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PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND CREATIVITY: A CASE STUDY OF A SAUDI SME

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the importance of creativity in project management and the drivers and challenges of creativity within project management. Using a case study of Saudi SME, this research aims to explore and analyze to which extent creativity can be supported and managed. The chosen SME called TAM development which is a company for public engagement and activation. In order to answer the research question “*To which Extent Creativity is supported in SME's Project Management?*”. A qualitative methodology based on interviews and observation accounts is used. The obtained interview result from the TAM development showed the importance of supporting creativity in project management using three levels: individuals, team and organization. The training and development of the employees appeared to be the key creativity factor of the studied company. This study also highlighted the importance of managing challenges, especially related to the poor communication and collaboration with clients, which limits the employee's creativity.

INTRODUCTION

The project management can be defined as the controlling of all areas of a project by monitoring, organizing and planning within a set time and budget. Moreover, the success of a project management can be measured through specific aspects which are mainly cost, time, resources, quality, scope and performance, these factors in which most of project management evaluation depends on [1]. One of the most effective tools of maximizing the chance of having a successful project is project management [2]. The question is not whether an organization is implementing project management or not the question is how adequately it is. Project management is basically methods and

techniques managers use to control and mentor the project activities in order to satisfy stakeholders in a certain project, which include identifying clear objectives and goals, managing cost and time by obtaining approaches and plans to reach the adapted goals of a project [3, 4]. Moreover, project management can be categorized into nine areas [4]. The first area is integration management which contains project plan development, plan execution and integrated change control. The second area is scope management which includes initiation, scope planning, scope definition and scope verification. The third area is time management which contains activity definition, activity sequencing, activity duration, schedule development and schedule control. The fourth area is cost management and it includes resource planning, cost estimating, cost budgeting and cost control. The fifth area is quality management which includes quality planning, quality assurance and quality control. The sixth area is HR management and it contains organization planning, staff acquisition and team development. The seventh is communication management which contains communication planning, information distribution, performance reporting and administrative. The next area is risk management and it covers risk definition, qualitative risk analysis, risk response planning and risk monitoring and control. And finally, procurement management which contains procurement planning, solicitation planning, solicitation, source selection, contract administration and contract closeout. As clarified, the project management area covers the whole project from all aspects which will make the implementation of the project more productive [5, 6]. Furthermore, project management tends to include an important concept which is managing a change and it is very important for project managers to concentrate on how to manage that change through their team members [7].

For instance, the most effective success factors are divided into three main elements which are competence, organization and methods [8]. For the competence factor it consists of the project managers, team members and their coordination competences which can be defined as technical, behavioral and contextual competences. The second element is the organization and it includes the organizational structure, culture and atmosphere which have a huge impact on the project management. The third element contains the methods and techniques factors. Project managers should consider these factors when assigning to a project, the factors may change from a project to another but these considers the most fundamental factors.

The concept of creativity is considered as an open concept such as art [9]. On the other hand, a study defined creativity as seeing things with more than just one angle [10]. Additionally, Amabile [11] stated that Creativity can refer to creating new and useful ideas and it can be by an individual or a small team member.

Moreover, creativity leads to perfect solutions for solving problems and any other cognitive abilities. Furthermore, another study that was conducted stated that the creativity should appear in defining the problem before solving it [12]. Regarding creativity in the workplace, a study examined the employees' creativity within three characteristics that can be affecting the employee's

creativity which are job complexity, support supervision and controlling supervision and the results showed that employees work creatively when working in a complex and challenging tasks and while being supervised in a non-controlling supportive supervision [13].

The interaction in the teams by its members can lead to creative ideas and innovation and it considers an important source to creativity [14]. According to Crotty and Brett [15] having multicultural members in a team can generate fusion creativity and also fusion and effective teamwork. Furthermore, Paulus [14] indicated that Creativity is known as an individual characteristic not a team characteristic. Another study found out that the creative thinking has no direct effect of the team effectiveness [16]. Being in a team may lead to loafing which might affect the creativity [14]. Moreover, Organizations assign teams in order to solve problems and deliver creative solutions [17]. One of the advantages of teamwork is to improve and support creativity. Moreover, Communication is considered a major factor to produce more creativity. Team creativity can be achieved through assembling team norms and encouraging positive interaction between the team members [18].

