

NewsLetter

Research Management Board



September 2012
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From Editor's Desk



In the earlier issue I talked about the impending release of a book titled **“Globalization and Innovative Business Models”** from Research Management Board. This time I am happy to tell you that the book is already out and the cover page of the book is shown in this issue of our newsletter. The book will be also on display at IPMA stall at our forthcoming 26th world congress at Crete. You will have an opportunity to have a look or even buy or order the book with IPMA , if you like. Recently we had organized a festival of knowledge at Ljubljana in Slovenia. This festival what we call FOCUS was largely attended and some very useful discussion that took place. Dr. Brane Semoilc has put together a short report on the same which has been included in this issue. This festival of knowledge series which RMB is pursuing has in course of time emerged as a valuable source of new knowledge for the PM community.

We also included in this issue an award winning article titled **“Communicative Project Risk Management in IT Projects”** written by Dr Karel de Bakker. This article first raises a fundamental issue whether project risk management leads to project success and then attempts to analyze the issues with respect to the type of risks involved. In a typical IT projects, Dr Karel talks about risks that normally arise out of human factors. And then went on to describe human factors which can be called predictable (objective) as well as unpredictable (subjective). The author observed that the underlying assumptions in the project risk management process as described in handbooks for project management are often not correct which

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needs to be taken care of for project success. I am sure that readers will find the article stimulating and thought provoking.

Some of you know that next year Prof Anbang Qi, an active member of PMRC and Professor at Nankai University, China is going to take over as Chairman of RMB. Dr Qi was also the recipient of IPMA Research award winner for 2009. Following Prof Mladen's election to the position of the President- IPMA, Mr Reinhard Wagner will take over from Prof Mladen as Vice President – RMB next year. Mr Reinhard is on the board of German Project Management Association (GPM) and actively supports IPMA delta for providing new services to MAs. Both Dr Anbang and Mr Reinhard are carrying vast experience with them and we look forward to support them in their program. Through this newsletter I would like to welcome both of them.

All of you are now getting ready to be there at 26th World congress. I wish all of you a very enjoyable stay at Crete and look forward to meet you there.

Rajat K Baisya
Editor

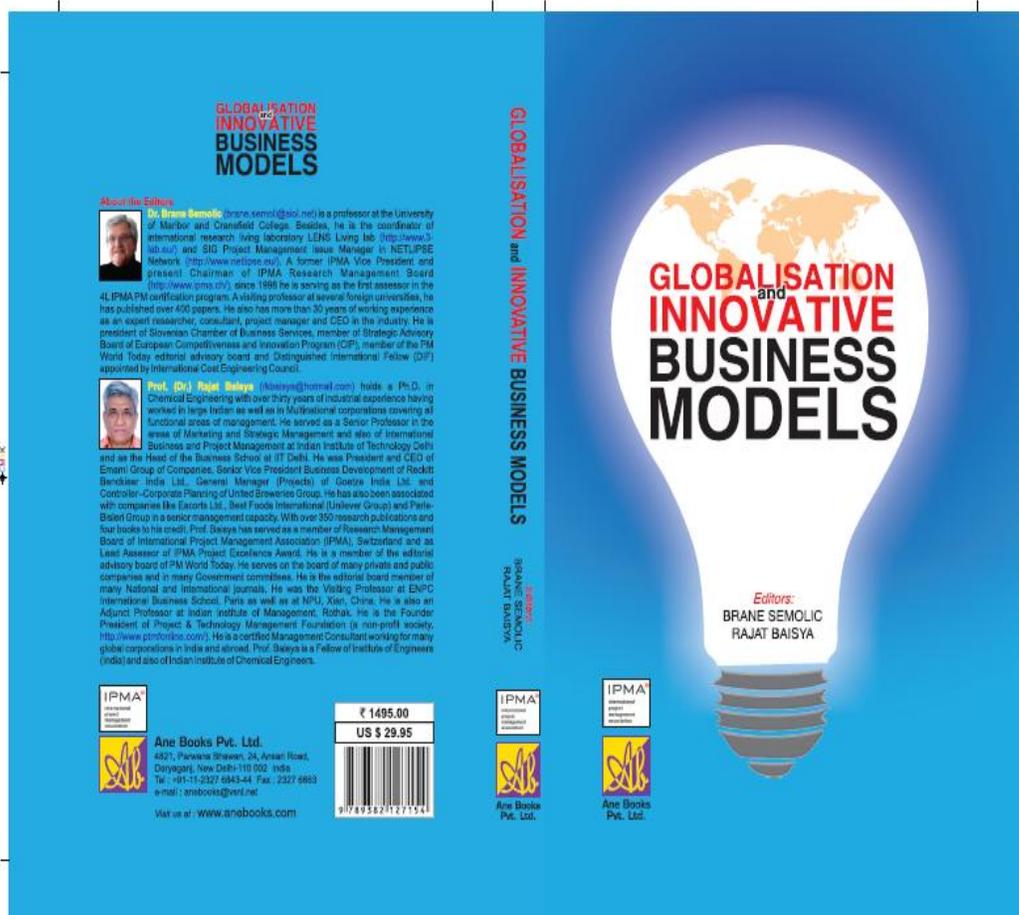
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The new book based on select presentations at Festival of Knowledge series that RMB has been organizing at various locations world over has now been published in the book form. The book deals with innovative business models and ideas with cases and examples to face challenges of globalization, new order economy and business environment. The book will be displayed at IPMA stall at 26th world congress at Crete during 29th to 31st October 2012. Below you can see the book cover. It is hard bound, colour printing, 267 pages having a cover price of USD 29.95. Printed in India by Ane Books. We expect that the book will be received well by professional community. We welcome your comments on this publication, if any.

