Final Paper

MBA Practicum Experience

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1. SUMMARY

Being able to apply concepts, theories, and lessons learned throughout the course of studying different business aspects allows for a person to experience a true and practical application of theory and concept to real life. This also allows for the seeking and exploration of best practices and how they translate to a real business and organizational structure. While many areas of business and business administration are of concern, the area of interest that was of most interest during my past two years of lessons in business administration was in the study and experience of running a project from start to finish. Over the course of two months, my practicum journey allowed me to work within an organization in which I could apply theory to practice and help develop, plan, and execute a project under the guidance of a project manager as my mentor.

Project management is a critical element within any organization and with the increased communications and project implementation between multinational corporations, stakeholders, sponsors, and investors from various multi-cultural ties, the concept exist of planning and implementing projects that cross organizational borders as well as international borders. Outsourcing and globalization have caused an increased demand for project teams and project managers who are able to conduct operations and take on projects that combine team members that are from different regions abroad. This expansion of the organizational ability allows for the use and integration of skills and teams that can conduct around the clock operations through the use of global tools that allow for virtual team building and linking between organizations and companies that require collaboration with both global and domestic project team managers.

This paper sets out to expound and reflect on my personal experience of using the fundamentals and current profile and progress of project management and the needs to manage

such a project, including the barriers that exist in managing a project that is multi-cultural and crosses various border constraints that can result from cultural difference between organizations. The investigation into managing projects across multi-cultural borders consist of writings and observations from my own experience of working alongside a project manager of a multi-cultural organizational project and project team and current research into best practices to shift an organization and it's methodologies to those in-line with the necessary requirements to execute a project and overtake a project as both an organization and as the project manager of a multi-cultural project. This paper also explores the necessary tools and techniques to complete such a project and the best use of resources and IT tools that can help a project team and the project manager to assist in communication and collaboration that builds a cohesive team. In summary I hope to highlight my experience of working in a real life project that required the acceptance of a multi-cultural team and maintaining the ability to be both a project manager and integrator. To do this I will define the experience and reflect upon it as well as apply theories and concepts to my experience and address any issues or changes that may have been noticed which could help further increase the productivity or process within a project or organization such as the one I was privileged to work with. I will also highlight the needs, necessities, and skills required of a project manager and organization detailing the issues and best choices in delivering a quality project and end result with the challenges presented in this course of action should a project manager or organization choose to pursue such a task as that of building a project and managing a multi-cultural project and team.

2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Definition

Project management is a strategic undertaking to encompass the knowledge, skills and techniques to successfully execute a given project that results in completing it successfully and efficiently to achieve a unique pre-defined scope that has a set beginning and end (Project Management Institute, 2011). A project, and furthermore project team, in today's world, sometimes includes people from different organizations across multiple borders that don't always necessarily know each other or work side by side but work together to deliver on-time, on-budget results that organizations need to fulfill a project and provide deliverables as intended to the stakeholders involved in such a project. In summary, project management requires initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling, and closing. It's these challenges and a focus on projects both local and domestic in nature and those globally at large that require a skillset to integrated focus, management, tools, and knowledge to achieve tasks in the global and multi-cultural organizational environment.

3. THE EXPERIENCE

The heart of this project, the experience, was one that was not only challenging in the selection, but challenging from start to finish overall. From the process of deciding exactly what area of business to pursue in finding an organization and mentor to work alongside, to the start and finish of completing such a task, I have to admit it was one of the most in-depth and enlightening experiences I have taken part in in my entire graduate program at American Military University (AMU). This is also an experience that I will continue to carry lessons learned from into my future career after college and after the military.

Arriving at the point of deciding an area to select for my practicum project was primarily through a process of narrowing down my interest over the course of my AMU program in business administration. In doing so I realized that one of the areas that most enlightened me

was the concept and theories applied to running a project and being a project manager. I have

been a part of many projects over the past decade, but have yet to experience the upper

management and executive level that involves the planning, execution, and decision making

when it comes to running a project. These interests led me to seek out and find acceptance in

working with an organization of the Department of Defense (DOD), which involves itself with

ongoing projects and project planning year round. The organization I chose to work with was

one which conducts multi-cultural projects and projects which span across the globe and involve

other countries, other organizations within the United States Government, and also civilian

organizations. This broad spectrum meant that working within a project that this organization

carries out, means working with a multi-cultural project team that requires a manager who is

skillful in carrying out the demanding responsibilities that would show good traits of a project

manager.

