¹*Saulen A.N.,
Master's student, Researcher, ORCID ID: 0009-0003-9600-6377, e-mail: anelyasaulen@gmail.com
²Yesmurzayeva A.,
Researcher, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0114-5925, e-mail: aknur.yesmurzayeva@gmail.com

¹Kazakh-British Technical University, Almaty, 050000, Kazakhstan
²Institute for Advanced Research and Sustainable Development, Almaty, 050040, Kazakhstan

SUCCESS FACTORS OF PROJECTS IN GLOBAL COMPANIES

Abstract

Project success is the best outcome expected by project stakeholders. Whether it's a product launch or service delivery, practitioners want to achieve success in projects as well and they have their understanding of project success and dependence of it on various factors. This concept is still developing, as the projects constantly transform in dynamic market. Project success is connected to factors, which contribute to the project successful delivery. For the time-being it is not limited to triple constrains pyramid of time, cost, and budget. "Iron triangle" was the initial model for project management success, however, it reflected only general projects in the 20th century. Researchers establish new factors and frameworks analyzing, how companies reach success in different fields. At the same time the business expands, companies strive to extend their territories to more than one country, so become international, global as the time goes by. They way how this companies continue leading projects is a matter of research nowadays, they face challenges as cultural, language, communication, legal, etc. The purpose of this research is to define project success factors from the perspective of practitioners with project management experience in global companies. Conduct of survey, quantitative analysis was applied as a research method. The findings of this study tested the hypothesis claiming that specific factors considerably contribute the success of global projects.

Key words: project, project management, success factors, global companies, project stakeholders.

Introduction

Expansion of companies on the territory of more than one country happens more often, leading to the creation of global companies worldwide. Many organizations switch to a project-based format and use project management principles to reach commercial goals. It's hard to imagine a modern company that isn't engaged in any type of project. Today's dynamic market forces companies to respond faster to modern challenges to gain a competitive advantage. Organizations act in increasingly diverse and complicated environments influenced by constant changes and transformations.

Regardless of business activity, size, duration, and budget, management is essential for projects. Whether it's a product launch or service delivery, practitioners want to achieve success in projects as well and they have their understanding of project success and dependency on various projects [1].

Over forty years, extensive research has discovered a diverse range of new success factors and expanded the scope of success criteria [2].

The purpose of this study is to define project success factors from the perspective of practitioners in a global context. This study aims to contribute to today's knowledge and gather insights into the best practices formed by project managers and organizational leaders, which can serve as an example for other companies with similar activities.

Main provisions

Carrying out projects successfully on a global level requires an understanding of success factors associated with project management. Identification of these factors helps organizations strengthen their capabilities and drive operational excellence. Projects can face a lack of applied PM techniques, but on the other hand, they reach their main goals and seem successful as they comply with the expected results.

The research question and hypothesis are the following:

◆ RQ: What factors are considered key to the success of global projects from the perspective of project practitioners?

◆ Hypothesis – there are specific factors that significantly contribute to the success of global projects.

The study's goal, which is to assess current project management practitioners' techniques and pinpoint best practices, closely aligns with the research objectives.

Literature review

Choosing articles for literature review is a process of filtering reliable and relevant sources. The keywords for searching the articles were: "project management", "success factors", "global", project success" and they didn't show up a recognizable amount of literature. So, it means that this field is still not investigated and explored in its big scope. The works dated from 1980th and until present were used for analysis.

The literature review part consists of 3 subparts. First subpart opens the definitions of concepts and meanings used in the research: project, project management, success factors, and recognized PM practices met in the literature, which lead to the project success.

During the review, literature shows that there is no common agreement of what aspects direct project to success. [15, 31-33]. However, organizational concept and communication, and stakeholder management were one of the most frequently mentioned factors, which fall under the focus of authors and became as theme for the second and third subparts of literature review.

Success factors and PM practices

The concept of success always appears in mind when it comes to associating future project outcomes. Each practitioner wants their project to be successful, as in that case, everybody wins.

