

Online Survey: Team Involvement and Project Re-Alignment

Results as of July 5, 2009

In total 29 people participated in this online survey over a time period of about 8 weeks. This is certainly not a representative number. Still, the results indicate important insights about team involvement and project re-alignment.

Some of these insights I have incorporated in my presentation “It Takes a Team To Re-Align a Project: Lessons from Rescue Missions” at the PMI Global Congress in Orlando, Florida (Oct 10-13, 2009) and the corresponding article.

If you want to view the results online, please visit

http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=hVzU84yLB0RKFPRR0EbSk_2bkc5p2CWoRS77I3_2bpQvXaQ_3d

I welcome any feedback on the survey results or the article which will soon be posted on my website, too.

Thomas



Thomas Juli Empowerment Partners

Thomas Juli, Ph.D., PMP®

tj@thomasjuli.com

www.thomasjuli.com

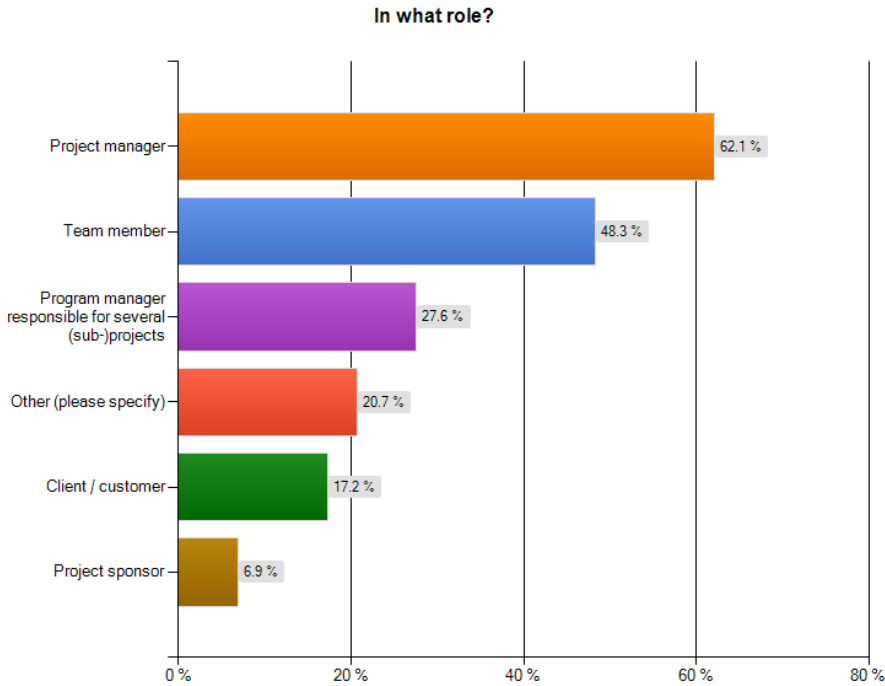
Survey Results

Personal Experiences:

1. Have you ever been in a project which has been ailing and mis-aligned?

28 out 29 respondents answered with YES.

