

# **Building Program and Project Management Muscles: The Key to Excellent Operating Models <sup>1</sup>**

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and

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## **Introduction**

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The future belongs to organizations that are able to continually stretch. It has become evident with intense disruptions, that the only operating models that could survive and sustain growth in the future are the adaptable and resilient ones. Value-focus has been widely discussed in research and practiced for the past few years. In addition, the need to find better and more effective ways for implementing strategy has been in the forefront of what executive teams continued to be concerned with.

We learned a lot over the years about what works and what does not in the utilization of program and project management. Strategically, organizations have finally started realizing the true value of structured, yet highly adaptable, practices for driving the major change missions they face. The next decade will see a tremendous focus on building these program and project management muscles and how this directly contributes to impacting organizational operations and how they deliver value to their most critical stakeholders.

During the past decade, there has been a great deal published on the business benefits and business value resulting from effective project and program management practices. Companies are now realizing that project and program management are more than just another career path position. They have become strategic competencies necessary for business growth, customer satisfaction, and sustainability of the business.

What most companies fail to realize is the impact at the organizational level and the company's business model resulting from the elevation of project/program management from a career path to a strategic competency. New organizational structures are being developed and, in many cases, resulting in major changes to the firm's traditional business model.

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## **The Strategic Benefits of Good Project/Program Management** \_\_\_\_\_

There is an adage that some trainers use in project management courses: “Any executive that always makes the right decisions probably is not making enough decisions.” Applying this adage to the project selection process, not all projects approved by senior management will be successful. But what we do recognize as happening in organizations is that the project success rate increases as organizations become good at project management.

When the project success rate increases, there are several changes seen in companies, three of which are:

- Program/Project management becomes a strategic competency rather than just another career path position
- A significant increase in the number and new types of projects the company needs for strategic growth
- Project and program management practices are applied to all the projects/programs rather than specific categories

## **Operating Models of the Future** \_\_\_\_\_

Forecasting major changes to the operating models of the future could begin with an understanding of the drivers that will necessitate that changes expected to take place.

- Increased need to respond to customers’ changing demands and growing expectations
- Having a delivery model that is reflective of the strategic focus of the business, that has been shifting to delivering change and decreasing investments in traditional operations
- Need to balance business as well as technical decisions
- New and more mature metrics to measure what success looks like
- Use of Artificial Intelligence and digitalization to enhance quality and speed of decisions

Building new types of operating models that would sustain growth and ensure value delivery, will shape the DNA of the future organization. One of the greatest strategic shifts executives have been making, is expanding their views of what project and program management muscles development achieves for their organizations strategically. These executives are now holistically seeing how to connect and build the end-2 end value

stream of the business on a foundation of proper program and project management practices.

This creates a great future opportunity for the program and project practitioners and the strategic units that own the cascading of the organizational strategy into a prioritized set of initiatives. Operating models in the future are in essence seeing a set of key characteristics shine:

- Investing in building an experience-driven culture that uses programs and projects to enrich those experiences
- Putting digitization in the center as a critical component of delivering initiatives' outcomes
- Exemplifying new forms of leadership necessary for the next decade of organizational excellence
- Applying adaptive delivery frameworks, while creating a fine balance between alignment and autonomy

