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Project exit strategies – Minimizing adverse effects of project failure through strategic termination management

Master's thesis in International Project Management

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Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
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Preface

In order to be successful in today's competitive business world, managers need to be able to deliver results on time and within budget. This requires delicate play-by-play decisions and an extraordinarily amount of tolerance. From the day you enter your mid-level job, you're expected to apply award winning Project Management tools and techniques to further launch yourself up the corporate ladder. In your free time you will look through numerous books on management that will help you maximize performance and guarantee optimum results, you will do everything in your power to know how to lead large or small projects all while effectively leading, motivating and instructing a team. Soon, you will have all your clients on speed-dial, flowers will be sent to your boss weekly and every aspect of successful Project Management processes will be perfectly ingrained within your sharp mind.

Ideally, you could continue for years tugging at every project upper management sends your way. You ride the momentum of your ambition until you come to a screeching halt. You go back looking through your 101 books on becoming a successful manager and realize that there is no wisdom to preempt. You're not sure why everything is failing. Did you overspend? Was the project overrun? You critically overthink things until you finally come to a truer conclusion. Projects are too complex to simply be dictated by time and budget. Similarly, projects are vivid and volatile processes too transient to measure in relationship to our own lifestyle. Throughout our education and in our books, we have been taught how to strive for best scenario cases. We memorize skillfully how to successfully manage businesses or projects. We opt for mastery of success until we inevitably find ourselves in the most unpleasant predicament; failure in what we do.

The purpose of this dissertation is to help project organizations understand how project failure affects the Project Leader and subsequently the project team. The dissertation also aims to contribute by sharing termination strategies that can help practitioners effectively reduce the effects of project failure.

Structured Abstract

Background: Project termination and failure is underrepresented in project management literature, its effects on the project organization and Project Leader remain unclear.

Aim: To study how project failure influences the Project Leader from an organizational perspective and how one can effectively terminate troubled projects.

Research design: The study adopted qualitative methods, using semi-structured interviews in order to perform a thematic analysis on the accounts of ten Project managers involved in the IT, Construction and Production sector.

Findings: Social constraints seem to also be a common cause of project failure as opposed to only technical and economic causes. Organizations lack formal methods of coping with project termination. There is a need for improved knowledge and resource management, especially in multi-project settings.

Conclusion: Project termination and failure can be effectively managed by introducing more formal methods that have been introduced as a result of considering project failure as a real problem. Project failure can indeed create feelings of anguish and negative behavior in the project team and leader. Clear ownership and improved project-ending competences in the Project manager can help resolve some of the issues with stakeholders and the project team.

Keywords: project termination, project failure, effective exit strategies, project leader

1. Introduction

The existing era of Project Management has been very clear and deliberate in expressing the importance of project success, especially in terms of defining success measured in time, cost and quality (Maylor, 2010; PMI, 2015; Elkington, 1999). These factors are without question an integral part of Project Management and all existing Project Methodology literature are abundant on information on this. The problem however stems from the fact that most plans that revolve around the three mentioned factors require a pre-conceived appraisal and expectation on how the project will behave in regards to time, cost and quality (Dosumu and Onukwube, 2013). Project success is limited to a pre-conceived notion that “winning” and “doing your job well” is reflected in acquiring monetary gain and beating the clock, this perspective has been criticized for being too narrow and insufficient (Chan, Scott and Chan, 2004; Norman & Macdonald, 2004). However, the incursion of some new scholars into Project Management is slowly allowing for refreshingly new perspectives to be taken. Two such new perspectives include measuring Project Sustainability (Ebbesen and Hope, 2013; Khalili, 2011) and following the views of your Project Stakeholders proactively (Bannerman, 2008; Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2012). Both mentioned perspectives offer an outside-the-box thinking that allows considerations for the future and the present notwithstanding the classical Project Management model.

The author proposes in a similar fashion that perspectives such as project failure and project termination are given the same delicate consideration, especially in an organizational context where the services of a Project Manager are required. Failing something is an extremely exhausting and straining activity and similarly failure in work will in most cases have a negative carryover to private life. The same goes the other way around. These individuals may experience emotional and mental distress that will cause a reduction in performance, motivation and overall quality of life (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). A person in a leading position who holds a great deal of responsibility needs to learn how to manage these types of situations (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004).

This report will explore project termination. It will investigate how Project Managers cope with project failure and how project termination impacts Project Managers from an organizational behavior perspective. Furthermore, it is important to understand that not all projects are equal. The severity and impact of a failed project differs depending on project size, duration and business sector. This report will therefore study Project Managers from the Construction, Production and IT sector and how these individuals experience and handle project failure. The aim is to study the duality of Project Management. While we are incredibly well-versed in knowing how to succeed with our projects, it is time to learn how we can effectively manage the failure of aforementioned projects.

1.1 Background

Failure in projects can come in different constellations and the subsequent terminations of these projects are due to various reasons. A project is defined as terminated when: “work on the substance of the project has ceased or slowed to the point that further progress is no longer possible” (Meredith and Mantel, 2000). Almost all projects follow a certain life cycle that is denoted using time. These projects include phases such as initiation, development, implementation and termination (Meredith and Mantel, 2000; Turner, 2009). As can be noticed, the projects have a planned beginning and end that is due on either specific dates or a pre-set period planned beforehand. There seems however, to be a great deal of focus on the front end of the projects, this is evident in the majority of Project Management literature where little attention is given to the termination phase (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013). Researchers found that in a typical project management textbook, less than 5 % of the pages were dedicated to discussing project termination (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013) and that the pages that did in fact discuss project termination depicted termination as something natural and uncomplicated (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013).

In reality however, project termination can be very problematic. Especially when the goal has yet to be achieved. Also, the closure can sometimes create feelings of anguish and disappointment among the project team (Meredith and Mantel, 2000; Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013).

Author Meredith (2012) explains that termination of projects has a larger impact on the attitude of the project team, client and senior management as opposed to the technical success (finishing launch of building, product or resource). Project termination means that some project members need new employment and equipment and materials will have to be re-deployed. This also leaves a greater challenge if external stakeholders are considered. The residual work will include regaining trust from both project members and stakeholders as well as having to fill up the large dent in the budget due to compensation to suppliers and the project firm (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013; Meredith, 2012).

A large global study done by Harvard Business Review was performed on 1, 471 different projects in the IT sector. The researchers compared budgets and performance with the actual cost and result of the projects. The results show that the average cost overrun was 27 % for projects across the board with several outliers that showed even more alarming numbers. One out of six of the projects showed cost overruns of 200 % on average and a schedule overrun of approximately 70 % (Flyvbjerg & Budzier, 2011). The authors conclude that the problem might be that business executives are guilty of “projectification” a term that denotes the idea of having work be the sum of many temporary projects (Flyvbjerg & Budzier, 2011). What we can see from the statistics mentioned is that projects should have been terminated a long time ago, especially if we are to follow the definition given by Meredith and Mantel (2012).

In fact, a team of researchers from the Technical University of Berlin took a look at 200 German multinational companies and found that failed projects added up to a cost of \$14.3 billion. Their findings also show that 67 % of all studied companies failed to terminate failed projects (Meskendahl et al., 2011). The same study shows that 32 % of the companies are performing redundant work due their inability to terminate these unsuccessful projects (Meskendahl et al., 2011).

In the context of organizational behaviors author Nuldén (1996) argues that projects set-up in an environment where the structural and political environment is strong can lead to projects being more prone to escalating (Nuldén, 1996). This is because the behaviors of

members in that organization can be overly optimistic in encountering problems, leading them to taking organizational efforts for granted due to their relative power position (Nuldén, 1996). Nuldén (1996) explains that projects that are deeply imbedded in the subculture of such an organization will not even be considered for discontinuation which could leave long lasting organizational behaviors that could eventually cripple the entire business (Nuldén, 1996).

1.2 Rationale of the Study

From the findings in the background section, we can see that there is a disproportionate amount of projects that require immediate attention and termination. While the overall decision lies within the hands of upper management, the actual repercussions from failed projects are readily felt and deserved by the Project Managers who are left responsible for keeping team morale high and stakeholders in the appropriate loop. Thus, it is crucial that a Project Manager learns to pay attention to projects that are not aligned with the corporate strategy (Dinsmore and Cooke-Davies, 2006) as well as cope with the subsequent hardships that will influence and impact work and private life as a result of project termination. One aim of the study is to find how business professionals can stay professional no matter how great the adversity. Termination of projects usually has an impact on the residual attitudes of people directly linked to the project. The client, senior management and the project team will have to face troublesome decision-making that can affect the success of subsequent projects and relationships (Meredith, 2012). The author argues that due to the straining activities that commence at the subsequent termination of a project it makes sense to carefully plan an exit strategy.

In fact, in the context of organizational behaviour some scholars argue that project failure can be constructive (Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe, 2011). The authors explain that project failure allows for a subsequent evaluation of the situation, the negative emotions that stem from failure forces the individual to see the failure in new light and hence allow for positive reinforcement (2011). The argument introduced by Shepherd, Patzelt and Wolfe does however perhaps assume that the Project Manager for instance shoulders full responsibility or completely accepts the failure as a normal part of the project experience. In contrast to

the idea above, Charette (2007) writes that what is considered as project failure (cancellations, delays in schedule, budget overruns) are rather “project blunders”. A project failure is according to Charette (2007) when correct actions and decisions have been taken but the overall timing is wrong, as opposed to “project blunders” that are flaws in the management of risks and stakeholders (Charette, 2007). This dissertation will therefore try to understand how failure and termination of projects affects the Project Manager from an organizational behaviour standpoint.

1.3 Research Aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to explore how project termination influences a Project Manager from an organizational behavior perspective as well as investigate how different Project Managers choose to exit failed projects.

Objectives:

1. To understand why projects are terminated and the impact that failure has on Project Managers.
2. To explore exit strategies that can limit damage on resources, motivation and stakeholder relationships.

1.4 Research Question

- How does project termination impact a Project Manager from an organizational perspective?
- How do different Project Managers choose to exit failed projects?
- How can Project Managers effectively terminate failed projects?

1.5 Research Method

The research method in this dissertation is qualitative in nature and aims to explore current trends in the Project management world, more specifically topics pertaining to project failure and project termination. The collection of data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews allowing for inductive reasoning to take place. In the interviews the author established a set of defined questions that can extract the experiences of the participants. Bryman (2012) defines semi-structured interviews as: "the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule. They are able to vary the sequence of questions." The participants for the interview will be selected using purposive and snowball sampling. The collection of data will also find support in literature and journals, especially topics connected to project failure.

1.6 Delimitations

Bryman (2012) would argue that the data generated in a purposive sample or a non-probability sample in this context would not be adequate enough to draw general conclusions. It is therefore important to state that a priority is to accumulate theory rather than stating facts. However, due to the stated complexity of this research both scope and lack of literature can be an issue in terms of ability to touch the subject completely and extensively. Furthermore, the greater portion of research will be attributed to firms and companies that run IT, Construction and Production projects meaning that there is a degree of expectation in how much theory can be produced as well as reliance in the participants' ability to prove useful. Other delimitations are only focusing on the organizational behaviour aspects that are affecting the Project Manager and not necessarily factors such as cost, time and quality that are integral in the classic view of Project Management. It will also be difficult to make any general conclusions and generalizations since the focus will be on interviews and not very large sample groups.

1.7 Structure of Dissertation

Chapter 1 marks the beginning of the thesis and presents an overview of how the research will be conducted as well as formulates the problem background, rationale and possible delimitations. The chapters offers the reader an idea of why, how and where the research is being held.

Chapter 2 presents a critical account on the available literature: it is partly divided into two areas of focus. The first focus will be on general Project Management termination procedures and the second focus will emphasize organizational behaviours pertaining to the termination of projects.

Chapter 3 examines the existing approaches and methodologies to research, instructs how to conduct proper research by abiding a set-out ethics framework as well as informs the reader on the data collection methods that will be used during the interviews.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the conducted interviews, these will be shown using figures, tables, illustrations and quotes.

Chapter 5 opens up for discussion, the chapter will aim to make connections between the findings and the literature review in Chapter 2. It aims to validate and evaluate the results by presenting the reader an easily digestible data analysis.

Chapter 6 concludes the end of the dissertation, it presents research conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

2. Literature review

The following Chapter seeks to gain insight in the latest advancements in Project Management literature as well as find interesting lines of inquiries in the Social Sciences. The accumulation of knowledge in this section will prove helpful in allowing the author to operationalize the research into useful methods and applications. The review will encompass both quantitative and qualitative literature extracted from academic papers, research journals and books on management.

2.1 Project termination and how it influences the Project Leader

The management of failed projects is akin to the management of a professional sport team writes Kerzner (2011): where in a similar fashion, coaches and managers are relieved of their services, players are traded or sold to new teams and subsequently substituted by new players. This is the same type of strategy project organizations use to recover failing projects. Kerzner (2011) presents a couple of opinions that are useful in forwarding the original concern of this dissertation; most businesses lack a proper understanding of how to manage troubled projects, and not all Project Managers can cope with the troubles of failed projects.

2.1.1 Why projects are terminated

There are various reasons for terminating a project. Most common reasons are upon successful completion of a project or when the project firm decides to no longer invest the cost and time needed to complete the project (Meredith and Mantel, 2008; Dean, 1968).

Dean (1968) writes in his book: “Evaluating, Selecting, & Controlling R&D Projects” the most common reasons for project termination. Table 1 shows an illustration conceptualized by Meredith and Mantel (2008) on the research done by Dean (1968).

Factors	No. of Companies reporting the factor as important
<i>Technical</i>	
Low probability of achieving technical objectives or commercializing results	34
Technical or manufacturing problems cannot be solved with available R&D skills	11
Higher priority of other projects requiring R&D labor or funds	10
<i>Economic</i>	
Low profitability or return on investment	23
Too costly to develop as individual product	18
Market	
Low market potential	16
Change in competitive factors or market needs	10
<i>Others</i>	
Too long a time required to achieve commercial results	6
Negative effects on other projects or products	3
Patent problems	1

Table 1 – Rank order of common factors for project termination (Dean, 1968; Meredith and Mantel, 2008)

The study was done on 36 different companies that all reported their most important reasons for terminating a project (Dean, 1968; Meredith and Mantel, 2008) Furthermore, while it is important to understand that the results above indicate factors that are specifically important for R&D projects, the results can lend some merit in understanding how organizations prioritize success. To showcase how dynamic the research is, author Pinto et al. (1987) surveyed “business professionals” in order to create a set of critical success factors. Pinto’s (1990) studies covered a host of different type of projects and his studies adopted research from Baker et al. (1983) who in their findings found that the factors connected with success in projects are different depending on the industry (Meredith and

Mantel, 2008). Out of this work Pinto et al. (1990) created models that could predict project success or failure by finding that certain characteristics were idiosyncratic to the specific industry this concept was later confirmed and developed in the works of many contemporary authors' states Meredith and Mantel (2008).

The work contributed by the above mentioned authors helped Meredith and Mantel (2008) come to the conclusion that there are a number of fundamental reasons to project failure that seem to take place in the absence of the success factors set by their earlier peers. One example would be the need for proper planning which is often cited as a success factor (Meredith, 2012; Maylor, 2010). Consequently the absence of proper planning is also called a cause of failure in projects (Meredith and Mantel, 2008; Kerzner, 2011).

A second fundamental reason for project failure is insufficient support from senior management, especially in terms of proper resource allocation (Meredith and Mantel, 2008; Kerzner, 2011). Kerzner (2011) sums the causes of project failure into three broad categories: management mistakes, planning mistakes and external mistakes. Kerzner (2011) explains that management mistakes include not managing stakeholders and not offering help to the Project Manager. Planning mistakes are among other things, inability to execute proper project management or having an exit strategy (Kerzner, 2011). Lastly, external mistakes entail failure to comply with the politics and culture of the environment or having poor timing (Kerzner, 2011).

There will invariably come a time during the project where a resource is needed but wasn't originally allocated or planned for. A third fundamental reason for project failure stems from the Project Manager, either through a lack of or by assigning one without the required competences. The later sections in this chapter will describe the competences needed by a Project Manager during the project termination phase.

2.1.2 Project failure and its effects on emotional behavior

As previously stated projects usually have certain lifespans where they are created and ended within different project organizations, they forego visions into entering new markets, creating new products and launching new business ventures (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). These projects either see themselves discontinued or absorbed into other business streams. Similar to projects, the people working on keeping the projects going invest both focus and dedication in making sure that the projects are correctly aligned with the visions aspired by both business and individual. It is for this very reason that when projects ultimately fail and are terminated that mixed feelings can surface (Shepherd and Cannon, 2009). Figure 2 shows a model conceptualized by Shepherd and Cardon (2009): the model shows the process of emotions that run through an organizational member due to project failure.