"Iron triangle" was the initial model for project management success, however, it reflected only general projects in the 20th century [3]. Morris and Hough (1986) introduced safety along with time, cost, and quality as four success factors. Later researchers needed to find other approaches corresponding to the modern demand of practitioners [5].

In literature review success factors can be categorized as either general factors, such as the "iron triangle," or specific factors that are relevant only to a specific project or organization according to Pinto and Slevin (1987) [4].

The critical success factors vary depending on the nature, objectives, and perception of the project as stated by Pinto and Prescot (1988). They conducted a study on critical success factors throughout the project life cycle and found that the relative importance of several critical factors changes significantly at different stages of the life cycle [8].

According to Shenhar (1997) business was described as a distinct dimension of project success in addition to the previous work of De Wit et al. Shenhar proposed four success dimensions, namely: project efficiency; impact on the customer; business and direct success; and preparing for the future were suggested by them [9]. These dimensions contain 13 measures and form a project success multidimensional strategic framework. Additionally, Shenhar categorizes preparation for the future as a long-term company dimension and direct success as a short-term business dimension [9].

Baccarini (1999) presented the logical framework, where four levels of project objectives should be used to define success, namely goals, purpose, output, and input. Baccarini's four levels are similar to Shenhar's four dimensions mentioned above [15].

Chow and Cao's (2008) research model reflects the 12 potential success factors within five categories: organizational, people, process, technical, and project with the claim that they impact the success of large and distributed agile software development projects using Scrum methodology [10].

H.R. Kerzner, (2011) has proposed that PM success is possible to be evaluated through criteria of time, cost, quality, scope, resource, and activity [11].

At the first stage of a project, internal factors such as budget, schedule, and technical performance took place, as noted by Pinto and Covin (1989) [34]. While, in the final stages of the project, external factors such as customer needs and their satisfaction are deemed to be of greater significance.

Lim and Mohamed's framework (1999) proposed two tiers of critical success factors [14]. The first level - micro level included time, cost, performance, and safety and the second level - macro level focused on overall project duration, and user satisfaction during the exploitation and operation of the end product.

When these practices are recognized, adopted, and proven successful by other project managers, they become accepted practices [16]. Hobbs and Besner et al (2016) propose the connection between success factors and PM practices [2]. They define PM practices as common PM norms, routines, traditions, and rules that guide the behavior of project managers in general circumstances and are described in bodies of knowledge and textbooks" [16]. According to Hobbs and Besner et a. (2016) in order for these practices to be considered as success factors, they must be connected to project management success by assessing their effect and influence on project efficiency, product success, quality of deliverables, team performance, and satisfaction of team members [2, 17]. Even if there are debates on how to measure the contribution of these PM practices, studying practices holds value if it can be demonstrated that they significantly enhance project efficiency [2].

Ensuring stakeholder satisfaction, timely delivery, and budgetary adherence are on the top metrics list for project success evaluation. Project failure is more frequently caused by internal than external issues; inaccurate projections or missed deadlines, scope modifications, and a lack of resources account for 50% of the causes [18]. The results of the survey handled by PwC in 2006 showed that project success is primarily affected by stakeholders' satisfaction, on-time delivery, budget, benefits, quality, acceptable return on investments.

Mladen Radujković and Mariela Sjekavica (2017) draw the breakdown where project management success is connected to 1) project management competence (project manager competence, project team competence, coordination), 2) organization (structure, culture, atmosphere, competence), and 3) PM methods, tools and techniques (methodologies, software, tools, decision techniques, risk assessment tools, information communication technology support tools). They argue that strengthening previously mentioned aspects testifies successful PM, which facilitates project success [35].

Organizational concept

Choosing the appropriate procedural model impacts the success of the project [19]. The organizational environment plays a significant role in the successful selection of the approach. Success factors also vary depending on whether the project teams use agile, traditional, or hybrid approaches. In other words, organizations can be unprepared or even resistant to adopting new approaches, and most of the time they continue to rely on existing processes, which is usually a traditional approach [20]. The competence of the team and the organizational abilities of its members are critical to the project's success.

