

IAF SPACE SYSTEMS SYMPOSIUM (D1)

Lessons Learned in Space Systems: Achievements, Challenges, Best Practices, Standards. (5)

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PROJECT EFFICIENCY: A DIFFERENT SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR SPACE SYSTEMS PROJECTS

Abstract

Space projects fail, no doubts, despite managers well know factors believed to contribute to the project management success, e.g. performance, quality, time, cost, earned value. Why should this be if both the factors and the criteria for success are believed to be known? One argument could be that project manager looks enthusiastic to adopt new factors to achieve success but continues to measure or judge project management using tried and failed criteria: if the criteria were the cause of project failure, continuing to use those same criteria will simply repeat the failures of the past. This is the reason why a new way to consider project success criteria can be proposed. The purpose of this study is to outline the techniques to measure and investigate ways to improve project success through the so-called Project Efficiency (PE). It gives guidelines to improve profitability on projects and also to reduce negative variances, as well as to increase opportunities on project profitability. The paper also reports some specific cases of real Space projects where PE has been used as success criteria and how project managers have managed the input factors that impact on PE. Worth to note that this measurement is focused on cost (and not on price) and it is done at overall project level (and not at the level of each project work package). Results can be then consolidated at Entity/Country level for the whole portfolio of projects. The study methodology is based on Project Efficiency instructions adopted in Thales Alenia Space standard reference system and includes lessons learned and interviews with project and portfolio managers from the Company. Experience of the author in evaluation of the PE on specific project is also reported, quoting criteria adopted to improve project efficiency and the challenges faced to overcome the difficulties. Findings from the study indicate that Space project managers are often struggling with the balance between time, cost, quality but they are interested in doing this as efficient as possible. Adopting the concept of Project Efficiency to evaluate the success of a Space project would help and support Space project based companies in their daily work. A clear view on Project Efficiency can be a basis for project internal improvements in terms of time, cost and quality, as well as external improvements in terms of customer satisfaction. In conclusion, PE can be definitively considered a best practices of Space projects management.