

**„Tell me how a project begins
and I will tell you how it ends". –
"Project Management - today"**

Project management presents a clear challenge to the management qualities of the company, and is increasingly seen and understood as an independent management discipline for temporary projects. Project management is made up of a wide variety of individual disciplines that cover the entire spectrum of human and task-related management within the context of projects. Whereas, in earlier years, project management was understood to be above all about costs, deadline planning and deadline monitoring, today's interpretations go much further.

Keywords: Project management, project management experiences

The justification for project work is generally known: the complex tasks and the associated organisational, technological and social challenges can only be solved in an interdisciplinary manner. This requires intensive, qualified collaboration and the removal of hierarchical barriers. Project management must be able to be measured against these requirements.

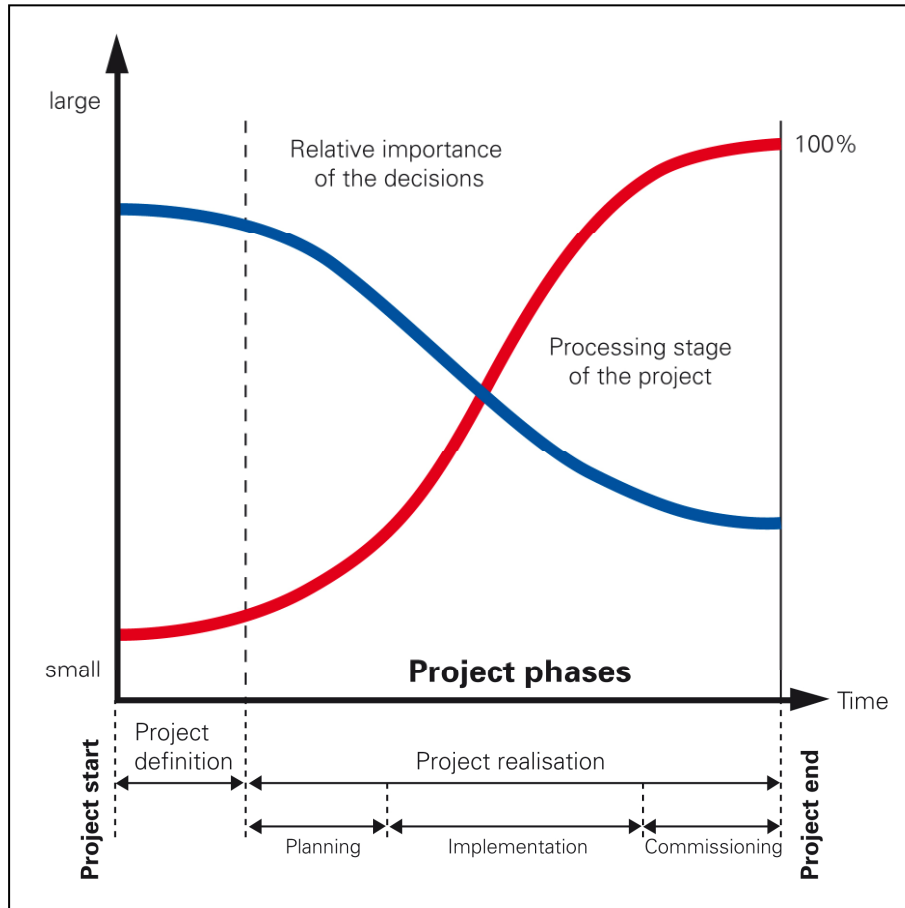
Project management is a special form of leadership

Project management is a form of leadership discipline that is used in all sectors of the economy and for all types of projects. The importance of this discipline, which has become a key function, is growing at an above-average rate in comparison to the general increase in project requirements. Overruns in costs and deadlines, non-achievement of technical and other objectives, as well as increasing economic pressure, have opened the eyes of entrepreneurs, building owners, planners, authorities, administrations and the general public to the necessity of minimising project risks through effective project management.

The greatest importance should be given to the project definition phase

A project is a limited undertaking, or in other words, an undertaking with a beginning and an end. Projects therefore represent unstable elements in the organisational system of a company or an authority, which are normally designed in a long-term manner, and therefore bring the corresponding organisational problems with them