Projects become complex and as organizations continue to undertake a rapidly growing number of projects concurrently, "having a central, horizontal office to govern and control projects amid the shift to a project-oriented approach becomes a necessity" as stated in the KPMG report (2022) [21].

The metrics for project success may vary depending on the business activity of the company, project type, and sometimes applied PM methodology.

The 13th annual Agile report (2019) has an analysis of the survey with 1319 respondents in 6 regions. [22] The respondents were the representatives of North and South America (47% and 8%), Europe (30%), Asia (10%) and Australia with New Zealand (3%) and of different sectors. 95% of respondents answered that somewhat their agile projects were successful and 48% – that most of their projects or all of them were successful. Also, participants emphasized that organizations measure the success of the agile approach in three indices, which remained the same during the last few years. There are customer satisfaction, business value, and on-time delivery. The metric of customer and/or user satisfaction means that companies aim to build reliable relationships between them, establish loyalty, and want to receive positive feedback and reactions. And depending on how much the amount of positive feedback has grown or whether the client returned, it's clear if Agile was successful.

Success models like PMPA – Project Management Performance Assessment [12] or maturity models of management within an organization like Project Excellence Model® [13] can be useful for measuring project success. Project Excellence Model® is divided into six outcome areas encompassing project success criteria and six organizational areas including essential success aspects. The Project Excellence Model describes project organization using five different project categories, providing guidelines on how to use the model.

Project stakeholders

Brown and Eisenhardt (1995) mentioned the significance of team members, project leaders, senior management, customers, and suppliers in the process of new product development [23]. At that time they were called agents but currently, they are named "Project Stakeholders" [24]. Project Management Institute defined project stakeholders as: "Individuals and organizations who are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be positively or negatively affected as a result of project execution or successful project completion."

Young and Poon (2013), using a fuzzy set analysis of 15 cases, concluded that when top-managements support the project team and other stakeholders, it is counted as more important rather than other success factors, as it impacts the project's success in general. [25]

It means that the business is people/individuals, and mental support, and cultural awareness are significant for process flow. Building trust can play a key role in developing effective relationships with partners. Trust is also helpful when a failure happens, and customers can share feedback on improvement decreasing the possibility of a second failure. Jack Gido and James P. Clements (2011) claimed that cultural awareness and sensitivity are imperative for successful global project management [26]. Understanding and gaining knowledge of the culture and customs of other team members is essential for a successful global PM as it shows respect, promotes trust, and helps create an efficient project team.

Level of responsibility, duties, and functions, contributions to the project, and sponsorship, including both financial and political support, - bring a variety to the categories of project stakeholders. Project stakeholders usually have expectations and visions of project outcomes, and non-compliance with them means failure.

In most project-based organizations Project Management Office (PMO) acts as a separate division.

Project management offices represent established organizational structures where project managers and team members interact with PM process owners, portfolios, and programs within a parent organization, and the temporary ad-hoc organizations that are created to support a large program or group of projects [27, 28].

Global PMOs are often related to the implementation of mechanisms such as coaching and assistance, information, and knowledge sharing related to political, legal, and cultural factors [29].

Project success requires the development of an effective project team. And even if PM techniques, tools, and approaches are in place, people engaged in the project as project manager and project team, are very important and key to the best outcomes. According to Forsberg, Mooz, and Cotterman (2005), the team is responsible for the achievement of product success in the market, and not only for the effective execution of the project. Since teamwork is a crucial element of project management, project managers must possess the ability to manage people, as they bear much of the burden [36]. In parallel, Akkermans and van Helden (2002) noticed that in case of failure, not all the people engaged in the project are responsible for it [30].