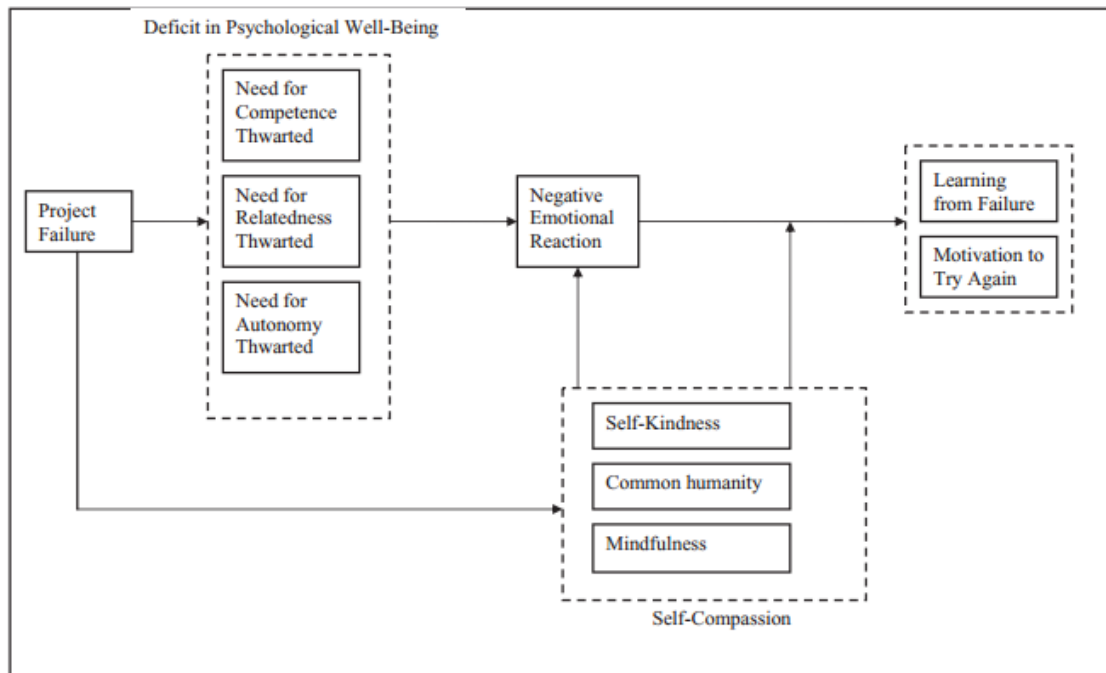


Figure 1: The emotional process of an organizational member due to project failure (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009, p.926).

The model presented by Shepherd and Cardon (2009) takes into account different emotional intensity levels (seen in the center of the figure) that are directly correlated to how important the organizational member deemed the project. The more negative the

emotion the lower the psychological profile and well-being of a member. Both authors Shepherd and Cardon (2009) insist that the key to decreasing negative emotions is accepting self-compassion to learning from past experience and accepting the failure as an opportunity for learning. The negative emotions that can result as a product of project failure are so strong in certain individuals that it can completely thwart their self-identity (Shepherd et al, 2009). These are usually individuals who seeked projects to affirm their own competence by being personally engaged to a project (Kahn, 1990).

Moreover, projects provide excellent learning experiences as well as develop feelings of mastery (Dweck, 1986) which can become a valued incentive to very driven people. Entrepreneurial and innovative organizations employ projects based on high-variance possibilities which acts as a perfect incentive for individuals pursuing ambitious careers and while they may find that performance improves, the high-variance offers unpredictable risks that can cause numerous project failures (McGrath, 1999; Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). In an ideal world authors Shepherd and Cardon (2009) argue that mindful organizational members would avoid weighing self-worth and project failure and instead embrace failure as a learning opportunity. This requires a delicate balancing of emotions and a need for the individual to share his/her negative emotions instead of isolating the feelings that can cause a future breaking point (Neff, 2003a).

In overview, it is important for organizations and individuals to understand that project failure works as a trigger that releases new behaviors in both Project Managers and organizational members (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009), especially behaviors that can develop lack of self-worth and competence (Fisher, 2000; Huy, 2002). It is also crucial for upper management to consider that negative emotions can cause resistance within the project among employees and project team members (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009). Furthermore, Shepherd and Cardon (2009) assert that negative emotions can cloud the judgement of organizational members causing them to undervalue positives results and overrate negative outcomes when deciding on future projects (Nygren et al., 1996).

Another consequence that manifests due to negative emotions is the gradual decrease of trust and commitment towards the organization and an increase in risk averseness among organizational members (Lerner and Keltner, 2001). Albeit project failure represents a learning opportunity, human emotions as evidenced from mentioned sections, can stop us from pursuing such opportunities (Shepherd and Cardon, 2009).

2.2 How organizations currently work with termination and projects

2.2.1 Current termination decision process

The most dominant approach in Project Management is according to Winter et al. (2006) the hard system approach which is a system that concerns itself with being rational, deterministic and using universal models. The hard system puts an emphasis on planning and control by including available quantitative data in the decision process (Crawford and Pollack, 2004; Winter et al., 2006). The termination process in a project life cycle assumes two paths: a decision to terminate a project and a decision to not terminate (Meredith et al., 2008).

If a project is successful it could either proceed or re-integrate an organization as a part of a function or division in which case it is a part of the termination process. If however a project is unsuccessful, it could potentially be terminated using any of the four mentioned termination processes (extinct, starvation, addition, integration) in which case it is also a part of a greater termination process. Together with the suggested hard system approach (Winter et al., 2006), Meredith and Mantel (2008) separate the termination process into two parts: *the decision process* and the *implementation process*.

The decision process usually has the aid of a host of different decision models that can assist in making the correct decision. Meredith and Mantel (2008) separate these models into two distinct generic categories, the first category of models base their decision on how qualified the project is in meeting the success factors (or other factors) and the second set of models base their decision on how well the project has actually met the agreed goals and

objectives. The effectiveness of these proposed models have been questioned, where some authors deem these models inappropriate for project termination decisions completely (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). The argument put forward by the mentioned authors is that the data requirements needed for the models are too costly and extensive, and that the evaluation of the factors in the selection models are too prone to change depending on what stage in the project one is evaluating (Meredith and Mantel, 2008).

Lee et al. (1986) disagree with the first argument presented by Meredith and Mantel (2008) by stating that projects of modest size are less expensive and can therefore be quite useful in a model assessment. While one can see here that there seems to be a great divide in the decision process, the referenced authors seem to agree that a primary focus or criterion for any organization is to first assess their willingness to invest time and cost in a project by basing their decision on the projects current status and the expected outcomes, this should than decide whether to continue or terminate the project (Meredith and Mantel, 2008)

This criterion can be utilized for most projects according to Meredith and Mantel (2008). When a decision has been made in the organization regarding the fate of a project, the correct termination method must be implemented. The research study works with the assumption that a project close-out is supervised by a Project Manager. According to Meredith and Mantel (2008) a project termination can signal one or two things at this stage, first it can signal the end for a Project Manager as a leader in which case the person could either stretch out the termination process, denounce all responsibility and leave work to administration or commence business as usual.

The second signal would involve a dysfunction in the organization where project team members interminably drag out final tasks while seeking new affiliations and jobs (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). The mentioned scenarios highlight the importance of executing and maintaining an elaborate and clear plan that accounts for the project termination phase. It could also be helpful to remember that the competences required by a Project Manager during project start are not necessarily the same competences necessary during a project termination (Turner, 2009, Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013). Several

textbooks emphasize the usefulness of having a project termination checklist (Meredith and Mantel, 2008; Turner, 2009; Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013). The following suggested termination check-list is adapted from the works of Meredith and Mantel (2008) and include careful consideration for:

i. *Personnel*: Will adequate preparations for the transfer of project members be met? Will the project team split up completely or are some of the competences they offer still important? How will the resource allocation look? Are members still active and interchangeable between the old and the new project?

ii. *Manufacturing/Operations*: Will training have to commence? Are all required facilities, equipment and materials available? Are new control and operating procedures needed and are they available on the firm's computer system?

iii. *Accounting/Finance*: Have all the old accounts connected to the project been properly closed and audited? Have new accounts been set up? Was the project property and equipment managed correctly as per established agreements?

iv. *Engineering*: Have all drawings been completed and saved on file? Are operational methods readily available and understood? Are all changed procedures clarified and clear? Are maintenance schedules ready for the change?

v. *Information Systems/Software*: Has the new software/system been properly documented and tested? Is the new system completely integrated with current systems? Are all users familiar and prepared for using the new system?

vi. *Marketing*: Is the sales department up to date on all changes? Are the lead times agreed upon? How has the new line been received? Is the marketing strategy aligned and ready for implementation?

vii. *Purchasing/Distribution/Legal*: Have all the new changes in the organization been accomplished using standard guidelines and correct administrative procedures? Are all

changes abiding proper legislations and business conduct?

viii. *Risk Identification and Management*: All above aspects carry with them certain degrees of risks, have they been identified? Can they be managed? If yes, how? Mitigating risk is crucial and should be handled accordingly.

2.2.2 How projects are terminated

Like previously mentioned in section 1.1, this dissertation will adopt the definition given by Meredith and Mantel (2012) which is to say that a project is accepted as terminated when: “work on the substance of the project has ceased or slowed to the point that further progress on the project is no longer possible, when the project has been indefinitely delayed, when its resources have been deployed to other projects, or when project personnel (especially the PM) become personae non gratae with senior management and in the company lunchroom” (Meredith and Mantel, 2008, p.551). These inevitable signs of danger to come need to be appropriately assessed and managed by a competent Project Manager in which case, four fundamentally different measures can be taken to terminate a project, these are: termination through extinction, addition, integration and starvation (Meredith, 2012).

Termination by extinction implies just as the name suggests a type of full-stop in the project that comes about when the project has either been successful in delivering its product and achieving its goals or when a project is deemed unsuccessful or has been superseded (Maylor, 2010; Meredith and Mantel, 2008). There also exists “termination by murder” which is a more political process characterized by lack of empathy or interest (Meredith and Mantel, 2008) these “murders” can occur when for instance corporate mergers deem projects redundant or uninteresting for the new corporate vision or during conflicts between senior managers.

What is important to remember is that termination by extinction and murder is usually uncalled for in the sense that project demise is sudden, swift and without early warning signs (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). In the event of an extinction of a project, the parent

company will find that a great ordeal of company activity will have to be done writes authors Meredith and Mantel (2008). Preparations will have to ensue so that project members are released and reassigned to other organizational activities whilst minimizing them getting resigned from the company (Maylor, 2010). Furthermore, materials and equipment needs to be moved and disbursed according to company protocol, lastly a suggested Final Report known as a Project History should be prepared (Meredith and Mantel, 2008).

Termination by addition is in comparison to termination by extinction, a friendlier and more positive outcome that results in projects being transformed into more permanent and formal structures in the parent organization (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). In extinction, the future of personnel, property and material are usually unknown whereas in termination by addition they are moved from the dying project to a more permanent division, department or subsidiary (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). Examples of this can be seen in the IT industry where engineering and business school courses are revamped into complete faculties and departments. This change in project structure requires that a Project Manager can bring a smooth transition and see to it that project members stay instead of requesting transfers to other projects due to increased freedom.

Termination by starvation implies that a project is experiencing a budget decrement, budget cut or business recession explains Meredith et al. (2008). Due to cuts being so common, “starving” a project can sometimes be used to hide a project termination. This is in line with the “projectification” concept forwarded by Flyvbjerg and Budzier (2011) where senior managers accept success as the sum of all projects instead of accepting and solving the failure of a handful projects. Meredith (2012) states that some firms have trouble accepting failure since it can harm their credibility as a company. What happens is that budgets receive either a deep cut or a series of small cuts that are large enough to make sure the progress stagnates. The project is terminated but remains a legal entity in order to keep up appearances (Meredith and Mantel, 2008).

Termination by integration is perhaps the most common yet most complex way of terminating a project. In this process, the governing organization redistributes all the project functions and resources among the already existing divisions of the organization (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). Meredith (2008) also found that in general the: probability of successful integration are dependent on the degree of experience the organization has with integrating technology and also successful integration of other projects disregarding what technology. The complexity in termination by integration as compared to addition is identifying what is important enough to “take with you” from the project to the integrated operation: aspects such as information systems, finances, purchases and personnel all need to be dealt with delicately so that the project team doesn’t become disengaged or disinterested in what is now “old” explains Meredith and Mantel (2008). The following section 2.3.3 will disclose more of the activities that occur during the termination phase.

2.2.3 The use of multi-project settings

The agreed upon characteristics of a multi-project setting include managing multiple projects that are shared by the same organizational members during the same time. The projects are run parallel to one another and are governed using the same management methodologies (Zika et al., 2006). Moreover, Zika et al. (2006) explain that multi-project work enables organizations to allocate fewer resources and personnel to a greater range of projects, thus limiting idle time and transferring expertise across the board.

From a managerial point-of-view a multi-project setting constitutes fierce competition over securing resources from a common pool (Kaulio, 2008). Whereas, in a regular employees perspective; launching multiple projects at the same time has been reported as “disruptive” and “fragmented” writes Kaulio (2008) in his paper: *Project leadership in a multi-project settings: Findings from a critical incident study*. Authors Zika et al. (2006) and Kaulio (2008) are in agreement that time-sharing in-between multiple projects, especially during time pressure has been reported to cause stress-induced behavior and lack of recuperation between intense bouts of work.

Moreover, Zika et al. (2006) found that “project overload” a notion expressed in the authors paper as: “a construct that in this study reflects perceived fragmentation, disruption and

inefficiency, caused by switching between assignments for separate but simultaneous projects” (Zika et al., 2006, p. 385) can cause a decrease in the competence development of members as well as reduce improvement in work routines. There is however, an interesting indication write Zika et al. (2006) that multiple-project settings can in fact improve learning and make for a rich work experience.

Engwall and Jerbrant (2003) explain that far too many companies suffer from over-commitment which is having too many projects in relation to available and existing resources (Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003; Payne, 1995). Authors Clark and Wheelwright (1992) coined the term “The Canary Cage Approach” in an attempt to exemplify over committed project portfolio planning. The authors described it as: new canaries (representing projects) were thrown into a bird cage without knowing the current number or status of the already existing canaries in the cage (Clark and Wheelwright, 1992; Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003). Similarly, authors Engwall and Jerbrant (2003) called the phenomena “The resource allocation syndrome” to which they explained was an effect of poor project scheduling. Projects and their members were expected to run in perfect unison until inevitably some projects lagged behind in schedule thus creating a lag in the “centralized resource planning system” (Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003).

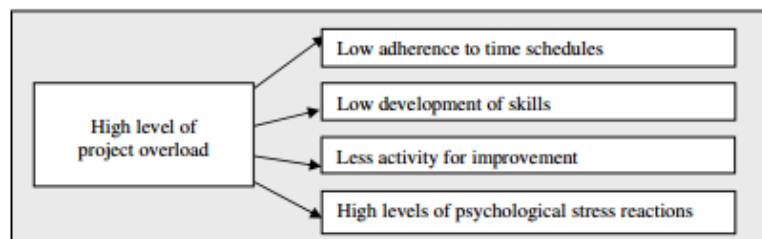


Figure 2: Shows the effects of high levels of project overload (Zika et al., 2006).

In summary, Figure 3 as presented by Zika et al. (2006) shows some of the symptoms that surface from having high levels of project overload. It is also important to consider that not all projects are equal and that they can in fact differ in size, uniqueness, content, size and scope (Zika et al., 2006). The figure above assumes that the more projects an individual partakes in, the greater the project overload risk (Zika et al., 2006).

2.3 How to effectively manage project termination and project failure

2.3.1 How organizations could fail more intelligently

One piece of academic literature of interest is an article written by Cannon and Edmondson (2004) that addresses the question of how organizations can “learn to fail intelligently” (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004, p. 2). The authors identify the barriers that make learning in organizations unusually harder by proposing suggestions for how technical and social systems can be reshaped more effectively by managers. One observation from their research is that even large and wealthy companies that aimed specifically at becoming more proficient at learning had trouble finding correct measures to learn from failure (Edmondson, 2002). Researchers say that true understanding can come when technological, social, psychological and structural factors are examined simultaneously as these are somehow linked (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004).

Moreover, Cannon and Edmondson (2004) consider learning from failure as a three-step process from which collective learning can occur. The three steps include 1) identifying failure, 2) analyzing failure and 3) consider deliberate experimentation (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004, p.2). Table 2 shows a conceptualized model made by Cannon and Edmondson (2004) that illustrates the mentioned three-step process both in technical and social systems. The model also gives the recommendations made by the authors as to how the processes can be implemented in an organization.

Key Processes in Organizational Learning From Failure			
	Identifying failures	Analyzing failures	Experimentation
Barriers embedded in Technical Systems	Complex systems make many small failure ambiguous	A lack of skills or techniques to extract lessons from failures.	Lack of knowledge of experimental design
Recommendations	<i>R1:</i> Training in systems analysis and judicious use of technical expertise from multiple disciplines	<i>R2:</i> Training in skills and techniques for systematic analysis of complex data	<i>R3:</i> Training in experimental design for effective experiments
Barriers embedded in Social Systems	Threat to self-esteem inhibits recognition of one's own failures, and corporate cultures that "shoot the messenger" limit reporting of failures.	Ineffective group process limits effectiveness of discussions in which failure analysis occurs	Organizations may penalize failed experiments inhibiting willingness to incur failure for the sake of learning
Recommendations	<i>R4:</i> Develop psychological safety in work groups and teams and celebrate and publicize failures as a means of learning	<i>R5:</i> Develop forums for analyzing failure and provide training in skills for listening and inquiry (double loop learning)	<i>R6:</i> Provide resources and reward systems to promote experimentation

Table 2: Shows the processes organizations need to implement when learning about failure (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004, p. 32).