After perusing project acceptance with the DOD organization Naval Special Warfare

Logistics and Support Unit THREE and being invited to participate within an upcoming project,

I gladly accepted the challenge and was teamed up with a seasoned project manager who has had

countless projects under his belt and worked over 30 years within the DOD element both as a

senior active duty military member and a civilian civil service member. This background

appealed to me due to my current status of being active duty military and the goals I have set for

myself in moving into this type of career after my retirement from active duty service.

After selecting my organization and getting approval to participate, I was introduced to

my mentor who immediately projected a strong ability to control demanding situations that can

arise during the course of a project lifecycle. The project I was placed to work within was one

that involved working with upper management in the logistics, management, and project

planning of a $250,000 restricted availability (RAV) maintenance and upgrade plan that was conducted on a military Dry Deck Shelter (DDS) asset used by military divers and valued at $35 million each. This was a big project to be able to join in and one that projected a sense of urgency and importance.

My role within this project was to assistance the project manager and carry out duties and responsibilities under the watchful eye of my mentor that required me to conduct planning, initiate tasking, create a timeline, coordinate logistics, and assist in the integration role of bridging the gap in communication between military members, DOD civilians, and outside contractors. This role turned out to be one of the more crucial roles in executing the project due to the multi-culture aspects that exist and the barriers of language or "jargon" that is so often used within military and government organizations.

Daily operations of my work included maintaining a project timeline tracker both electronically and on a posted schedule for team members to view. For weekly duties, I assisted in the preparation of midweek and end of week updates and presentations which were displayed for the project supervisors and the organization head boss in a conference room environment. This started off with me assisting with preparations, to eventually executing the presentations with my mentor as my assistant and backup. Needless to say it was a challenging assignment that started off rocky for me, but managed to evolve into a smooth flow as I started to see how things operated at this level in a project. While things seemed to flow smoothly for the most part, this is not to say that even after I realized the flow of things that roadblocks did not develop. Everything in life involves roadblocks and through the process I managed to overcome numerous issues along the way, both through solving problems myself to assistance by team members and my mentor, the project manager. This sense of accomplishment and the experience I

encountered has added to my increased interest in the project management sector of business and opened my eyes to the potential management positions available in my future.

4. REFLECTION

When looking back on my experience of working on a large scale project there are many things I can say in regards to the efficiency and detail of the project in which I was involved, yet there are also observations, especially in the Information Technology (IT) side of things, in which I felt more modern and up to date tools could have been utilized to assist us with the project team interaction. However this observation in the IT section of the project is not a direct reflection upon the core of the project because many organizational imposed restrictions exist due to oversight from a higher level within the organization, which is common in areas of government involved projects due to security requirements.

First I will start with my personal observations in working with an experienced mentor who had combined military and civilian experience that I felt assisted with his handling of issues, understanding of facts, and overall management of a highly successful project that integrated different cultures. In the beginning of my involvement with the project I noticed that even though the project start was several weeks away, the project manager was already deep into the final preparations of the layout and objective, which was started long before I even entered into any involvement with the project. This showed to me a dedication from the management standpoint in looking in the future and using foresight to calculate predictions in the direction of project flow and also tabulate a list of potential shortfalls, or roadblocks that might have a potential to develop once the project started. I also observed right from the start the many hats that the project manager has to take on that range from manager, to translator, to integrator, which in my studies has shown to be a highly sought after skill in a project manager. In addition

projects, such as the one I was involved in, that span across cultures and borders also require a project manager with traits such as a high level of integrity, confidence, flexibility, tolerance, resourcefulness, and persistence (Beranek, 2006), all of which were very evident and also noticed to be a necessity that without could cause things to become stressful to someone lacking a clear understanding of exactly the type of commitment a project manager must have.