Formation of the team is a separate matter, and the efficiency of it will depend on how smoothly the project will be performed. Random people put together will not create an effective team. It's required to analyze the background of individuals and work with them closely not only on their hard skills and technical performance but also on cultural awareness, communication, and establishing good relationships in a team atmosphere. The project team should move together with the project manager. An effective team clearly understands the expected project outcomes, stated project objectives, what are the requirements of project stakeholders, roles and responsibilities of team members. Members' characteristics also include high collaboration, level of trust, and communication skills, which are a game-player when the team is virtual or works mostly on a remote basis. They share new information timely, generate ideas, provide constructive points of view, and have open discussions on relevant topics during the work. Members of the effective project team are professionals, first. The way they manage their work schedule, respond to the given tasks, adequately react to changes, feel responsible for the assigned work scope, and initiatively go beyond – all of these directly impact the project. The diversity brings opportunities for new visions and ideas and is considered as a strength.

The behavior of team members is significant in building a trusted environment within the organization. Also, it reflects all project stakeholders. The behavior includes a healthy conflict resolution with the acknowledgment that a lack of agreement on questions is possible and normal. Most important here is how it can be handled. Conflicts show the weaknesses and address them to the project team for analysis and further growth. The resolution might be in the form of feedback, argument revision, or meet-up. Any vulnerable situation is a step towards maturity.

The project manager's responsibility isn't only limited to time, cost, and quality management, but also integration, scope, HR, communication, risk, and procurement management. As a result, the project manager is considered one of the key persons in achieving project success and smooth delivery of project objectives within time, budget, and quality constraints.

Project success is always attributed to the role of the project manager and how they lead the processes. Project Managers need to make sure of the perception of the customer, keep in touch with them, and control their satisfaction by minimizing delays and missing deadlines, that affect customers. Customers should be confident in the leader who carries out the assigned project within triple constraints.

Proactivity of PM may warn of future risks of task delays or non-performance, they don't leave things to get solved by themselves, and they take actions to solve the situation in the shortest and optimal meantime. The project manager also acts as a coach and consultant to the team as he/she/guides the members, reminds them of the objectives, and trains them for permanent personal development, but doesn't tell them how to execute the assigned task. Again, the team consists of professionals. However, the project is not about a one-man show, in case of complicated decision-making, project managers seek for a piece of advice and suggestions from team members [26].

Methodology

Research design
The main research subject covers the notion of global companies, project success, and its fundamental component success factors as parts of PM.
To answer the research question and test the hypothesis quantitative research was conducted.

Sample group is formed by individual respondent who've taken the survey. They group is represented by project managers, executive, PM practitioners. The aim is to receive answers of PM practitioners working in global companies performing projects, who has insights and opinion on project success factors. The survey was sent to target audience through social media networks and messenger (LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Telegram) and personal face-to-face request.

Google Forms survey tool was applied to gather information and assess the responses of practitioners on their practices and success factors in various regions and fields. The survey-based research was selected as the optimal variant for data collection from moderate and large groups of participants. Answers to the research are collected on a separate Google Excel Sheet, which sorts answers in proper sequence of columns and rows and shapes raw data for future analysis.

The survey can be logically divided into two main parts.

The first part of the survey is dedicated to the background of the respondents and company profiles. The survey included questions about the fact of participation of respondents in a global project, experience, age, possession of PM certifications, their role in the project, as well as questions about the global presence of the company, project duration, team size, industry, sector, project type, and used PM methodology. They help to understand the target participants and filter the answers accordingly. Also, it clears the picture on insights of PM practices in a particular field, sector, project type, etc., in other words, it forms the context.

The middle part of the research reflects information on the analysis of PM methodologies characteristics and variability in project estimates and is not directly linked to the present research.

The last part of the survey reflects the research question of the present study (Table 1), i.e. key success factors in global projects.

The questions were closed-ended and open-ended to understand the characteristics of participants and projects globally and in Kazakhstan. The matrix question in the part for "key success factors" helped to merge multiple options into one and put a rate.

All questions were marked as obligatory, and respondents could not move to the next part until they chose options in all questions on the active page.

Research method.

The author used statistical measures like Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation, a qualitative analysis for the gathered data. These metrics helped to analyze the frequency, distribution, and central tendency of answers in matrix complex questions.

Questions at the Table 1 are dedicated to test the hypothesis:

Hypothesis: There are specific factors that significantly contribute to the success of global projects.

