The role of a
steering committee
in a project

Does your steering committee have the right composition?

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A project is usually organized on a large scale. Project team, workgroups, sounding board, sponsor group, steering committee, they are all part of it. But which roles do the different parts have to fulfil in order to make the project succeed? Especially a steering group is regularly installed without prior proper thinking about the tasks of this group, and which functions should participate in order to fulfil the roles and tasks. In this article, we will address the role of a steering committee in a project organization. Next to its tasks, powers, responsibilities and members, you will also find a few illustrating and practical examples in which the steering committee has played an important role in the success or the failure of a project.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations change continuously; new products and services, mergers and acquisitions or application of new technologies. Project management methods are applied to realize these changes. Multiple projects are continuously in progress at any organization. Either projects that stand on its own or are clustered in a program. Projects are often characterized by a structure of a steering committee, a project group and some workgroups. The steering committee is often positioned as the directing and guarding body of the project. In practice, the composition of the steering committee and the task of the steering committee differs per project. In this article, we address the role, responsibilities and composition of the steering committee. The creation of a steering committee only has added value if this has an adequate composition and responsibilities. This is an obvious matter for a project team, but in a steering committee, these aspects are often forgotten. This is why the steering committee does not always function properly. Steering committees exist in different forms and types. Some types of steering committees function properly, others less. As an illustration, in this article we provide a number of examples of projects with sound functioning steering committees and with malfunctioning steering committees. Partly based on practical experiences, a step-by-step plan has been developed that can be used for the composition of your steering committee.

IMPACT OF PROJECTS

It is of critical importance for an organization to respond to external developments and/or the application of technological possibilities in a timely and adequate manner. This importance translates directly into the importance of the success of projects that have to realize these changes. Next to project failure, not achieving the intended project objectives also has a substantial (financial) impact.

Over the years, various studies into the failure and success factors of projects have been carried out. When looking at a large number of these studies, key success factors can be reduced to:
- *Involvement of senior management.* Involvement of key management in a project reaches further than the mere initiation stage of a project. Actually, senior management is the owner of the project: they want something to be realized or changed, and can weigh priorities between projects among themselves and with other senior management members. Furthermore, the project leader should be sufficiently supported by the steering group in the execution of the

project. That also implies that they need to establish the necessary preconditions and give direction. Think of organizing adequate user engagement, prioritizing the use of resources in the various projects and line tasks and activities; but also taking decisions about (re)directing the project.
- *Clear objectives and scope.* An objective that is unambiguous and not multiple interpretable helps in maintaining focus. A well-defined scope prevents scope creep and unintentional digression to other areas.
- *High quality project and program management.* Perhaps self-evident, but project and program management is a discipline. Not everyone has the capacity and competencies to manage a project. The number of people within an organization that are experienced managing complex transformations is rather limited. In addition, not all organizations want to use a rigid form of project management for the realization and monitoring of its progress. In the present time of sizeable changes and technical developments, vigor and decisiveness are crucial.
- *Focus on quality control.* Oddly enough, organizations devote less attention to quality control than in their primary processes. Using quality control in projects increases the likelihood of success. By explicitly defining the quality requirements or acceptance criteria prior to the realization of project deliverables and by determining how these will be tested and validated, it is obviously clear to all stakeholders what the expected quality will be and whether the deliverables will be strictly in adherence with the criteria.
- *Focus on benefits realization.* The products realized by a project (e.g. a new CRM system or a new supply chain process) actually need to be used or need to start "working". Only then can the intended objectives or benefits such as increased productivity, cost-saving or higher Net Promotor Score be realized. Managing and monitoring that these benefits are realized is too often handled implicitly. Actively controlling a project ensures that the responsible managers in the organization will take on the realization of the benefits as anticipated in the business case.

Therefore, a steering committee of a project has an important role in the success of a project. It anchors the involvement of senior management, helps to maintain focus on objectives, monitors the quality of project management and deliverables, directs and controls the line organization for the realization of the business benefits, etc. However, establishing a steering committee is never a guarantee for involvement without further ado. We outlined a few criteria to which a steering committee needs to comply with to function successfully.

TASKS, POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A STEERING COMMITTEE

Major tasks

The project steering committee has as its most important task the fulfilling of an initiating, signaling and adjusting role to objectives with respect to a project. This task can be further defined as regularly assessing project results, the project objective and the project risks on the basis of reports. After completion of each project phase, the steering committee has to assess whether the intended results suffice, the project objectives are still valid, and the project risks are acceptable and/or have sufficiently been addressed. This task of the steering committee implies that het members of the steering committee have to be well-informed of the status and progress of the project. Practice shows that the knowledge and the available capacity of steering committee members is usually too limited in order to be able to form a well-balanced and weighted opinion about the risks of the project.