Structure

In the area of the structure of things within my project experience I noticed that it was well laid out and involved an organization that was in keeping with demands required in today's global project environment, which often time calls for companies to expand their reach and become even more competitive to compete with others who may be afar and bidding on the same project. This growing trend, which drives the necessity for project managers within an organization who can competently oversee projects on a global scale, was something I felt this organization and project manager could easily accomplish due to the ability to communicate through known barriers that exist in a global arena. I also noticed the ability of the organization to reach out and use the parenting framework, which is the use of the power of their bigger organizational structure to overcome obstacles and barriers that might exist (Pearce & Robinson, p. 290).

The demands of project management have increased even more with the enabling of ways to communicate and conduct such projects with the help of outside entities in that certain barriers have begun to lighten and in many cases have even been broken leading to the enabling of methods and techniques that 20 years ago were just a dream or in the initial development stages. Advances in technology, improved methods of global communication, means of traveling globally, more open acceptance and understanding of cultures, and increasing peace

and trade agreements are just a few of the enablers (Beranek, 2006). In addition the combined forces of allowing "strength in numbers" and the greater access to human resources are providing a foundation that is leading to the increase in global projects and global project demands such as this one which might not have been completely global, but did involve parties that spanned from the East Coast of the United States to Hawaiian Islands. Of course heading up to and implementing a multi-cultural project or global project is almost never without criticism or obstacles such as legal, political, cultural, security, infrastructure and economic aspects, but having a listening ear, open mind, and a willingness to work together helps to overcome those type of barriers, which I personally observed in our areas of security, logistics, and IT infrastructure.

<div align="center">Phases</div>

Throughout a project, the phases of a project shift from one to the other and also adapt in ways that are sometimes unforeseen or present themselves as easy, moderate, or difficult in the level of attention that is required to run and manage a project. The basis of every project is built around five phases: initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing (Conkright, 1998). These five phases were evident in the organizational project I experienced as well and showed levels of difficulty during transitions and sometimes in the midst of each phase. The following is a recollection and reflection of things observed under the five project phases as applied to my practicum project, and highlights issues and transitional aspects from phase to phase.

Initiating

In the initiating phase, which includes defining and authorizing a project, the project manager should be involved in ways such as setting tasks which the team members understand as well as the stakeholders and the end customer or user. This phase also requires that a project

manager familiarize themselves with the potential stakeholders which may involve traveling to the region in which the stakeholder and customer operates within in order to gain access to the unique necessities that the project needs to be tailored to or may involve investigating areas that detail requirements specific and sensitive to the nature of the stakeholders and their organizational culture. This involvement was clearly evident in my project and required that the project manager and myself clearly understand the requirements and the unique aspects of our contractors that were to fly in from the mainland and conduct the project onsite at our Hawaii compound. There were phone calls to gather details, necessities, and logistical requirements as well as a drafting a an memorandum of agreement (MOA) that highlighted the unique aspects of the project, and the project parties involved, as well as the desired deliverables and end goal purpose of the project. For the most part this phase involved a lot of research, but still lacked direct involvement with project team members unless specific questions were unable to be answered for the project setup.

Planning

In the planning phase a project manager must devise a plan or scheme that can associate with the cross-culture experience to include sensitivity to time zones, vocabulary, cultural aspects in the work environment, and identifying acceptable limits for work and scheduling based on all parties involved in the team. It must also include identifying resources in all areas and where best they can be tapped to suit the needs of the customer and also provide fairness to all parties involved. This phase is one in which I observed the requirement to not only be a manager, but also to be well versed with the integrator aspect of running a project. In the integrator aspect a manager must be able to clearly communicate between all parties involved and understand the "lingo" or language, and the specific details of each culture involved with a

project. In this case there was the necessity to translate between a civilian contractor relationship and a military relationship which sometimes is perceived as a language of "jargon" to those in the civilian sector. Seeing the ability to become the integrator in my project was important in keeping the lines of communication clear, which allows for the frank and clear communication path to exist (Zalud, 2009).