Question: In your view, what do you consider the most critical factors for the success of global projects?

Table 1 – Extract from the survey conducted by the author

No	Metrics / Success factors	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Highly Important
1	Cross-cultural communication strategies					
2	Use of collaboration tools and technology					
3	Clearly defined project objectives and goals					
4	Adaptive project management strategies					
5	Resource allocation and management					
6	Timely and accurate risk assessment					
7	Leadership and team collaboration					
8	Stakeholder engagement and communication					

Findings and discussions

The survey was addressed to the respondents on social networks such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Telegram messengers, by creating a post and sending direct messages. It was distributed to Project managers and executive managers from various fields, regions, and project types. The response rate was comparingly lower than expected.

Overall, the number of respondents in the conducted survey was twenty-three people. 61% of the total number had experience in global projects, consisting of 35% noting that they led projects in different regions but on the same continent, and 26% noting that they had been engaged in projects on different continents. The average age of participants is 35 years, the average work experience is 6 years. 6 of those people had project management certifications, namely PMP, SMCP, IPMA level D, IPMA D, and Chapter Lead, Prince 2.

The majority hold Project manager positions within the projects, which takes 74% of the total percentage. Additionally, it is needed to highlight the duration of their participation in projects. A large number of respondents were involved in the projects that lasted for a maximum of 5 years. However, there were only two respondents who reported being involved in long-term projects within the research and development (R&D) and oil and gas industries. These projects had a duration of 100 years and 40 years. Professional fields of the respondents occur to be very diverse: IT and consulting – 30%, Banks and insurance – 23%, Oil & Gas, and telecom – 10%, and Mining – 10% (figure 1).
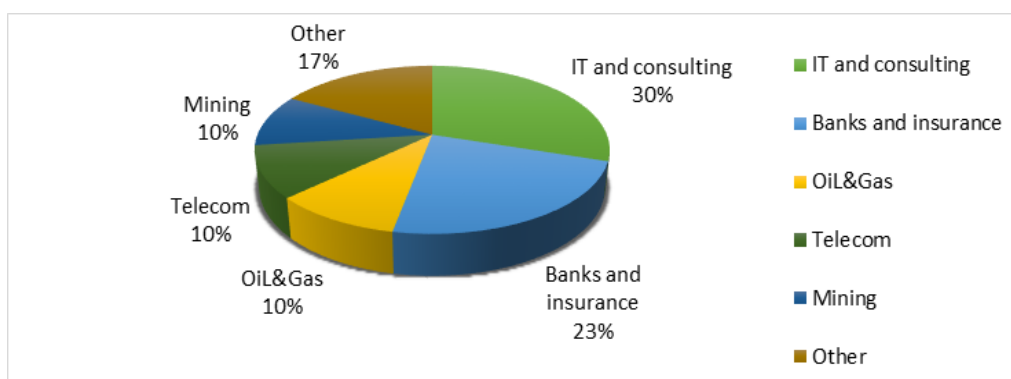

Figure 1 – Professional fields of respondents

The teams' size is also different: 1-10 people within a team were at 44% of respondents, 10-100 people within the team were at 43% of respondents, and at the same time, only 13% were working in teams of more than 100 people.

There was also the choice to choose the applied PM methodology and the answers among those, who work in global companies, were 64% with hybrid methodology and 36% with Agile, no one chose waterfall (figure 2, p. 360).

Matrix questions to evaluate preferences of practitioners in success factors included variants such as cross-cultural communication strategies, use of collaboration tools and technology, clearly articulated project objectives, adaptive project management strategies, resource allocation and management, timely and accurate risk assessment, team leadership, and collaboration, and stakeholder engagement and communication.