- Editor



GLOBALISATION and INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MODELS



Dr. Brane Semolic (brane.semolic@siol.net) is a professor at the University of Maribor and Cranfield College. Besides, he is the coordinator of international research living laboratory LENS Living lab (<http://www3.siol.net>) and SIG Project Management Issue Manager in NETLPEE Network (<http://www.netlpee.eu>). A former IPMA Vice President and present Chairman of IPMA Research Management Board (<http://www.ipma.org>), since 1998 he is serving as the first assessor in the 4 IPMA PM certification program. A visiting professor at several foreign universities, he has published over 400 papers. He also has more than 30 years of working experience as an expert researcher, consultant, project manager and CEO in the industry. He is president of Slovenian Chamber of Business Services, member of Strategic Advisory Board of European Competitiveness and Innovation Program (CIP), member of the PM World Today editorial advisory board and Distinguished International Fellow (DIF) appointed by International Cost Engineering Council.



Prof. (Dr.) Rajat Baisya (Rajatsb@hotmail.com) holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering with over thirty years of industrial experience having worked in large Indian as well as in Multinational corporations covering all functional areas of management. He served as a Senior Professor in the areas of Marketing and Strategic Management and also of International Business and Project Management at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi and as the Head of the Business School at IIT Delhi. He was President and CEO of Enamni Group of Companies, Senior Vice President Business Development of Reddy Bhandari India Ltd., General Manager (Projects) of Goetze India Ltd. and Controller-Corporate Planning of United Breweries Group. He has also been associated with companies like Escorts Ltd., Beal Foods International (Unilever Group) and Parle-Bread Group in a senior management capacity. With over 350 research publications and four books to his credit, Prof. Baisya has served as a member of Research Management Board of International Project Management Association (IPMA), Switzerland and as Lead Assessor of IPMA Project Excellence Award. He is a member of the editorial advisory board of PM World Today. He serves on the board of many private and public companies and in many Government committees. He is the editorial board member of many National and International journals. He was the Visiting Professor at ENPC International Business School, Paris as well as at NPU, Xian, China. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Indian Institute of Management, Rohtak. He is the Founder President of Project & Technology Management Foundation (a non-profit society, <http://www.ptmfoundation.com>). He is a certified Management Consultant working for many global corporations in India and abroad. Prof. Baisya is a Fellow of Institute of Engineers (India) and also of Indian Institute of Chemical Engineers.