2. In what role?

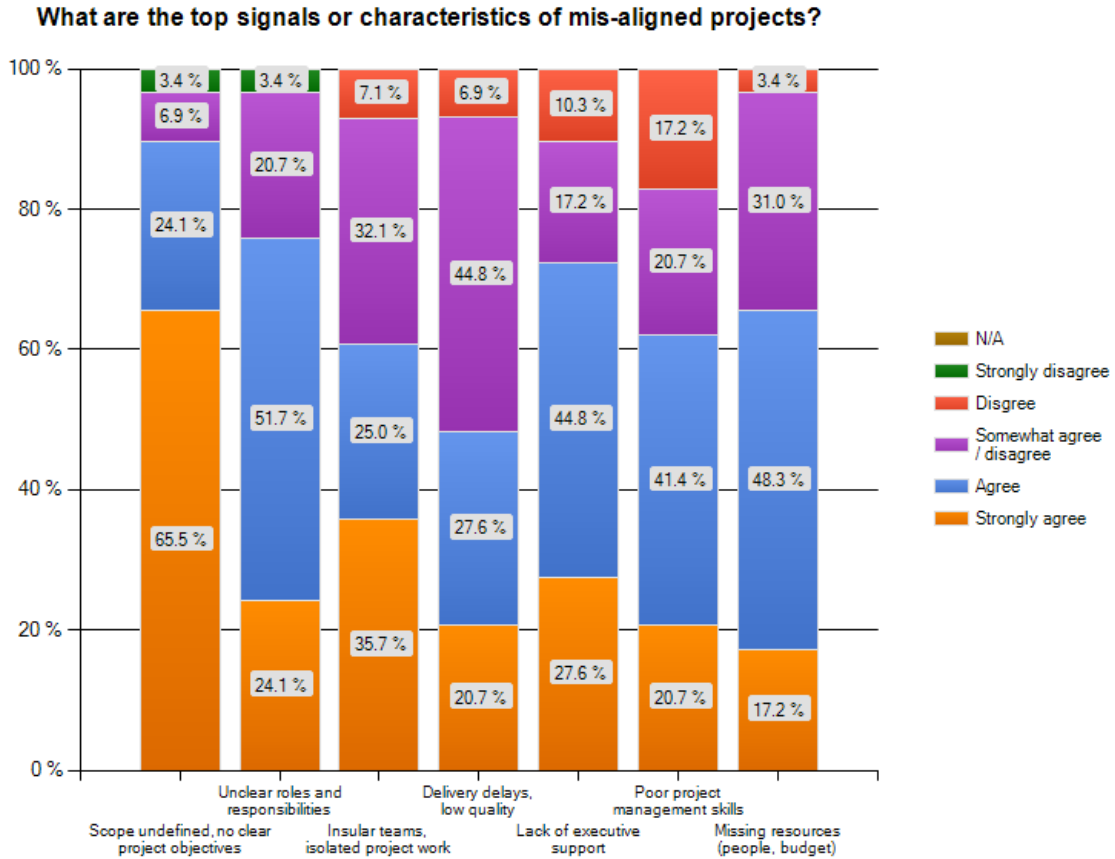


Additional roles mentioned:

- Coach
- Non-profit fundraiser with volunteers as 95% of team
- Project Management Office
- Stering committee
- Consultant for the review and PM for the rescue
- Head of Project Office

Characteristics of mis-aligned projects

3. What are the top signals or characteristics of mis-aligned projects?



Additional responses:

- Missing overall vision / context of project
- Missing Team Building as part of a project; Team which doesn't fit (human factors)
- Poor Stakeholder Management
- Not the right (techn) skills for the project in the company. And the unawareness of that in the organization
- Team know how insufficient

Approaches to re-align a project

4. What are the most effective approaches to re-align a project?

Possible responses were:

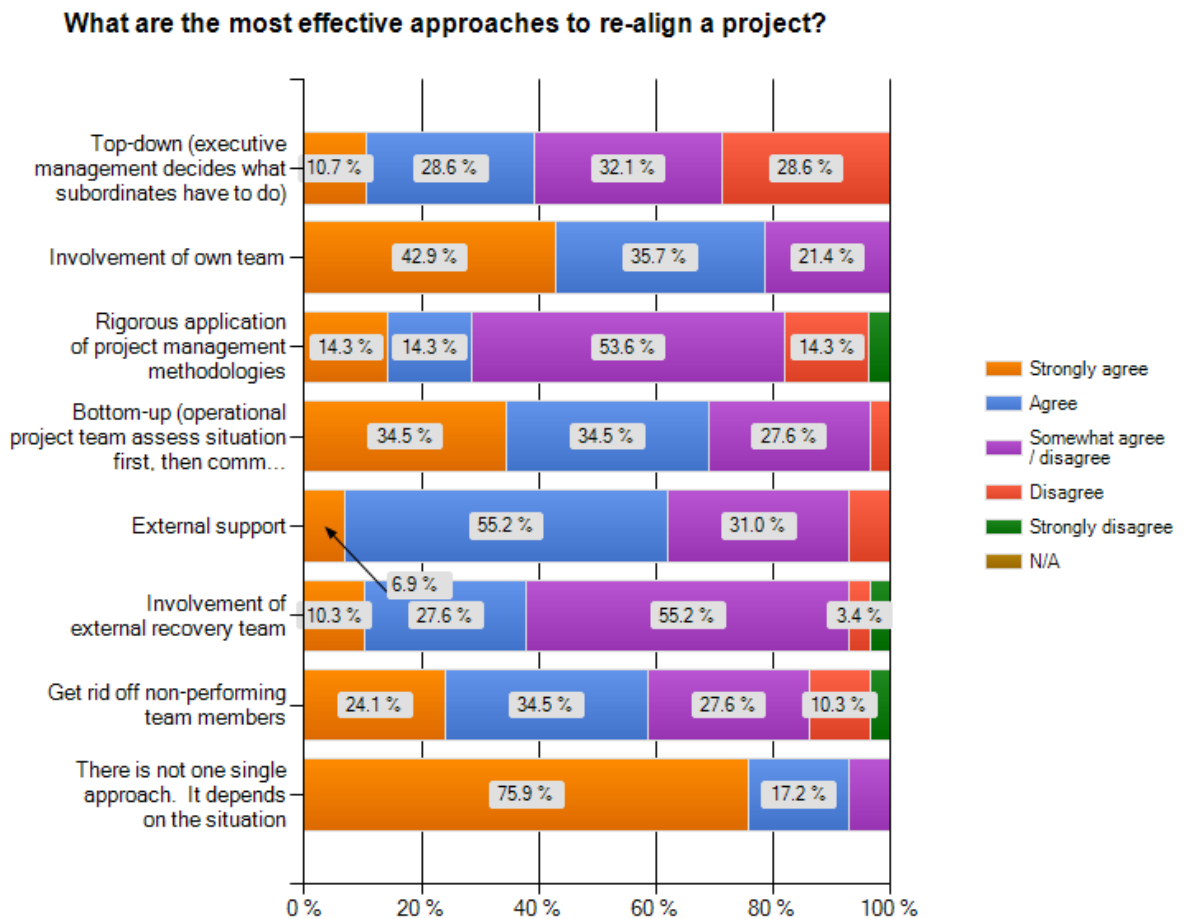
1. There is not one single approach. It depends on the situation
2. Involvement of own team
3. Bottom-up (operational project team assess situation first, then communicates results to higher management levels)
4. External support