Executing

In the executing phase a project manager and team must be willing to try, adapt, and accept new tools and methods that in a closed setting might not be necessary. They must also seek approval from all stakeholders involved to use such methods and ensure that everyone is familiar with these tools to ensure the loss of communication due to cultural differences, language barriers, and society acceptance does not occur. Such tools might be the use of social media communications in which global team members can communicate or post task, feedback, questions, and ideas so that everyone can share in the collaborative effort no matter where they are. In addition a project manager must consider the infrastructure to be used to communicate and therefore address areas such as Internet capabilities and smart phone/PDA compatibility across borders and region technology, all of which are important areas that need attention when addressing the inherently more complex concept of dealing with a cross-platform, cross-border approach in running a project. In our project this in particular was one of the areas in which I paid close attention to, primarily because of my background and interest in Information Technology. While there are unique requirements to a project, such as one that involves the government, I noted many areas in which I felt the project could have benefited by the use of more collaborative means of communication. Of course this again was more restricted due to the nature of the project and the need for security measures to be intact. In another environment

technology such as closed collaborative tools that allow for posting and project team member interaction might have led to a more efficient means of relaying information. Due to the security restrictions imposed on this project I noticed lost time in transferring information and utilizing only email and a file portal, which at times seemed a little outdated. I know through my experience with military employment that it's not always the choice of government workers in the products they use since general contracting is conducted through a contracting office, but this is one area in which I felt a lot more could have been done. Besides the IT aspect, I noticed that the execution phase was for the most part smooth and seemed to flow without too many roadblocks. This again I believe was largely in part to the wealth of experience from the project manager in charge.

Monitoring & Controlling

In this phase it's important for a manager to identify timelines when progress should be evaluated and reports should be submitted keeping in mind the sensitivity to date and time differences when operating globally. In addition a level of tolerance is needed to deal with such issues that might arise due to these time differences and maintain a posture that is understanding, yet persistent, in order to keep a project on track and minimize confusion and loss of control (Beranek, 2006). In this phase I observed a routine that developed within the project that ensured the timeline was maintained and that updates were prepared daily and weekly. I personally had a large part in the updates and timelines because one of my daily task items was to prepare the end of the day update and to attend a meeting with the project manager that tracked each individual line item in the project. We also conducted a midweek and end of week meeting with the organization executives that went over the details of the project and exactly where we stood in regards to timeline and percentage complete. Of all the phases, I felt this one

was most effective and hope to be able to carry the lessons learned from this with me in my future endeavors.

Closing

In the final phase the manager has the responsibility of formalizing the acceptance and presentation that conforms to the end user and stakeholders, making sure that compliance and formal acceptance is received in regards to the desired scope and deliverables that were intended. In a project, if the monitoring and controlling process is not properly adhered to, the final result in the closing stage can come across as what was intended by the team, but not understandably perceived by the stakeholders due to a loss of control. This can occur in any project, but especially within a cross-cultural project, communication must be clear, straight, and understandable. This might require that more milestones be put into place with additional reviews and progress reports to ensure that the communication is not lost during the entire process when the closing phase approaches. Additionally in a cross-cultural project a manager must ensure that all contracts and administrative documents have been properly managed and listed since there is a potential for an increased amount in working across borders. If all was successful then the closing result should not present any issues especially if a manager incorporates a review with a team that is from every aspect of the project should it be from one additional cultural aspect or many. In relation to the closing phase of my project this concept was indeed adhered to. As discussed in the monitoring and controlling phase, the methods of updates, reports, and presentations that this organization followed allowed for ongoing communication and relaying of events, their status, their issues, and ultimately their completion as they occurred. This process again was a very well executed phase that I observed and a model for other organizations to follow.

Overview

For my reflection overview I can say that overall I viewed this project as a well-executed and well planned event that showed the efficiency of the organization and the application of quality guidelines and procedures in regards to running a project. My only negative reflection, which I refer to as a restriction of the larger organization, is the ability to use technology to the advantage of the project manager and project team. While this is something that cannot easily be changed, given the nature of the organization, it is an area in which I personally noted that could help in other organizations who are not limited in the use of technology, but maybe lack the overall knowledge of what exist or what advantages technology can bring to the efficiency and execution of a project.

5. THEORY & CONCEPTS

Throughout the course of my studies at American Military University and within my MBA program there have been many concepts, methods, and theories that have been discussed and expounded upon from course to course. Many of them involve areas of security, personnel safety, management, and leadership style that can be applied directly from studies and readings to the project in which I worked in over the past few months. Applying these concepts and looking for these concepts, methods, and theories in use over the course of my project has helped to better contribute to my overall thinking of project management and business administration as it can be applied to a real working project in a real business scenario. The following will detail and apply some challenges faced and the application of various theories and concepts which were most notable when working in my practicum project and my selected organization.