What is primarily of interest in the model presented above is the idea of experimentation which sounds very different from traditional project management that usually is planned and rigid (Cannon and Edmondson, 2009). It seems that even though experiments are unpredictable, research shows that organizations that are allowed to experiment are more innovative and productive than their counterparts (Cannon and Edmondson, 2009) which is in direct conflict with the testimonies of companies blaming experimentation as a primary cause of project failure (Thomke, 2003). What can be concluded is that experimentation can be important for learning (Lee et al., 2004).

As long as experimentation is properly aligned with the intentions of gaining knowledge and experience in project failure, rampant and unsound experimentation could be kept at minimum. It is therefore the responsibility of the Project Manager to foster correct project culture and to set-up an appropriate environment for learning (Cannon and Edmondson,

2009). Moreover, Cannon and Edmondson (2009) underline that the Project Manager needs to be more than just talk, in that the leader needs to experiment themselves by showing both their failures and successes in order to demonstrate that both activities can bring valuable learning to the organization (Cannon and Edmondson, 2009, p. 29). This requires that managers shift the way they perceive failure which can be done by working on their psychological and emotional capabilities suggest Cannon and Edmondson (2009, p.29). Both authors Cannon and Edmondson (2009) have a second conceptualized model aimed at the Project Manager dubbed Table 3 shown below:

	Traditional Frame	Learning oriented reframe
Expectations about failure	Failure is not acceptable	Failure is a natural byproduct of a healthy process of experimentation and learning
Beliefs about effective performance	Failure is avoided	Organizations are most effective when they learn from <i>intelligent failure</i> and communicate the lessons broadly in the organization.
Psychological and interpersonal responses to failure	Self-protective	Characterized by curiosity and humor that make it possible to learn from failure

Table 3: How managers should promote learning from failure (Cannon and Edmondson, 2009).

The table above directed at the manager together with Table 2 directed at the organization are both the results of the work of Cannon and Edmondson (2009) who believe that shifting the mind-set of both manager and organization can in fact make project failure less of a repressed memory and more of an moment of insight. By deviating from the traditional view that failure is something negative the Project Manager can instead learn to fail intelligently, learn that failure is a healthy process and that failure can pique curiosity and interest (compare with Table 3)

Figure 1 shows a proposed organizational design that can be applied during a project closeout. It can be applied assuming project termination is defined into the project life cycle by a Project Manager. One caveat with this procedure is that it can take up quite some time in a larger project or organization, in which case a single “Special termination manager” should be considered (Meredith and Mantel, 2008).

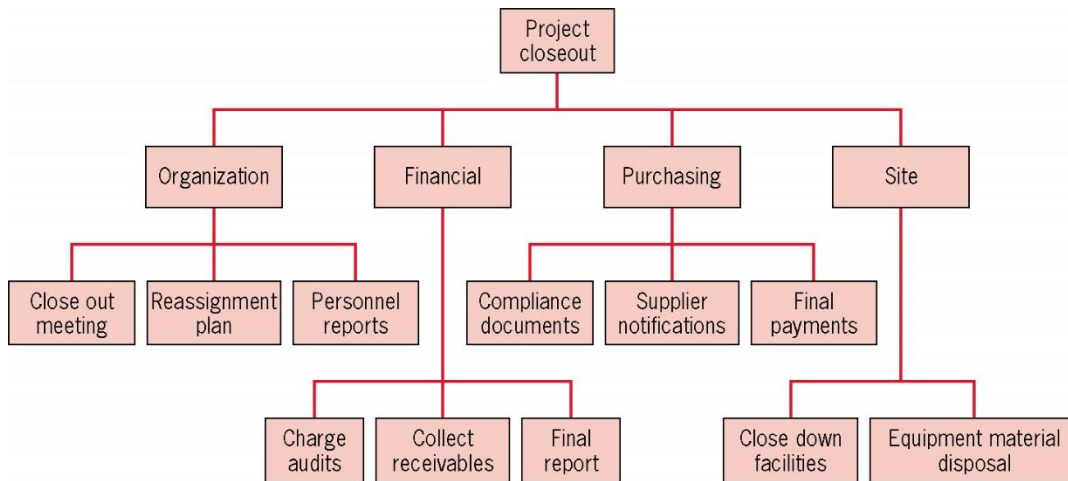


Figure 3: Proposed design for project termination (Meredith and Mantel, 2008, p. 562)

Another issue with accepting the proposed design is that organizations might see it as embracing failure in organization since failure in general is frowned upon (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). Organizations often adopt the mindset that project failure is the direct polar opposite of project success (Fincham, 2002) this notion hinges on the fact that companies deeply believe success criteria is governed by specific performance metrics and measurements (Belassi and Tukel, 1996). Project failure is seen as something subjective and is negatively judged on the basis that it carries a political and social awkwardness (Sauer, 1993). Pinto et al. (1990) further narrows the static scope that is plaguing project management by arguing that project outcome and performance should be distinctly evaluated by the general process of project management, how the stakeholders perceive the project itself and overall satisfaction leaving little room for risk management.

2.3.2 Dealing with stakeholders

Failure to work closely with stakeholders is a common cause of project failure (Burke, 1999). Having stakeholders involved is a success factor writes Buttrick (2009) who also states that your project could be one of many tasks that the stakeholder oversees leading to him/her finding it all to be irrelevant or simply going through the motions. This also causes a second risk since some stakeholders draw the line of project failure early meaning that projects that overrun on cost or get delayed in schedule (which are common occurrences) are deemed failures early on (Dallas, 2006).

Furthermore, in the event of premature project termination, management needs to consider decisions related to the closure as well as manage disappointed external and internal stakeholders (Havila, Medlin, and Salmi, 2013). This mentioned type of commitment from the senior management is especially important during long-term projects (usually construction projects) where there are a lot of more external stakeholders involved (Havila, Medlin, and Salmi, 2013) in which case close relationships are not only operative but also strategic (Havila, Medlin, and Salmi, 2013). It also makes great sense for managers to strategically handle internal stakeholders such as company lawyers who could be extremely valuable players during negotiations with suppliers (Havila, Medlin, and Salmi, 2013).

It is also important to consider that the wishes and expectations of stakeholders are not necessarily the wishes and expectations of the parent organization (Kerzner, 2011). The stakeholder's different perception of failure could be triggered by the fact that the project no longer satisfies the stakeholder's needs, will not finish in time or that the project has become too costly or simply will not achieve the expected benefits or values (Kerzner, 2011). This supports the fact that the actions taken by stakeholders could be unpredictable, however communicating all decisions to the stakeholders even though the information has been thoroughly reviewed by the project team is strategically important for project success since communication would allow more transparency and clarity regarding the true intentions and expectations that the stakeholders might have (Maltzman and Shirley, 2011).

Stakeholder management has been a hot topic in the Project Management literature (Jepsen and Eskerod, 2009) especially for phases where projects undergo important changes (Söderholm, 2008). To cope with these changes Havila, Medlin and Salmi (2013) suggest that one important key ability is to understand stakeholder relations as well as the link between them. The findings from the research made by Havila, Medlin and Salmi (2013) suggest that three distinct actions should be taken during project termination. These are: "involvement of all managerial levels, handling stakeholders under an unanticipated (crisis) situation, and changing focus from the planned and on-going project activities to the future ramifications of closure." (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013, p.96).

To summarize, Havila, Medlin and Salmi (2013) argue that companies should aim to be

active when approaching important stakeholders; information on decisions should be delivered early through the use of on-site visits and personal communication channels. They should cover the reasons for project termination as well as explain the plans for future actions (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013).

2.3.3 Dealing with competences and the project team

Author Kerzner (2011) points out that believing any project methodology to be a miracle cure is a mistake, since projects are managed by people and not a set of tools or management methodologies. The key-word in the above sentence is ‘people’ by which Kerzner (2011) specifically refers to Project Managers. There seems to be a shift in perspectives in modern project literature, where writers are adopting a leadership oriented focus rather than a task perspective (Kaulio, 2008). Kaulio (2008) observes that even though project leadership has been an ongoing research topic for more than a decade, real and convincing research has been very limited. Moreover, from the existing literature on project leadership, very little has been addressing project-ending competences (Havila and Salmi, 2009). Project-ending competences is a concept termed by Havila and Salmi (2009) and refers to the ability of any organization and its members to effectively terminate projects so that damage to the project stakeholders and the company relations are limited (Havila and Salmi, 2009, p.63).

Project-ending competence is a construct that first takes into account the ability of the Project leader to commit and support the organization in effectively terminating a project and secondly doing so whilst maintaining the quality and capacity of the organizational members (Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013). The need for the above mentioned competence is also supported by Söderlund et al. (2008) who explains the need for developing project specific management competences, Söderlund et al. (2008) argues that competences should be developed in these four sub-processes: project generation, project organizing, project management and project teamwork (Söderlund et al., 2008).

Kerzner (2011) makes a case for a so called “Recovery Project Manager” that possesses the skills to effectively terminate and recover projects. Similarly, authors Havila, Medlin and

Salmi (2013) describe a call for the role of an “exit champion” and Meredith and Mantel (2000) suggest a “Special termination manager”. Kerzner (2011) argues that such a person requires in addition to an already existing knowledge on project management skills that include; being politically strong, willing to be honest in giving transparent accounts of critical issues, tolerable to stress and understanding of the fact that effective recovery is information sensitive not emotion sensitive (Kerzner, 2011, p.58).

It is also important to consider that not all projects are equal and that failure can occur in different phases of a project (Harris, 2009). This means that project work needs to be extra transparent and that the Project Manager claims ownership over responsibility and accountability (Turner, 2007). By stating ownership, the Project Manager can in the event of project failure use this role as protection explains Turner (2007) suggesting that this lowers the risk of finding a scapegoat in the group since the Project Manager bears full responsibility (Turner, 2007, p. 571).

Furthermore, in order for Project Manager to develop their competences, there is a need for an apprenticeship (Morris and Pinto, 2007). Senior members need to sit and spend time with junior members so that knowledge transfer can prepare the newcomer for what is to come (Morris and Pinto, 2007). Mentoring is key in adjusting the skill level of junior members who are awaiting a great deal of responsibility. Figure 4 shows a model made by Kaulio (2008) that divides the Project Leader roles into four distinct quadrants:

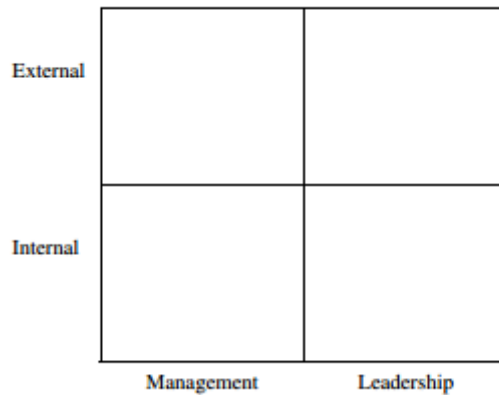


Figure 4: The Overall-Project-Leader-Role framework (Kaulio, 2008).

The first quadrant (see Figure 4) entitled Internal Management refers to planning internal activities which include setting up tools and techniques that are specific to project management for example Gantt charts and WBS-models (Kaulio, 2008). The second quadrant Internal Leadership refers to any leader-type activities such as team integration (Kaulio, 2008).

The third quadrant External Management refers to as explained by Kaulio (2008) activities outside the project that are more formal, these typically include resource and project portfolio planning or re-defining and terminating projects. The fourth and last quadrant External Leadership refers to unplanned events or informal activities outside the project, examples being: lobbying, resource and information gathering, ambassadorial activities and handling organizational politics (Kaulio, 2008).

As can be seen from the sheer number of roles and responsibilities a typical Project Manager needs to respond to, work for such an individual is arduous and long. Not only does the Project Manager need to be able to react to, a long list of expected activities, the Project Manager also needs to prepare for what is perhaps the major cause of project failure. Namely; the occurrence of unforeseen events (Hillson, 2009). Unforeseen events have the power to completely disrupt the planned chain of events (Hillson, 2009).

In summary, Havila, Medlin and Salmi (2013, p.98) discuss three measures to handle unexpected events. They are presented and adapted in order:

1) Having a well-functioning and responsive organization that is in-tune with the occurring shifts and changes, an organization that has well-formulated and integrated plans for terminating projects and also handles employees with outmost care with their wellbeing being a priority.

2) Having a good interpersonal relationship at the group level, both with organizational members but also with all the stakeholders. An organization that has an understanding of how multi-project settings and project failure can have an adverse effect on both the emotional state of organizational members but also on the subsequent relationships with customers, suppliers and sponsors.

3) Having competent organizational members at the individual level that understand their limits but also their transgressions. They embrace the fact that they are the backbone of the organization but still never fail in continuously developing and honing their skills.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to develop material that either illuminates current literature or highlights the shortcomings of mentioned literature. It is for the sake of improvement that the author tries to connect theory with practice. Furthermore, this dissertation will rely on qualitative research with the aim of trying to understand how Project Managers view project failure and what meaning they derive from reality. In order to refresh the memory of the reader, here are the main objectives presented in the introduction:

1. To understand why projects are terminated and the impact that failure has on Project Managers.
2. To explore exit strategies that can limit damage on resources, motivation and stakeholder relationships.

3.2 Research Design

According to Bryman (2005) a research design provides a framework from which data can be analyzed and collected, it provides a structure for the study (Yin, 2011). Moreover, a research design aims at finding casual connection between variables which in this thesis is made by comparing chapter 2 (the literature review) to chapter 4 (the findings) these connections can if they are valid enough be generalized to larger groups (Bryman, 2005). The research approach in this paper will be parts cross-sectional and parts comparative in nature. The cross-sectional design will also have case study elements. Participants are asked questions in an unstructured manner, deliberately touching on more than one temporal instances pertaining to specific cases. The comparative element in this design is that ten interviews are being compared.

A grounded approach will be used in designing the interview questions, this according to Bell (2010) means that qualitative data is developed as theory without any specific commitment to specific methods or lines of research. While the delimitations and

shortcomings of the research have been previously stated in section 1.6, most of the presented theory have been extrapolated from a limited pool of renowned authors and researchers that have been very helpful in establishing a theoretical starting point from which subsequent findings can find support from. The plan is to compare and ultimately reaffirm already existing literature by collecting data through the use of semi-structured interviews

3.3 Research Scope

Determining the research scope is very much a practical matter that relies on how much useful access you can receive (Fisher, 2010). For this study the author decided to study one specific part of an organization throughout different organizations belonging to three sectors, namely; IT, Production and Construction. The reason for this is because the scope timely fits within the anticipated time schedule but also offers a broader project setting comparison (Yin, 2011). Furthermore, in order to ensure that enough data can be sampled due to the limited literature on the subject, open questions in a semi-structured order allow the scope to stretch leadingly (Bryman, 2005). This argues Bryman (2005) can lead to problems of generalization stemming from the fact that participant observation and few individual interviews are not adequate enough to be able to generalize from one setting to another.

Figure 5, shown below was used as a “deal breaker” when initially deciding on whether the research topic was plausible and within sufficient scope.

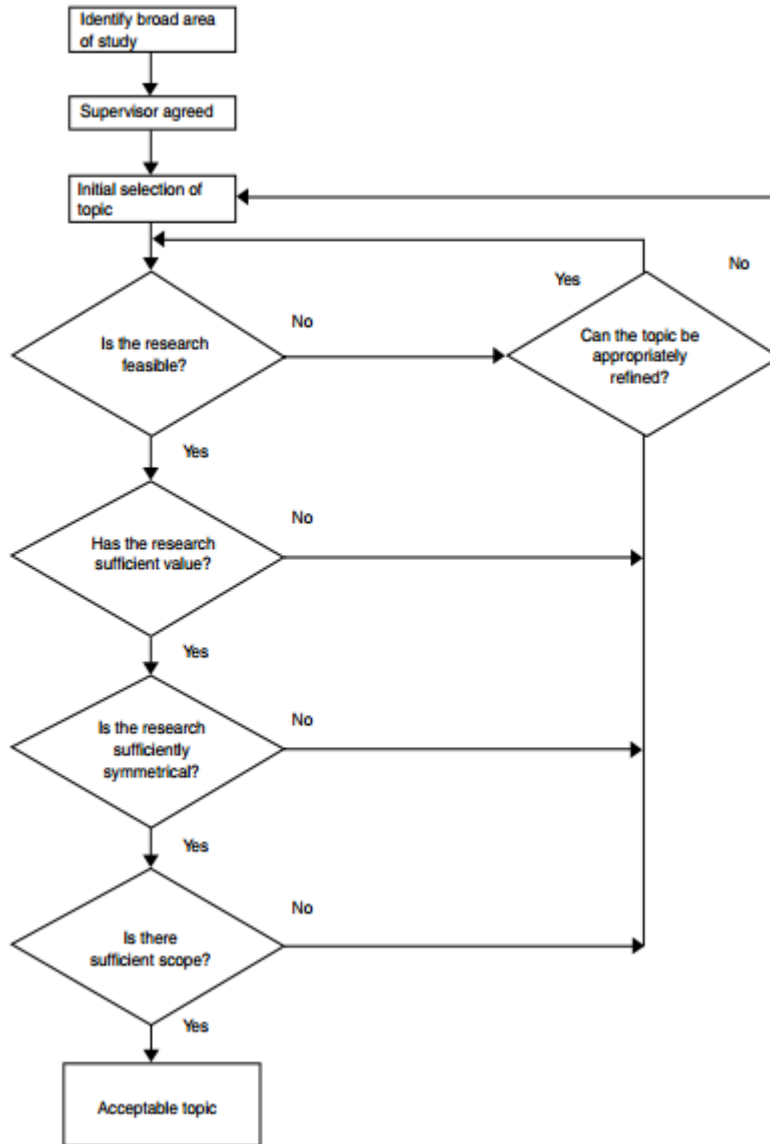


Figure 5: shows the process of selecting an acceptable topic (Sharp, Peters and Howard, 2002, p.28).

