

Model of Alignment between Personal Expectations and Project Needs

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Abstract—The paper describes an approach to aligning personal expectations with project needs by negotiation means. Two principles – operational fit and competence integration – form the base for the proposed alignment model. One of the driven force for successful negotiation is the trust between participants. The paper formalizes the trust in the project with the model based on trust and mistrust levels and analyses different types of trust defined by the model. The alignment model gives the possibility to introduce four negotiation tactics of alignment. The paper examines the properties of the tactics.

Keywords—*personal expectation; project needs; negotiation; trust; alignment model; operational fit; competence integration; tactic*

I. INTRODUCTION

The team can work towards attaining the common goals only if the entire team is willing to pursue the goal. In case of lack of a common goal, team members who disagree with the objective in hand will feel reluctant to utilize their full effort, leading to a failure to reach the goal.

In the paper [1] there was introduced an empirically grounded approach to coordination between the personal expectation of team members and project objectives (needs). It focused on normative and predictive expectations analyzing, which means mainly recognition of mismatching between individual expectations and project objectives and its resolution. The resolution process success strongly depends on the quality of relationships because it involves different kinds of communications. For example, when project manager tries to fight with Unmet Expectation anti-pattern, she has to negotiate unmet expectations with corresponded team members, as well as she has to consult with stakeholders to fight with Missed Objective anti-pattern.

The last version of IPMA Individual Competence Baseline defines the negotiation, which means the ability “to reach results that are both in the interest of the project, program or portfolio and acceptable to other parties,” as one of core competence for a project manager [2]. The purpose of this competence element is to enable the individual to reach satisfactory agreements with others by using negotiation techniques.

Negotiation can be defined as a dynamic process among interdependent and self-interested parties with different

backgrounds, which aims to reach an agreement that satisfies preferences and constraints of the involved parties [3]. The work [4] identifies such characteristics of negotiation:

- there are two parties (for our case, team member and project manager);
- there is a conflict of interest (for our situation, personal expectations and project needs) between the parties;
- parties negotiate due to the belief that they are going to gain better outcomes instead of not negotiating;
- the parties are the attitude to mutual concessions and compromises;
- psychological factors influence parties during a negotiation.

Therefore, the project manager needs a practical framework to be successful in negotiation on resolving the issue of mismatching between personal expectations and project needs.

In the paper, we propose a simple tool for alignment the personal expectations and project needs in the course of negotiation.

II. ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS AND PROJECT NEEDS

The negotiation strategy focuses on what the project manager thinks is essential for a successful outcome of the project. The selected strategy should be appropriate to the interests of the project and not detrimental to the relationships with the team members involved.

The alignment model is based on two principles: operational fit and competence integration. Also, the project manager should address both external and internal domains. The external domain is the business area in which the company is concerned with decisions such as product-market offering and attributes that differentiate the company from its competitors. In contrast, the internal domain is focused on choices about the project structure and the specific rationale for the design of project lifecycle processes, as well as the acquisition and development of the human resource skills necessary for achieving the project objectives. Within the project area, the fit between external business interests and

internal infrastructure are critical for maximizing the economic effect. As well, this logic can be adapted to the personal area.

According to the alignment model, four areas of interaction are considered, which allow for the coordination of the project and personal needs (Fig. 1).

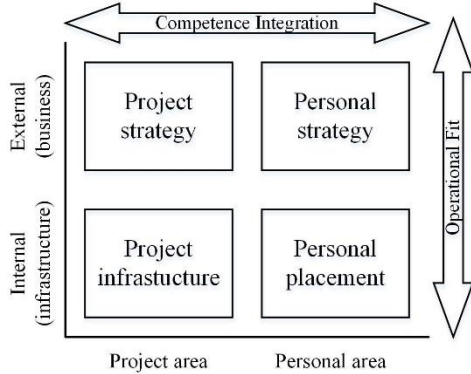


Fig. 1. Model of alignment between project needs and personal expectations

The alignment model highlights the need to focus the attention of the project manager on two aspects: the functional ability reflecting the external domains and the interpersonal benevolence dealing with the corresponding internal domains. Therefore, effective project management requires a balance among the choices made across all four domains.

The results of negotiation on the alignment between the personal expectations and project needs depend on the trust between parties involved in projects. Trust is understood as openness and honesty in conflict situations, assistance in taking the most critical decisions, readiness to offer support [5]. Trust was indicated as one of the essential factors whose significance starts at the first stage of the project when the underlying assumptions, expectations, and requirements are established [6].

In [7] authors define trust as the “willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.” There are two opposites of trust. Distrust is a complete lack of trust based on experience. Mistrust is a general lack of trust or confidence based on instinct. Because our study concerns personal expectations, we focus research on mistrust.

We must consider the concepts of trust and mistrust simultaneously since in the context of a particular project they can be simultaneously true. An agent can trust certain aspects of his environment in the project despite mistrust of other ones because in the context of project management trust is built by the manager, team members, stakeholders, and even such elements of the environment as technology and infrastructure.