The average scores for these factors were 4.52, 4.39, and 4.35 respectively, out of a maximum possible score of 5 (table 2, p. 360). Additionally, the standard deviations for these factors were 0.95, 0.94, and 0.98 respectively. These relatively low standard deviation values suggest a high level of consensus among the respondents regarding the significance of these elements.
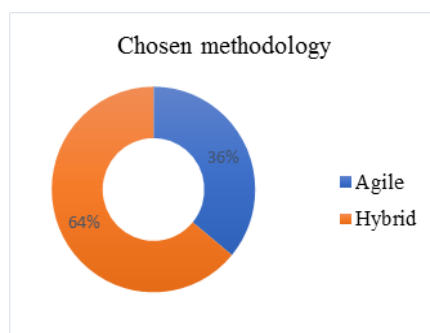
Figure 2 – Methodologies chosen by respondents

Therefore, it is clear that well-defined project objectives, effective resource management, and stakeholder engagement are crucial for initiatives in achieving success in projects within this specific context.

Table 2 – Statistical results of the survey conducted by the author.

Statistics	Variants in matrix question								Key Success Factors
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Mean	3,74	4,04	4,52	3,87	4,39	4,17	4,09	4,35	4,15
Standard deviation	1,14	0,71	0,95	0,92	0,94	1,03	1,04	0,98	0,79
Median	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,50
Mode	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4,5
Min value	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,25
Max value	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4,88
Interquartile range	1,50	0,50	1,00	0,50	1,00	1,00	1,50	1,00	0,75

Conversely, the respondents gave lower ratings to the factors of intercultural communication strategies and adaptive project management, with mean scores of 3.74 and 3.87 respectively. The standard deviations for these factors were 1.14 and 0.92. A high standard deviation for intercultural communication strategies suggests a wider range of opinions among respondents, while a lower standard deviation for adaptive project management indicates a more consistent view. This data supports the idea that intercultural communication strategies and adaptive project management are perceived differently by respondents and may have varying perceptions in the realm of effective project management.

From the final section of the survey, we found out that:
- clearly defined project objectives and goals,
- effective resource allocation and management,
- stakeholder engagement and communication,
- timely and accurate risk assessment.

They considered as key factors for the success of global projects by project management practitioners, therefore the hypothesis has been tested and approved.

Conclusion

Project success is unquestionably a highly debated topic in the contemporary academic realm of project management, attracting significant research attention. However, a commonly acceptable definition of "project success" has not been detected until nowadays. Organizations that effectively

employ project management practices to facilitate change and accomplish their business goals are the ones that achieve successful project outcomes. There are numerous chances to enhance current project management methods to align with the constantly evolving requirements of the business environment. The success criteria serve as the variables that determine and assess project success. The literature shows that time – schedule, cost – budget, and quality – performance are the three most cited and significant success criteria, added by recently recognized client/user satisfaction.

However, as time goes by and the business expands, the competitive advantage is harder to gain, and the practices begin to vary because the usual path for the project to be successful and reach excellence is not as straight as it used to be before. Our study investigated that nowadays practitioners working in global companies consider clear project objectives, effective resource management, stakeholder engagement, and proper risk management impact on the successful performance and execution of the project.

It's essential to recognize research limitations / ethical and other considerations of this study.

To collect the data by conducting the questionnaire the limit might be:

1. The response bias, as respondents can give inaccurate answers to the questions or interpret the questions in a way not planned by the researcher.
2. Non-response bias is also a possible limit, so in this regard, the list of participants can be shorter than expected. Non-response can be caused by ignoring the request to take a questionnaire.
3. Confidentiality notes - the request to hide the name of the company and the names of the participants might also cause the perception of non-reliability.

These limitations may have altered the findings' universality and must be acknowledged when evaluating them.

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¹*Саулен А.Н.,
магистрант, ғылыми қызметкер, ORCIDID: 0009-0003-9600-6377, *e-mail: anelyasaulen@gmail.com
²Есмурзаева А.,
ғылыми қызметкер, ORCIDID: 0000-0003-0114-5925, e-mail: aknur.yesmurzayeva@gmail.com,

¹Қазақстан-Британ техникалық университеті, Алматы қ., 050000, Қазақстан,
²Жетілдірілген зерттеулер және тұрақты даму институты, Алматы қ., 050040, Қазақстан