GLOBALISATION and INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MODELS

EDITORS
BRANE SEMOLIC
RAJAT BAISYA

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Editors:
BRANE SEMOLIC
RAJAT BAISYA



Ane Books Pvt. Ltd.
4921, Parkview Shikhar, 2A, Ansari Road,
Daryaganj, New Delhi-110 002 India
Tel : +91-11-2327 6843-44 Fax : 2327 6863
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IPMA Festival of Knowledge in Slovenia (IPMA FOCUS)

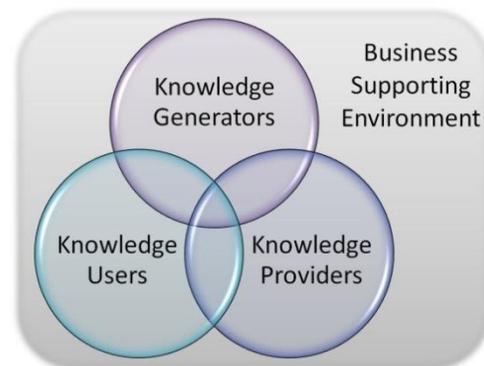
Ljubljana, 10-12.2012



Prof. Dr. Brane Semolic
IPMA RMB Chairman

IPMA FOCUS with the Working Title: “Knowledge Market and New Business Models”

Organizational excellence is the key element for business success in a modern knowledge-based business environment. In contemporary business environment organizations their competitiveness is kept not only by focusing on their key competences and optimizing their own resources, but also by regional and global outsourcing and development of authentic, network-based business models. The key elements of dynamic, innovative business models are an envision of global industrial and business trends, identification of areas of business interests and performance, decisions about specialization and sourcing, allocation of outsourcing needs, development of authentic organizational support and a good leadership.



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IPMA FOCUS Objectives

- To explore new challenges by presenting different international business cases from different industries and regions,
- To discuss characteristics and trends of emerging global knowledge markets and the new roles of knowledge providers (universities, research organizations etc.), knowledge sellers (management consulting companies, training companies, sellers of different high value-added services etc.), knowledge buyers (value migration on the markets of profit and non-profit organizations from different industries) and a business-supporting environment (chambers of commerce, different business-supporting agencies, professional associations etc.),
- A critical analysis of the present global situation and the needs for strategic transformations, of changes in personal and corporate attitudes and organizational as well as personal competences,
- Needs for a corporate and personal culture change,
- What do we need to achieve, what are the required changes and how to make it happen?

IPMA FOCUS Events and Results

During the IPMA FOCUS event were organized four events, as follow:

1. Open workshop on certification of behavioural competences for PM assessors and other interested parties (10th of October),
2. The international Research and Management Consulting Forum "Knowledge Market & New Business Models" (11th of October). We had about 50 participants from the region (Austria, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia) and other countries (South Africa) with impressive number of senior managers from the industry,

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3. The extended *Association of Management Consulting* board meeting with workshop (12th of October). Where we also discussed potential areas of collaboration between Chamber of Commerce and Slovenian Project Management Association (ZPM-IPMA). The output of this discussion was decision to sign the collaboration agreement between ZPM and Slovenian Chamber of Commerce,
4. Workshop »IPMA Knowledge Base« (12th of October) organized by IPMA Research Management Board and led by Les Squires. On this event 15 students and members of Slovenia Young Crew have participated..

We had the free entrance policy for all IPMA members to all these events!



Participants at the Young Crew workshop

More info on the website address: <http://event.einovainstitut.eu/slovenia2012/>

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Communicative Project Risk Management in IT Projects



Dr Karel de Bakker, PMP

Introduction

The question as to whether project risk management contributes to project success is, in the context of project management practitioners, essentially a question about the value of an instrument. An instrument that is employed by project managers during the planning and execution stages of a project, employed to secure project success, regardless of all manner of unexpected events and situations that may occur during project execution.