Let us apply the 2x2 matrix to show the relationship between individual trust and the project, or rather, particular aspects of the project, since individuals can demonstrate different types of trust in various aspects of the project (Fig. 2).

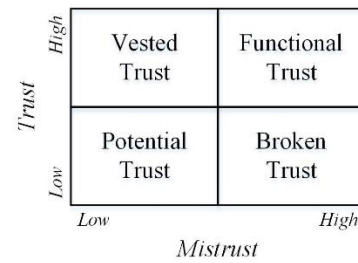


Fig. 2. Model of trust classification in the project

It seems the cell, which determines the presence of functional trust and corresponds to the formed trust and distrust is the most attractive. We say agent a_1 has functional trust in agent a_2 in the given trust scope, if an agent a_1 may trust another agent a_2 for agent a_2 's ability to perform particular task/function in a presumed scope [8]. The experience of working together often results in such type of trust, which means the facts of the performing tasks possibility has been checked in other projects. Accordingly, a dynamic team forming based on functional trust is extremely difficult. Since each project is unique, functional trust creates risks for project management.

Therefore, the cell of vested trust is more attractive because there is a formed trust, but there is no mistrust. Under these conditions, the project manager is forced to understand what factors determine the trust of a team member and make the project worthwhile of investing confidence, primarily through the provision of high-quality communications.

The most dangerous is a cell of broken trust. Although studies show that broken trust can be restored, the project manager must take into account the fact that rebuilding trust is not as straightforward as initial building trust [9]. After a trust violation, it cannot be restored if the victim is not willing to reconcile. If the victim is willing to reconcile, rebuilding trust in the relationship becomes possible but not guaranteed.

The last cell, which corresponds to the situation with unformed trust and mistrust, determines the case that is the biggest challenge for the project manager. This situation grants the project manager a space for trust building without taking into account any stereotypes.

The project manager must direct his efforts and energy to enhance effective and reliable trust. The model shown in Fig. 2 simplifies understanding of the project management context and allows orientation in the trust in the project team before the negotiation starts.

However, the project manager needs the tool for the formalization of the negotiation tactics.

III. FOUR ALIGNMENT TACTICS FOR NEGOTIATION

The alignment model can serve as the base for project manager in the negotiation of mismatches in personal expectations and project needs. Finally, we describe the alignment tactics opened for project management (Fig. 3).

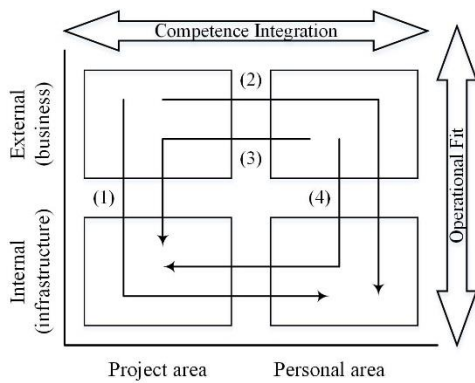


Fig. 3. Trajectories of alignment tactics

A. Orientation on Personal Expectations

The first two tactics given here arise when personal expectations serve as the driving force.

Tactic One. As depicted in Fig. 3, this tactic is anchored on the notion that the project impact on the business success of the company has been articulated and is the driver of both project organization decisions and role definition for a concrete team member. This tactic is, perhaps, the most common and widely understood one as it corresponds to the classic, hierarchical view of project management. Thus, it is not surprising that it is strongly oriented on personal ability, which could be the source of personal mistrust arising. It is essential to identify the specific role of project manager to make this tactic succeed; she should pay attention to honest and open communication, as well as delegating decisions to indicate evidence of benevolence.

Tactic Two. As shown in Fig. 3, this tactic involves the assessment of implementing the project in the context of the business strategy through appropriate personal strategy and the articulation of the personal place in the team. In contrast to the tactic one, this tactic is not constrained by the project organization. Instead, it seeks to identify the best possible personal competencies through appropriate positioning in the company. The tactic inspires trust due to a demonstration of benevolence. On the other hand, it also takes into account individual ability. For this reason, tactic two is preferable for negotiation on establishing expectation-need fit.

B. Orientation on Project Objectives

The following two tactics arise when project manager explores how the team member might participate in objectives achievement in the framework of a particular project organization.

Tactic Three. As shown in Fig. 3, this tactic is concerned with the exploitation of personal strategy capabilities to affect the successfulness of the project in the business perspective. Unlike the previous tactics, this one considers the project strategy as given. This tactic begins with a personal strategy and seeks to identify the best set of decisions about project organization and processes. The specific role of the project manager to make this tactic succeed is being the one who articulates how the emerging personal competencies and

decision between different project organizations would affect the project successfulness. It is a very deliberate tactic based on an accounting of individual ability, so it requests additional efforts to the intention and motivation of team members. Due to tactic rationality, it might be recommended for negotiation with project stakeholders.