ЖАҺАНДЫҚ КОМПАНИЯЛАР ЖОБАЛАРЫНЫҢ ТАБЫС ФАКТОРЛАРЫ

Аңдатпа

Жобаның сәттілігі – жобаның мүдделі тараптары күтетін ең жақсы нәтиже. Бұл өнімді шығару немесе қызмет көрсету болса да, тәжірибешілер жобаларда табысқа жетуді қалайды және олар жобаның сәттілігі мен оның әртүрлі факторларға тәуелділігін түсінеді. Бұл тұжырымдама әлі де дамып келеді, өйткені жобалар динамикалық нарықта үнемі өзгеріп отырады. Жобаның сәттілігі жобаның сәтті орындалуына ықпал ететін факторлармен байланысты. Әзірге ол уақыттың, шығындардың және бюджеттен тұратын үштік шектеу пирамидасымен шектелмейді. «Темір үшбұрыш» жобаны басқарудың сәттілігінің бастапқы үлгісі, бірақ ол 20 ғасырдағы жалпы жобаларды ғана көрсетті. Зерттеушілер компаниялардың әртүрлі салаларда қалай табысқа жететінін талдай отырып, жаңа факторлар мен негіздерді белгілейді. Сонымен қатар бизнес кеңейіп келеді, компаниялар уақыт өте келе халықаралық, жаһандық болу үшін бірнеше елде өз аумағын кеңейтуге тырысады. Бұл компаниялардың жобаларды жүргізуді жалғастыру тәсілі қазіргі уақытта зерттеу нысаны болып, мәдени, тілдік, коммуникациялық, құқықтық және т.б. мәселелермен бетпе-бет келеді. Зерттеу әдісі ретінде сауалнама, сандық талдау жүргізілді. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері нақты факторлар жаһандық жобалардың сәттілігіне айтарлықтай ықпал етеді деген гипотезаны тексерді.

Тірек сөздер: жоба, жобаны басқару, табыс факторлары, жаһандық компаниялар, жоба қатысушылары.

¹*Саулен А.Н.,
магистрант, исследователь, ORCID ID: 0009-0003-9600-6377, *e-mail: anelyasaulen@gmail.com
²Есмурзаева А.,
исследователь, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0114-5925, e-mail: aknur.yesmurzayeva@gmail.com

¹Казахстанско-Британский технический университет, г. Алматы, 050000, Казахстан
²Институт перспективных исследований и устойчивого развития, г. Алматы, 050040, Казахстан

ФАКТОРЫ УСПЕХА ПРОЕКТОВ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ КОМПАНИЙ

Аннотация

Успех проекта – это лучший результат, которого ожидают заинтересованные стороны проекта. Будь то запуск продукта или предоставление услуг, специалисты-практики также хотят добиться успеха в проектах и имеют свое понимание успеха проекта и его зависимости от различных факторов. Эта концепция все еще развивается, поскольку проекты постоянно трансформируются на динамично развивающемся рынке. Успех проекта связан с факторами, которые способствуют успешной реализации проекта. На данный момент дело не ограничивается тройной пирамидой ограничений времени, стоимости и бюджета. «Железный треугольник» был первоначальной моделью успеха управления проектами, однако он отражал лишь общие проекты XX века. Исследователи устанавливают новые факторы и рамки, анализируя, как компании достигают успеха в различных областях. В то же время бизнес расширяется, компании стремятся расширить свою территорию более чем в одной стране, чтобы со временем стать международными, глобальными. То, как эти компании продолжают вести проекты, в настоящее время является предметом исследований, они сталкиваются с проблемами культурными, языковыми, коммуникационными, юридическими и т.д. Целью данного исследования является определение факторов успеха проекта с точки зрения практиков, имеющих опыт управления проектами в глобальных компаниях. В качестве метода исследования было проведено анкетирование, количественный анализ. Результаты этого исследования проверили гипотезу, утверждающую, что конкретные факторы в значительной степени способствуют успеху глобальных проектов.

Ключевые слова: проект, управление проектом, факторы успеха, глобальные компании, участники проекта.