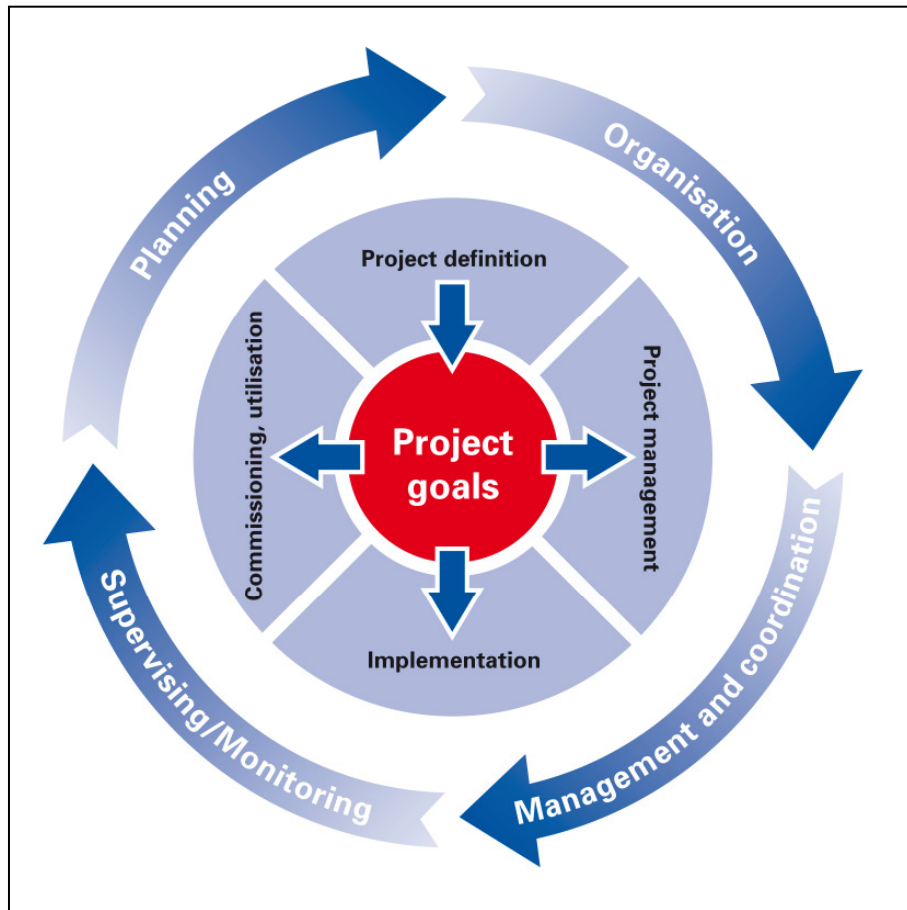
At the start of a project, i.e. in the project definition phase, important decisions are made with regard to project goals, project procedure, organisation, involved persons and companies that are decisive for the success of the project. All project management activities within this phase are aligned towards the definition of the project goals (see Fig. 1).



Importance of project management in the project cycle (Fig. 1)

The project realisation must include set targets and deadlines

During the project realisation phase, i.e. during the detailed planning, the implementation and the commissioning, all project management activities must be aligned towards compliance with the previously set project goals (and deadlines) (see Fig. 2).



Basic principles of professional project management (Fig. 2)

Include the project management as early as possible!

Nowadays, it is increasingly accepted that the project management must be responsible for all the project goals and for the cost and deadline goals, as well as for the material and quality goals. The project management must therefore not only be called in for the compliance with the project goals, but must also participate in their determination (see Fig. 1). Finally, it is extremely important that the project management can design, propose and manage the project organisation. This generally requires the early integration of the project management into the project.

Eight experiences that have been made in connection with successful project work

For a clearer understanding of project work, the following eight principles are presented, which, according to the experiences gained by Kappler Management AG, make successful project work "more probable":

Exp. 1: Project management is a special form of work, organisation and management

Project management is successful if it is understood by all the employees and managers of the company as a special form of work and organisation in and alongside the line organisation, and if it is actively practised as a comprehensive management concept. Project managers must enliven their roles through their professional and personal authority.

Exp. 2: Project management means cooperation extending over departments and companies

Project managers must build up internal and external networks, because these are the basis for decision making. Departmental and area egoism can quickly reduce a network to a patchwork, however.

Exp. 3: Project management means open, cross-hierarchy communication and cooperation

Professional project management is not always squinting "upwards" following the principle: "What do they want?", but must take action according to the principle "What is the goal of the project, what is necessary in order to bring things forward?" The project manager must be able to play on the keyboard of power processes, but must also always be able to critically examine whether he himself is causing a blockage in some situations.

Exp. 4: Project management means clarifying borders and roles in order to achieve binding agreements

"Tell me how a project starts, and I will tell you how it ends!" Goals, timeframes, project workers, task distribution and budget must all be clarified at an early stage. The necessary binding agreements can only be achieved in this way. This also means clarifying borders. This is not always easy, because you can very quickly find yourself stirring up a "political wasp nests". Role awareness can help here. The project manager is thereby ill advised if he decides to determine unclear priorities by himself. His task is much more to inform his client about uncertainties and the consequences that these entail, and to demand a decision.

Exp. 5: Project management means the management of contradictions

Projects often have high priority, but no-one has time for them! Projects are also susceptible to paradoxes. A professional project management will list these paradoxes in order to reach decisions.

Exp. 6: Project management means methodically designing a process for solving complex problems

The project goals can be better planned with the help of methods and instruments. The meaningful use of tools makes the work easier and more transparent, whereby it should also be ensured that the rider masters the horse, and not the horse the rider! The following should apply in the choice of tools: "As simple as possible".

Exp. 7: Project management means solving problems and handling conflicts

In many cases, problems are ignored, or a simply overseen due to a lack of professional and social qualifications. In the case of incorrect developments, the project manager must ask himself what he has done in order to solve these. Conscious or unconscious strategies for the avoidance of conflicts often lead to time and budget overruns. Successful project management also includes mastering conflicts, above all when the project management's negotiation limits have been reached. This requires a continuous and conscious advance determination out of one's own room for manoeuvre.

Exp. 8: Project management is a learning process for persons, groups and the organisation

Quality standards are necessary in order to be able to analyse and evaluate the success and the course of the project. Every project must include a solid project evaluation with two key questions: Have we achieved our goals? And how have we achieved the goals?

November 2006

© Arnold Kappler, Dr.oec. HSG CMC
Kappler Management AG, Hedingen / CH

Author's address: Dr.oec. HSG Arnold Kappler
Kappler Management AG
Haldenstrasse 58
CH – 8908 Hedingen ZH
Mail: info@kappler-management.ch
www.kappler-management.ch