Project management nowadays focuses mainly on how to finish the project on time with the lowest budget. Project managers emphasize on the technical part and forget the part where creativity can appear. It is very important to engage the creativity concept more in the project management as it can save a lot of time and cost. Therefore, this study considers applying a case study on a Saudi SME to evaluate how creativity is supported in their project management and what can be the most effective drivers toward creativity in project management and what can be the biggest challenges that limit the creativity in their project management.

Furthermore, the purpose of the study is to examine the creativity support in SME's project management and to evaluate the creativity drivers and barriers while executing a project in SME's. As it is hard to measure creativity but the idea is to classify where it can stand in a project and what outcomes can creativity generate in the benefit of the organization. TAM development is used as the target for case study as it is a leading company for public engagement and crowd sourcing and they also bring creativity and innovation in their projects.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to evaluate the importance of the creativity concept within project management and to understand the impact of it and in which level it can be supported. There are many factors that have a direct impact on the success of a project management, which are primarily the cost, time, resources, quality, scope and performance. Furthermore, project management is basically methods and techniques managers use to control and mentor the project activities in order to satisfy stakeholders in a certain project, which include identifying clear objectives and goals, managing cost and time by obtaining approaches and plans to reach the adapted goals of a project. Moreover, the concept of creativity has an explicit effect in the success of the project management. Also, creativity leads to providing better

solutions on how to solve problems and other cognitive abilities. Subsequently, the selected method will be chosen based on its effectiveness on providing a better understanding of the selected research topic and its impact on the project management performance and result.

There are many factors that have a direct affect to the project management and its results. Moreover, the concept of creativity has an extreme impact in way or another on any project management. Understanding the importance of the creativity and how it can be supported can lead to a better performance for a project management and achieving its goals.

Qualitative Research

In this study, a qualitative research was chosen by using a case study. Semi - structured interview was used as a tool to collect the required data. Observation accounts were also collected from one of the project members. There are many advantages for a researcher to approach and conducting a qualitative method. One of its advantages, that it gives the researcher the opportunity to collect a variety of options on searching and obtaining the required information without limitation.

Qualitative method adoption was a must in this case study as it is the tool of generating a detailed yet rich data. And it helped getting a clear and deep understating of the SME and this considered as one of the main advantages of obtaining a qualitative method. The qualitative method is designed to provide a new perspective of captive participant through more comprehensive and detailed data. Furthermore, the qualitative method indeed associated the data analysis and promoted the desired applications of data.

Research Approach: Case Study

To have a deep understanding of the research objectives, the research was conducted with a collaboration of one of the successful Saudi SME. The approached method that was selected to be implemented in this study is a case study approach. The main objective of the case study approach is to help describe in-depth the experience of individuals, families, groups, communities, or institutions.

Saudi SME: TAM

This study considered the Saudi SME which is specialized in public engagement and activation. The chosen SME called TAM. They define the public's challenges and create effective solutions for it. TAM implemented more than 50 local and regional programs in Saudi Arabia and Arab wide with a partnership with both government and private sectors. Furthermore, their projects depend primly on creating solutions for particular challenges which involve creative thinking.

The depth description of the experience of the company would help to understand the impact of the creativity and its effectiveness on the project management performance. Moreover, it will help to have a better knowledge

on how can we support the creativity within the team and disclosing any potential opportunities to enhance the performance of the team to achieve the goals of the project.

Data Collection: Interviews and Observation

This research is a case study about a Saudi SME, the method obtained in the research is a qualitative method to build up the knowledge based on the participant experience, to analyze the attitude and to find the explanation behind actions.

Using the qualitative method, it helped in adopting the following methodology. One interview was conducted in order to obtain this case study. Additionally, it helped in analyzing the project management sector and its interaction with creativity and it allowed me to experience the real-life context. Moreover, the developed data led to beneficial results which will provide the business sector with useful discoveries.