A sensible steering committee is therefore supported by an independent external advisor who supports the steering committee in the area of project risk management. We see various interpretations of this role, two basic types are:
- A sparring partner role. A highly experienced project and program manager coaches the steering committee members in their role. The members of the steering committee are being prepared to really take on their role: how to be informed, which decisions do you have to take, how to listen to your gut feelings and presentiments. The sparring partner role also offers the possibility to discuss in confidence what to expect of a project and the possible risks.
- A quality assurance role. A quality assurance role periodically investigates the status, progress, most important risks and the way in which the project controls the risks. To this end, project documentation is viewed and discussed with the most important people concerned in a project. Independent from the regular progress reports by project management, the quality assurance role reports its findings independently to the steering committee.

Powers of a steering committee

The project steering committee also fulfils a task in the decision-making for those situations in which the project manager has no mandate or when there are conflicting interests or when there are conflicts within the project organization. At first sight, the role the steering committee fulfils in the decision-making process seems a clear: the decisions of the steering committee are binding as it is the highest entity in the project organization and can take binding decisions. However, the way in which

Using quality control in projects increases the likelihood of success

the steering committee takes on a decision-making role differs. In the situation that an organization positions a steering committee as a sounding board, we hardly ever see the steering committee taking a decision. If cases are submitted to the steering committee, the steering committee will formulate an advice regarding the decision-making. The project group either follows this advice or not. The steering committee could have a more supporting role. It only takes decisions for which the project group is not competent or about which there is a dispute within the project group. The steering committee takes all decisions; the project group has a preparing and executing task in the decision-making process.

But what about the role of the steering group in organizations that have an agile approach? The core of the agile way of working entails that teams work on new products (services or IT adjustments) in short clear periods ("sprints"). This way of working has many advantages: it stimulates closer cooperation of employees of several disciplines, which results in faster decision-making, and it offers more room for creativity in the development process, ensuring flexibility for responding to and redirecting of projects due to changing requirements or priorities.

The agile way of working is sometimes used as a reason for giving less direction to a project. And with it also relaxing or giving up the responsibility on budget and progress. Regretfully, this is a misconception. Yes, it is correct that agile working advocates self-directing teams. However, these self-directing teams almost always are part of the bigger picture; a project or program that has as its goal to realize a business change (e.g. improvement of a Shared Service Center or an integration of an IT system). The different agile teams contribute to the realization of the bigger picture. These projects apply the regular project management methods in order to ultimately realize the prior defined targets with the scopes of time, budget and quality. A steering committee that ultimately

is the owner of the project is also present when working in an agile manner. This steering committee has a far more supporting role than would be the case in a more traditional approach.

Responsibilities

Formally, the steering committee is also the "commissioner" of a project, the recipient of the project results. In recent years, we see more and more that a steering committee is formed at the start of a project and that there are fewer projects without some type of steering committee. The commissioner's role also implies that they are the project owner and with that responsible for the successful execution of the project. The ultimate responsibility of a project is with the steering committee as the final project result needs to contribute to the business objectives. The steering committee has both budgetary and managerial responsibilities. This governance structure has to guarantee that there is sufficient attention from the organization for the realization of the project objectives. The steering committee delegates the daily project management to the project manager, who is authorized within the predefined boundaries (time, budget, quality and scope). No adjustments by the steering committee are needed as long as a project remains on course. The project manager can take self-sufficient decisions within the tolerance limits and is obliged to report to the steering committee as soon as the project threatens to cross these limits. The steering committee's task is to maintain the applicable boundaries and limits. In this way it is safeguarded that significant deviations of the project cannot go unnoticed by the steering committee.

In order to guarantee effective decision-making by the steering committee, the project team and the steering committee has to make some clear agreements at the start of the project on:
- the role, tasks, mandate, responsibilities of the steering committee (a RACI matrix might be useful in complex project organizations);
- the power and mandate of the project manager (also in relationship to those of line management);
- the way in which the project team reports to the steering committee (and in some cases even beyond);
- the frequency of the steering committee meetings.

Composition of a steering committee

The success of projects is , amongst others, dependent on the productive involvement of all persons concerned. Within a project, a product is being delivered by suppliers (internally or externally), for clients (end users), or on behalf of the realization of organizational objectives. If one of these parties is underrepresented,

it creates risks for the success of the project. It leads to delays, dissatisfied customers or project results without sufficient added value for the business.