In order to answer the question, a research project (de Bakker, 2011) was conducted which was divided into four stages. The structure of this article embodies this stage approach, the first stage being a study of recent literature on the relationship between risk management and Information Technology (IT) project success. From the literature study it appeared that in order to answer the question about the contribution of project risk management to IT project success, an additional view on project risk management and project success¹ is necessary. This additional view is developed in the second stage of the research. Exploration of the additional view is done in the third stage, by means of case studies of ERP implementation projects. Finally, in stage four, an experiment is conducted in which the influence of a single risk management activity on project success is investigated. This article concludes with a section on theoretical implications and implications for practitioners.

¹ This research considers project success as the outcome of a personal, individual evaluation of project characteristics by each project stakeholder. This may include objectively measurable characteristics such as time, money and requirements, but may also include other characteristics such as stakeholder satisfaction and the future potential of the project result.

What does literature tell us about risk management and IT project success?

The conducted literature study investigated 29 papers, published between 1997 and 2009 in scientific journals, reporting on the relationship between risk management and project success in IT projects. The study demonstrates two main approaches on how risk management is defined in the literature, one of them being the *management* approach. The management approach considers risk management being an example of a rational problem solving process in which risks are identified, analyzed, and responses are developed and implemented. Evidence found in all investigated papers for the relationship between risk management and project success is primarily anecdotal or not presented at all (de Bakker et al, 2010)

Additional empirical findings indicate that the assumptions underpinning the management approach to risk management are often invalid. Firstly, IT projects contain risks for which there is no classical or statistical probability distribution available. These risks cannot be managed by means of the risk management process (Pich et al., 2002). Secondly, project managers in IT projects show a tendency to deny the actual presence of risk; they avoid it, ignore it or delay their actions (Kutsch and Hall, 2005). This behaviour is not in line with the assumed rational behaviour of actors. Finally, project stakeholders in general deliberately overestimate the benefits of the project and at the same time they underestimate the project risks at the start of the project (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003).

Not only is there little evidence from recent literature that risk management contributes to IT project success, empirical findings thus far indicate it is also unlikely that risk management is able to contribute to IT project success. It remains remarkable that there is such a large gap between project risk management in theory and project risk management in practice. Findings from research indicate that the complete risk management process as described for instance in the PMI Body of Knowledge (Project Management Institute, 2008), is often not followed (Voetsch et al., 2004), or

even that practitioners do not see the value of executing particular steps of the risk management process (Besner & Hobbs, 2006). In addition, it is remarkable that both project management Bodies of Knowledge and established current literature ignore the results from research which indicate the assumptions and mechanisms that underpin project risk management only work in specific situations, or do not work at all. This should at least lead to a discussion about the validity of certain elements of the Bodies of Knowledge, and to the adjustment of the project risk management process, of which it is claimed it is founded on good practice (Project Management Institute, 2008) or even Best Practice (Office of Government Commerce, 2009).

An additional view to project risk management

An important assumption in the current literature underpinning both project management and the way risk management influences the project and consequently project success, is the assumption that projects are taking place in a reality that is known, and that reality is responding according to the laws of nature the project stakeholders either know or may be able to know (see e.g. Williams, 2005). This so called instrumentalism assumption defines project risk management, its effects, and the object on which project risk management works, i.e. the project, in instrumental terms. Figure 1 depicts the relation between risk management and the project in traditional terms, in other words under the assumption of instrumentalism.

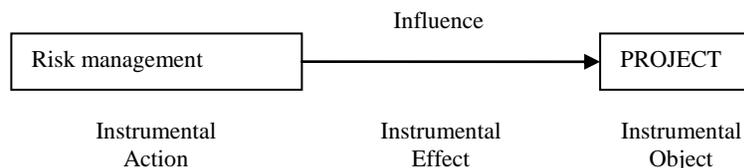


Figure 1: Traditional view on risk management and its relation to the project

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Risk management may work well in situations in which the object of risk management can be described in terms of predictable behaviour (the instrumental context), for instance controlling an airplane or a nuclear power plant, or a piece of well defined software that must be created as part of an IT project. Risk management is then an analytical process in which information is collected and analysed on events that may negatively influence the behaviour of the object of risk management. However, projects, and particularly IT projects, generally consist of a combination of elements that contain both predictable and human behaviour; the latter of which is not always predictable. The presence of human behaviour makes a project a social object, an object which does not behave completely predictably.

