

Capstone Topic Paper Evaluation

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The purpose of the capstone project is to have each student develop their scholarly voice through a formal written project paper. The capstone project seeks to use applied research to solve a specific problem. Olson (2016) pointed out that while traditional research includes conducting experiments or surveys to collect data, the applied research method uses findings that are available from the literature. The capstone project, as described by Olson, will use the applied research method to understand the problem, evaluate the problem, and formulate a model to solve the problem. Following the research process that is expected for the capstone project will lead to advances in the project management field of study because it is solution oriented, meaning that people in the field will be able to use or apply the capstone project outcomes to their work.

Capstone Topic

To prepare and identify potential project capstone ideas, time was spent exploring content from past courses, making lists of personal interests, reading through topic advice resources, exploring library resources, and reviewing articles from the Project Management Institute (PMI) website. After conducting initial research, the topic of project sponsors was intriguing. More time was spent learning and investigating the role that project sponsors play regarding the project manager and the project. Project sponsors were described as being key project allies whose support is reflected in a suitable budget, receptiveness to unanticipated needs, and a clear signal to others in the organization of the importance of the project (Larson & Gray, 2014). However, Englund and Bucero (2015) stated that good project sponsors do not appear by accident. The statement from Englund and Bucero is what led to further investigation and the eventual identification of a business problem and potential solution.

Business Problem

One specific stakeholder of vital importance in project management is the project sponsor. According to the *PMBOK® Guide* (PMI, 2017), the project sponsor is a person or group who provides resources and support for the project and is accountable for enabling success. The PMI (2018) suggested that sponsors who guide a project to fruition are critical to project success because actively engaged and effective sponsors use their influence to overcome challenges by communicating the project's alignment to strategy, removing barriers, and driving organizational change. However, Hanley (2010) argued that some project sponsors are not experienced enough to be effective sponsors, and most project sponsors have not been taught how to be an effective sponsor. Furthermore, Englund and Bucero (2015) claimed that every project worth pursuing needs effective sponsorship, or the project will not deliver on time, within budget, or on scope. Finally, Christenson and Christenson (2010) declared that many organizations will cite project sponsorship as very important to project success, but few have invested in training project sponsors.

Business Problem Statement

Project sponsors are cited as being one of the key factors and top drivers for project success. However, project managers are at the mercy of the sponsor that is assigned to their project. Project managers need to have access to effective tools and techniques that can allow them to train and coach inexperienced project sponsors as a way to increase project success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to provide project managers with a framework of the most effective tools and techniques that can be used to train and coach inexperienced project sponsors for the sake of increasing project success.

Business Problem Question

How should project managers train and coach inexperienced project sponsors to help increase project success?

Research Questions

1. What risks exist if a project sponsor is inexperienced?
2. What risks exist if a project sponsor does not understand their roles and responsibilities?
3. What are characteristics or qualities of an experienced project sponsor?
4. What tools, techniques, or best practices are available for project managers to help project sponsors understand their roles and responsibilities?
5. What training components are important for project managers to use with project sponsors before a project begins?
6. What training components are important for project managers to use with project sponsors during a project?
7. What training components are important for project managers to use with project sponsors following the close of a project?
8. How can project sponsor training and coaching increase the likelihood of project success?

Capstone Topic Assessment

The business problem is both effective and relevant because project sponsors were described as being key project allies whose support is reflected in a suitable budget, receptive to unanticipated needs, and a clear signal to others in the organization of the importance of the project (Larson & Gray, 2014). However, Hanley (2010) argued that some project sponsors are not experienced enough to be effective sponsors, and most project sponsors have not been taught how to be an effective sponsor. The statement from Hanley (2010) provided an opportunity for

the development of a framework for project managers to train and coach inexperienced project sponsors as a way to increase project success. The business problem question reframed this opportunity as a question in order to focus the opportunity into an actionable focus for the research (Olson, 2016).

After conducting base level research and identifying an opportunity for the project management field of study, the business problem and business problem question were developed to help lead the research. From there, several research questions were formulated to identify the questions that must be answered in order to arrive at an effective solution (Olson, 2016). The research questions were carefully established to divide the problem statement by both the topics and the two groups of people. In addition, the research questions focus on the “how” and “what” to better establish a direction for researching a solution that is validated in the current literature (Olson, 2016).

To further assess the capstone project topic and its validity for the project management field of study, the three sides of the PMI Talent Triangle® were taken into consideration (Klein, 2015). Further research provided conclusive evidence that the capstone topic aligns with the “Leadership” component, which stressed that the successful management of projects not only requires technical knowledge, but also leadership skills (Klein, 2015). According to Klein (2015), a project manager with expertise in “Technical Project Management” can plan and execute a project, but their expertise in the field of “Leadership” is what would help them with the various stakeholders that are involved in a project. In other words, the capstone project would align with the leadership component because, as outlined in the purpose statement, the purpose of this study would be to provide project managers with a framework of the most effective tools

and techniques that can be used to train and coach inexperienced project sponsors for the sake of increasing project success.

Conclusion

Overall, the capstone topic is appropriate for the project management field of study as it highlights a major project stakeholder that a project manager must rely on for project success. Currently, there is not a framework that project managers can utilize for training or coaching inexperienced project sponsors. The research process will help seek out all sides of the business question and thoroughly and intentionally provide a comprehensive view of the business problem (Weidenborner et al., 2010). Finally, this project will provide an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive study in a specialty area related to project management, which will contribute to the field through the development of a solution for inexperienced project sponsors.

References

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