All steps in the proposed model by (Sharp, Peters and Howard, 2002) were reflected upon. Most of the criteria in the model are sufficient, with research symmetry being perhaps slightly lower than ideally expected with literature being highly dependent on a selected few authors. In terms of researcher persona author Hart (2005) states that a researcher should be objective and open-minded towards his study, and to be able to critically evaluate without bias. As an interpretivist, remaining bias-free is fairly difficult in that interpretations are much subjected to biased opinions and conclusions. By adding

Trustworthiness to the research (introduced by Lincoln and Guba, 1985) one could add stability to the report through increased validity, reliability, objectivity, conformability; these four criteria together make up the idea of *Trustworthiness* according to Hart (2005). Moreover, in Bryman's book *Social Research methods* it is evident that the scope is limited and the purported theories introduced by the author will be middle-range theories coupled with grounded theories from more established sources (Bryman, 2012).

3.4 Data Collection

The adopted approach in acquiring data is dependent on the information type and the nature of the inquiry (Bell, 2010). Data collection will proceed until “theoretical saturation” has been reached; this argues Bell (2010) transforms theories to complete concepts. Data in this research has been collected through the understanding of literature, and through the development of stories, experiences and values expressed by participants during the semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research as a means of collecting data enables the storyteller to provide multiple perspectives explains Bell (2010), it also allows the researcher to structure the conversations and ask follow-up questions. Furthermore, Face-to-face interaction also allows the researcher to assess the potential in the respondents so that they get suitable answers (Denscombe, 2007). In a sense the author has used a phenomenological approach that needs a retained constraint argues Denscombe (2007) by stating that researchers need to suspend their own beliefs temporarily if they want to describe how they make sense of the world (Denscombe, 2007).

Phenomenology deals with the ways people interpret and make sense of their reality and personal experiences (Denscombe, 2007). It relies on recorded interviews conducted with members that are of specific interest, it also allows the member to give further insight into the thinking of the entire group through in-depth interviews (Denscombe, 2007). The most common structure for interviews are unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2012). In summary, qualitative interviews can give rich and serious accounts of historical information with the added benefit that the researcher can control the order of questions asked. The drawback of relying on such methods is the emergence of bias and filters as

well as an overreliance on the capabilities and experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, other criticism specifically to phenomenology is that it lacks scientific rigour, it is associated merely with description and not analysis and that it is difficult to make generalizations from phenomenological studies (Denscombe, 2007, p.86).

The advantages of semi-structured interviews are plenty. Berg (2009) argues that semi-structured interviews allow the participants to describe and elaborate on their experiences more openly resulting in richer interviews. Such structures also allow the interviewer to more freely change formulations, add clarifications and switch order of questions asked (Bryman, 2012; Berg, 2009). Moreover, interviews in general add more room for critical reflection (Silverman, 2005). Silverman (2005) also points out that knowing how to correctly ask a question is far more important than the number of questions asked. For this research participants were asked a set of questions that belonged to certain categories pertaining to:

- Experience in the field of Project Management
- Personal and critical reflection
- Perceived ideals and weaknesses
- Suggestions and appraisals for improvement

3.5 Sample size and Selection criteria

The interview questions (Appendix A) were issued to a select group of 10 professionals, more specifically Project Managers. These included three members from the Production sector, three members from the Construction sector and four members from the IT sector. The questions were issued through email beforehand in order for the participants to reflect on some questions that were more specific in nature (asking for specific cases of project failure). The participants were sampled using purposive and snowball sampling, meaning they fitted into a certain selection criteria, with most being:

- Predominantly young (20-30 years old),
- Knowledgeable in Project Management methodologies,
- With limited experience (6 months to 5 years)

The reason for picking out members of a certain age and with only limited experience is due to the fact that more experienced and older individuals most likely already exude qualities and competences required for managing failure in projects. One could argue that they would serve as better candidates seeing that the one of the objectives is to present more effective ways of terminating troubled projects. The author of this dissertation however feels that the effects of failure can be more easily measured and observed at less experienced individuals compared to their more experienced and blunt counterparts. Moreover, by sharing the same age as the participants and perhaps a similar lifestyle, the author can more easily engage in reflective reasoning as opposed to more mature and refined individuals. A personal aim for the author is to finish this dissertation feeling strengthened and invigorated by the experiences from similar peers.

Overall participation was one hundred percent with no actual reluctance to participate encountered. There were however two complications where members could not physically join, they were therefore asked to respond through email. This undeniably goes against research protocol, but the author feels that their opinions were valuable to the research.

3.6 Research Validity and Generalizability

Validity, in particular Research validity refers to the ability to use research in order to create useful generalizations, these need to be accurate enough so that the representation of the sample is true (Hart, 2005). In this regard, interviews contribute largely to the generalizability of theory (Qu and Dumay, 2011) since any data accumulated during research interviews are aimed at collecting valid and reliable information (Saunders et al., 2011).

Research Validity is further broken down into three elements according to Hart (2005) these are construct, internal and external validity. Construct validity relates to being able to

clarify all possible variables within the research in order to avoid confusion, meaning all inferences need to be legitimate in their measurements and formulations. During the interviews some confusion lingered around questions related to Project Termination since it is not necessarily entirely a result of Project Failure. This however was managed effectively so that the internal validity was kept intact.

Internal validity refers to the approximate truth regarding causal relationships (Hart, 2005). The responses given by the participants were in this study arguably candid, warranted by the fact that they were assured complete anonymity. In order to make generalizations to the wider population, one must hold a degree of external validity (Hart, 2005). In this case, it can be argued that since the interviews were in connection with professionals from 10 different organizations, the external validity is legitimate. Moreover, the organizations were of different sizes and from different sectors which further strengthens the validity. The literature covered in this research is the work of prominent scholars and authors offering not only credibility but also research validity.

The perhaps most important fact to point out was that the participants were both asked and expected to give answers in Swedish since this is the language they are most fluent and comfortable with, this ensured that responses were honest and spontaneous as opposed to limited by the participants vocabulary and English proficiency. All transcripts were therefore collected in Swedish and translated to English in accordance with the language used in this dissertation. The author also made sure that all translations were sent back to the participants in order to confirm and validate that these statements are indeed a true reflection of what was stated during the interviews.

3.7 Ethical considerations

It goes without saying that the first principle of research ethics is that the subjects should never be harmed by the research conducted (Bell and Opie, 2002) and that the researcher protects all subjects involved (Black, 2002). This can be done by anticipating any ethical issues that may arise during the study (Creswell, 2003). Hart (2005) suggests that four areas are of particular interest when considering ethical issues, these are: the researcher, the

research, participants and the sponsor.

As a researcher in this instance, the majority of research will be written outside the organization environment as a standalone investigation. As such, only a fraction will be spent within the confines of a working environment, these are limited to interviews and discussions that pose very little change to the politics and rhythm of an organization.

The following two areas however require some more ethical consideration, namely the research topic and the participants that are arguably inter-linked. The topic is contentious in the sense that it focuses on failure which could potentially create an upset in the senior management. This is due to the fact that participants are asked to assess and criticize existing processes and activities in the parent organization. It is for this very reason that participants are kept anonymous and that interviews are held at a place within comfortable distance from the parent organization. This measure ensures that participants are relaxed and secure from political harm. Also, not everything that has been explicitly said during the interviews will be presented in the transcribed data since some of the information might reveal personal information that could lead to the identification of the participants. Focus has therefore been to extract the essence that has a direct correlation to the actual subject researched.

Moreover, all participants are informed beforehand about the nature of the topic and that the researcher will be recording the sessions solely for data analysis and private use. Furthermore, while the purpose of this research is to explore new themes and perspectives regarding project failure, certain factors already proposed in the comprehensive literature review could either be subject to change or expanded upon in which case full credit will definitely be given.

As for the handling of sponsors, more specifically the University from whom the author will receive final degree. The author has made sure to follow all requirements accordingly, in particular any requirements expressed in the Research Handbook (2015). Moreover, a Research Project Ethics Registration Form has been completed and approved by a member

of the Research Ethics Department at Northumbria University. The second sponsor university; Chalmers University of Technology have also been notified of the intents and purposes of both the research and the research conduct.

3.8 Data Analysis and Coding

All data collected in this research apart from the data collected from interviews come from data sources, journals and literature and are as such presented as key references in the literature review and methodology chapters. These two mentioned chapters give the reader a general view of the current issues and an understanding of the direction the author aims to follow. The data gathered from the interviews however, is slightly different since it requires sense making and interpretation (Hart, 2005). The data gathered from participants will not be transcribed in full, only the parts that belong explicitly to the themes described in the literature review will be presented as a finding.

The coding is in essence an analytical ability to interpret keywords and key sentences that form a pattern. These will allow a conclusion to be formed from which facts, experiences and theories are supported. The following sections are divided as such: the fourteen interview questions are divided into eight core themes since some of the questions have overlapping themes. Each theme or subsection will have a subsequent thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is according to Bryman (2012) examining collections of data in order to extract core themes that are distinguishable both between and within transcripts. The analyst in this case uses coding of transcripts in order to find similar recurrences of code (key words are underlined), this involves data being broken down into component parts that are later labeled (Bryman, 2012, p. 13).

3.9 Overview

As earlier mentioned, data was collected through semi-structured interviews consisting of fourteen questions. The interviews were issued via email to ten Project Managers from different organizations and sectors. The breakdown of participant background can be seen in Figure 6. The interviews were done over a two week period yielding a response rate of 100 %. Participants were sampled using purposive and snowball sampling which meant approaching people that fit the specific criteria and also people that came recommended.

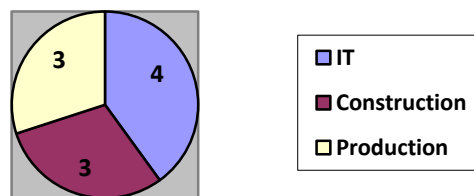


Figure 6 - Project Manager Breakdown According to Industry

The questions asked were specifically designed to answer the research questions indirectly as well as formulated with the intent of assessing themes that were also prevalent in the literature review. The aim is to both answer the research questions as a main objective but also contribute to the general understanding of project termination and failure in project management literature.

As for the participant breakdown:

- The average age is 26 years (maximum 32, minimum 24)
- Work experience average is 2.65 years in a project setting
- Gender ratio is 8:2, with majority being males.
- All participants are currently residing in Sweden

The participant demography is well within the selection criteria presented in section 3.5.

4. Findings & Analysis

4.1 Why projects fail and how failure influences the Project Leader

This section aims to answer the first research question: How does project termination impact a Project Manager from an behavioral perspective? This is done by partly introducing the most common activities in which the Project Manager has been involved in regarding project failure as a consequence. Moreover, the second sub-section presents exactly how Project Leaders are influenced and the outcomes these influences might create.

4.1.1 *Most common causes of project failure*

Theme: Poor communication

The cause of project failure that reappeared most frequently during the majority of interviews was the element of poor communication. Either a lack of communication entirely, or a flawed communication between the project team and clients/stakeholders are mentioned. Informant D (Appendix B) highlights this: *“We were poor at communicating what our strengths and weaknesses were. We failed to show the overall picture of the project and to give explicit advantages that the project might produce”*. Here the participant is referring to the quality of communication between the project team and stakeholders, particularly upper management. It seems that communication within the actual project team was also a cause of project failure, less so, in smaller organizations but very evident in larger project organizations. Informant I gives a brief testimony of this: *“Definitely poor communication, especially with larger projects where a lot of people are involved, it makes it increasingly more difficult for communication to travel in all directions”*.

Theme: Poor Resource Management

With communication being the most discussed topic, poor management of resources and personnel seems to be the second most common reason of project failure. More than half of the participants describe events where their job as a Project Leader was hindered due to lack of or insufficient amount of resources. This was in primarily due to the fact that they had trouble securing the right resource or staff member because these were allocated to

other projects. Informant E: *“More often than not has it been a case of poor estimation of the resource requirements, past projects that I have been part of have either calculated costs on the lower end or instructed that we need five workers whereas in reality maybe we needed eight workers”* and Informant G: *“A second cause is that the group is distributed to other projects, for instance if we have ten people in a given project, it makes it difficult to keep the same level of work without the entire group suffering”*, really manage to capture the nature of the problem. The issue it seems stems from the fact that projects that are run parallel risk the fact of getting short-handed due to overlapping allocation of resources and personnel mainly, this is supported by some of the respondents who believe it is because management shifts interest when deciding on priority projects.

Theme: Poor assessment of multi-project competences

The above-mentioned issue is also influenced by the structure of multi-project settings in particular when handing over numerous projects to the Project Manager. Informant E points this out: *“Problems have also surfaced as a result of overestimating the number of projects the project leader can undertake”*. This has been a shared sentiment by some of the respondents who also argue that both their competence levels and that of some of the project members should have been questioned. Informant J describes such a situation: *“I felt that I received too much responsibility too early and that I didn’t receive any help from anyone (project team and management) they assumed that because I am a Project Leader I know everything already. They threw a project at me knowing that I am perhaps the most knowledgeable but a far cry from deserving to be a Project Manager”*.

Theme: Different project cultures

The issue of different project cultures was also a reported cause of failure. Approximately one-third of the participants credited poor communication with other countries as a reason for project failure, this issue is exacerbated due to the fact that different countries have different working methods and as such a different project culture. Informant A explains: *“There have also been a lot of problems due to different project cultures. Working with different countries leads to cultural clashes. In Sweden you manage documents in a certain way, whilst in Italy for instance they work in a different manner”*.

4.1.2 How Project leaders are influenced by project failure

This theme is actually constructed from three interview questions that had overlapping similarities. The participants were asked how they are personally affected by project failure/termination in their private life, but also what their thought-process and emotional state-of-mind would be during such a termination phase. The participants were also asked to identify others other than themselves that would be potentially affected by project failure.

Theme: Difficulties separating private life and work

The findings indicate that most agree that it really should come down to separating work and private life and that both should be mutually exclusive. To what extent the participants manage to successfully separate the above mentioned realms differs however, with most admitting that they manage quite well and others hinting that it does in deed occupy an unnecessary amount of thought-process. Informant G gives a confirming example of the latter: *“It’s not like you can sign in 9 in the morning and sign out at 4. When you have these types of projects, the phone can ring 2 in the morning or 9 in the evening, it definitely affects your life negatively. A certain disappoint emerges from not knowing the root of the problem. The regret of having to work extra on weekends to solve the issue, the confidence takes a beating and also the emotional”*. Here the person clearly describes that work follows long after scheduled hours and that the extra disappointment creates negative emotions.

Theme: Increased professionalism

If we look at the opposite end of the spectrum, three participants in particular distinguish themselves; Informant B: *“Doesn’t affect me at all. I don’t take the job with me home. Shit happens. I have a never make the same mistake twice state of mind”*, Informant E: *“I am very skillful in separating career and the private, when I come home I make sure to turn off my cellphone. I embrace the fact that I am a part of a cog wheel and that I don’t have all responsibility for myself and it feels pretty good. I can come home and turn of my mobile and shut out anything work related.”* and finally, Informant D: *“Not at all, I think on the contrary I only get stronger and happier by the experience”*.

What is of interest here is that all three participants agree to not letting project failure affect their lives. However, they agree by coping with very different methods. Informant B resolves the issue by distancing subjective experiences and not let it define him/her. Informant E adopts specific routines that allow suppression of work related matters, and also embraces the inevitability of project failure by accepting belittlement of her/his own involvement and contributions. Informant D welcomes negative project experiences and views them as strengthening and enriching events capable of stimulating happiness. It would be interesting to see how genuine these responses are. Informant G said something that perhaps could indicate that there is more than meets the eye. The response: *“You also never get to show project people that you’re not professional, projects are closed every day, but for some it boils down to prestige and showing that you’re project never fails”*, is interesting because it highlights the fact that perhaps some professionals are capable of exhibiting momentary lies in order to not lose ‘face’.