5. Get rid off non-performing team members
6. Top-down (executive management decides what subordinates have to do)
7. Involvement of external recovery team
8. Rigorous application of project management methodologies
9. Other (please specify)

Results:

93% explained that there is no such thing as the ultimate approach. It more or less depends on the current situation, your team members, executive management and your customers. In second and third place, were responses which actively call for team involvement. 78% believe that you have to involve your own team. 69% call for a bottom-up approach, in which first the project team assesses the situation and then communicates the results to higher management levels. Interestingly, less than a third of the respondents think that rigorous application of project management methodologies is the most effective approach to re-align a project.

What we can conclude from the survey results is that *it definitely makes sense to involve your team in project re-alignment*.



Additional responses were:

- Experiential program where team members can bond, develop norms, and shared vision for project. Programs can be especially valuable for geographically dispersed, multi-cultural and alliance teams. shameless plug but info available at www.gelcorp.com
- In the end there is not such thing called "The ultimate approach". More or less it depends on the current situation, your team members, executive management and your customer. Therefore, you got to incorporate and adapt more than one of your listed approaches and

apply it to the project. E.g., sometimes it might be good to "get rid of non-performing team members", but first you should determine why is he/she not performing? Asking the right questions to analyze the situation is key to find answers getting the project back on track, applying one or multiple approaches.

- Someone (executive sponsor, project manager) has to exhibit leadership
- project team building should be part of the approach

Involving a team in project re-alignment

5. Have you ever actively involved your team in re-aligning a project?

| Answer Options | Response Percent |
|--|------------------|
| Yes, team was actively involved in re-aligning the project | 59,3% |
| Team was partially involved in re-aligning the project | 33,3% |
| No, team was only informed about measures to be taken | 7,4% |
| No, team was replaced | 0,0% |
| Other (please specify) | 7,4% |

Other responses:

- never had that case
- PM stopped every action to re-align project with team

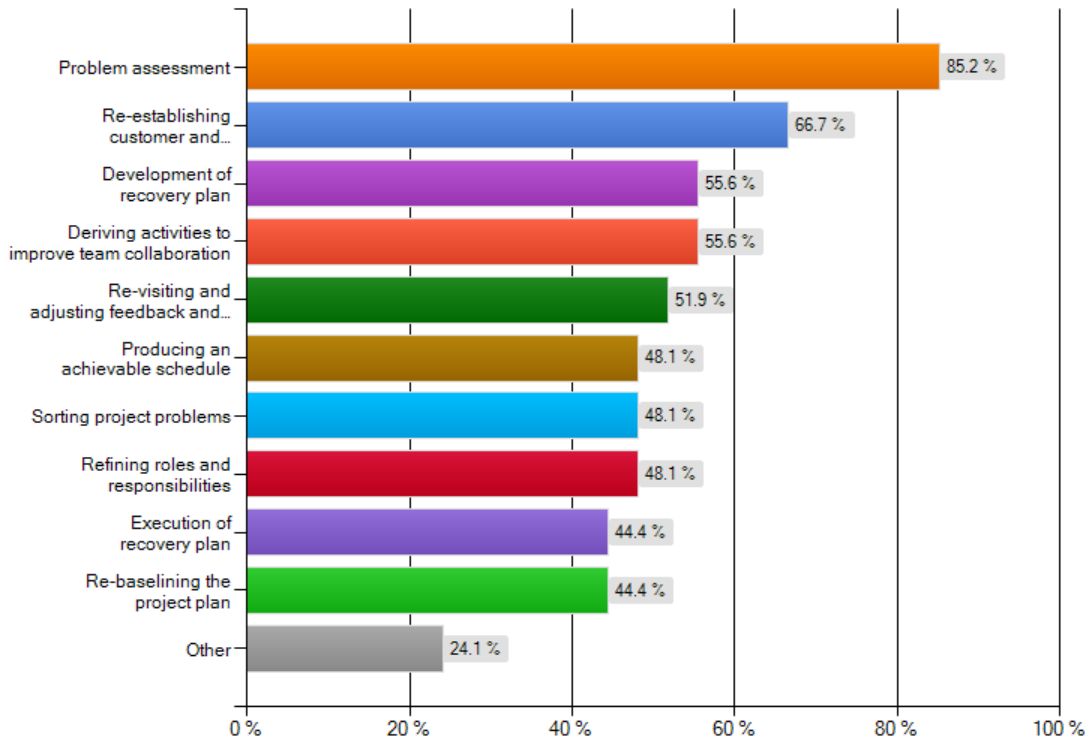
6. If you involved your team in re-aligning a project one way or another, what approach did you take?

Possible responses were:

1. Problem assessment
2. Re-establishing customer and management confidence
3. Development of recovery plan
4. Deriving activities to improve team collaboration
5. Re-visiting and adjusting feedback and learning policies
6. Producing an achievable schedule
7. Sorting project problems
8. Refining roles and responsibilities
9. Execution of recovery plan
10. Re-baselining the project plan
11. Assessing quality of team and individual deliverables
12. Other (please specify)

Results:

If you involved your team in re-aligning a project one way or another, what approach did you take?



Additional responses:

- workshops with business and team on scope reduction
- My answers show how I would involve team if I was allowed.
- Performing Lessons Learned on a regular basis
- Lessons learned identification - what went well what went wrong

85% chose the answer “problem assessment”. This is not necessarily contrary to other prominent recovery approaches which stress the importance of regaining control. One of the most important foundations of control you have as a project manager is your own team. You are surely not the only person on the project who is performing, save for a single person project. The team as a whole realizes the project. As the project manager you lead and manage the project. At the same time you are a member of the team. Corollary, if you don’t have a functioning team, you are acting without a solid foundation of control. Team building helps establish this foundation of control. In the case of a project in trouble you can certainly try to re-align it and gain control by yourself. Still, it will certainly be easier to involve your team right from the beginning and not at the end. Good leadership, team building, team work, project control and hence project re-alignment go hand in hand. The PMBOK (PMI, 2008, 418) states “Team building is the process of helping a group of individuals, bound by a common sense of purpose, to work independently with each other, the leader, external stakeholders, and the organization. The result of good leadership and good team building is teamwork. [...]” It continues, “Outcomes of team building include mutual trust, high quality of information exchange, better decision making, and effective project control.” There is no doubt that in a project in trouble you do need to regain control over the project. But you cannot do it by yourself or solely from the top down. If you want to succeed you need to involve your own team in the process. This is why *it takes a team to re-align a project*.