For the composition of the steering committee, the following points of attention need to be considered:
- ensuring the different roles of the steering committee, inclusive the decision-making role;
- representatives in the steering committee who have the proper decisive power.

The Prince2 project method acknowledges three representative roles in the steering committee in order to prevent underrepresentation: the business manager (Business), the senior user (User) and the senior Supplier (Supplier). This cast in the steering committee is indicated within Prince2 as BUS:
- Business manager (Business). The business manager role is the project manager and the owner of the business case. They assess the project in relation to the business objective and the business interest, the justification of the costs compared to the benefits.
- Senior user (User). The senior user role represents the group that will leverage the results of the project in their operation. In addition, this role ensures a sound alignment of the project results with the user requirements.
- Senior supplier (Supplier). The senior supplier role provides the required manpower, budget and/or services for the project. This role assumes the responsibility for the robustness of the designs and products and standards followed. Moreover, the supplier assesses the feasibility of the products to be delivered within the set boundaries of planning and budget. This role is often filled in by a representation of the IT organization as they usually provide the internal and external manpower for the execution of het project. This role can also be filled in by an external supplier, such as an IT provider or software package supplier. We do note that most suppliers are reluctant to fulfil an actual role in the steering committee; they prefer to be a listener.

Except for ensuring a sound representation, these three different roles also contribute to a natural powerplay within the steering committee. This is how the different interests are properly expressed, and they can be counterbalanced (so-called countervailing powers).

The business impact of a project largely determines the composition of the steering committee. A project that affects most business processes significantly and therefore the entire organization, needs a steering committee with representatives from the entire organization. In addition, it is important that these representatives have the proper power. The steering committee members

must be entitled to take decisions that influence the entire organization. For a project at department level that only impacts the business processes at the department concerned, the steering committee should consist of members that have decision-making power within this department and can properly assess the consequences of certain decisions for this department. Those not investing in the project, in whatever sense, should definitely not co-govern. A financial director as member of a steering committee of a small project that only impacts a department outside of the financial domain is not an effective choice and could even be a drag factor; direct involvement is lacking. A steering committee (member) must be able to experience the changes in an organization and navigate likewise. Next to sufficient decision-making with the various committee members, it is important that there is a clear decider within the steering committee. This decider is the one who in case of a difference of opinion/insight within the steering committee can take a decision and will, upon the request of the project leader, take decisions in specific situations outside of the steering committee meetings. The chairman of the steering group mostly fulfils this role.

THE ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE IN THE DIFFERENT PROJECT PHASES

A project goes through several phases, each phase has another purpose. Therefore, the activities that a steering committee needs to perform in order to fulfil its task differ somewhat per project phase. This poses other demands of the composition of the steering committee. Table 1 shows per project phase the tasks of the representative roles in the steering committee and the requirements of composition of the steering committee. Even though various roles of the steering committee and various types of persons are desired per project phase, this does not mean that the steering committee has to change completely with every phase. A fixed kernel within the steering committee is of the utmost importance. Only with a number of steering committee members serving on the steering committee throughout the project can it be ensured that the steering committee has an overview of the overall project. This is because it needs to be able to not only make the decisions necessary for the phase the project is in, but also to consider the decisions made previously. Where appropriate, it is advisable for the steering committee to invite experts to assist it in its role.

Table 1. Tasks and composition of the steering committee related to the project phases.

| | Project phases | | | | |
	Vision/Definition	Design/Validation	Execution	Implementation	Aftercare/ Operations
Tasks Business manager	Test the definition against the demands of the organization. Analyzing costs/benefits.	Test whether the project is still in line with business interest. Test whether this design complies to the approved definition. Make resources available.	Test whether the project is still in line with the business interest. Guard progress of the project. Monitor budget.	Determine acceptability of risks for implementation. Provide resources if required.	Determine whether project objectives have been realized. Assess whether all project deliverables have been delivered.
Tasks User	Test the definition against the requirements and demands of the organization.	Validate whether the design meets the approved definition.	Test whether the products to be realized remain in line with the user requirements.	Determine whether users are sufficiently trained and informed. Approve aftercare organization.	Assess whether all delivered products are satisfactory.
Tasks Supplier	Test quality of project organization.	Secure technical resources.	Safeguard sufficient availability of resources of user organization. Monitor scope adjustments.	Ensure sufficient involvement of organization for acceptance tests and conversion/ migration.	Safeguard timely completion aftercare period.
Composition	Officers with strategic overview, with power to approve the project definition (including planning, staffing, budget).	Officers empowered to take decisions with respect to business and process changes. Representation of user organization and MT. Power to change the scope (if necessary).	Officers are empowered to take decisions with respect to business and process changes. Empowered to provide resources. Empowered to accept or reject the modifications to the design.	Involvement of representation of business/user community, mandated to provide operational resources/ capacity.	Officers with strategic overview.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