Theme: The emotional impact of project failure is very relative

As for identifying emotional responses, the varying sensations were many with most claiming things would get little to very emotional depending on a number of factors. Most participants responded that: 1) the severity of the project failure, 2) the timing of the failure, 3) the size of the project and 4) the number of people involved, greatly influenced the emotional impact. The first mentioned factor is relative in the sense that the Project Leader would feel more troubled if any missteps or failures were due to their poor leadership and less troubled if it were due to reasons beyond their authority and control. As for the remaining factors, Informant I describes the delicate matter quite well: *“It depends on to what degree, if it’s a project that has been going on for years. Then you’ve been there from the beginning to the end, if anything were to happen towards the end it would devastate you, whereas smaller projects maybe not as much. It’s very relative, it would be sad if it were due to me. If it’s not my fault then it would still be sad because then you’re thinking there were so many people there so it should have been looked over”*.

Theme: People outside the organization can also be influenced by project failure

Most of the participants identified the project team and the parent organization as mediums that would be affected by project failure. This isn't to say that other unmentioned groups remain unaffected but perhaps that participants identify with respect to immediate proximity. Two participants mentioned that friends and family members would also be affected, perhaps not directly by the project events but more so the mood fluctuations and lack of spare time the Project Leader exhibits and invests. Informant J: *"It affects your private life because you are constantly trying to fix the problem this also affects your family strongly. You are stressed, come home stressed and fail to make family and friends a priority"*. In general, all participants stressed the fact that a project failure is indeed not only a personal loss but also one that concerns the organization, immediate project group, stakeholders and suppliers more specifically.

4.2 How organizations are currently dealing with project termination

In this section of the interview, participants were asked a set of closely related questions that tried to investigate exactly how well-prepared or endowed their organizations were in setting up a proper termination environment. The first question asked whether there was a specific plan in the company that thoroughly explains and or supports the project termination process. The second question continues by asking if the interviewee feels that organizations; both parent and others, should increase their focus on the termination phase of a project. This section aims to answer the second research question: How do different Project Managers choose to exit failed projects? This question is posed with respect to how each individual organization instructs their Project Leaders to terminate projects. Therefore, this section covers how organizations as a whole advocate dealing with project termination. Section 4.3 shows the individual wishes of Project Leaders in effectively terminating projects.

Theme: Organizations have informal methods of managing termination

The majority answered that they did not have a clear-cut contingency plan in the organization. Some participants explained that they 1) perhaps had such a plan, but were definitely unknowing during the time of the interview and 2) used risk management and

risk budgets to predict or correct activities during the termination phase. Informant A explains: *“Yes and no. In some case we have a few guidelines but it’s mostly based on risk analysis. In case we have too many identified risks then it’s a project that is due to be terminated”*. Similarly, Informant G explains: *“if something were to cost half a million SEK extra than predicted then we have something similar to a side budget, we call it a risk budget that appears during project deviations. You take from the risk budget but you have to report and explain what went wrong in order to take from the budget. A thorough report has to be filed in”*. Both mentioned accounts are from two individuals from the Production sector, it seems that projects that should be terminated due to failure instead have some sort of alternative escape route or means of bypassing the closing phase altogether. A third interviewee with a Production background, Informant E further validates the above argument by stating: *“We rarely if ever terminate projects here though, they are instead put on hold until the right time or resource pops up”*. Projects are somehow recovered or re-aligned in spite of project failure rather than having to have learnt anything from the failure itself.

Theme: Failure is not an option

For participants from the IT sector, in particular the Project Leaders who were interviewed in this study, work is less cut-out than their above-mentioned counterparts. Informant C describes a rather unorthodox method of coping with project failure: *“We have a template for how to start up a project, I think that’s why we should create a template for how to terminate/close projects. I really have no clue if we have such a document in our organization. If something were to go wrong then we usually have alternative routes but usually routes where termination is not an option. At this level things simply can’t go wrong, if a project is worth 200 million SEK then you have to twist and turn until everything is solved”*. This explanation helps put perspective into just how intensive competitive and large projects can become. Informant F, also from the IT sector explains that this trend is hopefully short-lived by stating that: *“Many projects in the IT sector have failed in recent years and the project networks are now investing a lot of effort in avoiding this”*. Informant F is referring to PMI in particular, but also the parent organization.

Theme: No explicit method or mention of managing project termination

Respondents from the Construction sector had little to no knowledge of any such plan existing in the organization environment. Informant H explicitly points this out by stating: *“I don’t think we have one. I as a Project Leader don’t really know stuff like this. Usually we initiate a project with the focus to succeed. Sure the time schedule can change every now and then but we still go on with the intention and focus on succeeding within the decided time parameters. I don’t really think it should be an option that the project should fail if it doesn’t happen to contribute to being a bad business case for the organization”*. There was also no mention of any alternative options when handling project failures. The data analyzed above clearly indicates that there is a lack of any clear project termination plan in the actual parent organization and that different organizations instead opt for different means of managing troubled projects.

4.3 How should project termination be prevented or dealt with?

This section aims to answer the third research question: How can Project Managers effectively terminate failed projects? The section summarizes the suggestions and wishes of the respondents in dealing with project termination and project failure. Different aspects and themes have been identified that represent areas that need improvement or consideration.

The participants here were asked how they would manage closing down or handle project failure in the parent organization (Appendix B). It is important to note that the answers given are not necessarily general steps to managing failure but specific measures these individuals would undertake based on their personal experiences. These could be measures to handle stakeholders, upper management or the actual project.

Theme: Dealing with stakeholders

The majority are in agreement when it comes to the most suitable action and how to execute it. Most respondents suggest that you should actively and with a large degree of honesty approach all involved stakeholders to explain what went wrong. This especially requires

that you as a Project Leader claim ownership and responsibility over the entire situation. You should as a Project Leader be able to thoroughly on-site through frequent visits, point out to the stakeholders why the project failed, what could have prevented it, and also suggest a plan for where to go from now. By showing effort and claiming responsibility, respondents argue that it would make it difficult for stakeholders to condemn your actions. On top of the above mentioned things, Informant A highlights some other noble actions: *“It’s important that the Project Leader refrains from sugar coating things, remember to be completely honest, it is people that have after all invested money on this. You have to get the stakeholders to see the problem from your eyes that you really tried everything but maybe the market doesn’t really exist or the technology is too new, it’s important to show that you’re not trying to make a profit but actually doing them a service by saving a lot of money”*.

It seems that by terminating a project before it ultimately fails could potentially create a deeper trust from stakeholders that is if you can manage to convince them that it was in the best interest of everyone involved. Another advice from some of the respondents is to be completely honest when explaining the exact reasons that led to the project failure. Informant J seconds this sentiment by explaining: *“A mistake many companies do is failing to confess failure which I think makes a lot of clients frustrated. If it doesn’t work, you should be honest towards the customer which in return they’ll really appreciate. It’s difficult because the management wants to keep a pretty face”*. Also, if possible trying to build a closer relationship deviating from the more formal aspect of business life can also be helpful in bonding with stakeholders and clients. Informant C assures that this can become very helpful indeed: *“You should always strive to have a good relationship with the customer, try to maybe once a month go out on dinner, and it’s all about maintaining a good relationship”*.

Theme: Dealing with the project team

There were three suggestions that kept showing up on almost all the interviews. The first suggestion or perhaps rule is that the Project Leader should never accuse, blame or identify a scape-goat in the project team. The second suggestion was that the Project Leader should

at all times be transparent, responsible and takes ownership over all activities in the project team. Finally, holding workshops and meetings for the project team is an invaluable tool for the Project Leader in order to assess the work quality and motivation of the project team but also helpful in predicting potential project failures. One key element here is communication which should be channeled to the correct people, frequent enough and with respect to the receiver of the message. Communication definitely seems to transcend throughout all three suggestions. Informant D really manages to capture all key-points in the following statement: *“The most important part is transparency, being clear with what is good and what is bad, you should definitely not point out a scape goat. If it’s more serious things that point to someone mishandling themselves then you clear out the accusation and make sure the project doesn’t go so far that the person destroys everything. You have to make people pull their weight and also know how to manage lazy people. You always go with honest cards and expect the same back. If you keep secret information undisclosed in a project organization it only makes it difficult to pinpoint any errors. It will only be unfair when things go wrong because you’ve had people working without one’s knowledge. You should early and regularly schedule meetings where everyone is open with information”*.

Theme: Dealing with private life

This question showed the largest variance in response among the participants in the interview study. While all respondents agree that work-related matters should be kept separate, some had it easier than others. Approximately half shared the same view as Informant H: *“don’t take it with you, stuff happens. Work isn’t everything”* whereas the other half felt like Informant I: *“I think you always take work with you home, especially emotionally, it’s not something you can just turn off. It’s important that you don’t work from home and make it a habit because you risk mixing those two up. Project failure does in deed affect the private life”*. While both groups agree taking distance from work when arriving home, it seems however that some are more emotionally connected to work which could in turn make it harder to separate both worlds. Informant J is hesitant towards the idea that work and home can be separated, yet the person believes that a safety plan of sorts could help alleviate some of the stress induced by project failure. Informant J: *“I don’t think it’s possible, if something risks failing it will undoubtedly affect you, but a plan B could*

ensure that a project fails within safer margins which could alleviate stress somewhat”.

Theme: How the Project Manager should lead

It seems that the majority from the interview study are all in agreement on how a commendable Project Leader ought to behave, with different wording; the majority essentially wants a project figure that is: experienced, responsible, empathetic, ambitious, adaptive and knowledgeable. The interview respondents suggested that such a Leader needs to be able to coordinate a myriad of complex activities almost simultaneously, these include: identifying, securing, utilizing and allocating resources and competences across projects with respect to the status of each resource, but also attentively follow up on the mental and work quality of project members, stakeholders and the parent organization. Informant C highlights some of the qualities an ideal Project Leader needs: *“A Project Leader should be able to listen empathetically but make hard decisions. One should be open and listen to everyone, give good ideas feedback and never criticize, one should lift people up to the same level and not push people down. You’re not supposed to micromanage, but be empathetic, have a sense of tact, know when to come in to control the person, know who requires the most help. A Project Leader needs to make sure no one ever stands still, when everything has stopped, that’s when we risk the project failing for real”.*

Theme: Actively promote Lessons Learned and improve knowledge management

The need for better knowledge management is also something that was brought up at numerous times. Respondents felt that the lessons learned and experience from working on the project weren’t really documented or utilized. Informant E shares this sentiment by explaining that: *“If it’s an abrupt ending it’s critical to do a lessons learned to see what went wrong. One could wish for a better knowledge management, it’s not as systematic as I wished it could be. It would be a good idea to sit down and assess the project, now is however not the case, as soon as you complete you’re consulting work then you go back to your office and wait until you receive your next project. There is no feedback or lessons learned”.* Understanding why and being able to extract lessons learned from events such a project failure was a common suggestion in all interviews. Informant E gives again one such suggestion: *“You make sure you do a lessons learned, you do a thorough investigation*

with anyone involved, all stakeholders and then you make sure this lessons learned is implemented into the organization. Not just throwing paper around, but actively make sure it is implemented, and systemized”.

Theme: Exemplify leadership by ownership

It seems accountability is one notion, most of the participants would agree with. Taking ownership over the project, ensuring that mistakes are not only openly confessed but also reflected upon and strategically prevented as per a defined protocol seems to be the higher ground the consensus are looking to mount. This idea of accountability and ownership is indirectly present in the statement given by Informant C: *“A project leader will never receive blame, the person will never be scolded or receive negative critique due to a failed project, but a project leader will definitely receive negative critique if a project fails, and he/she didn’t flag the risks”*. The majority of the participants throughout their mentioned accounts, described a Project Leader who resolved momentary issues by insisting on sticking to their decisions no matter how wrong they might seem at the time. Perhaps it’s the ability to defend your leadership. Informant G discusses this: *It’s about defending where you stand, even if it is a poor decision, you have to stand behind it so that it becomes a good decision, to be confident is what you say and what you decide”*.

Theme: Continuous improvement and assessment of projects

Another key-mention is the willingness to review, revise and evaluate work through additional meetings and check-ups. This allows the project group to keep members accountable and active since their work is always followed up somehow. Informant A best illustrates this point: *“More reviews and revisions in conjunction with more check-ups, additional check-ups would require that the person in charge is responsible for fixing the problem until next meeting. What I personally have experienced could’ve been solved through additional meetings, it allows me to see how the actual project is moving forward, how it is progressing. It makes it easier to predict failures”*.

Theme: The need for a Recovery manager

There is however a great interest among more than half of the respondents in assigning some kind of recovery manager or task force that specializes in terminating projects. Informant J: *“We need such a person in every company, a person with a plan and an ability to limit damage, one that knows what to do with resources, in case we face bankruptcy for instance”* and Informant B: *“Yes, I think all companies should. You have a project group that finishes the project and then you have a termination group that handles the rest. You don’t want to waste any more time when you’re finished with a project. It would be good to have a project leader who specializes in closing projects, a person like that with maybe one or two assisting leaders”*.

Theme: Concrete termination plan

Most of the respondents also agree that there should definitely be an increased focus and alertness on the termination phase, Informant G elegantly expresses this: *“Investing time on the final phase of a project is as important as putting in time at the beginning. The last 10 % are even more important than the remaining 90 %”*. Respondents argued that organizations should above all make concrete alterations that really makes decision-making black and white. Informant A explains exactly why this is important: *“I think it’s good with an increased focus, it’s good primarily because when everything comes down to it, we are Project Leaders, it sounds like a Superman title but we are normal human beings. We humans have trouble with terminations and failures, that’s why it’s good to try to concretize procedures and have a template where you can check things off and say hey this isn’t working let’s terminate it. Then you remove the responsibility from the individual”*. The truth should perhaps lie somewhere in the middle, where instead of placing responsibility on either a Project Leader or a piece of document, there should be a supporting interplay between both manager and project methodology in making appropriate decisions.

5. Discussion

Impact of project termination on Project Manager

The premise of the first research question is to understand how project termination impacts a project Manager from a behavioral perspective. Most of the project organizations that were included in the study typically launched traditional project life cycles divided into phases such as initiation, development, implementation and termination (Meredith and Mantel, 2000; Turner, 2009) this traditional way of working coupled with multi-project settings might have led to decreased quality of communication and also a greater competition in securing resources or project members. This puts a great responsibility on the Project Manager in being able to present necessary project-ending competences.

Poor communication was in fact the most mentioned cause of project failure in the findings. Zika et al. (2006) as mentioned earlier in the literature review explains that organizations launch multiple project simultaneously because this enables them to allocate fewer members to a greater range of projects. By opting for this method, organizations can thus limit idle time. The issue here is that by decreasing idle time and also the number of members that can actively partake in multiple projects, you also put a great constraint on communication because people are constantly busy and furthermore, the pool of resources from which a Project Manager can pick and collect from is increasingly getting smaller. Kaulio (2008) describes a regular employee's thought-process as "disruptive" and "fragmented" during a multi-project context which could explain why some Project Managers find increasing difficulties in securing members and competences for their projects because not only is idle time which could arguably serve as a communication "window" limited, but members are constantly engaged in stress-inducing activities (Kaulio, 2008).

Furthermore, with the limited resources and personnel currently available to the Project Manager due to the nature of multi-project settings, the parent organization could potentially perceive this as a dropping performance and thus assign even more projects

with little to no regard of the competence and motivational level of the Project Manager. The parent organization in an attempt to increase performance, over-commit by handling more projects relative to existing resources and competences (Engwall and Jerbrant, 2003). A few of the participants disclosed this fact and even mentioned that not only did it increase working hours it also made them dislike the company even more because the extra work affected their private life and emotions. Lerner and Keltner (2001) explain that negative emotions can create a decrease in trust and commitment towards the organization. This manifestation of project induced symptoms could also be known as “project overload” a state of inefficiency and decreased competence development (Zika et al., (2006). Moreover, the very same respondents described how they felt a lack of support from senior management by either feeling like their project was not a priority or that the right resources were not appropriately provided. This is according to literature a fundamental reason for why project failure occurs in the first place (Meredith and Mantel, 2008; Kerzner, 2011).

Cultural clashes due to different project environments or working habits was also an important matter that is seemingly unattended in the project world. Participants gave brief accounts of project failure due to confused communication with other offices. Instead organizations should deliberately experiment and adapt new ways of working together (see Table 2, section 2.3.1). This could perhaps be done by sending Project Managers to overseas offices and letting them get to know how work is conducted in a different project culture. Experimentation should be something a Project Manager actively promotes, especially as a pre-caution to project failure but also for learning (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004; Lee et al., 2004). This could be done by proposing and showing the senior management the real business advantage of experimenting with offices abroad.

Table 1 (see section 2.1.1) shows the most common reasons for terminating projects and while it was not entirely clear whether projects failed due to technical or economic difficulties in the interview study, it is important to consider that while companies fit failures into different labels and categories, employees and project members are in the dark when it comes to the state of affairs. They perceive disinterest from management as a lack of support and priority whereas management might view it as a means of lowering costs

and redundant work. Moreover, by including Project Managers in managerial decisions that include plans for the entire organization, opinions could be voiced so that a carefully exit strategy could be implemented where all aspects of the overall corporate strategy could be considered and respected (Kerzner, 2011). This in particular would help organizations to support their members by giving them better insight on the business play-by-play and at the same time avoid losing face, which is something also mentioned in some of the interviews (Appendix B).