Furthermore, human behaviour, together with human interaction, plays a role in the risk management process itself. During the various activities of the risk management process, participants in these activities interact with each other. Risk management can then no longer be considered instrumental action, but should be considered social action instead. These interactions between participants in the risk management process may be able to create effects in addition to the assumed instrumental effects of risk management. Figure 2 presents this adjusted view on the relationship between risk management and the project.

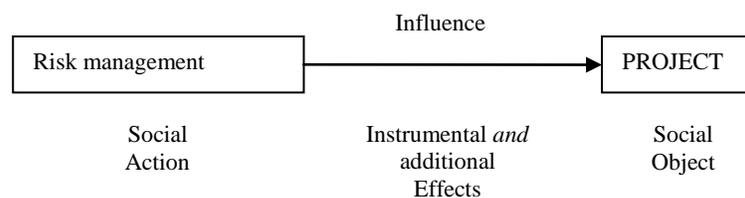


Figure 2: Adjusted (or new) view on risk management and its relation to the project

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This adjusted view, which considers risk management as being social action working on a social object, instead of instrumental action working on an instrumental object, leads to various changes in model definitions and assumptions compared to the traditional view.

The adjusted view considers project success to be the result of a personal evaluation of project outcome characteristics by each stakeholder individually (see e.g. Agarwal and Rathod, 2006). Timely delivery, delivery within budget limits and delivery according to requirements, being the traditional *objective project success* criteria, may play an important role in this stakeholder evaluation process, but they are no longer the only outcomes that together determine if the project can be considered a success. Therefore, project success becomes *opinionated project success*, and is no longer considered as something that can be determined and measured only in objective terms.

The adjusted view, considering risk management in terms of social action, implies that risk management is a process in which participants interact with each other. In addition to the traditional view, which considers risk management only in terms of instrumental action and instrumental effects, the additional view assumes that interaction between participants or social interaction exists, which may lead to additional effects on the project and its success. This research refers to these effects resulting from interaction as “communicative effects”, and the research assumes that each risk management activity individually may be able to generate communicative effects and may therefore individually contribute to project success.

Generally speaking, this additional view on risk management creates an environment in which human behaviour and perception play central roles in terms of describing the effect of risk management and the success of the project. The additional view acknowledges the influence of stakeholders interacting with each other, and influencing each other through communication. By doing so, this additional view positions itself outside of

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the strict instrumental or “traditional” project management approach that can be found in project management Bodies of Knowledge. However, the additional view does not deny the fact that risk management may influence project success in an instrumental way; it only states that in addition to the potential instrumental effect of risk management, there is a communicative effect. Given the limitations of the effectiveness of the instrumental effect, the influence of the communicative effect of risk management on project success may probably be larger than the influence of the instrumental effect.

Results from case studies

Seven ERP implementation projects were investigated on the presence of communicative effects as a result of the project risk management process. A total number of 19 stakeholders from the various projects were interviewed. Data collection took place between one and two months after project completion.

ERP implementation projects that participated in the research were selected based on the criterion that they had done “something” on risk management. The sample of projects therefore does not include projects that performed no risk management at all. Risk identification is conducted on all projects, in various formats including brainstorm sessions, moderated sessions and expert sessions. Risk analysis is carried out on five projects, but only in a rather basic way; none of the projects used techniques for quantitative risk analysis. Other risk management activities for which the use was investigated in the projects are: the planning of the risk management process, the registration of risks, the allocation of risks to groups or individuals, the reporting of risks to stakeholders or stakeholder groups and the control of risks. Actual use and format of these practices vary over the projects.

The case studies’ results demonstrate that, according to stakeholders, project risk management activities contribute to the perceived success of the project. Risk identification is, by all stakeholders, considered to be the risk

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management activity that contributes most to project success. Furthermore, stakeholders provide a large number of indications on how risk identification, in their view, contributes to project success. Finally, risk identification is, by stakeholders, considered to be able to contribute to project success through a number of different effects; Action, Perception, Expectation and Relation effects².