Tactic Four. As shown in Fig. 3, this tactic focuses on how to build a stable and efficient project organization. This issue requires an understanding of the external and internal dimensions of the personal area. This operational fit for team member creates the capacity to meet her expectation. This tactic is often viewed as necessary (but not sufficient) to motivate the team member. The specific role of the project manager to make this perspective succeed is the prioritizer because she has to articulate how best to allocate the human resources within the project organization. This tactic balances well ability and benevolence – two pillars of trustworthiness.

IV. THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION TACTIC SELECTION

Let us describe the process of negotiation tactic selection based on the model of trust [7].

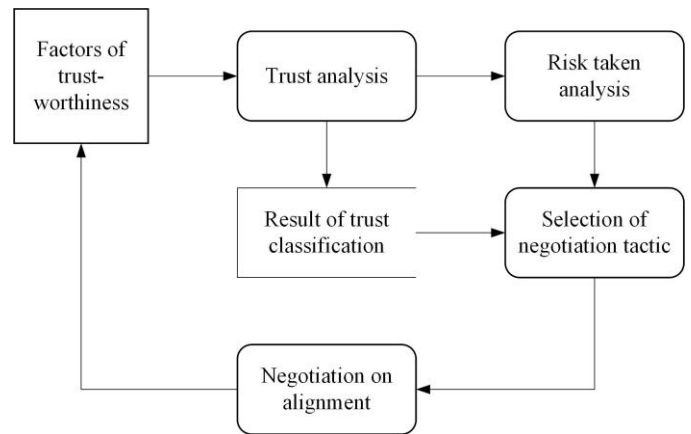


Fig. 4. DFD-diagram of the process

From the beginning, the project manager should perform a trust analysis. As defined in [7], trust is determined by the team member's propensity to trust in general and the ability, benevolence, and integrity of the project manager. Ability is that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to influence within some specific domain. Benevolence is the extent to which a project manager is believed to want to do good to the team member, aside from an egocentric profit motive. The relationship between integrity and trust involves the team member's perception that the project manager adheres to a set of principles that the team member finds acceptable. Trust analysis is based on the model of trust classification in the project. As a result, project manager defines the type of trust demonstrated in the project by a particular team member.

Next, the project manager should classify the team member as risk-averse or risk-tolerant based on the perception of risk. The perception of risk involves the team member's belief about likelihoods of gains or losses from compromises taken to get expectation-need fit. As well, the relationship with the project

manager influence on the risk behavior. The risk issue is outside of the alignment model, the risk analysis methodology, for example, could be based on the integrative review [10].

Then, the project manager should choose a negotiation tactic. The recommended options under different conditions are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I. RECOMMENDATIONS ON TACTICS CHOICE

Type of trust	Risk perception	
	<i>risk-averse</i>	<i>risk-tolerance</i>
Potential	Tactic Two	Tactic One
Vested	Tactic Three	Tactic One
Broken	Tactic Two	Tactic Four
Functional	Tactic Four	Tactic Three

The last stage involves negotiations for alignment the personal expectations and project needs. Feedback after interaction provides the possibility for updating the information concerned the factors of trustworthiness.

V. EMPIRICAL EVALUATION

In the evaluation, we tested the following hypothesis:

H_0 . Negotiation success does not depend on using the alignment model.

The analyzed cases were gathered in custom software development projects. They were focused on personal expectations of team members who have 0.5–3 years of experience. The project managers had the same level of expertise evaluated by company managers. The empirical results are generalized with Table II.

TABLE II. THE RESULTS OF OBSERVATIONS

Negotiation mode	Number of successes	Number of fails	Total number
With model using	21	5	26
Without model using	16	9	25
In total	37	14	51

Hypothesis H_0 was verified with the independence test χ^2 . There was a basis for rejecting hypothesis H_0 with significant level $p=0.2$. Hence, it seems the using of the alignment model impact on the success/failure. However, the sample of cases is not statistically representative. Therefore, this issue requires additional examination.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper introduced an empirically grounded approach to aligning personal expectations with project needs based on

negotiation. It also suggested the models of coordination for personal expectations and project needs, which defines four tactics of alignment.

The alignment model reflects some issues concerning the effective ways of coordinating personal expectations and project needs. First, the alignment model shifts the focus of the project manager from an internal domain toward the operational fit. This shift is significant because neither project nor personal exist without the impact of the market environment. Second, the alignment model and the alternative tactics highlight the diversity of roles carried out by the project manager. Instead of the traditional leadership role, alignment requires functions including those of business visionary, prioritizer, and communicator. Finally, during the negotiation on alignment, the project manager should consider two goals – operational fit and competence integration; there is a need to view the project performance from different perspectives.

The alignment model generalizes the empirical cases reported by the project managers of custom software development projects. Nevertheless, there are no limitations to make use of it in other kinds of projects.

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