Technology

Within technology there are many tools that we can apply within business and within projects of our business or organization. With a growing development in technology and IT applications it is becoming more important for organizations to utilize these new applications and structure the organization and its policies to accept such new transitions and developments. As Thomas & Streib (2003) pointed out, dramatic developments in information technology are transforming society and challenging our nation's many governments to keep pace. This notable finding was never clearer than within the project I was working with. Being that it was a governmental organization meant that the challenges of transforming and adapting are more difficult in reality than just making simple changes to policies and procedures. To explain this you have to understand that within government projects many things have a level of classification which also pertains to the concepts of security within an organization, which I'll discuss later. To some outsiders, the government may appear to be overcoming the sluggish adaptations to technology, but in reality the inside is not that much adapted when it comes to classified or highly sensitive projects. This concept of applying new and emerging technology for the benefit of the project would have been of great benefit to our project, which still uses technology that is nearly a decade or more overdue for upgrading. This fault lies highly within the overall big structure of the government and its organizational polices and is understandable due to the nature of requirements to test and obtain applications that pose no security threat to the project or its sensitivity. As we all know, information technology is a means that spies, saboteurs, and those who wish to do malicious intent use as their point of entry into an organization and project. When I look back upon the available technology in use in the business sector as a whole and the types of systems used by the government I can say that some of them are quite outdated. I will say that when I applied this thinking to my organization in which I

conducted my project with, I did find some outdated technology and systems, but with regards to government organizations as a whole, our organization systems and technology were substantially higher in regards to those in use by the majority of government agencies. Furthermore my observation is that this may primarily be due to the fact that they conduct projects, such as the one I was working in, that involve many high technology civilian contractors and therefore require adaptation to newer technology trends to execute a project, but also require technology that can be adapted by all and has proven consistent with reliability and maintaining the data and information flow that is required.

Technology use was a high priority of my focus during the project because of my IT background, but although we didn't have the latest and greatest technology in place, our project still managed to flow smoothly without heavy interruption in the information flow. This shows that although you may not have the latest technology in place, if you manage your IT systems and applications properly and utilize them to the best of their abilities then you can still manage to run a massive and highly cross-cultural project with great success.

<div align="center">Geocentric Integration</div>

Using the concept of geocentric integration is one in which one system or process is adopted and put into place to allow integration that can accommodate methods in place worldwide (Pearce & Robinson, p. 133) and allow for a smooth flowing process of interaction between many organizations working together in areas such as a project in which I worked within. In my project this concept was applied because we were comprised of various organizations which spanned out across the globe and required us to fully integrate based on different cultures, processes, time zones, and normal routines of each organization. Using this approach and applying a process of accommodation also allowed for us to work together in a

more efficient manner and also apply problem solving techniques in both the ethnocentric and polycentric approaches (Vance & Paik, p. 97) so that we could come to a universal solution.

As is the case with many government agencies, the Department of Defense (DOD) organization I worked with during my project required that we coordinate with an integration approach to deal with multiple contractors and suppliers who were not within our same geographical location. This use of geocentric integration benefited our organization in understanding a pathway to reach specific goals and was clearly evident during the course of my practicum project.

<div align="center">Inventory Control</div>

One of the most important factors of any business is the ability to maintain and control adequate inventory levels within the company. Having inventory and the proper amount is important when it comes to customer satisfaction, gaining market share, and thus being a profitable and sustainable company. One very important function is inventory control which adds flexibility to the company and its operations (Render, Stair, & Hanna, 2009). In relation to business inventory control within my project, I would say that for the most part it was properly addressed and several measures were put into place to ensure shortages or project delays did not develop as a result of the on hand inventory of parts and equipment needed to carry out the project. What I did noticed in regards to material and inventory control within my project was only the delay in material or projects that were due to the experimental nature of the project. Just as any organization does or should do, the organization I worked with keeps inventory on hand for certain projects, but because some of the project details were of an experimental nature or first time ever production, the level of inventory is not necessarily always up to the right levels largely in part to not wanting to waste funding on parts that may become obsolete should a

revision or new generation of product develop during the life cycle of the development. This was seen in a few instances, but not enough to delay the project.