The tool used to collect the data in this case study is the interview. The TAM development was interviewed which is a Saudi SME, which is a company for public engagement and activation. The interviews were positively effective and it was full of interaction and engagement which was the core factor to receive decent respondents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research question of this study is to see to which extent creativity can be supported in project management in SMEs. However, it is hard to measure the creativity as it is not a measurable concept. This study evaluates the creativity concept in every step of the creativity in project management model as shown in Figure 1.

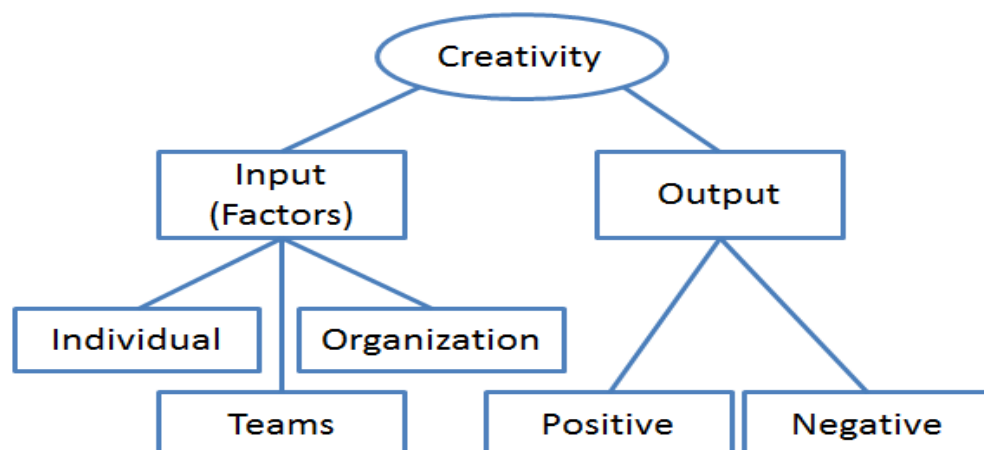


Figure 1. Creativity Process Model

The first factors of the model are the inputs, where all the tools and resources needed in order to get to the creativity process. The input can divide it into three main categories namely individuals, teams and the organization. The contribution of the individual factor according to TAM are highly appreciated,

an example as stated in the interview they mentioned that *“in the process of creating a project sometimes we face a problem with coming up with a name to the project so we set a brainstorm session across the departments so the whole employees can brainstorm together to pick the suitable name for the project”*. This proves that they encourage the individuals in the company and gives them a chance to share their opinions and take it seriously.

Furthermore, for teams TAM tend to make sure that the team members formed for a project comes from different backgrounds interns and employees they seek diversity in ideas and to benefit from each other’s experiences and this means that they feel open to be creative within the team members and how they all complete each other based on their own background and this shows that creativity is existed in team members. Moreover, the organization as a whole reinforces creativity within their employees by different and several approaches for example one of the initiative approaches is their creative Thursday’s initiative, which simply means that they dedicate a short period of time every Thursday to discuss a creative topic. This program determines creativity and spread it among the whole organization. Additionally, now after going through the inputs the creativity will be implemented the main concept. In this stage the inputs start to execute in action using the tools and methods in the inputs. Furthermore, after creativity finally appears in the equation now the third factors will occur which the outputs are.

There are two options in the outputs the first option is the positive output, which simply means the success of the project. On the other hand, negative output is the other option, according to TAM *“an example of a negative output might occur when we are about to finish a project and the client changes the whole direction or sometimes the client refuses the creativity aspect and aims for a traditional aspect”*. This disappointment of lead toward uncreative work and will negatively affect the whole project.

After conducting the interview with TAM development, the outcomes can be concluding under the aspects of Creativity Enablers and Creativity Barriers which tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Finding of Interview Of TAM Development

Research Question	To which Extent Creativity is Supported in SME’s Project Management?
Creativity Enablers	The most enabler’s factors that help promote creativity in TAM’s project management is the training and development of the employees and also the organizational culture.
Creativity Barriers	According to TAM there are several factors that limits creativity within project management but the higher barrier that affects mostly is the Poor coordination and

	communication between the clients.
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This study divided the findings into two main categories. The first category is creativity enablers which indicate to what extent do several factors help promote creativity in project management, in simple words what is the most effective drivers toward creativity. The study found out that training and development of the employees is the higher factor that drives creativity. TAM really determine to make their employees feels open to be creative and gives them the opportunity to express their opinion and they support them by offering them training and development needed to be creative in their project management which lead us to the second factor which is the organizational culture, as part of the project management success factors creativity stand in the culture and atmosphere of the organization. Moreover, TAM focuses on spreading creativity within the organization by every chance they get which proven how supported creativity is in the project management in TAM.

