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On the nature of the project as a temporary organization

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Abstract

The nature of the project as a temporary organization is analysed from the perspective of organizational theory. This leads to a reassessment of the definition of a project. It is suggested that classical definitions of projects are not wrong, just incomplete. The project as a temporary organization is viewed here as a production function, as an agency for assigning resources to the management of change within the functional organization, and as an agency for managing uncertainty. The role of the project manager is also considered. The project manager is chief executive of the temporary organization, and thus their roles in objective setting and motivating team members are emphasized over their role in planning and executing work. Second, as manager of the agency, they are the agent of the owner (principal) and so a second hierarchy of management and control must be put in place to monitor their performance. These agency costs add to the cost of the project, but may also explain why professional recognition is so important to project managers.



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Keywords

Agency; Principal-agent; Resouce; Change; Uncertainty; Executive management; Professionalism

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