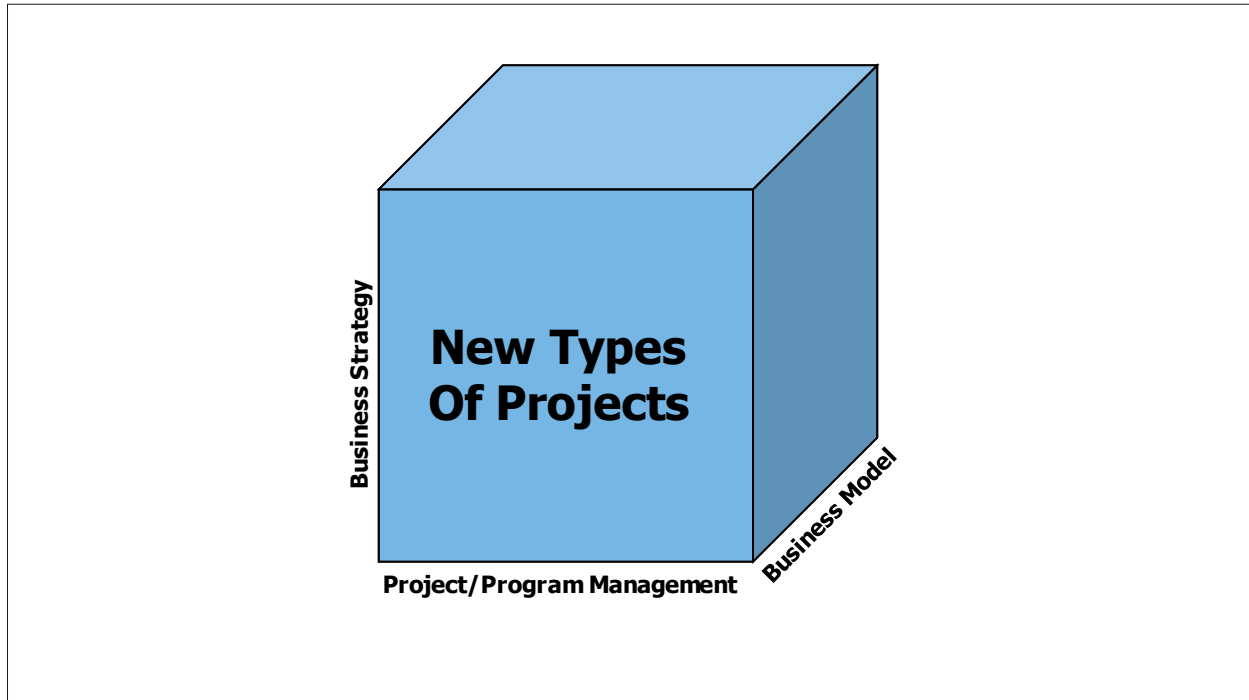
## **Organizing of Future Projects**

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As the number and types of projects increase, companies are being challenged on how best to organize for the growth in projects. For several decades, project management practices were established for managing a single project rather than a group of projects. The single projects were mainly traditional projects that were started with well-defined requirements, a business case, and a statement of work. Other types of projects, such as those related to business strategy, advances in technology, R&D, innovation, and business opportunities were managed by functional managers who were allowed to use their own approaches, often not including any of the traditional project management processes, tools, or techniques. The success rate for many of these nontraditional projects was significantly lower than the success rate on traditional projects.

For traditional projects, project managers were assigned from the controlling functional unit. Resources were assigned, when necessary, from other functional units using a strong, weak, or balanced matrix organizational structure. When the project was completed, regardless of whether the project was a success or failure, the employee would return to his/her functional unit. The success or failure of the project most often had no impact on the employee's performance review by the functional manager.

The new types of projects, accompanied by the organization's recognition that project management has become a strategic competency, has brought forth new issues as shown in Exhibit 1.



**Exhibit 1. Future Projects Alignment Attributes**

## **Strategic Focus Shifts**

The strategic nature of many of the new projects are forcing organizations to better understand the alignment between projects/programs and business strategy. Project management is now part of the organization's strategic business plan with a focus on long-term rather than short-term business benefits and business value.

Integrating strategic planning and program/project management will create alignment issues and conflicts resulting from new organizational change management initiatives. Some of the issues expected to surface include:

- The focus will be on managing and organizing groups of projects rather than a heavy focus on individual projects.

- Many of the new types of projects require that the workers be assigned full-time to the effort.
- Functional units will be created for managing groups of projects and employee performance reviews will be the responsibility of the new functional units.
- There will be a much greater level of participation by people outside of the project team and also outside of the organization.
- There will be new problems and issues that will be more complex and unlike what has been seen previously on traditional projects.
- Problem-solving and decision-making will become more complex. Organizations will need additional soft skills training in these areas.
- The sharing and communicating of strategic information will become a necessity for effective problem-solving and decision-making to occur.
- The measurement of success on these new projects will be the business benefits and business value created rather than just creating a deliverable for a client.
- The focus will be on long-term rather than short-term business benefits.
- Program and project teams may not be self-managed. Organizational units may be created for managing groups of projects and project management leadership will be horizontal and vertical rather than just horizontal as with traditional projects.
- New business-related tools and techniques will be part of project management practices. Project managers will see themselves as managing part of a business rather than just a project.
- The program manager's focus will be on managing the linkage between the organization's strategic goals and the program's objectives rather than simply creating a deliverable for a client.

## **THE PATH FORWARD**

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As can be seen from the above list, program and project management muscles are quickly becoming a strategic/business process with the intent of achieving strategic goals rather than just deliverables on a project or a program. These initiatives' leaders will need to formulate strategies to compensate for changes in the enterprise environmental factors and market conditions.