In summary, it is important for organizations to understand that project termination as a result of project failure is more than just a bad business case and that project failure in itself is capable of affecting the confidence, competence and behavior of a Project Manager (Shepherd and Cannon, 2009). Project failure triggers new behaviors in the Project manager and project team that could thwart or pique their confidence levels (Fisher, 2000; Huy, 2002). In the interviews performed, most Project Managers show an ambition and willingness to learn from the failure of failed projects and admit that there is a shortage of lessons learned in the organization regarding termination of troubled projects that could serve as excellent learning experiences (Dweck, 1986). However without the clear support and guidance from senior management, Project Managers will find difficulties and deficits in their ability to relate and create project autonomy (see figure 1, section 2.1.2). Furthermore, while the literature identifies and concludes technical and economic instances of project failure, the findings show that social constraints are just as frequent and debilitating as any other cause of project failure. It is important to note that this study refers to failure as something negative whereas this does not necessarily have to be the case.

Exit strategies for a Project Manager

The question that started this discussion was the need to understand how different Project Managers choose to exit failed projects. It is however important to first make the clarification that whilst the overall decision to terminate a project depending on how well it is aligned with the goals (Meredith and Mantel, 2008) lies with senior management, the responsibility of implementing and executing the decision is generally the responsibility of a Project Manager. What the findings indicate is that this ability to execute project termination properly is flawed, mostly due to inexperience but also because of a lack of formal methods that instruct and advise how to close-out troubled projects. A transparent decision process is needed, especially one that decides on a potential termination, it requires the aid of a host of decision models or plans (Meredith and Mantel, 2008).

There exists currently no such decision plans according to the respondents who also suggest the urgent need for one. It is important that when a decision in the organization has been made regarding the fate of a project, a suitable termination method must be implemented (Meredith and Mantel, 2008). By embedding the knowledge of project failure into the business, organizations and subsequently Project Managers can more effectively execute decisions that steer projects, tasks, routines and activities away from more possible damage (Cannon and Edmondson, 2009). There is a need for a delicate interplay between both senior management and Project Managers to exchange reasons for project failure as viewed relative to their position in the company, this would help create a knowledge bank. It is also critical that all the project members are reflective enough in their lessons learned so that the accounts of project failure also receive an honest assessment. This requires that the Project Manager sets up an appropriate learning environment for the project members and stakeholders so that individuals refer from interminably dragging out other tasks but in fact give their input at the very commencement of a terminated project. There is a definitive need for a concrete project termination plan (Turner, 2009; Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013) as suggested by some of the interview respondents.

As for the projects and their current termination processes, no explicit mentioning of the concepts introduced by Meredith and Mantel (2008) were encountered (see section 2.2.2)

most of the projects that were reported to have been terminated were done so in a similar fashion to what Meredith and Mantel (2008) call: termination by integration. Because all of the organizations were multi-project organizations; resources and personnel were scattered and redistributed to other projects and fractions in the organization thus limiting chances of individuals potentially losing their jobs or status. The issue with this method is that while it is positive that members are actively placed into new projects, no measures are performed to ensure that the knowledge and lessons gathered from previous project are collected. Moreover, with the availability of new projects, very little incentive is given to the Project Manager in effectively exiting the previous one, thus possibly wasting resources and spoiling stakeholder relationships.

Interestingly, two new accounts of “terminating” projects were introduced in the sense that these were unheard of in the literature used in this dissertation. One described method was to essentially put projects “on hold” until resources, equipment and market interest are timely present, these projects as opposed to “starving” projects (Meredith and Mantel, 2008) are still present in the organization as legal entities and instead of inflicting deadly cuts as in termination by starvation (see section 2.2.2), projects are thus put into hibernation mode. A second described method of terminating was in fact allocating a “side-budget” that the Project Leader could use in the event of project failure or unforeseen risks in the project. The closest thing to a termination plan was in fact one based on risk management. The respondents explained that depending on the number of risks identified, the decision to terminate a project would be discussed. This however was commenced at the beginning of a project which would mean that projects could be stopped before even being launched. The existing ways of terminating projects, as presented by Meredith and Mantel (2008) and the previous discussed ones, all share the same fundamental flaw in the author’s opinion. That flaw is failure to actually learn from the project. This is evident, because project demise is either sudden and swift or transforming. Meaning project content and personnel are either completely stopped or redistributed to other functions in the organization with the second being more the case. Or in the case of the mentioned termination methods by the respondents, project termination due to project failure is avoided all together, by asking Project Managers to put project matters on hold or using even more budget in an attempt

to recover the project. Whatever the decision is, time and budget will most likely be affected. Also with projects either being integrated, added, starved or killed none of the current literature based termination methods, take into account parties outside the actual organization or the management of information and knowledge in the project environment.

Managing termination effectively

To conclude the set of research questions, the author explores how Project Managers can effectively terminate failed projects. In order for a Project Manager to effectively be able to terminate projects with respect to stakeholders, the project team and resources, the parent organization needs together with the Project Leader remove both the technical and social barriers that prevent them from reaching project failure in the first place. It is a vicious cycle of blissful ignorance one could argue. A true understanding can come when technological, social and structural factors are considered simultaneously (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004).

Table 2 in section 2.3.1 shows the key processes for understanding failure in organizations and also recommended ways of preventing failure. While it seems that a majority of organizations are excellent at identifying technical and even economic barriers that promote project failure, which is evident in the literature of Meredith and Mantel (2008), they fail to consider social and psychological barriers. It is far easier for companies to simply invest more money or acquire the right technical competences for projects than to secure the appropriate social competences that are necessary for the longevity of a project. This is most likely because, gauging social competence is extremely difficult to do since it is a very subjective experience. Instead respondents believe that organizations together with the Project Manager should promote and foster social environments where there is an abundance of social leeway in the ways of communication.

Cannon and Edmondson (2004) show in table 2 that the corporate culture is to “shoot the messenger” as a means of limiting reports on failure. As a resistance to this, the findings showed that refraining from pointing out “scape-goats” was necessary and that this could

be avoided if the Project Manager could take full ownership and accountability over project affairs (Turner, 2007). Moreover, Cannon and Edmondson (2004) suggest that in order to avoid that project members are ostracized for reporting failure, organizations should: “develop psychological safety in work groups and teams and celebrate and publicize failure as a means of learning” (Cannon and Edmondson, 2004, p. 32). This is evident in the reported accounts of the Project Managers that recommend increased and transparent meetings where all matters on project failure are openly discussed similar to an open forum.

Both the findings and the literature suggest that as earlier written in section 4.3; the majority of respondents want a project figure that is: experienced, responsible, empathetic, ambitious, adaptive and knowledgeable. He/she needs to be able to coordinate multiple complex activities simultaneously, these include: identifying, securing, utilizing and allocating resources and competences across projects with respect to the status of each resource, but also follow up on the mental and work quality of project members, stakeholders and the parent organization. This is almost in accordance with what Cannon and Edmondson (2009) believe.

Furthermore, the two authors Cannon and Edmondson (2009) argue that Project Managers who wish to be more than just talk require an immediate shift in how they perceive project failure, which includes working on their psychological and emotional capabilities. Almost half of the interview participants, admittedly felt that their emotional and psychological capabilities were tested due to having to actively separate work related thought-processes and activities from the private and social life. It is however important to note that the change in emotional and psychological capabilities is relative to each individual, with most respondents basing their emotional impact on: 1) the severity of the project failure, 2) the timing of the failure, 3) the size of the project and 4) the number of people involved.

All of these mentioned notions, leads the author to believe that whilst Project Managers are expected to succeed, there comes a time when their projects inevitably fail which can create a relative deficit in their psychological well-being. Instead, the author suggests that a Termination Specialist is assigned as a central role in terminating projects that lack substance and value. Terminating a failed project seems to be of complete different nature

than starting one, which means that the competences required by a Project Manager at the start of a project are not necessarily the appropriate competences at the end of a project (Turner, 2009, Havila, Medlin and Salmi, 2013). Also, important to note that failure can occur in different phases of a project (Harris, 2009)

Havila, Medlin and Salmi (2013) explain that three linked actions are required during project termination, these include involving all levels of management, managing stakeholders under crisis and shifting focus from active project plans and activities to plans that concern limiting damage and setting up project closure. The reported steps are arguably what could be considered effective termination of projects. In contrast however, effective project set-up arguably requires refraining from involving too many managerial levels by exuding independent project autonomy, keeping stakeholders relatively happy and informed and finally; successfully launch projects via careful and deliberate decision and plan making. Simply viewing the sheer number of roles and responsibilities a Project Manager should be capable of handling gives evidence of just how much work is expected. Embracing the idea of a Recovery and Termination Manager requires that organizations adopt a leadership oriented focus rather than a focus on tasks alone (Kaulio, 2008). A Project Leader given the correct guidance and support will most likely exhibit a different kind of leadership and project outcome than a Project leader given no guidance and sub-par support. It is therefore essential that organizations invest in mentorship, ownership, flexible resource, stakeholder and knowledge management and finally; a proper exit strategy and/ or competent termination specialist.

6. Conclusions

Simply writing about project failure is not a solution on its own but requires a delicate interplay between organizations and its members. As it stands, a complete and effective termination plan needs to be created with the outmost consideration for proper knowledge and stakeholder management. This will in return ensure that a healthy decision-making process can be adopted by the Project Manager and thus decrease the deficit in emotional and psychological well-being that has been reported.

Moreover, project failure it seems does not only consist of economic and technical barriers to an organization but also social barriers where work for a project team is reported to be disruptive and fragmented, especially with the introduction of multi-project settings. These settings albeit time and cost effective, can create stress-inducing reactions due to their nature. Multi-project settings also make it difficult for the Project Manager to channel information and communication to all involved parties and stakeholders thus requiring extra visits and meetings. Furthermore, with organizations managing such a large project portfolio relative to the number of resources and personnel, great difficulties arise for the Project Manager in being able to retrieve and secure equipment and members in an ever decreasing pool of resources. Project failure resulting in project termination also creates a disinterest from the parent organization, meaning shift of priorities and support are moved instead to more successful projects. This leads to the Project Manager feeling a lack of support and guidance. This issue can be alleviated by allowing the Project Manager to promote healthy experimentation and create project environments where project failure is studied instead of repressed, by viewing project failure as a challenge and an enriching experience, the Project Manager can together with the project team create effective improvements to the management of stakeholders, resources and knowledge. By earning the trust and support from the senior management, the Project Management can subsequently improve his/her project-ending and social competence and therefore provide the organization an even more impressive business advantage.

With the clear support and interest from senior management, the Project Manager accompanied by a concrete termination plan can make better and more profitable decisions that can possibly limit damage and waste to stakeholder relationships and project resources. The testimonies of a handful of business professionals, clearly give evidence to the fact that companies today lack the incentive for Project Managers to effectively terminate projects. Instead, Project Leaders are given more informal methods of trying to recover troubled projects and these methods usually require the aid of more time and more money. Project Managers are expected to twist and turn at the very mention of project failure and are held to believe that project failure simply is not an option, employing short-sighted strategies to mitigating project failure only increases the risk of a backlash both to the senior management but also to the Project Manager in the sense that confidence and motivation is slowly dissolved until a state of project overload has been reached. This disappointment will only create an upset in the senior management leading to brash decision-making by employing last-minute termination decisions that negatively affect the project atmosphere.

By investing in a clear, transparent and definitive termination plan, the Project Manager can with the support of this valuable playbook make preparations and decisions that positively affect unexpected instances of project failure. The termination plan should be the sum total of all insights and lessons learned in the project organization and should account for both the success factors but also include the reasons why project fail. A termination plan will ensure that the Project Manager has incentives to possess project ownership and leadership and by having a sounding board, the Project Manager is allowed time to nurture and foster private matters, the quality and motivation of the project team and the stakeholder relationships. In order for this to occur, there needs to be a continuous investment in creating a knowledge bank that is the product of insightful lessons learned collected at the very end of project termination. By dynamically documenting strategies to combat reoccurring project failures, organizations can minimize the adverse effects of project failure through strategic termination management. It is time that organizations admit the reality of project failure, especially the effects it can have on the project team. It is time for a project exit strategy.

Suggestions for future studies

- It would be interesting to see exactly how much project organizations can gain from investing in a clear-cut termination plan in terms of cost, quality and time. Also interesting would be to see organizations establish a “Termination Manager” of sorts, one that has the required capabilities and competences to only focus on project close-out.
- With the suggested need for a proper lessons learned data collection, it would be fascinating to research on what type of support or data systems one could use, especially during times of project failure where there is a great deal of chaos and stress in the organization. One suggestion would be to study the effectiveness of “video-blogs” where there is an assigned room in the office environment where employees can go to record their honest appraisal and assessment of project matters. This could potentially serve as a company log where management could assess and evaluate the overall well-being and health of the project organization.
- With the majority of interview respondents being male and also situated in Sweden, it would be interesting to see the female perspective (if such a perspective exists) in how project failure affects them individually and also their suggestions on how to effectively terminate such projects.
- Also after organizations admit that project failure is a real problem in organizations, it would be fascinating to see suggestions as to how organizations can give incentive or potentially reward project members in introducing project exit strategies that work.

7. References

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8. Appendix

Appendix A – Interview Questions

Interview questionnaire in English

Personal questions:

1. Tell more about yourself, position, years as Project Manager?
2. Based on your experience, why do you think projects fail?
3. Have you ever experienced project failure or termination? If yes, please describe a particular case?
4. How would (have you approached based on your experience) you approach a project failure in the organization?

PM and team impact

5. Do you feel confident in your ability to handle failure in projects?
6. How does project failure/termination affect you as a person (personal life)?
7. What is your thought-process and emotional state-of-mind during a project termination?
8. Other than yourself, who does project failure affect?

Skills / Capabilities of PM

9. What kind of Project Managers do you think would cope well with project failure, think for example on particular competences, skills?
10. What kind of Project Manager do you think wouldn't handle project failure well?

Organizational processes

11. Do you have a specific plan in your company that explains/supports the termination process?
12. Do you feel that project organizations, especially yours should put more focus on the termination phase?
13. How would you say project failure differs in different industries, for instance compared to IT, Construction and Production projects?
14. How should one handle project failure in regards to these aspects:
 - Stakeholders
 - Project Team
 - Private life during project failure?

Interview questionnaire in Swedish

Personliga frågor:

1. Berätta lite mer om dig själv, din position, hur länge du jobbat som projektledare?
2. Baserat på din erfarenhet, varför tror du projekt misslyckas?
3. Har du någonsin upplevt misslyckanden eller nedläggningar av projekt? Om JA, berätta gärna om ett specifikt fall?
4. Hur skulle du (om du nu upplevt) hantera ett misslyckat projekt inom organisationen? I korta generella drag?

Projektledaren och projektgruppen:

5. Känner du dig självsäker i din förmåga att kunna hantera misslyckade projekt?
6. Hur känner du att projektmisslyckanden påverkar ditt privata liv?
7. Hur dan är din tankeprocess och ditt emotionella tillstånd under nedläggning av ett projekt?
8. Utöver dig själv, vilka tror du påverkas av projekt misslyckanden?

Färdigheter/Förmågor och Projektledaren

9. Vad för typ av projektledare tror du skulle kunna hantera projekt misslyckanden väl? Tänk på specifika kompetenser, karaktäristiska drag eller färdigheter?
10. Vad för typ av projektledare tror du skulle INTE kunna hantera projekt misslyckanden väl? Tänk på specifika kompetenser, karaktäristiska drag eller färdigheter?

Organisationen:

11. Har ni en specifik plan/förberedelse i ert företag som förklarar/stödjer projekt nedläggningsprocessen?
12. Tycker du att projektorganisationer, speciellt din borde utöka sitt fokus kring avslutningsskedet av projekt?
13. Hur skulle du säga att projekt misslyckanden skiljer sig i de olika industrierna? Jämfört med till exempel IT, Konstruktion, Produktion och Startup projekt?
14. Hur borde man gå tillväga i sin hantering av projektmisslyckanden i avseende till:
 - Intressenter/andelsägare?
 - Projektgruppen?
 - Det privata livet?

Tack för hjälpen! Notera att ni förblir anonyma under intervjun så ni behöver inte oroa er för att era företag får reda på att ni kritiserar! På nästa sida ser ni frågorna i original språket, uppsatsen kommer att skrivas på Engelska vilket innebär att era svar kommer senare att översättas och transkriberas! Ljudfilerna som jag spelar in kommer endast att användas av mig för mitt personliga bruk!

