Business Analysis and Project Management

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A new study on IT technology projects in excess of $250,000 by IAG Consulting discovered that project success is "improbable" for 68% of companies. And, that for the other 32% the likelihood of success was "probable" because of their established Business Requirements process. I would like to think that those 32% also use an established business Project Management process and that helped them with their projects. This study focused on the analysis portion of a project and so I will concentrate on that area of a project.

Just as there is a PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) there is a BABK (Business Analysis Body of Knowledge). In that document, part of the role of the Business Analyst is defined as the individual(s) "responsible for identifying the business needs of their clients and stakeholders to determine solutions to business problems." They are "responsible for requirements development and requirements management".

As Project Managers, we sometimes forget that the initial part of our project should be the business analysis. Whether done by a skilled (or certified) Business Analyst or somebody else it still needs to be done. It is critical to the success of a project to have a solid foundation. Without the understanding of the existing situation and the need for the project by the project participants, sponsor and senior leadership even the best Project Manager is going to have difficulty. For every project that you work on, there should be a Project Charter and Scope Statement – and the larger the project, the larger those documents may need to be. But, even for a very small project, these documents should exist (maybe in an email, maybe one sheet of paper – but they must exist somewhere!).

Just as Project Management is a process and not a one-time event, the IAG study concludes:

> Finally, requirements discovery and elicitation is a process – not a deliverable. The findings are very clear in this regard – companies that focus on both the process and the deliverables of requirements are far more successful than those that only focus on the documentation quality. Documentation quality can only assure that investment in a project is not wasted by an outright failure. The quality of the process through which documentation is developed is what creates both successes and economic advantage.

The IAG Study is called "Business Analysis Benchmark – The impact of Business Requirements on the Success of Technology Projects" by Keith Ellis and can be found at www.iag.biz.