Risk identification triggers, initiates or stimulates action taking or making actions more effective (Action effect). It influences the perception of an individual stakeholder and synchronizes various stakeholders' perceptions (Perception effect). It influences the expectations of stakeholders towards the final project result or the expectations on stakeholder behaviour during project execution (Expectation effect). Finally, it contributes to the process of building and maintaining a work and interpersonal relationship between project stakeholders (Relation effect). Risk reporting is another risk management activity that influences project success through these four effects. Other risk management activities also generate effects, but less than the four effects mentioned with risk identification and reporting. The research data demonstrate a positive relation (both in quantity and in quality) between the effects generated through risk management activities and project success.

Results from an experiment

The conclusion that individual risk management activities contribute to project success is based upon the opinions of individual stakeholders,

² This typology of effects is based on The Theory of Communicative Action by Jürgen Habermas (1984). In order to avoid an excessive wide scope for this article, this theoretical background is not discussed here.

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meaning that the effect of risk management on project success is directly attributable to those effects *as perceived* by project stakeholders. Given the case study research setting, the possibilities for “objective” validation of these perceptions are limited. In order to create additional information on the effect of a specific risk management practice on project success, independently of various stakeholders’ perceptions, an experiment was developed with the aim to answer to the following sub-question: *Does the use of a specific risk management practice influence objective project success and project success as perceived by project members?*

Building on the results of the case studies, risk identification was chosen as the risk management activity for the experiment. Risk identification is the activity which, according to the results from the case studies, has the most impact on project success. Furthermore, a project generally starts with a risk identification session, which makes risk identification relatively easy to implement in an experimental setting. The experiment was conducted with 212 participants in 53 project groups. All participants were members of a project group where, in the project, each member had the same role. The project team had a common goal, which further diminished the chances for strategic behaviour of participants. The common goal situation provided the conditions for open communication and therefore for communicative effects, generated by the risk management activity.

All project groups that performed risk identification before project execution used a risk prompt list to support the risk identification process. 17 groups did risk identification by discussing the risks with team members (type 3 groups); 18 groups that did risk identification did not discuss risks with team members (type 2 groups). The control group projects (type 1 groups, 18 groups) conducted no risk identification at all before project execution. All project groups had to execute the same project, consisting of 20 tasks.

Results from the experiment demonstrate that project groups that conducted risk identification plus discussion perform significantly better in the number

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of correctly completed tasks than the control groups that did not conduct risk identification at all. The number of correctly performed tasks is, in this experiment, one of the indicators for objective project success. A trend test³ demonstrates a highly significant result, indicating that the number of correctly performed tasks increases when groups perform risk identification, but increases further when groups do risk identification plus discussion.

Perceived (opinionated) project success was measured by asking projects to grade the project result. The analysis of grades demonstrates some remarkable research findings. Project groups that did risk identification plus discussion (type 3) score significantly better on the number of correctly performed tasks than control groups (type 1). *After* project groups have been informed about their *own* project result (and their own result only), *all* project groups value their project result equally. There is no difference in grades assigned by project groups from any of the group types. The result of project groups that conducted risk identification plus discussion is objectively better, but apparently this better result is not reflected in the opinion of the project groups who conducted risk identification plus discussion.

It is remarkable to see that, directly after project execution, *before project groups are informed about their project result*, project groups who conducted risk identification plus discussion are significantly more positive about their result than groups that conducted no risk identification or risk identification without communication. The grades for project success given by project groups directly after project execution indicate that project groups attribute positive effects to risk management in relation to project success.

³ Jonckheere-Terpstra test: ($J = 625$, $r = .36$, $p < .01$, $N = 53$).

