Reasons of Software & IT Project Failures in Pakistan's Government Sector

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Abstract— Software Engineering has evolved and many software development techniques and models have been development to smoothing the process of software development. Even after the evolvements of these techniques and models, many software and IT projects continues to fail. By failure doesn't mean that the project collapsed completely. Most of the software projects doesn't complete in estimated time and budget. This text cover some different aspects with respect to reasons behind the failures of software and IT project failures and will help project managers and higher authorities in Pakistan government sector to reduce the chances of software and IT project failures.

Index Terms— Project Failures, Pakistan Government, Project Management, Software Project Failure, Software Development, Software Project Management, Project Management Failure

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INTRODUCTION

Many surveys have been conducted to discover the reasons of IT & Software projects failures. The failure of an IT project is not unusual and there are many reasons behind the project failures including poor communications, meeting milestones, maintaining the required quality level, meeting the budget,… etc. The chances of project failure can be reduced through proper project management. Many software development process models have been developed to reduce the chances of project failure.

Today IT has a key role in all fields of life and the concept of E-Government has evolved in last 10 years. In today's modern world, a successful Government cannot be run without the support of Information Technology, Software and Database systems. In Pakistan's Government Sector, the ratio of failure of IT based projects is a bit higher. The News revealed that almost one third of World Bank's (WB) multi-billion dollar credit financed projects in Pakistan have failed to achieve the desired results. (News Link). Many software projects initiated in Government sector were not able to produce desired results and were not completed in estimated time.

After working for 4 years in Pakistan's Government sector and 2 years in private sector, I have learned many reasons of Software Based project failures in Pakistan besides the traditional software project management failures. Some of them are highlighted here.

1 LACK OF SKILLED PROFESSIONALS

Unfortunately our educational system is not good enough to produce skilled human resource. Most of the teaching staff doesn't have any professional job experience. The higher education system is focused on theories rather than practical work.

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While considering for the jobs of teaching faculty in universities and colleges, the hands on experience of the applicants doesn't count. As a result, the persons having practical hands on experience doesn't get a chance to deliver something to young graduates.

The IT industry is growing very fast and we have not updated our curriculum to deal with current needs of the industry.

2 LOW PAY SCALE

The opportunities for a talented IT professional are unlimited. An average programmer can earn $6 to $10 per hour, and experienced programmers can earn $20 to $25 per hour while working at home through freelancing. The private organizations and software houses also pay handsome salaries to the IT professionals.

In presence of these wonderful opportunities, skilled IT professionals never prefer to join Government Organizations where chances of high earning are very limited and growth rate is very slow.

3 DUAL JOBS

The specialized experts of the particular fileds truly know their worth and they want to cash themselves. As they are not satisfied with their salaries at the job, they used to find other sources of income as well. Most of the programmers, database and system administrators do freelance work, and some do teaching in private colleges along with their jobs. Some experts do multiple jobs at a time.

This greedy attitude also affects their performance because they could not find enough time to relax themselves and spend most of the time in working condition.

4 JOB SECURITY

In most Government organizations, the IT staff used to work on contract basis and they have not been offered a regular job. The threat of losing the job always revolves in their minds and led them towards organizational politics. This greatly affects their performance outcomes.

5 EXPERIENCE HAS NO WORTH

The programmers couldn't program till 50-60 years old like any other career would do (nurses, lawyers, doctors, engineers. etc) its either they will get promoted to a high ranking manager, build their own company.

But for Government sector, this is not true. A programmer is supposed to stay at his post unless he improves his education. The practical and hands on experience doesn't have any worth in Government sector.

6 OVER WORKLOAD ON SKILLED PERSONS

Due to all above described cercumstances, very few specialized experts manage to survive in Government sector and expectations from them are very high. They are swarming with extra work load because their colleagues and fellow workers are not capable enough to handle complicated problems. Due to these extra responsibilities they used to spend extra time in office, they cut off from their personal and social life. During the office hours, they spend most of the time dealing with managerial or non-technical issues.

In the long run, this practice ultimately affects their performance and their skill level decline gradually.

7 POLITICAL INFLUENCE

All the Government Offices are heavily influenced by the elected politicians. When the government change, all the higher administration of the government offices also change and political favorites of the new government replace them. As a result, the ongoing projects or the delayed projects used to layed down without any further developments.

The recruitment system in not based on merit, at the time of recruitment, these elected politicians play a very negative role to bring forward their near and dear ones ignoring the fact that they are not up to the mark technically.

8 ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

Organizational politics is an inescapable and intrinsic reality. Organizational politics is so intricately woven with management system that relationships, norms, processes, performance and outcomes are hugely influenced and affected by it. Organizational politics can be described as self serving and manipulative behavior of individuals and groups to promote their self interests at the expense of others, and sometimes even organizational goals as well. In Pakistan's Government sector, organizational politics are directly or indirectly related with the political environment of the country.

Political climate of an organization is impacted by a leader through treatment and use of authority under different settings which is clearly visible during the acts of decision making, setting agenda and interaction with others to mobilize support, inspire teams and individuals and recognize people.

9 LACK OF LEADERSHIP

Indisputably, leaders are source of power, influence and hence politics in an organization. Since people have needs and leaders have the authority to fulfill these needs, those who fulfill the needs hold potential power. Leaders can to a great extent smother political climate having negative impact on the people attitudes and organization outcomes by aligning individual needs with organizational goals, in such a way that fulfillment of collective goals results in automatic fulfillment of individual needs also. Leaders must realize that organizational politics is a function of culture of trust in the organization, which is built through values of fairness and transparency. Fair play, justice and transparency in procedures and processes is key in creating an environment where organizational politics take back seat and a progressive culture is established which gives prominence to organizational goals through voluntary involvement of individuals. In other words, leaders must inspire people into action by creating clarity and unity of purpose and build synergies through organizational values.

It is extremely important for leaders to understand, exploit and smother the political climate in the company to maximize the organizational outcome and satisfaction levels of the people.

CONCLUSION

Many project management tools and techniques have been developed to reduce the risk of an IT project failure but some serious policy making at government level is required to reduce the software & IT project failures. Government offices should not be influenced by the elected politicians. The recruitment system should be based on merit. The government should start talent hunting programs in the universities. The giant companies of IT like Microsoft, Google, Oracle, they have already started Brand Ambassador and Student Ambassador Programs in the Universities all over the world. These companies pick up the best human resource from all countries. The Government should make peaceful and equal employment opportunities for everyone, so that our best human resource can take part in the development of the country rather than going abroad and sell their expertise to other nations. We must also peep ourselves, develop some moral values and discourage the behavior of hatred and leg pulling.

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