

# ICT Project Management

*Challenges and Lessons Learned in Local Context*

Meried B.

CEO, IE Networks

[meried@ienetworksolutions.com](mailto:meried@ienetworksolutions.com)

[www.ienetworksolutions.com](http://www.ienetworksolutions.com)

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# Agenda

- A Project - Definition
- Project Management - Basics
- ICT Projects – Anything Special?
- Challenges faced while running ICT projects in Ethiopia
- Lessons learned
- Why IE Networks as your partner?

# A Project – Definition

*"An individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a **particular aim**"* Oxford Dictionary

*"Planned set of interrelated tasks to be executed over a **fixed period** and within **certain cost** and **other limitations**"* Businessdictionary.com

*"...a project is **unique** in that it is **not a routine operation**, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal." pmi.org*

# Project Management Basics

***"Project management, is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements."** pmi.org*

- Project Management Processes

- Initiating
- Planning
- Executing
- Monitoring and Controlling
- Closing

- Project Management Knowledge Areas

- Integration
- Scope
- Time
- Cost
- Quality
- Procurement
- Human resources
- Communications
- Risk management
- Stakeholder management

# ICT Projects – Anything Special?

- Usually involves something really really new for many stakeholders
- Usually looks threatening to job security of some stakeholders if successful
- Usually touches multiple departments, divisions or branches of an organization which demands extraordinary cooperation and collaboration
- Many people expect miracles out of IT Projects

# Challenges faced while running ICT projects in Ethiopia

## 1. Unrealistic delivery schedule expectation

- Build a 4,000 users campus network that runs on almost all imported items in 120 days
  - Getting foreign currency approval to import items would take at least 180 days.
  - Shipment and customs clearance takes another 30 days if the items are manufactured and ready for shipment from the supplier even before foreign currency approval. Otherwise, a minimum of 90-days is required after foreign currency.
  - The installation work needs a minimum of 30 days with every stakeholder collaboration, which is very ideal in most cases, if all design works are completed before the items arrival to the project site.
  - If labor intensive civil works and renovation such as excavation, trenching, pipelining, manholes, foundations, demolition, block works, partitioning, plastering, painting, wall and ceiling cladding... are involved, at least 60-90 days are required for installation works with qualified and experienced civil and electrical sub-contractors.

# Challenges – continued...

## 2. “Turnkey”

- Lazy tactic to shy away from possible changes during project period
- However, there is a list of specific items in the RFP.
- Additional items and works are almost all the time required, besides the list of specific items outlined in the original RFP, to provide a complete solution.
- Hence, change requests and processing would create long back and forth which adds into a project’s critical path.

# Challenges – continued...

## 3. Lack of ownership from the project sponsor

- The common “business case” for initiating a project is just because a competitor or similar organization did it. Or it is because a system is mandated by regulatory body.
- Lack of internal motivation for a project initiation means the sponsor doesn’t give it proper attention and the necessary support to make it a success.
- It is rare to set up a project steering committee with executive members let alone to have periodic follow up of a project by a senior management team.



# Challenges – continued...

## 4. Just go into execution; “Planning is a luxury and/or a waste of time”

- Prerequisites are usually discovered long after the project was started. Sometimes, it needs another procurement/project to fulfill prerequisites.
- No risk register to identify and mitigate risks well ahead of time.
- No issue log to trace and address issues on time.

# Challenges – continued...

## 5. No dedicated project manager or management team

- Lack of clarity on the basic difference between Project and Operation
- Though getting a project manager assigned is a big deal by itself, getting the assigned PM focus, energy and time on the project is usually unrealistic.
- Project team members usually don't consider that their unavailability or delay in decision making affects the project schedule, cost and quality.

# Challenges – continued...

## 6. Getting paid is a nightmare

- It starts with items delivery. It is usually a long and tiresome process to get a goods received note (delivery note) signed.
- Most of the times, a project team from client side is afraid of unknown far future accountability more than success of the project.
- Hence, it is common to hear an illogical demand such as downgraded version of a hardware or software to be delivered just to match with a 1+ year old RFP specification.
- Then, Procurement, Finance and Management would take their own time to delay payment for delivered items or system. Nobody wants to imagine how that would affect performance of the contractor to execute rest of the project or other projects.
- Getting paid in two weeks is like a miracle. Not being paid after six months of items delivery is not abnormal here in our market.
  - *And by the way, don't expect interest or any kind of compensation even if there is a double digit devaluation and inflation during this period.*

# Lessons Learned

1. Insist on a realistic project period before signing a contract. Or walk away; the client doesn't want to understand the reality on the ground which means a lot worse during project period.
2. There should always be a change management system in any project. There is no such thing as "turnkey" project that anticipates and addresses everything right from the beginning.
3. Without an executive buy-in from early stage, a project is doomed to fail. Bring the management team onboard or you are putting yourself into a long and painful waste of energy and resources.
4. 80-20 rule - Spend a whole lot of time on planning than fire fighting style execution. Educate the client that spending sufficient time and resources on planning would save a lot more time and resources during execution.
5. Demand proper project management organization and dedicated team (at least immediately available whenever required) including steering committee at the initiation of a project.
6. Negotiate clear payment schedule with accountability for any delay from lack of ownership.

# Why IE Networks as your partner?

- Our mission statement
  - *IE seeks to be trusted technology advisor for customers and deliver business outcomes with **excellence in project management**, technical expertise and customer care.*
- IE Networks is a company of 55+ young, committed, professional and disciplined human capital with strong leadership team.
- We are a learning organization. We take lessons seriously and improve everyday.
- Customer satisfaction isn't just enough at IE. We go extra miles to make our customers our raving fans. Hence, we don't engage into a project that we are not 100% confident in our internal capacity to deliver with utmost excellence.

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# Thank You!

Any Q?