Using a proper inventory control method in place ensures that parts and equipment are on hand and ready when a task comes due within the project. Another observation I have in regards to the application of this concept is that having a separate logistics element within the project can truly help the project and the project manager in keep the equipment and inventory process flowing smoothly.

<div align="center">Quality Control</div>

Quality and Total Quality Management or TQM has long been an element in the success of many top companies throughout the world and within my project it was no different. Knowing when to identify a trend and how to correct it are key to maintaining the quality emphasis for the entire project all the way from the supplier direct to the customer's door (Render, Stair, & Hanna, 2009). Having the ability to also maintain a sense of pride in the excellence the project provides is one that can best be observed and contributed to through the use of statistical methods and quality control practices or measures laid out that detail what is to be expected. Within my project we have a dedicated Quality Assurance (QA) element in place that ensure parts, assembly, and testing was conducted to the highest standards and helped to identify areas that were weak or required further detail to accomplish. This aspect helped to ensure that the smooth first time accomplishment of tasks resulted in a quality outcome with no repeats.

Applying QA and TQM within my project was the cornerstone in accomplishment on time with quality results. This process also ensured that we were able to stay within our budget and not have to spend additional dollars for unwanted failures. Additionally, having programs

such as this in place required training before the project that enabled all project members to come together and have an understanding of what to look for, how to conduct their selves, and what the expectations of quality were for the entire project to get to a successful completion.

<div align="center">Physical Security</div>

Physical security should be one of the top priorities in any business organization or project being conducted. With corporate espionage taking place every day, it's important for organizations to adequately equip and protect their assets from unnecessary damage. Layton (2007) reminds us all that physical security and physical security controls have a history of being one of the hardest hit areas of all security controls and today retain the ongoing negative aspect of being one of the most breached areas of security controls. It was not surprising to see that during the course of my project we had an ongoing and stringent security policy in place that maintained our assets and also helped to ensure the integrity of the project and make certain that there was no entrance for doubt in the security chain or reliability of the project and project staff. During the course of my project we had numerous security controls in place that included access badges, restricted areas with access available to only those with a need-to-know status, and continuous surveillance and monitoring of the project operations area and the IT infrastructure that is used to communicate and transmit project data. The security model we had in place is common in government agencies and projects. The amount of detail, which sometimes can be a hassle, only works to further enforce the integrity and safe keeping of the project and project information and material. Additionally, the application and effectiveness in which we together as a project team and our independent security office devoted to the ongoing project ensured that in the end our project was without question maintained and in keeping with the necessary security protocol.

As for other organizations, I can only suggest that they too have detailed security protocol in place that utilizes the methodologies and concepts of security and safe keeping preventing those outside intruders that only wish to do harm. As Layton (2007) said, security is all part of the risk of running an organization or a project and within a corporation or organizational security policy, whether it be information security or security as a whole, this fundamental concept should not be overlooked and always included in the overall risk and risk assessment. This concept was truly taken to heart and applied within my organization and practicum project and ultimately contributed to the successful outcome.

Disaster Recovery

Disaster recovery is a big fundamental concept that should never be overlooked in any organization or project. Being able to recover from natural disasters or unforeseen events is important in business and in a project being conducted to allow for the operations to continue on seamlessly without any interruption. In the DOD organization I worked with, we utilized a business continuity planning model which is comprised of a disaster response and recovery model along with the ability to recover all other necessary resources and assets. This recover model in place allowed for us as an organization to continue to run our project under the concept of what Peltier, Peltier, & Blackley (2005) refer to as the "business as usual" concept, which means that no matter what the interruption, you have measures in place that provide contingency means to move forward without anyone even noticing a disruption. During the course of my project I was able to see this concept implemented first hand during an unexpected power outage that would have cost a full day of work had there not been a contingency plan in place to address such an issue.

This use of disaster recovery was also in place for our IT systems which provide backups every day and allowed for measures to be in place to protect our important project information should any type of disaster occur, whether it is fire, flooding, power outage, or some other form of manmade or natural disaster. I cannot stress enough how important the concept of recovery and being able to move forward with an unnoticeable event taking place is. This was seen during my project and something that I believe was well executed and of great design reflecting well upon the organization and project as a whole.