The following provides some practical examples of the steering committee's role in projects:

- Initial steering committee. A steering committee of which the initial composition is suitable for the start but not for the execution.
- Substantive steering committee. A steering committee that is seduced to touch a lot of substantive themes, focuses heavily on project content and repeats discussions previously held at the same (steering committee) level.
- Receding steering committee. A steering committee that, further to the success in a prior phase, further distances itself in the next project phase.
- Directing steering committee. A steering committee that is very conscious of het positive effect on the project success in order to keep a project leader alert.

The initial steering committee

An organization identified a critical security incident. It appeared that several employees had access to the personal contact data of employees, but also to those of their clients. A primary investigation revealed that resolving it would be a complex task. It appeared to be significantly more than the mere strengthening of access security rights. The various contact data within the different processes and systems that were created, used and changed also had to be investigated. But far more urgent was the uncertainty who was responsible for what and how to operationalize this responsibility.

The board of directors acted immediately by requesting some employees to develop an approach in order to address this problem. As one of the first actions, a steering committee was formed consisting of a member of the board of directors, the Corporate Security Officer, the Concern Controller and the IT Director. The intended project leader started elaborating the approach, supported by internal and external resources. This approach was discussed with those responsible from HR and Sales and agreement was sought with adjacent projects in order to properly map the (inter)dependencies. The detailed approach for the entire project and the first three months were approved by the steering committee.

However, almost immediately after this consent, the steering committee meetings were tampered with. The first signal was that the member of the board of directors wanted to be informed about the delivery of certain important project milestones. The frequency of the planned in steering committees was adjusted: meetings in which the board of directors was present and steering committee meetings "in between" intended to catch up with the other steering committee members.

After the granted approval, the first real steering committee was no more than a catch-up session for two members of the steering committee. The project group realized the deliverables agreed upon in the prior period of six weeks, but also established that the range of the project issues was far bigger. The steering committee meeting directed itself towards the discussion of the realized products and the sound cooperation within the organization. No one within the steering committee thought about the impact of the size of the issues on budget and planning. The signal for longer timelines was not picked up by the steering committee members but also not made explicit by the project leader.

The internal reflection of the project team on this steering committee revealed that the involvement of senior management was not felt any more. It did not feel right that only two out of the five steering committee members were present. The project team therefore determined that the steering committee did not have the proper composition required for the execution of the project. The initiative of the board member to start the project was sound. But it also became abundantly clear that in the first part of the execution the responsible HR director was the owner. In alignment with the steering committee members, the composition was adjusted accordingly. It was decided that the responsible board member would be periodically informed by the HR director. The project team also looked into its own conscience with regard to the approach of the steering committee meetings; reporting is based on a clear pattern. Not only is the steering committee informed about progress, but standard issues, decisions to be taken and budget utilization are also discussed

The substantive steering committee

A Dutch wholesale organization consisting of multiple operating companies initiated a project for the introduction of a new ERP system. The project organization consists of a steering committee, project group and a number of working groups. The working groups have been subdivided into functional areas: Finance, Purchase, Sales, Logistics and ICT. The steering committee consists of management team members of various functional focus areas.

From the start, the project group gathers weekly, the steering committee gathers once a month. The organization is featured as strongly operational with a limited attention to the longer term. These features are also reflected in the pragmatic project approach: collecting matters without a proper action plan. This translates into project group meetings; multiple subjects of the various disciplines are discussed substantively and extensively and in joint consultation actions are determined. The

average project group meeting therefore lasts at least 4 hours. In preparation of the project group meeting, each employee provides a progress report for their own focus area. This progress report is extensively discussed in the meeting. After rounding off the project group meeting, a total progress report is drafted consisting of the separate progress reports, including formulated actions.

In a discussion of this progress report by the project leader the steering committee is briefed. The project leader discusses the entire progress report. The steering committee as well as the project group meeting discusses the subjects substantively and determines by common agreement whether the actions taken by the project group have been correct or whether other actions should be taken. Even though these meetings have a lower frequency than the project group meeting, the duration does not differ.

