Swedish IT Project Managers’ Personality Traits Mirrored in the Big Five

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ABSTRACT

Project success, which is critical to achieve, requires a competent project manager. Could anybody become a skilled project manager, or what does it take? One factor that is considered to influence the opportunities of succeeding is individuals’ personality traits. Which ones would be suitable for Swedish IT project managers then? Could these be mirrored in the perspective of the Big five categories? This research was carried out by collecting and analyzing job advertisements (henceforth ads.) once a year (2010-2013), in total 325 ads. The findings indicate that the three most requested personality traits for a Swedish IT project manager are driven, communicative and structured. Mirrored in the Big five dimensions the most requested traits from the study fell into the categories conscientiousness and extraversion. The practical implication is improved ads. by using the Big five categories; research implications are foremost yet another perspective of IT project managers’ personality traits.

KEYWORDS
Big Five, Five Factor Model, IT Project Manager, Personality Trait, Project Manager, Project Success

INTRODUCTION

It is often pointed out that it is essential, and should be a top priority, that projects are successfully managed by skilled project managers: Trevor Band at Siemens Business Services, UK (Pollitt, 2005, p. 28) states that: “Successful project management is the lifeblood of our business … We are therefore keen to attain and practice the highest standards of project-management competency.” A satisfactory situation for a project manager could be described as when the individual’s competencies, the job’s demands, and the organizational environment meet in a way that triggers effective actions or behavior to occur (Boyatzis, 1982). Hence, it is important to pay attention to all pieces in the puzzle that build successful project outcomes. The project manager’s personality is one of these pieces, more rarely discussed, however, and even more seldom studied. An example of a qualification requirement that is often given prominence to in the literature (PMI, 2013) is that successful project managers should be certified in accordance with established project association’s guidelines (e.g. PMI, 2013). Nevertheless, recent research findings show that 4.3 percent (14 out 325) of Swedish employers demanded certification for their applicant IT project managers and 11.7 percent (38) mentioned certification as an additional qualification (Lundqvist & Marcusson, 2014), which is less than expected given the interest that certifications usually receive. Loads of books and articles...
are also written about what is important for being a good and effective leader/manager on a more
general level. Hence it makes sense that these general theories about how to become a successful
leader spread into the project management communities, with the aim to find out how to overcome
unsuccessful project accomplishments and outcomes.

**PROJECT SUCCESS**

According to Lechler and Dvir (2010) project success could be achieved by applying: A
multidimensional approach, a number of alternative management structures, and also by the following
of a taxonomy approach. Other perspectives of successful projects are: Project management success,
project success, and consistent project success. Project management success (i.e. whether the project
was carried out the right way or not) includes factors like: Time, cost, quality, technical performance,
scope and safety. Project success (i.e. whether the right project was carried out or not, or rather if the
right product was delivered or not) presumes that expected benefits and values are realized as well
as stakeholder satisfaction was attained. Consistent project success (i.e. whether the right projects
are carried out the right way, time after time – or not) refers to an all-embracing success rate for all
projects that are undertaken in an organization (Cooke-Davies, 2004). In contrast, the size of the
organization does not affect the success; however, for IT projects to keep up with technology is a
fundamental success factor (Peslak, 2012).

A main part of project success is apprehended as dependent on how the project leadership/
management is executed. According to Pettersen (1991) there are five categories of project management
skills: Problem solving, administration, supervision and team management, interpersonal relationships,
and personal qualities. Soft project management issues are important for the project outcomes since
they are helpful for keeping the projects inside the boundaries (e.g. cost, schedule and operability/
functionality/quality). Project managers need to clearly focus on, and prioritize the goals for each
project, not least in order to get the most out of the project team’s knowledge and skills, which would
work as facilitators for the project’s goal achievement (Scott-Young & Samson, 2007). Considering
project management as a legitimate management discipline has influenced the traditional management
model by incorporating a link between the role and the mental preference. This might for example
explain underlying reasons for job satisfaction and performance – or the lack of it (Madter, Bower &
Aritua, 2012). Another factor that is perceived to be important is transformational project leadership,
which if it is missing could lead to lowered team satisfaction. Effective organizational outcomes
however, do not always require strong transformational leader behaviors (Strang, 2005). To have
sufficient personnel is an important factor (Lind & Culler, 2011). Besides, the project manager must
be able to communicate with a lot of different stake holders and staff, and also having the ability to
respond to expected as well as unexpected situations (Chang & Torkzadeh, 2013).

Leadership is dependent on the manager’s personal characteristics and one can say that leadership
behavior relates to the manager’s personality (Bergman, Lornudd, Sjöberg & von Thiele Schwartz,
2014). Creasy and Anantatmula (2013) found positive relationship between personality dimensions
and project success. Jewels and Ford (2006) developed the taxonomy of desired personal qualities for
team members; the taxonomy also highlights the fact that different teams could perfectly well desire
different personal qualities. A person’s personality influences a wide range of work-related variables
(Robertson & Callinan, 1998) and the single most important key attribute for project managers is
known to be administrative ability. Something that is also emphasized by the PMBOK Guide’s (PMI,
2013) five process groups pointing out what project management involves: Initiating, planning,
executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. Project management success often highlights
leadership abilities that emphasize teamwork and decision making skills with moderate levels of an
adaptive decision making style, and moderate levels of technical competence. Contrariwise, Valencia
(2007) found no effect of communication skill, analytical thinking, and coping ability. Additionally,
five important competence characteristics were suggested: i) motives that drive behavior (toward
Development and Validation of an Instrument to Measure Maturity of IT Business Strategic Alignment Mechanisms
www.igi-global.com/article/development-validation-instrument-measure-maturity/1294?camid=4v1a

Security-Based Knowledge Management
www.igi-global.com/chapter/security-based-knowledge-management/14078?camid=4v1a