<div align="center">Integrator</div>

The integrator role is a concept that I looked for extensively within the organization and project mostly because of the nature of the project and the multiple parties involved. Before we talk about the application of this concept to my project, I must first define exactly what an integrator is so we can understand just how important this role is within a project, especially one that involves parties from different parts of the world or just different organizational cultures. To put it into simple terms, an integrator is essentially a person in the leadership or management aspect of a business organization or project or a totally independent person who works for an organization or project who works to integrate or bring together two or more parties during the implementation of a project in order to successfully fulfill the request and requirements of the stakeholders, the end user, and the organization. In a project environment the integrator takes in the request of the end-user, dissects it, translates it, and then uses their background knowledge and subject matter expertise abilities to close the gap between the party delivering the project and the end-user who put in the request (Baxter, 2010). Where this concept really comes into play is within a project, such as the one that I worked on, which was multi-cultured and from a background that involved numerous policies and procedures that had to come together to work in

unison. Our project was an ideal candidate for the implementation of this concept due to the fact that the nature of working with a DOD and military organization that employs civilians, military members, contractors, and outside agencies to execute a project requires detailed integration, to say the least. During the course of my project the project manager took on the additional task of integration and functioned in the capacity of an integrator and manager who conducted interpretation and translation of request between the DOD customer, civilians, and military employees. This process ensured the end result produced exactly what the customer was requesting and expecting. Our project manager, who spent over 30 years within the military as a military member and currently holds over 10 years as a DOD civilian employee, possessed the necessary background and information to help decipher details, language, and understanding from all the different cultures and parties involved within the project. I observed this on a daily basis and often time thought of just how this project would function smoothly if such a role was not taken on or understood. While this concept might be fairly new to some, it has ideally been around for years in a minor form of translators, consultants, or individual teams of experts that are routinely employed by organizations to explain details of the unknown. The idea of an integrator is a very unique concept that requires a background in a multi-facet environment to be able to break the barriers of communication, which is one of the most important aspects in executing a project from start to finish.

Just as the role and concept suggests, the integrator "integrates" all aspects of a project, especially projects which involve multiple cultures, whether they be geographical culture differences, or organizational cultural differences. This concept was one of the most important concepts I seen applied throughout my project and one I will carry with me in future endeavors and projects.

6. CHANGE

Change is a big word and one that often times causes people to be hesitant either in implementing or accepting. In order to implement change and suggest new things, one must have a clear path to present to the organization and people involved that expresses the goal, intent, and process to getting where you want to go or what you want to change. Deborah Cap (2005) implied that in proceeding with change, communication is of high importance to allow for a smooth transition during the process. This would also be the case in suggesting change or recommendations for change to any organization or project management team, such as in the case I had direct involvement with. While the suggested change may be hard to accept, being able to effectively communicate the necessity will also be of importance in getting to the end goal.

In looking back on my project there are several areas where key methods and concepts could have been better implemented, and again I'll hit highly upon the technology aspect of the organization and project execution. Another aspect I observed in which I would recommend a change in is at the manager level by implementing a backup plan to handle the project should a situation occur where the overall project manager is not present. I visit this area in the management primarily because I see the ability and the work that the project manager does, but during my project experience there was essentially no permanent assistant manager that worked alongside the project manager throughout any phase during the project. This I see as a problem in which I will expound upon a little more.

Technology Adaptation

As I mentioned earlier technology is a key aspect in any project or organization and the ability to adapt and stay up to date with the current trends is important in maintaining an edge

over others in the industry. Sure there are situations where the reliable and tested applications

are desired in regards to security and other sensitive aspects, but being able to aggressively

pursue new technology that can stand the test of the organization and its requirements is

important and should also be the focus of the IT department within an organization. With the

increase in demand for project execution from afar, the ability to conduct mobile computing or

telecommuting is becoming even more important in this day and age. Even in our project we had

engineers and project team members who were relied upon from thousands of miles away and

although we could reach them with set schedules, would it not have been better to have a

collaborative system in place that could allow for the working of different time zones on their

own? I would propose that it is possible as long as the proper steps are taken to ensure the

technology used is fitting for the environment and the company policies. Mamaghani (2006)

explains how decentralization, language barriers, time zone differences, and most importantly,

threats to the security of "mission critical" information systems is causing organizations to be

hesitant on making changes or attempting to try new technology for business projects. While I

do agree with this explanation, I also tend to be a thinker that is open to new things, ideas, and

willing to run the necessary test and investigations into new methods that may come out as a

positive element to the success of the organization. I felt that in my project the organization

overall, which was outside and above our smaller organization, displayed a sense of reluctance in

adapting new practices quickly and did so strictly with the excuse of security. Again as

