In my previous article, I talked about all that you need to know about [Project Concept Definition Statements for projects.](#) In this article, I want to talk about all that you need to how you can determine strategic and operational relevance for projects.

Having created the concept definition statements for projects, it is imperative for you to ensure that the project's requirement aligns with the stated operational and strategic goals.

Samson, an architect in a mid-size land development company, draw up plans to build best-in-class houses only to find out that the company cancelled the construction of such houses.

The company's strategic objective is to increase its market share in the community by building affordable housing, and the houses that Samson planned to build were too expensive and did not suit the company's plan.

As a project manager, you need to make sure that your project aligns with your company's business objectives or you, like the architect, may find that your

project has been cancelled.

Strategic relevance …

The strategic relevance of a project determines whether the project should be done- in order words, does it align with the company's strategic goals? To ensure that a project meets this requirement, the desired future state established in the project concept definition should align with or support the organisational strategic objectives set by senior leadership.

Strategic relevance serves as a checkpoint and requires that the project objectives and strategic priorities are clearly defined and communicated by senior leadership. it is important to remember that strategic objectives are inherently dynamic and can be influenced by unpredictable market events.

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A project can meet the business requirements of solving a particular business problem in a particular department, but may not be deemed strategically relevant by senior management.

Senior management determines the prioritization of resource allocation for the organisations. If your project is not strategically relevant, you will lose your sponsor's support.

Typical example...

Let's take a look at the example of a Midwest-based consulting company that specialises in systems integration work.

Senior management wants to increase the hourly billable rates for all its consultants by establishing expert status on cutting-edge technology.

A Camelot marketing strategy will be the ideal way to promote this new image. Several key systems are targeted for an upgrade with the area that each new technical capability will be a showpiece in the new campaign.

One of the operations managers has several upgrade projects in the pipeline for a legacy system.

The managing director has previously authorised the upgrade projects, but the project manager assigned to these projects is now unsure that the projects are still relevant given the shift in strategic direction.

Operational Relevance

Establishing operational relevance is a responsibility that requires the desired future state described in the project concept definition to be aligned with, coordinated with, or in support of the operational priorities authorised by tactical management for the stated management horizon.

The activity requires that the project objectives and operational priorities be clearly defined and communicated by tactical management who decides if the project should be taken up. It is important to remember that operational

priorities will be heavily influenced by both established and emerging strategic priorities.

Determining operational relevance...

Senior management has set a strategic mandate to improve communication across the organisation. Senior Management granted the functional management authority to establish the best approach to meeting their operational objectives.

Tactically, an intranet project has been launched, weekly video conference meetings have been established, and a comprehensive wireless phone plan has been drafted and is currently in the implementation phase.

Operational management asked the team to draft a project Concept definition that identifies the issue as the remote ability to access certain types of information in real time. In response to this, several department heads decided that they want to roll out wireless PDA technology to their groups, but the IT function has deep concerns regarding support cost and security.

The project manager must take the IT department's concern seriously, but because the wireless PDA project is both strategically and operationally relevant, it should move forward.

Relative authority ...

The relationship between the project manager and functional management is going to be heavily influenced by the Organisational context. In a strong matrix

organisation, the balance of power rest with the project manager, while in a weak matrix organisation, the balance of power rests with the functional manager.

In many ways, both project and functional managers share tactical responsibilities with varying degrees of authority. This reality can cloud the process of establishing the operational relevance of any project.

Whole strategic relevance is often easy to determine and because the source of organisational direction is more clearly defined, the determination of operational relevance requires that the accountability and authority for operational priorities be clearly established and communicated.

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Relevance of Strategic and operational goals...

It is important to attune the project's business, functional and technical goals with the Organisation's strategic, tactical, and operational goals. Primarily, the Organisation's strategic goals are set by the executive management.

These goals need to be reconciled to the project's business requirements. Then, the functional requirements must be reconciled to both the project's business goals and the organisation's tactical goals, which are set by project and functional managers.

Similarly, the project's technical requirements must be reconciled to both the organisation's operational goals and the functional and business requirements.

Action Point
PS: I know you might agree with some of the points that I have raised in this article. You might not agree with some of the issues raised. Let me know your views about the topic discussed. We will appreciate it if you could drop your comment. Thanks in anticipation.

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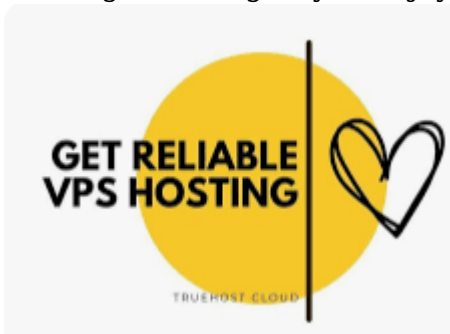 **Threads@crmnuggets**
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