The good news for tomorrow's operating models, is that executives are gradually comprehending the strategic potential of program and project management and thus are paying closer attention to the muscles building required. There is now a clear realization that the future operating models need continual transformation and that properly and

strategically prepared program and project managers, will be essential to driving future successes.

Shifts in how we work and how deliver value, dictate a new mindset and adaptable practices that the program and project leaders are best at bringing to the forefront. Any reinvention of future operating models will be affected by the delivery vehicles of products and services to customer and other stakeholders, and thus the importance of these muscles will continue to grow.

It is with adaptability, creation of experience-driven culture, and the effective use of digitalization, that the program and project management practices, will continue to demonstrate strategic impact. Empathizing to growth mindset needs of these future leaders will directly contribute to the effectiveness of the next generation operating models.

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## About the Authors



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**Dr. Harold Kerzner** is Senior Executive Director for Project Management for the International Institute for Learning (IIL). He has an MS and Ph.D. in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering from the University of Illinois and an MBA from Utah State University. He is a prior Air Force Officer and spent several years at Morton-Thiokol in project management. He taught engineering at the University of Illinois and business administration at Utah State University, and for 38 years taught project management at Baldwin-Wallace University. He has published or presented numerous engineering and business papers and has had published more than 60 college textbooks/workbooks on project management, including later editions. Some of his books are (1) Project Management: A Systems Approach to Planning, Scheduling and Controlling; (2) Project Management Metrics, KPIs and Dashboards, (3) Project Management Case Studies, (4) Project Management Best Practices: Achieving Global Excellence, (5) PM 2.0: The Future



of Project Management, (6) Using the Project Management Maturity Model, and (7) Innovation Project Management.

He is a charter member of the Northeast Ohio PMI Chapter.

Dr. Kerzner has traveled around the world conducting project management lectures for PMI Chapters and companies in Japan, China, Russia, Brazil, Singapore, Korea, South Africa, Canada, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Poland, Croatia, Mexico, Trinidad, Barbados, The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Venezuela, Columbia, United Arab Emirates, France, Italy, England, and Switzerland. He delivered a keynote speech at a PMI Global Congress on the future of project management.

His recognitions include:

- The University of Illinois granted Dr. Kerzner a Distinguished Recent Alumni Award in 1981 for his contributions to the field of project management.
- Utah State University provided Dr. Kerzner with the 1998 Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to the field of project management.
- The Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Project Management Institute gives out the Kerzner Award once a year to one project manager in Northeast Ohio that has demonstrated excellence in project management. They also give out a second Kerzner Award for project of the year in Northeast Ohio.
- The Project Management Institute (National Organization) in cooperation with IIL has initiated the Kerzner International Project Manager of the Year Award given to one project manager yearly anywhere in the world that demonstrated excellence in project management.
- The Project Management Institute also gives out four scholarships each year in Dr. Kerzner's name for graduate studies in project management.
- Baldwin-Wallace University has instituted the Kerzner Distinguished Lecturer Series in project management.
- The Italian Institute of Project Management presented Dr. Kerzner with the 2019 International ISIPM Award for his contributions to the field of project management.

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**Dr. Al Zeitoun** is a Future of Work, business optimization, and operational performance excellence thought leader with global experiences in strategy execution. His experiences encompass leading organizations; delivering their Enterprise Digital and Business Transformation; guiding fitting frameworks implementations; and using his empathy, engineering insights, and collaboration strengths to successfully envision new business models and execute complex missions across diverse cultures globally.

In his current role with Siemens, he is a Senior Director of Strategy responsible for driving the global program management practices, Master Plan governance, and enabling the Strategy Transformation processes and priorities.

In his position, as the Executive Director for Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation, Abu Dhabi, UAE, he was responsible for creating the strategy execution framework, achieving transformation benefits, governance excellence, and creating the data analytics discipline necessary for delivering on the \$40B complex country energy mission roadmap.

At the McLean, USA HQ of Booz Allen Hamilton, Dr. Zeitoun strategically envisioned and customized digitally enabled EPMO advisory, mapped playbooks, and capability development for clients' Billions of Dollars strategic initiatives. Furthermore, he led the firm's Middle East North Africa Portfolio Management and Agile Governance Solutions.

With the International Institute of Learning, Dr. Zeitoun played a senior leader and global trainer and coach. He was instrumental in driving its global expansions, thought leadership, and operational excellence methodology to sense and shape dynamic ways of working across organizations worldwide. He speaks English, Arabic, and German and enjoys good food, travel, and volunteering. Dr. Al Zeitoun can be contacted at [zeitounstrategy@gmail.com](mailto:zeitounstrategy@gmail.com)