On the other hand, the second category is the creativity barriers which clarify the factors that limit the creativity in project management. The budget and time limitations are considering as very important barriers to creativity but the higher factor that limits the creativity in project management in TAM is the poor coordination and communication between the clients. Some clients prefer the traditional way rather than the creative way and this will definitely affect the whole creativity process in the project management which will limit the creativity. The creativity process in TAM is developed and presented in Figure 2.

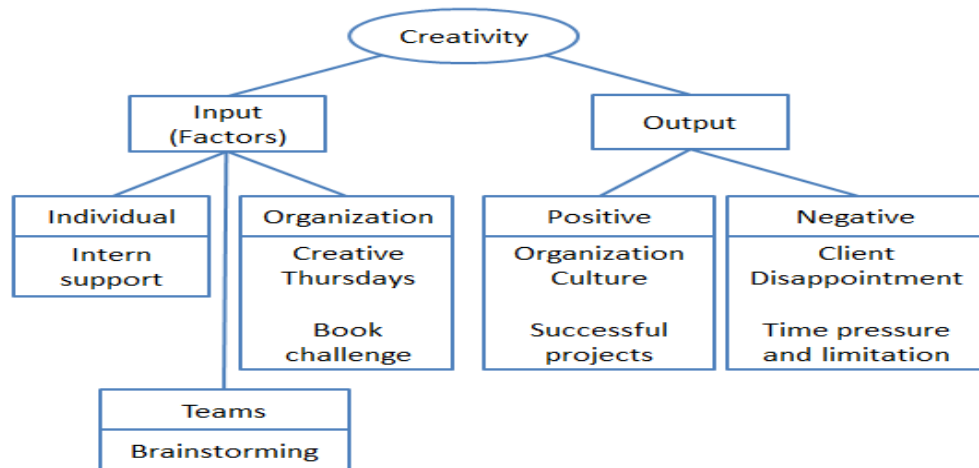


Figure 2. The Result of The Creativity Process Model For TAM

Figure 2 also demonstrates the example of each factor in the model with TAM’s activities. For the input factors in individuals the support they give for the interns made it a great example to support creativity within individuals, they push the interns to give the best in them and always gives them the chance to express their opinions which makes them feel confident to share their ideas and to be more creative.

Moreover, in teams TAM always tries to support the creativity in the team members, the example is the brainstorming sessions across the departments. They benefit from each other's ideas which are the core value of having creativity in teams.

Additionally, for the whole organization factor this study find it very likely that TAM is spreading creativity vibes as much as they can offer, they establish multiple initiatives to make sure that the culture of the whole organization remains creative and the atmosphere feels inspiring to think creatively even while working in a project.

Furthermore, after the execution of creativity in the project there will be several outputs, the first option is the positive output; the successful of having a positive creative organizational culture makes it a repeatable process and it gives the employee's the inspiration to be more creative all the way. Another example which shows the positive output in creativity is the success of TAM's projects and how this success encourages them to always be on the top in the market. On the other hand, a negative output might occur in TAM while nearly finishing a project and the client decide to change the whole direction, this will affect the whole project and most likely it will limit the creativity spirit in the team members. So, dealing with the clients sometimes leads to a negative output in the creativity process in project management. Also, time pressure and limitation will negatively affect the project creativity within the team.

CONCLUSION

This study deduced the creativity process implemented in a Saudi SME which is TAM development. Interviews and observation were used to write and analyze the case study. The results and findings determine the extent creativity is supported in SME's project management. This study found that TAM development support creativity within their project management and the most effective drivers toward creativity are the training and development of their employees and also the organizational culture. On the other hand, the biggest barriers that TAM face toward creativity are the poor communication and collaboration to their clients and the time and budget limitation.

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