Conclusions and implications

The main conclusion of this research is: Project risk management as described in handbooks for project management and project risk management (Association for Project Management, 2004; Project Management Institute, 2008) only occasionally contributes to project success if project risk management is considered solely in terms of instrumental action working on an instrumental object. If, on the other hand, project risk management is considered a set of activities in which actors interact and exchange information, also known as communicative action, working on a social object, individual risk management activities contribute to project success because the activities may generate Action, Perception, Expectation and Relation effects. A positive relation exists between the effects generated through risk management activities and project success

The experiment demonstrates that an individual risk management activity is able to contribute to elements of project success. For this effect to occur, it is not necessary to measure or to quantify the risk. For instance in a risk identification brainstorm, project stakeholders exchange information on what they individually see as the potential dangers for the project. Such an exchange of information may lead to adjustments of the expectations of individual actors and the creation of mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Mindfulness includes awareness and attention; actors become sensitive to what is happening around them, and they know when and how to act in case of problems. This leads to a remarkable conclusion, which can be described as “the quantum effect” of project risk management, because its appearance is somewhat similar to what Werner Heisenberg in quantum mechanics described as the uncertainty principle.

Firstly; in order to influence the risk, *it is not necessary to measure the risk*. The experiment demonstrated that a risk prompt list, in which five risks were mentioned that were realistic, but all of which had very low probability of occurring, is enough to make project members aware of potential project

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risks and to influence their behaviour. As a result, the project groups who talked about the risks before project execution performed better and gave themselves a higher grade for the performance of their project. Secondly, as a result of this communicative effect, *it is impossible to measure risk without changing its probability*. The moment the risk is discussed, stakeholders become influenced and this consequently leads to an effect on the probability of the risk.

Based on the research findings the main implication or recommendation for practitioners is to continue the use of risk management on IT projects. However, this research provides some important recommendations that should be taken into account when risk management is used on IT projects. Practitioners should be aware that the assumptions underlying the project risk management process as described in handbooks for project management (the instrumental view) are often not correct. Hence, only in specific situations, the risk management process is able to contribute to project success in terms of “on-time, on-budget” delivery of a predefined IT system. If project risk management is used in a situation in which the assumptions are not met, it will inevitably lead to a situation in which project stakeholders think that the project risks are under control, were in fact they are not.

However, individual risk management activities such as risk identification or risk allocation generate non-instrumental effects, possibly in addition to instrumental effects. These non-instrumental or communicative effects occur as a result of interaction (discussion, exchange of information) between project stakeholders during the execution of risk management activities. Communicative effects stimulate instrumental action taking by stakeholders, and the effects create a common view among project stakeholders about the project situation by influencing stakeholders’ perceptions and expectations and shaping the inter-stakeholders’ relationships. Practitioners should be aware that the creation of communicative effects can be stimulated by providing capacity for interaction during risk management activities. For

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instance; a risk identification brainstorm session or moderated meeting will generate more communicative effects than a risk identification session in which only checklists or questionnaires are used. For the communicative effects to occur it is not necessary that the complete risk management process is executed as described in handbooks for project management. Individual risk management activities each have their own effect on project success through the various communicative effects they may generate. The communicative effect contributes to project success, not only in terms of time, budget and quality, but also in terms of perceived success.

At the same time, practitioners should be aware that communicative effects with an effect on project success will not occur in every project situation, nor that the effect is, in all situations, a positive effect. If, for instance during risk identification, certain information about risks is labeled as being important for the project, where in fact these risks were relevant in an earlier project, but not in the forthcoming project, the risk communication can lead to project members to focus upon (what later will appear to be) the “wrong risks”. By focusing upon the wrong risks, project members are unable to detect and respond to risks that have not been identified; one of the cases of this research (case 7, the petro-chemical industry) provides an example of this type of problem. Furthermore, communicative effects with a positive effect on project success occur predominantly in situations where information is not used strategically. In situations in which information on risks is not shared openly, the positive communicative effect may not occur. One other case of this research (case 4, the energy sector) provides some indications that not sharing risk related information between customer and IT supplier leads to lower communicative effects, resulting in lower project success.

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Dr. Karel de Bakker, PBLQ Het Expertise Centrum, The Hague, The Netherlands, was awarded the IPMA Outstanding Contribution of a Young Researcher 2012 for his research on “Dialogue on Risk – Effects of Project Risk Management on Project Success” In his brief article he provides insights from his PhD thesis A pdf of the thesis can be downloaded from www.debee.nl. Contact: karel@debee.nl

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