The steering committee in this project organization has a strong substantive role; it wants to be kept informed of the smallest details. Even though it is the culture of this organization to be strongly content oriented, this approach is of course highly inefficient for the project leader and for the members of the steering committee. The project leader has to deal with two project groups, switching between the two. In addition to that, the steering committee members of a fairly senior level devote a lot of attention to substantive matters. The question is of course whether this construction is effective. For this organization, the construction is certainly effective because a pragmatic approach was chosen for the implementation of the project. This entailed that a large number of matters needed to be discussed. A risk of this approach is that despite the extensive discussions, decisions are taken that would not have taken with a solid preparation. In addition to that, chances are that the steering committee will lose oversight. The steering committee does not fulfil a reflective/contemplative role anymore but is strongly involved in content. Who then in the organization is available to redirect the project? In this steering group, it is striking that no clear agreements have been made regarding the tasks and responsibilities of the steering group and the project group. The members of the steering group are so involved with regard to content that it is more a case of implementing than adjusting.

The regressing steering committee

A multinational production organization has initiated a transformation project that has as its goal to harmonize the business processes (purchase, sales, finance and production) and to unify the current various IT systems into a single new ERP system. The organization has attracted an external consultancy firm for the implementation of the ERP system. The project organization is firmly built up and consists of a project group lead by an external project leader, various working groups and a steering committee. The working groups consist of a sound representation of the user organization complemented with external implementation consultations. The steering committee consists of four people: the general director, the financial director, the head of production and a director of the consultancy firm.

The implementation project of the ERP system was divided into two phases. The first phase relates to the implementation of the financial modules, the second phase relates to purchase, sales and production modules. The first phase of the project was successful; the financial modules was implemented within the initially planned schedule and budget. In this period, the steering committee gathered monthly. The meetings of the steering committee were characterized by alertness; the committee had a good sense for the status and progress of the project and the associated risks. The different members of the steering committee were positively critical towards the project leader and took concrete decisions in the cases the project leader submitted to them.

The second phase was led by another project leader of the consultancy firm, with more knowledge of the purchase, sales, and production modules. There was a "winners feeling" due to the successful first phase. This was such a strong feeling that a few months after the implementation of the first phase the steering committees' attention for the project deteriorated. Its meetings became shorter and were not attended by all members. It even occurred that steering committee meetings simply did not take place. This led to an unpleasant situation for the project organization as several activities in the organization were not properly attuned to the project activities as they were outside the influence sphere of the project leader. This is how the implementation project was delayed unnecessarily.

As a result of the reduced involvement of the steering committee, the project leader decided to take decisions independently. This is how the implementation date of the second phase has been shifted twice without the steering committee being substantively involved. After the implementation date had been shifted for the second time, the general director gathered the steering committee and indicated that the status of the ERP project needed to be investigated. Upon the steering committee's request, a project review was performed by an independent IT Auditor into the status and progress of the project. The most important finding of this project review was that the steering committee was insufficiently involved and that its composition was still based on the first phase. This created a situation for the project in which

insufficient resources were made available from the user organization on critical processes and at critical times. In response to these findings, the general director in cooperation with the project leader devised a new composition and new job responsibilities for the steering committee and drafted a new planning for the remainder of the project. Those ultimately responsible for purchase and sales were included in the steering committee.

In this project, the steering committee performed a sound role in the first phase. Through clear reporting lines, frequent meetings and clear decision-making, the steering committee delivered a clear contribution to the success of the first phase. The attention of this steering committee slackened in the second phase, in the end to such an extent that the project leader was forced to take independent decisions. The cause of the slackened attention was the steering committee's idea that they were well underway with the successful implementation of the first phase. Also, the composition of the steering committee did not connect perfectly to the scope of het second phase. Process owners of purchase and sales processes were not involved in the second phase. An important lesson to be learned from this example from practice is that the steering committee needs to be involved in the entire course of the project.

The directing steering committee

A financial institution had a blueprint developed by an external consultancy firm for future IT/information provision. After approval of this blueprint by the organization and by the parent company, a project group was set up to realize the blueprint. The project group is led by an external project leader. The steering committee consists of the executives (general, financial and commercial director), IT director of the parent company and the project leader. Within the organization, the financial director is responsible for the realization of the project.