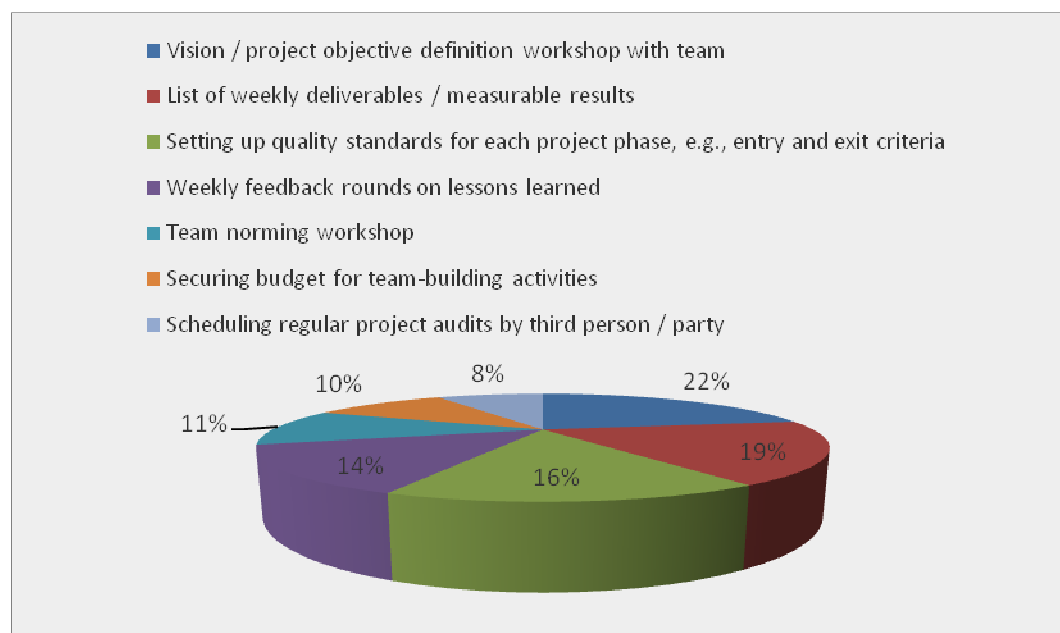
Learning from project re-alignment

7. What lessons learned from project rescue missions do you recommend to apply in setting up and managing project?

| Answer Options | Response Percent |
|--|------------------|
| Vision / project objective definition workshop with team | 88,9% |
| List of weekly deliverables / measurable results | 74,1% |
| Setting up quality standards for each project phase, | 63,0% |
| Weekly feedback rounds on lessons learned | 55,6% |
| Team norming workshop | 44,4% |
| Securing budget for team-building activities | 40,7% |
| Scheduling regular project audits by third person / | 33,3% |
| Other (please specify) | |

Additional responses:

- Clearly documented project charter with signoff required from all sponsors and stakeholders
- "Frequent checkpoints with the business,
- Professional development discussions with team members,
- Showing recognition and appreciation to stakeholders"
- Defining activities of (sub)projects in detail right from start of project; Stand-Up Meeting with team every morning to discuss issues and tasks of the day and give feedback on what went well/bad the day before; focussing on effectiv and efficient team meetings;
- Senior management involvement in engaging influential stakeholders and revisiting the personal agendas.
- In on-site projects daily "stand up" start of day with activities done yesterday and to do today. 5 to 10 minutes in total.
- "(if possible) have prototypes.
- have separate team with separate reporting lines for QA"
- Key project issues being solved by project team problem-solving workshop (plan preparation, major technical/process problem needed crative approach, etc.)



8. Please use the space below for any additional insights or recommendations on re-aligning a project with or without the help of the project team.

- Weak engagement from project sponsors is a fundamental problem
 - vision is key
 - Projects are really about people not process, shift thoughts from making process improvements and focus on EQ issues.
 - This was a tough survey. There is goodness in all of the items that you have mentioned. Also, whether internal or external intervention is needed is highly dependent on the team - some teams are not capable of the action necessary to adjust the situation. What I have seen in the external interventions is that the team is well aware of problems and root causes, but lacks the combination of knowledge and credibility to take action on this understanding.
 - There is one common mistake why projects struggle or fail: Lack of clarity of the projects objectives.
"If you don't know your destination, how can you arrive?"
 - too many to say
 - The project team are often too close to the problem to envisage a strategic recovery approach. It is often better to reassess the path followed and decide where the issues started, and throw away what was done since then, rather than to try to keep all that's been done and carry on from where you are, in a different ("correction") direction
 - Leadership
Be realistic
Be prepared to abandon the project if there is no longer a viable business case (NB doesn't have to be the original business case)
 - Of course re-aligning the project and give it a solid structure is important. Re-aligning the team and needed skills, together with good leadership of PM (!) is crucial for success of the project.
 - Setup of project communication plan (meetings structure, reporting, communication rules/principles,...) - created by project core team together.
-