Appendix B – Interview Transcripts

4.1 On why projects fail

Informant A: *There are very different reasons. In my case, I have felt a lack of revision or inspection when looking over someone's work. Other factors would be lack of knowledge in personnel, more specifically the members in the project team. For instance, I have worked closely with quality engineers whose responsibility is to secure products, in this case products that have been delivered by suppliers. The problem is due to them not having adequate education or background necessary to validate more mechanical constructions, this leads to them running to constructors which prolongs the process and leading to more and more stuff being sent to my constructors. There have also been a lot of problems due to different project cultures. Working with different countries leads to cultural clashes. In Sweden you manage documents in a certain way, whilst in Italy for instance they work in a different manner - **Production***

Informant B: *It depends on numerous things. But the thing that weighs the most is poor communication in the project, more specifically in the project team - **Construction***

Informant C: *A few factors that I consider to be key in project failures is lack of anchoring in the organization. I handle large transformation projects which makes it difficult to anchor with the individuals where change is supposed to take place. Some changes mean that we might go more lean, more consolidated, more efficient which sometimes mean that we assume that your job is no longer required, which could scare people. Another reason is poor communication, cultural background is also important. Communication between different cultures requires excellent supervision over what they do and how they do it. That communication needs to be controlled regularly - **IT***

Informant D: *We have had plenty of interesting projects that have both succeeded and failed. Among those that have failed, usually there have been lack of structures that don't really convey the spiritual message of the project, what the purpose is. The issue that*

developed was that we failed to present our entire concept to the management, our vision didn't reach through. We were poor at communicating what our strengths and weaknesses were. We failed to show the overall picture of the project and to give explicit advantages that the project might produce - **IT**

Informant E: More often than not has it been a case of poor estimation of the resource requirements, past projects that I have been part of have either calculated costs on the lower end or instructed that we need five workers, whereas in reality maybe we needed eight workers. Under estimating the time schedule has also been an issue. Problems have also surfaced as a result of overestimating the number of projects the project leader can undertake, or a case of other projects being prioritized more highly than others resulting in poor time allocation. I can also be affected by what resources I can have or are available to me, sometimes I have to fight to secure right people for my project which oftentimes is something out of my control - **Production**

Informant F: Mostly due to politics -in the consulting area, and a bad project start phase burdened by insufficient requirements, bad stakeholder management and bad contracts. Projects were terminated because it was beneficial for one person or party. Mostly for managers: Showing authority in the company or correcting personal mistakes. Usually possible after a few things go wrong in the project. As mentioned above, politics mostly decide which projects fail and which continue. Issues appear in every project; it is the willingness of every shareholder or important stakeholder that decides the success - **IT**

Informant G: The biggest reason is that a poor communication channel is created with the customer. This makes it difficult to build something on, gradually becoming worse. Since the projects are between 14-20 months, the root of the problem is cemented early, when it finally gets worse the entire project organization suffers. A second cause is that the group is distributed to other projects, for instance if we have ten people in a given project, it makes it difficult to keep the same level of work without the entire group suffering. It doesn't work in the real world to claim that you finished your assignment and then go relax somewhere else. With projects being run parallel and being different sizes means that some

only prioritize what is important to them which is not necessarily highly prioritized by you
- **Production**

Informant H: *Not enough experience with international certification systems amongst consultants in Sweden* - **Construction**

Informant I: *Definitely poor communication, especially with larger projects where a lot of people are involved, it makes it increasingly more difficult for communication to travel in all directions. The people at the top maybe have something important to say and it doesn't find its way down to where the actual work is done* - **Construction**

Informant J: *Generally, I would say with my limited experience that projects fail due to poor pre-study, we have ventured off into something that we can't quite understand how complicated it is. Poor pre-study is definitely a major cause. Also I felt that I received too much responsibility too early and that I didn't receive any help from anyone (project team and management) they assumed that because I am a Project Leader I know everything already. They threw a project at me knowing that I am perhaps the most knowledgeable but a far cry from deserving to be a Project Manager. In this very situation, I felt that the entire project group should've acted like one unified system and not relying on one specific person to carry the entire responsibility. If you give only one person responsibility, then the entire group assumes that role is who you get to throw blame at later* - **Production**

4.2 How project failure should be managed

Informant A: *More reviews and revisions in conjunction with more check-ups, additional check-ups would require that the person in charge is responsible for fixing the problem until next meeting. What I personally have experienced could've been solved through additional meetings, it allows me to see how the actual project is moving forward, how it is progressing. It makes it easier to predict failures. Sometimes however, it could be a matter of poor timing, at times a technical project or product is simply not ready for the world even though it might have really cool features* - **Production**

Informant B: *Substitute the project team with another one and completely start over. Not fire people but switch out the organization. I would then hold a knowledge transfer with the old project team and the new and highlight what went wrong and what could be improved. Before you restart it is important to look and investigate for the mistakes that surfaced and why they originated in the first place - **Construction***

Informant C: *A project leader will never receive blame, the person will never be scolded or receive negative critique due to a failed project, but a project leader will definitely receive negative critique if a project fails, and he/she didn't flag the risks. Things will undoubtedly go wrong, if you go every day telling yourself that it will solve itself, then you have an issue. You need to constantly flag, if it is this way, then there is this risk. You grade the risks and take into account probability and effect. Then you mitigate and resist the risks, which you have to do first when the project starts and then every quarter - **IT***

Informant D: *Analyze, write analytical reports to clarify what went well and what went bad. Documentation is one of the most important things, adding a personal assessment at the end, where you write a text for the boss explaining what you believe with hard facts. I also prefer paper, it feels more objective, I have no difficulties communicating face-to-face - **IT***

Informant E: *You make sure you do a lessons learned, you do a thorough investigation with anyone involved, all stakeholders and then you make sure this lessons learned is implemented into the organization. Not just throwing paper around, but actively make sure it is implemented, and systemized. The leaders should dynamically document so that everything is formally presented in the organization so that one can fix the failures. Eye-to-eye is the best option, sit in front of the boss and explaining lessons learned so that it is actively considered - **Production***

Informant F: *If projects fail, both parties usually try to limit their expenses and get out of contracts. Often this ends in court. Important: No accusations, no personal involvement, communication limited to a minimum to let lawyers do their work - IT*

Informant G: *Meeting the client is number one because than you can avert if anything were to fail. Number two would be to go really far back in time and look for the problem or else you might really risk crack the time schedule which is really expensive. Third is to look into the project team and their flaws so that you don't take premature decisions without actually facing the group - Production*

Informant H: *I would explain more clearly for the closest boss and the group of directorates the reason for the failure. I would reflect on what possibilities I have for continuing with the project and present this to the boss/upper management and we would than together reflect on whether it is advised to continue with the project or terminate it completely - Construction*

Informant I: *Communication is really the thing that keeps everything together and that's why I think check-ups with important members, regularly or always depending on how close you are working with the person or people. Put up good communication channels, check regularly, have a level of transparency in the work. If you have clarity then communication will improve - Construction*

Informant J: *If I were to redo, and if you disregard the fact that the project were to fail regardless then I would not appoint myself the Project Leader but instead make three of us leaders and I would also demand more resources from management. It is important for me that the management see my project as a priority and not a mere side-project. The problem I had in the past was that everyone involved in the project team had other stuff to do so they treated my project as a second priority, I was forced to solve the problem myself without much actual experience - IT*

4.3 Confidence in managing project termination

Informant A: *I would say no, that is because the projects that I have been involved in all have different reasons for failing. You can't really conclude any general conclusions. You definitely never feel confident in failing projects. First and foremost, different projects have different investments and depending on when the project fails, if it fails after you've been working with it for a long time then you have more money in the project that you've wasted. I feel more insecure in failed projects that have been up for a while, because there you usually never have anyone who wants to take the decision of killing the project even if they know it. In my company, the board and leaders sit in --- and they only see good or poor results, and nothing in between. To give them a failure, in something they have been investing in for many years. You will definitely notice a large reform in the organization as a result - **Production***

Informant B: *Yes, I feel very confident and did my best in the project (recovering a failed project) and when I resigned I was considered a hero in the project because I managed to minimize all the errors - **Construction***

Informant C: *I want to say yes, because when you enter a project you want to you receive a number of tools and instruments that you learn. The person who is the most experienced will directly be able to tell what will go wrong. I don't want to say that a person who has experienced a failed project is a poor Project Leader, really it boils down to always telling the truth and not cover anything up. 70 % according to Mckinsey (not cross-checked) of all transformation projects fail. It will never be 100 % but when you've done all your calculations and preparations assessing the plausibility and deciding on a budget, then it's always best-case scenarios you've been guessing on. It's all about being and working transparently with the person or towards the person you are working with, then you could work with all types of projects - **IT***

Informant D: *Absolutely, as long as I have the resources then it's all good. What could be potentially troublesome would be if external factors are in control, for instance economic*

conditions that make it impossible for you to live up to your deadline. But if it's a matter of leader capabilities, then I am completely pleased - IT

Informant E: *Yes I would say so, if a project were to fail and I haven't given it my all in the project then I would know that I was personally responsible for something failing in the project due to me forgetting something. That's way I always make sure to identify all the risks and flaws early on so that I can for instance learn something useful from someone with 20 something years of experience. If I make sure to guard myself and realize that the project doesn't seem to go as planned, then I don't hold it against me because I know that I couldn't have known - Production*

Informant F: *No, this is an exception. Usually risk and crisis management bring the project back on track - IT*

Informant G: *It's about defending where you stand, even if it is a poor decision, you have to stand behind it so that it becomes a good decision, to be confident is what you say and what you decide. It's about not saying that we will deliver this here and then regret because then the entire project team, the customer and all local offices are affected. You have to take responsibility for something and stand firm behind it, to be determined. It's a characteristic trait as Project Manager - Production*

Informant H: *Yes in the present situation. If you were to ask me a year ago my answer would've been no but now that I've been in a project that has succeeded I have some more meat on my legs - Construction*

Informant I: *Yes and no. No because you are never prepared for failures and then you also don't know to what degree, it could be smaller or larger stuff such as economic failure due to overspending, how do you explain it to the customer? Then it could be that solutions, constructions that you've built don't really make the cut that would be even worse than failure since someone could get really hurt or worse - Construction*

Informant J: Honestly, no because since that project (earlier failed project) I feel that I really don't want that responsibility. If I were to take that responsibility it would require a lot. It would have to be an area I am hundred percent sure of. It really affects you as a person and it affects your judgment completely. You don't take projects that you're not sure of. I have the qualities that are required to become a Project Leader, but when you fail and the errors are directed towards you, then you automatically hold them against yourself as well - IT

4.4 Self-reflection and identification of emotional triggers

Informant A: It's very person-dependent, personally I am someone who has a hard time letting go of things. When something goes bad at work, I take it home. You get locked inside of your own bubble thinking how you could've done things better. It's all about hanging your jacket and telling yourself that there's nothing more you could do about it. For me as a person I have a hard time letting go of things, it's mostly because I have difficulties letting go of my emotions. Even if I don't think about it, I feel that I have failed doing something. Everyone in the project group are affected, this is not only a personal failure but also one for the group. On top of that you have other organizations and suppliers. The parent organization is affected to different degrees depending on what stage in the project you are in. If a project that you have invested a lot of money and time on fails, then all other projects are affected because the money I invested could have been used to these other projects, so they get stuck both economically but also in manpower because they lack the resources they wanted - **Production**

Informant B: Doesn't affect me at all. I don't take the job with me home. Shit happens. I have a never make the same mistake twice state of mind. Everyone involved in the project, the management and the stakeholders. If it's a large project everyone is affected. Economically and emotionally if you are sensitive - **Construction**

Informant C: A Project Leader is like a boss, the more they have to do...the less they have to do the more successful they are. If a Project Manager wants a finger in everything and

really work with everything then something is wrong. It affects you privately by taking control of your life if you allow it - IT

Informant D: Not at all, I think on the contrary I only get stronger and happier by the experience. I would probably only feel frustration if it were due to factors out of my reach. But it will probably never affect my confidence. I am used from many years of other experiences in taking critique and working with areas that I am not necessarily very knowledgeable in. It would probably affect the people who want further employment and the people who have laid down a lot of energy on the project but failed to make what they've done really show - IT

Informant E: I am very skillful in separating career and the private, when I come home I make sure to turn off my cellphone. I embrace the fact that I am a part of a cog wheel and that I don't have all responsibility for myself and it feels pretty good. I can come home and turn off my mobile and shut out anything work related. When failures occur you do get a little bit emotional, you always want to perform your best and be the best person you can be. You usually thresh for a day or two after a project is terminated, it can suck out the energy out of you and maybe you're not as up to beat the day after at the office. You also never get to show project people that you're not professional, projects are closed every day, but for some it boils down to prestige and showing that you're project never fails -

Production

Informant F: As a project member: Not at all. Lawyers usually take over if the project is considered failed...None. Again: The failed projects I experienced ended because of politics. Had little to do with the project itself...The Company. Court cases are very expensive and bind resources. Reputation is only a bit affected, because other projects succeed - IT

Informant G: It's not like you can sign in 9 in the morning and sign out at 4. When you have these types of projects, the phone can ring 2 in the morning or 9 in the evening, it definitely affects your life negatively. A certain disappoint emerges from not knowing the

root of the problem. The regret of having to work extra on weekends to solve the issue, the confidence takes a beating and also the emotional...Suppliers are affected...family is also affected when you are working holidays...the boss is also affected since he is forced to attend meetings in order to explain why stuff have gone so bad. There's also a bunch of people affected, especially in the project group consisting of 10-15 people - **Production**

Informant H: It does take some time out of your private life when you invest so many thoughts on the project on what you want to change...Everyone (project group) is affected and the entire organization if it a larger project - **Construction**

Informant I: It depends on to what degree, if it's a project that has been going on for years. Then you've been there from the beginning to the end, if anything were to happen towards the end it would devastate you, whereas smaller projects maybe not as much. It's very relative, it would be sad if it were due to me. If it's not my fault then it would still be sad because then you're thinking there were so many people there so it should have been looked over - **Construction**

Informant J: The problem is when you're sitting with a project that is failing you take the work with you home and try everything so it doesn't fail. It affects your private life because you are constantly trying to fix the problem this also affects your family strongly. You are stressed, come home stressed and fail to make family and friends a priority. It definitely takes a toll on your private life, it was frustrating resulting in me disliking the company even more. I felt I didn't receive enough help and with my members I felt that we started to get even worse communication. I had to do everything when they were supposed to be there full-time but instead are busy with something else - **IT**

4.5 The ideal vs less ideal Project Leader

Informant A:

Ideal: A Project Leader should be understanding, tolerant, very driven and essentially very well-liked. A Project Leader needs to get a feel for how the group feels, support when it is

needed so that the group fights to get things done. It makes you work towards the same goal when you feel like you're part of a team.

*Less ideal: It's good to be a winner, someone who always wants to win and achieve goals is a good thing for a Project Manager. But to me a Project Leader is similar to the role a father has in a family, even if the situation is difficult he needs to endure. A Project Leader that makes it so that the group loses hope and lacks understanding, a person that is short-sighted and not popular will have a difficult time making people cooperate - **Production***

Informant B:

Ideal: a Project Leader who is strategic, ice in his belly, solution-oriented and has a lot of knowledge in his industry. One has to see errors and not be afraid, he needs to be able to solve it even though it's wrong, he needs to minimize errors in the best possible way.

*Less ideal: A project leader who is afraid of challenges, easily stressed, doesn't cope with problems in a professional manner - **Construction***

Informant C:

Ideal: A Project Leader should be able to listen empathetically but make hard decisions. One should be open and listen to everyone, give good ideas feedback and never criticize, one should lift people up to the same level and not push people down. You're not supposed to micromanage, but be empathetic, have a sense of tact, know when to come in to control the person, know how requires the most help. A Project Leader needs to make sure no one ever stands still, when everything has stopped, that's when we risk the project failing for real.

*Less ideal: Someone who is condescending, a pushover. There are Project Managers who are really excellent at specific competences, but sometimes have difficulty with social competence. When you come and ask for help, they give you a negative comment back. Hard, and unpleasant people who sometime answer very short on email don't really fit me. Authoritarian types who want to manage by fear, push them down instead of up. I have met very few of these types, but they definitely exist - **IT***

Informant D:

Ideal: Interested and strong in managing everything from smaller details to larger general details. To be able to coordinate resources and good at identifying the resources needed for your project, this requires that one does some research and is humble and can learn and understand the assignment. If you have different groups where some members are in many projects at the same time it can be difficult with timing when you plan meetings, deadlines, you are constantly competing with other Project Managers for resources. You have to show respect and try to utilize people in the right way so that they're not in the middle of an important step in their project and suddenly have to work on my project. You have to consider things like that.

Less ideal: The absolute most important thing is humility towards people and knowing your place. If you can't value resources in the shape of people or equipment or time, then that person is unstructured, which is the worst thing possible. Structure is important.

- IT

Informant E:

Ideal: I know a lot of Project Leaders who are capable of managing project failures, and they are all agile Project Leaders. There is not a single one that is capable and traditional as a Project Leader. They are very ambitious, driven but also very changeable and flexible. You have to be open for the world and changes, you have to work around problems sometimes. They have to have an eye on every step in the process and be able to look far ahead. The best Project Leader is not the boss but the leader, he needs to be able to identify the right competences and extract the best traits out of people. They are like coaches, a part of the gang. The more traditional Project Leaders are too old school, they are difficult to work with in a world that is increasingly becoming more modern. This isn't the 50's.