In the first months of the project the project leader translates the blueprint into action plans to realize the concrete future information systems. In one of the first steering committee meetings the steering committee has the project leader present the elaborated plans. As the financial impact differs from what was proposed by the external consultancy firm, the steering committee proposes to have the action plans tested by an IT Auditor. Here, the steering committee has a strong steering role. Based on external testing, the action plans are adjusted and the project is started up.

The project leader holds a biweekly project group meeting; the steering committee gathers monthly. During the execution of the project, the project leader discusses the progress every week with the financial director. Also,

in the discussion with the financial director, the project leader provides an overview of bottlenecks and decision points, as well as a suggested approach in resolving the bottlenecks. The financial director has a decisive role if there are multiple ideas resulting from the project with respect to the realization of functionalities and organizational changes.

In addition, in the monthly steering committee meeting the status and the progress of the project is formally reported upon. The general director in these meetings very consciously fulfils a stimulating role with respect to the project leader. In this way he wants to show continuously that the project is a serious matter for the organization and is followed meticulously. The steering committee is periodically supported in its role by an IT Auditor. Once every three months, the steering committee has the status and progress of the project investigated by this IT Auditor. The findings are reported in the steering committee; the project leader may present his proposed actions directly after the report, in order to fill up the concluded gaps. In this way the steering committee maintains grip on the project and on the project leader.

In the final phase of the project, the production was postponed twice with a month for various reasons. After the second postponement, the steering committee did not want a third postponement for a number of reasons. From that moment onwards, the steering committee decided to get more substantively informed about the status and progress of the project. The project leader needs to report to the financial director on a daily basis. In addition to that, the latter has requested an IT Auditor to continuously investigate whether the action points as mentioned by the project leader are sufficiently picked up and whether the project leader adequately controls the risks. Even though the construction was not an optimal situation for the project leader, it was an emergency intervention of the steering committee in order to get a grip on the project after all.

From the beginning, the steering committee realized that it would be a sizeable project with serious financial consequences if it would fail. That is why it wanted to keep a close grip on the status and progress in the project from the start. This was accomplished by including the successful realization of the project in the job responsibilities of one of the executives. As a consequence, the responsibility of the organization for the succession of het project clearly was on the retina of the steering committee. The steering committee, consisting of the entire management, was conscious of which subjects it could redirect independently and for which subjects it needed external support. Although top-heavy, the composition of the steering committee was effective and in line with the size and complexity of the project for the organization.

REFLECTION ON EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

From the above-mentioned practical examples, we can conclude that the composition and the tasks of the steering committee do not always meet the needs from the project. Admittedly, the composition of the steering committee consists of mostly senior employees, but in the situations described, it is not clear which users they represent, whether they have the proper decisive power and which tasks/activities are expected from them. Also, the composition of the steering committee is not periodically evaluated in relation to the developments within the project.

In as far as we know, the described steering committee was initially consciously compose, but not adjusted in time. The other steering committees were formed in a natural manner; in other words, the members seemed the right persons for the job at first sight. Our examples show, however, that a balanced composition of the steering committee, clear job responsibilities and a division thereof over the members could have prevented a number of bottlenecks in the course of the project.

STEP-BY-STEP PLAN TO COME TO THE COMPOSITION OF A STEERING COMMITTEE

Based on the tasks, powers and responsibilities within a project as mentioned before, a step-by-step plan that can be used for the composition of a steering committee entails:

- Determining the impact of the project (which parts of the organization are influenced by the project).
- Determining which group can provide an important contribution to the project. Think of "Business manager", "User" and "Supplier".
- Describing in advance the contribution of the different groups and opt for those persons who have gained a lot of respect in that area. Those without authority, in any sense, should not try to acquire it through a steering committee.
- Determining which decisive powers the steering committee needs. Opt for persons who already have such decisive powers in their present activities.
- Indicating the chairman and with that the decider of the steering committee.
- The steering committee should not be larger than five or six people. Prevent the steering committee from becoming an unwieldy body that is difficult to convene in a timely manner and in which discussions are impossible because of its size.
- Considering guidance of an (external) expert in guarding the progress and the control of the project risks .

CONCLUSION

The steering committee holds a role in a project organization that should not to be underestimated. The steering committee is commissioner for the realization of the project. This role in no way dismisses the responsibility to successfully execute the project. This responsibility entails that the steering committee participates in the project and does not look at the project group's progress from the sidelines. This also poses demands for various tasks of the steering committee, and for the time actually spent on the project.

The real-life examples in this article also reveal that in practice the job responsibilities and the composition of the steering committee have not always been established consciously. Based on experiences, you can use the step-by-step plan for the composition of the steering committee.

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