, long-term goals.
Identify Communication Needs

The first step in creating and maintaining effective communication is to identify the communication needs of team members. SignArt’s project managers should focus on identifying these needs based on project team individuals before developing a communication plan. The project manager must also identify any obstacles that may interfere with effective communication. Using the information gathered, the modes of communication and communication channels can be determined.

Review Current Business Strategy

SignArt’s owner and organizational leaders may consider reevaluating the current business strategy to ensure the objectives support all departments in the organization. If project management, or another department, is not supported in the strategy, the organization may experience significant loss. The author recommends completing an environmental analysis, external and internal, to identify the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. If the decision is made to develop a new strategic plan, or revise the existing plan, SignArt’s leaders should be sure to include the project manager(s). Their input is valuable to the strategic plan and is essential for success of future projects.

Identify Project Team Diversity

The first step in creating and maintaining effective diversity management is to identify and understand the culture and background of individual team members. Team members work differently as individuals, based on factors such as cultural beliefs, religion, and ethics. In order successfully manage their project team, SignArt’s project managers need to know what is best for each individual. Identifying strengths and weaknesses can help develop a plan that utilizes individual’s strengths to strengthen the team as a whole. It is important to include subcontractors
in the identification process, as these individuals likely have a more diverse background than in-house team members.

**Long-Term Goals**

Long-term goals are defined by Business Dictionary (2018) as “a strategic target that is a project to require significantly more time for completion than other business goals. Long-term goals are typically more general than shorter-term goals” (para. 1). To best address the research problem, SignArt should strive to achieve these goals within three years. These goals will likely require additional resources and funding to implement.

**Develop & Implement Financial Fundamentals Training**

Developing a training program to educate those in with financial decision-making authority is very important to SignArt’s financial performance. The training program should be customized to the work environment and the needs of the individuals who will participate in the program. Regardless of the method of training selected, the training program must offer participants the help they need to gain the skills identified as necessary for success financial decision-making. In addition to specific skills and competencies, it is important that managers understand how the financial decisions they make are impacting the organization as a whole.

**Increase Project Manager Participation**

To help achieve the short- and long-term goals, increased participation by project managers would be beneficial in many areas. Project managers can offer their perspective and insight to decision-making in areas such as developing a business strategy. Increased participation will help the organizational objectives and goals to align with future projects and, therefore, increase the probability of project success. Project managers can be more confident in managing organizational projects when they are involved with a range of areas in the
organization. This will also help project managers to better understand individuals in other departments who they may work with on future projects.

**Implement Improved Project Management Practices**

Developing and implementing improved project management practices, including a communications plan, a diversity management plan, and a financial management plan will be the most beneficial solution to address the issues SignArt is experiencing related to poor project management. Although such plans should be project specific, the author recommends that the team of project managers at SignArt develop a portfolio of project management documents for use on future projects. The documents should be generic so that they can be adjusted as necessary to meet future project needs. Such documentation will help to standardize practices and improve consistency in all areas of project management. The preceding short- and long-term goals are essential to successfully developing effective plans.
References