Mamaghani (2006) points out, this could highly be in part to the "mission critical" information

that is at risk when distant team members attempt to access the information. I agree with the

security aspect, but I think more could be done to implement testing of new technologies for the

project and I hope that in the future, this organization and its project managers will have more

reliable technological tools at their disposal. At this point in time things may be working well for them with what they have, but as the world progresses and the civilian contractors' progress with their technology, it may become harder to integrate outdated government organizational IT systems to interact and talk with outside contractor systems. This aspect alone is a reason I would suggest that this organization look into pursuing a path of application testing and acceptance to better align with current technology trends.

<div align="center">Management</div>

Management will always differ from organization to organization and as my mentor said, they will always be different from project manager to project manager as well. In the area of management I noticed that everything within the project was well structured and each person knew their role and who they reported to. What most concerned me during the project when looking at the structure and the way things operated was the lack of an assistant to the overall project manager. Every organization is built different, but to have an assistant means selecting someone who is equally able to perform in the role that you perform should it be necessary. D'O'Brian (1993) states that your assistant should in reality know everything there is about your job and be able to step in should you be unavailable and take over should you retire or get promoted. This aspect was lacking with our project and I feel that if you look at another concept I talked about, the disaster recovery plan, you could also tie this aspect in with the project recovery plan and the ability to continue on with the "business as usual" concept that Peltier, Peltier, & Blackley (2005) talk about.

<div align="center">Future Outlook</div>

Some can say that the increased expansion into the global project arena is the wave of the future, and in my practicum experience it appears that that way is here now in some instances. In

fact Castellano (2011) summed it up in the "*Top 10 Global Project Management Trends for 2011*" that through the use of training methods, partnerships, and enabling project managers that performance and competitive edge will guide organizations into the future and help them maintain their space in the project management space globally. My observations during my project have shown that it is slowly coming about within this DOD organization, but still much needed attention to the technology methods and implementation and the management aspect within the recovery plan is still needed. I would hope that as the organization proceeds into the future that the global project concept and the necessary means to reach it will not be overlooked and that through the use of IT tools such as collaborative mobile applications, portals, virtual teams, and even the use of social media and social networking sites will help. In an economy that Akalpler (2010) says is being transformed into a single integrated global economy, an organization would be other than wise to pass up investing time into the acceptance, training, and resource allocation of seeking out technological advances and a global project structure in order to maintain a competitive nature.

7. CONCLUSION

Over the course of the past few months and throughout this MBA practicum experience I have learned and experienced many things. My ability to understand and apply methods and concepts that relate to business and project management has truly helped me in planning out my future career. I have had an amazing mentor that has passed on a wealth of knowledge and experience involvement within a project like never before. I have also seen an instance in which theories have applied perfectly and also seen areas in which much needed improvement could be used to provide better efficiency, especially as we move into the future, and also assistance in the structure and daily operations should an unforeseen management crisis develop.

My recommendations to the organization under which I worked with are simple, yet complex in the nature of their business. Being able to ensure proper security protocol is of the utmost importance, but also having the ability to compete on a level that is in keeping with civilian counterparts is also of equal importance. As they proceed forward in their operations and projects I see the evolution of a global reach, which they are already embracing, and the acceptance of new processes and technology.

I sincerely wish to thank Naval Special Warfare Logistics and Support Unit THREE N9 and my mentor Mr. John Veverka for the quality experience I enjoyed during the two months in which I worked in a highly successful and important project. While many aspects of business and business administration were explored throughout my studies at AMU and observed even during my practicum project, the lessons learned and the experience of seeing a project from a dedicated project manager's insight has inspired me to further explore the potential of project management in my future and pursue my way forward in obtaining my project management certification. I hope that one day I can be as versed and successful in planning and executing a multi-cultural project that will apply the necessary tools of leadership and integration to produce a quality project from start to finish.

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