Less ideal: Project Leaders who point and tell you what to do, individuals who think they know everything. You get so extremely unmotivated when working with such Project Leaders. You don't feel like a part of the team but someone who only follows orders, like a child. Everything comes down to prestige with such leaders. Prestigeless Project Leaders are the best Project Leaders to work with, they always think of the team because they know if the project team delivers excellent results then they also get commended. Some Project

*leaders however believe that if people see that I was the one pointing and leading then I get all the praise, which is not the case. The project group will hate you, reputation will flow so no one will want to work with you instead - **Production***

Informant F:

Ideal: Good at Stakeholder management and risk management. Good Mediator, good personal skills. Understanding politics. Has enough grey hair!

*Less ideal: Managers that get too involved in emotional conflicts. Young managers, even if they are good - **IT***

Informant G:

Ideal: an ideal Project Leader is a person who really stands for what they are saying. When the project group comes during a project stand-still, the Project Leader needs to take a decision. Even if it's a poor decision it has to be taken even if it could potentially drag down the entire group, at least now someone has taken ownership which is both accepted by client and office. If the project were to go up in flames after 1-2 years it doesn't matter because the Project Leader did whatever he/she thought was the correct decision at the time.

*Less ideal: A project leader who doesn't take ownership and constantly blames others, someone who doesn't have a firm understanding on technical matters, that I would say is a poor characteristic - **Production***

Informant H:

Ideal: a sufficiently experienced Project Leader who has worked on different types of projects: short/long, many involved/independent. Also someone who has experienced failed projects.

*Less ideal: Someone who hasn't been in the business long and someone who takes things too personal - **Construction***

Informant I:

Ideal: Very understanding, takes care of you, if you have questions he/she takes their time and is calm. You shouldn't feel stressed if he/she also feels stressed. People like that are however also dangerous, because you can't really tell when you put too much responsibility on their plate.

Less ideal: Leaders who haven't really experienced failure, they can be working for a project very long, a project they really feel close to and then it all fails. I haven't really experienced much myself, a failure will most likely hit me hard - **Construction**

Informant J:

Ideal: I believe it's really important that the person has experience but I also believe that someone who really has a lot of experience also is insensitive and blunt to failure. You need a person who has knowledge and understanding for how other people work, if you're a Project Leader then you are a coordinator and if you don't understand how other work and see strengths and weaknesses in their methods then it's a problem. You need a person who is a leader with an ability to see others more than themselves.

Less ideal: I think an asocial person generally is the first main obstacle. Also people who are very insecure and lack experience. Young people whether they are experienced or not have difficulties in my opinion – **IT**

4.6 On whether the organization is prepared or focused to fail intelligently

Informant A: Yes and no. In some case we have a few guidelines but it's mostly based on risk analysis. In case we have too many identified risks then it's a project that is due to be terminated. However, though if it's a matter of working with innovative products that usually are unpredictable because they have undefined markets with new technology and new stakeholders, usually competences the company has invested a lot of money in; those kind of projects you need to keep separate from the risk analysis and instead take a look at how the market moves and make sure the technology is heading in the right direction.

I think it's good with an increased focus, it's good primarily because when everything comes down to it, we are Project Leaders, it sounds like a Superman title but we are normal human beings. We humans have trouble with terminations and failures, that's why it's good to try

*to concretize procedures and have a template where you can check things off and say hey this isn't working let's terminate it. Then you remove the responsibility from the individual switching from subjective to making it more objective. If one were to have a template with criteria's then it would be much easier for a Project Leader to make decisions - **Production***

Informant B: *Yes. I think all companies should. You have a project group that finishes the project and then you have a termination group that handles the rest. You don't want to waste any more time when you're finished with a project. It would be good to have a project leader who specializes in closing projects, a person like that with maybe one or two assisting leaders - **Construction***

Informant C: *We have a template for how to start up a project, I think that's why we should create a template for how to terminate/close projects. I really have no clue if we have such a document in our organization. If something were to go wrong then we usually have alternative routes but usually routes where termination is not an option. At this level things simply can't go wrong, if a project is worth 200 million SEK then you have to twist and turn until everything is solved - **IT***

Informant D: *It varies, we have so incredibly many different projects. If it's a research project then a negative result still counts as something important, but if it's an IT system that is supposed to be used in the organization then it could really become expensive especially if you were to fail the project. It is exactly these type of questions we are trying to focus on at the moment, both directly and indirectly primarily because projects are so varying in nature - **IT***

Informant E: *We go agile, when a project is terminated usually you know beforehand because you do everything in sprints, that's why you don't spend as much time until the project is terminated. When a project finally is closed, we still have continuous communication with the stakeholders. We rarely if ever terminate projects here though, they are instead put on hold until the right time or resource pops up. If it's an abrupt ending it's critical to do a lessons learned to see what went wrong. One could wish for a better knowledge management, it's not as systematic as I wished it could be. It would be a good*

idea to sit down and assess the project, now is however not the case, as soon as you complete you're consulting work then you go back to your office and wait until you receive your next project. There is no feedback or lessons learned - **Production**

Informant F: No. Failed projects are an exception. There are many processes that prevent project failure. If a project fails, it costs a lot of money. This will be avoided with much effort.

For failed projects: No, because there is not much to save as soon as the failure occurs. **** puts a high focus on avoiding these failures, (Several chapters the body of knowledge: Crisis management, Medication, Project termination, Change of PM, etc.) Many projects in the IT sector have failed in recent years and the project networks are now investing a lot of effort in avoiding this. PMI as well is suppose.

For successful projects: No. All deliverables are part of a termination template and defined in advance. Enough time is planned from the beginning to terminate the project. Usually three months after project completion. Usually the termination process of each successful project is similar, so not much optimization is needed. Only exception: Lessons learned - **IT**

Informant G: There are a number of processes we have when we fall behind in the time schedule, if something were to cost half a million SEK extra than predicted then we have something similar to a side budget, we call it a risk budget that appears during project deviations. You take from the risk budget but you have to report and explain what went wrong in order to take from the budget. A thorough report has to be filed in. You also have to go back to when you tendered the project to the customer in the country you first went to and explain why you failed to consider this risk. If you however knew of the risk but completely ignored it as a Project Leader even though it was in the tender, then it could be difficult receiving the risk budget. If the tender is poorly formulated then it's the project group who get the hit, the better the tender the better the project. It's pretty logical. Other than the risk budget, we don't have a specific termination process. Investing time on the final phase of a project is as important as putting in time at the beginning. The last 10 % are even more important than the remaining 90 % - **Production**

Informant H: I don't think we have one. I as a Project Leader don't really know stuff like this. Usually we initiate a project with the focus to succeed. Sure the time schedule can change every now and then but we still go on with the intention and focus on succeeding within the decided time parameters. I don't really think it should be an option that the project should fail if it doesn't happen to contribute to being a bad business case for the organization - **Construction**

Informant I: I don't know actually, haven't really given it much thought. It's a very good question. It's something that should be included in the introduction days, or the introduction to the consulting role. To get a mental preparation and understanding that things will fail or be terminated, then a program or step-by-step process would be pretty helpful. There should definitely be a method for terminating, one that allows you to later reconnect to see what went wrong so that you don't repeat the same mistake. I think it should exist in every company - **Construction**

Informant J: No specific. You have to have a plan B, you need to be able to tell what to do in case plan A fails, how to limit the damage. There is no plan B. If we succeed, we succeed. If we fail then we're at loss. How much can you lose? What damage is acceptable? We sit in a small business, if a project doesn't work then it affects everyone, especially customers. The clients we have are highly coveted, if we fail we lose a lot of customers. You have to early on clearly understand when a failure is a failure instead of spinning your wheels and be hopeful. You have to first define failure, is it economical or lack of efficiency? We need such a person in every company, a person with a plan and an ability to limit damage, one that knows what to do with resources, in case we face bankruptcy for instance - **IT**

4.7 A brief comparison of project failure in different industries

Informant A: Because I work as a Project Leader in production...IT is an industry where you program something, then it's not as difficult to back away in the same way, you don't really think about money in the same way because it's all in the program. If we come to my

area: production, then you've actually come so far that you've actually produced something, you've received parts, invested time on construction, IT, talking with suppliers, ordering parts, entered the house and assembled everything only to find that something went wrong. Then not only have you only wasted working hours as an expense but also entire resources. When we order a batch of for instance 3000 of something and every unit costs let's say 1000 SEK then you have a lot of money tied up to something that doesn't currently work. We work with just-in-time, when we do an order, then we do it so that everything is assembled and shipped out. If we get an order that doesn't work then there's a full-stop in the production, stop in the line, then we're just wasting time on employees and just wait -

Production

Informant B: Moneywise. I don't have any experience from the other areas, but it feels like it would cost more in a building project compared to the rest. If you design something wrong in a building project then it could possibly end up costing anything from 10 000 to many million SEK - **Construction**

Informant C: IT projects fail all the time because it's so amazingly complex. It's a different type of market because there's so much pressure. I read somewhere that 40 % of all the world's market share is IT based and those 40 % are only shared by 20 players. It's the world's most competitive market, you really have to cut down prices which in return affects performance - **IT**

Informant D: IT is a very broad topic area, there is hard competition in all three fields of course. If IT is of the nature that it is a support system then things can become very costly - **IT**

Informant E: if you look at Construction then it's very expensive to fail with projects, because there we have buildings, materials, physical objects and prototypes. Construction requires an awful lot of competences, you have so many resources you can't afford to lose, that's why it becomes so extremely expensive when such projects fail. IT however has the biggest difference, with IT you usually say it's the cheapest thing to forward, you essentially only need programmers. A computer and a programmer. And a programmer can basically

sit anywhere. IT projects have a very large economical scale, you can scale up an IT project pretty quick without costs also going up. You also get more revenues with all the extra users you get in comparison. You have more room to fail with IT projects - **Production**

Informant F: *I only have the Consulting/IT perspective. I assume it is very different in other areas* - **IT**

Informant G: *Construction compared to IT can become increasingly more expensive and also more exhaustive, you have so many suppliers and hundreds of tons of something has to be delivered. Materials and equipment can be left at some abandoned warehouse never to be used again because of a terminated project* - **Production**

Informant H: *Some industries are more prone to be affected by a failed project. If something you designed and calculated as a construction later falls and breaks down, then someone could potentially get hurt or lose their life, whereas in IT, if a software crashed then you always have something to lean back on, an older version for instance* - **Construction**

Informant I: *If we do something wrong, the entire house or bridge could tumble down, we do the most important work. It differs. It's more life and death in Construction. If you dimension something wrong, something will go wrong* - **Construction**

Informant J: *I think that in IT and Construction project failure is usually a result of lack of knowledge, whereas in production it's mostly due to poor coordination* - **IT**

4.8 Dealing with stakeholders, project members and private life

Informant A:

Stakeholders: *It's important for a Project Leader to explain to the client why we no longer can continue with the project. You have to show the stakeholders why it's not going the way we want to. If the stakeholder has earlier on been informed on all points, then you have to*

clarify why some of the points didn't work out due to such and such reason. It's important that the Project Leader refrains from sugar coating things, remember to be completely honest, it is people that have after all invested money on this. You have to get the stakeholders to see the problem from your eyes that you really tried everything but maybe the market doesn't really exist or the technology is too new, it's important to show that you're not trying to make a profit but actually doing them a service by saving a lot of money.

Project group: *it's important that the Project Leader refrains from pointing out a scape goat. If critique is in order, then it's better to take that individual to the sideline and explain the error of their ways. That you explain what was bad but also what was good. Also make sure not to put all the blame on yourself.*

Private life: *take distance. My partner gets to share by behavior when I get home. It's always nice to come home and hang with your partner, but if I show up with a bad mood and she's on a good mood, then she gets stuck with my behavior which affects the entire atmosphere. If you have children then everyone's atmosphere is changed. You have to work on yourself in order to disconnect from it – **Production***

Informant B:

Stakeholders: *Inform entirely until it's completely failed. Everything should be personal, you should have a personal communication by visiting on site.*

Project group: *Keep a workshop to not repeat the same mistake. Go through what went wrong and what went right.*

Private life: *Let it go. You should leave the job when you come home. The most important thing is to leave the computer and the desk back at the office, then you go home and rest until a new day comes - **Construction***

Informant C:

Stakeholders: *it's all about effort. If something is failing and a Project Leader steps in and shows progress and shows how you can solve this with concrete suggestions and explains why the project is not moving forward, then it's difficult to be angry towards that Project Leader. You should always strive to have a good relationship with the customer, try to maybe once a month go out on dinner; it's all about maintaining a good relationship.*

Project group: *as long as you are transparent as a Project Leader and constantly communicate, then there's no way the project organization could be disappointed or angry. The only thing you should avoid is to give out promises you can't keep.*

Private life: *Don't mix, simple.*

Informant D:

Stakeholders: *You should do the comparison what did we want to do in the beginning, where are we now and what brought us here. Toyota use a system called 5 why's, you ask the question why five times until you reach the cause of the problem. The analysis is very important.*

Project group: *The most important part is transparency, being clear with what is good and what is bad, you should definitely not point out a scape goat. If it's more serious things that point to someone mishandling themselves then you clear out the accusation and make sure the project doesn't go so far that the person destroys everything. You have to make people pull their weight and also know how to manage lazy people. You always go with honest cards and expect the same back. If you keep secret information undisclosed in a project organization it only makes it difficult to pinpoint any errors. It will only be unfair when things go wrong because you've had people working without one's knowledge. You should early and regularly schedule meetings where everyone is open with information.*

The private life: *you have to separate your own achievements versus what role you undertake. You have to be clear in your intentions and values. As soon as you leave away your project, then the project is finished. If any suggestions of improvement were to follow, then you discuss it but as soon as you put it away then you're done - IT*

Informant E:

Stakeholders: *it's always good that stakeholders know why the project failed. In those situations it's good to reconnect, to summarize, describe the cause of failure and what precautions you plan to take in order to recover the project. It's important that they get to see your explanation on matters and things, well-written and well-documented explanations.*

Project group: lessons learned is extremely important, to sit together and discuss why the project failed and could've been done to prevent it. It's also important not to accuse anyone and tell them they did wrong, you should always assume a 'we' identity, we did well or we did badly. You should create a shared identity. As a Project Leader, you will most likely see that the project is failing before everyone else in the project group since they might be occupied with their specific tasks. You have a helicopter perspective.

Private life: if I feel that I've given it my all at work, then I allow myself to go home. If something were to fail even though I did everything in my power, then it's most likely because I simply lack the experience. You can't really compare yourself to more experienced seniors. If you give me an assignment, I will try to do it to the best of my ability, but if I fail, I fail. If they however tell me you could've done better, then I usually drag my feet at home reflecting before going to bed - **Production**

Informant F:

Stakeholders: Limited communication with stakeholders, let lawyers take over.

Project group: reassign members to the next project. Don't waste resources.

Private life: None. Might be very simple in my case, but that's just how it is - IT

Informant G:

Stakeholders: Go to visit on site is something we do on every project, customer gets to meet us and we meet them, they get to visually see who does what instead of constantly sending emails forth and back.

Project group: difficult question, it's a management decision really. As a Project Leader I can't really kick anyone out of the group. I can however tell them what to do and what to focus on. They know their specific parts better than I can. If a project were to fail and they risk getting fired, there's not much I can do in that regard.

Private life: it's all about having some kind of routine, something that allows you to let go of all troubles, working out at the gym would be one example. It makes it difficult to think of work when you're really exhausting yourself at the gym. Having a partner can also help. When things really get intense at work, it makes it really difficult to let it outside of the private life, it's very difficult to counteract it - **Production**

Informant H:

Stakeholders: *inform everyone involved why things went wrong.*

Project group: *schedule meetings often and reflect on why things went wrong in order to prevent it from happening again.*

Private life: *don't take it with you, stuff happens. Work isn't everything - **Construction***

Informant I:

Stakeholders: *the most important thing is that they (stakeholders) understand that you took responsibility, things went wrong but you showed that you still took responsibility to investigate what led to the failure and that you can give a satisfactory answer is also very strong. Perhaps not many are capable of such honesty.*

Project group: *it depends on what kind of personality you have as a Project Leader, take responsibility and make sure that people don't switch jobs or at least make sure there are available areas or projects. You shouldn't accuse, black list and tell people they did wrong. As a Project Leader you should take responsibility for ensuring everything goes according to plan.*

Private life: *I think you always take work with you home, especially emotionally, it's not something you can just turn off. It's important that you don't work from home and make it a habit because you risk mixing those two up. Project failure does in deed affect the private life – **Construction***

Informant J:

Stakeholders: *A mistake many companies do is failing to confess failure which I think makes a lot of clients frustrated. If it doesn't work, you should be honest towards the customer which in return they'll really appreciate. It's difficult because the management wants to keep a pretty face, the management has to be able to directly say and accept that the project failed instead of covering it up.*

Project group: *I think as a Project Leader because you have most of the responsibility, it's about being able to take some of the blame because you will most likely receive that blame*

from co-workers. It's also important not to have a direct scape goat, usually it's not the Project Leader but the management that points the finger, and the Project Leader needs to make a principle of not passing accusations forward

*Private life: I don't think it's possible, if something risks failing it will undoubtedly affect you, but a plan B could ensure that a project fails within safer margins which could alleviate stress somewhat - **IT***