

## Artículo de investigación

**Motivational resources for project teams' success****Мотивационные ресурсы успешности проектных команд**

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SPIN-ID <https://elibrary.ru>: 2042-1586**Abstract**

The article explores motivational resources behind the success of project teams. To determine the motivational resources, we develop a comprehensive model of project activity based on the approach proposed by Harvard Business School, according to which we study a subjective assessment of a project's implementation and its resource potential, the possibilities for realizing motives, satisfaction with intra-group relationships, and job satisfaction. The data were processed with content analysis, comparative and correlation analysis. The study involved 8 project teams, 120 participants aged between 24 and 30. Motivational indicators of the project teams' success correspond to the high levels of resource assessment and project implementation, assessment of the capability to realize motives in the project, satisfaction indicators (intra-group relationships and job). We revealed an interrelation between the estimate of the capability of motives realization in the project and the estimate of resource potential and project implementation, and the capabilities of employee motives realization in the project. The research results provide a comprehensive overview of the project implementation process, while focusing on the construction of both the motivational system and the communication system within the project.

**Аннотация**

В статье рассматриваются мотивационные ресурсы успешности работы проектных команд. Для определения мотивационных ресурсов успешности проектной деятельности была разработана комплексная модель проектной деятельности на основе мотивационной модели, разработанной Harvard Business School, в соответствии с которой изучались: субъективная оценка процесса реализации и ресурсности проекта, возможность реализации мотивов, удовлетворенность внутригрупповыми отношениями, удовлетворенность работой. Данные обрабатывались контент-анализом, сравнительным и корреляционным анализами. В исследовании участвовало 8 проектных команд, 120 участников в возрасте от 24 до 30 лет. Мотивационными показателями успешности проектных команд соответствуют высокие показатели оценок ресурсности и процесса реализации проекта, оценки возможности реализации мотивов в проекте, показателями удовлетворенности (внутригрупповыми отношениями и работой). Была выявлена взаимосвязь оценки возможности реализации мотивов в проекте с оценкой ресурсности и процесса реализации проекта, и возможностями реализации мотивов сотрудников в проекте. Результаты исследования позволяют взглянуть на процесс осуществления проектной деятельности комплексно, с ориентацией на

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построение как мотивационной системы, так и системы коммуникаций внутри проекта.

**Ключевые слова:** проектная команда, мотивационная модель, реализация мотивационных ожиданий, удовлетворенность работой, удовлетворенность групповыми отношениями.

## Introduction

In modern organizations, project work is both auxiliary and main activity that ensures success of the company (Dellis, Karkalakos, & Kottaridi, 2016; Trofimov, 2017). Often the tasks of operational management pass into the rank of projects, since many issues can be resolved more successfully in a project team (Galaso & Kovářik, 2018). The problems faced by project teams are primarily of managerial or organizational nature, while the motivational questions are put aside. In order to evaluate project successfulness, the economic methods for effectiveness evaluation are usually applied (Pennipeker & Kabanis-Bruin, 2003; Muñoz, 2019). The relevant scientific literature categorizes the reasons behind projects successfulness into the following groups: 1) economic (lack of funding); 2) managerial (strict requirements); 3) temporal (too tight deadlines). The evidence from practice shows that, in spite of the reasons mentioned above, projects are successfully implemented (if there are no favorable conditions for projects implementation), and fail to be completed (if favorable factors are available). Here, the question arises as to what resources ensure projects effectiveness in the lack of financing, excessively strict requirements and tight deadlines.

Analysis of scientific theories allowed us to make an assumption about the role of the human factor in project work and the need for building special relationships that contribute to effective project work. In our research, we concentrate not only on leaders, but also on ordinary participants in project teams. The purpose of our study, therefore, is to identify motivational resources behind project successfulness. This topic is relevant due to the growing number of companies involved in projects, and each of them is focused on achieving the maximum results. To assess the projects under study most comprehensively, we propose an integrated experimental model for evaluating project successfulness.

The present study is premised on two assumptions. Firstly, successful projects are characterized by high levels of resource assessment and project implementation, the capability to realize motives of the project's participants, and satisfaction with intra-group relationships and job. Secondly, there is a relationship between the assessments of the project's resource potential, its implementation and capabilities of employee motives realization in the project.

## Literature review

The majority of researchers consider the concept of a project as a complex system of processes that focus on certain tasks in a clearly defined time period with fixed funding (Snetkov, 1997). According to DeMarco and Lister (1999), the concept of a project has a broader meaning: "a project is everything that is designed or planned; it is a process of purposeful change of a technical or socio-economic system that transforms it from one state to another."

Shapiro (1996) highlights the features inherent in projects: project goals and objectives are unique and original; all project tasks are clearly coordinated and limited in time; every project has a clear goal and stated results; projects are resource-limited.

Specialists in project management distinguish between several stages of project development, referring to the period from the beginning of the project up to its end as the project life cycle (Thomsett, 1980). Every project has its own life cycle, structure, organization of work to maximize goal achievement. Project participants are considered the main elements of the structure, as they provide the implementation of plans and bring all ideas to life. Cooke and Tate (2007) point out that for successful project management it is necessary not only to focus on the achievement of goals, but also to ensure the unity and well-being of the team.

Pounder and Devonish (2008) prove that successful implementation of a project is affected by such factors as strong relationships and obligations between key project specialists, the necessary level of qualification, expertise in projects and motivation of project participants. At that, some experts (Stuckenbruck & Zomorrodian, 1987; Halkos & Skouloudis, 2016) highlight that the correlation between values and cultural attributes of the company and project participants is of great importance for the successful implementation of the project.

As indicated in scientific literature, there are two levels in project management, i.e. financial and professional. Mehrmann (2007) states that professional level is the most expensive and complex one. Project participants must “believe” in the project, be motivated to work, and teamwork plays a central role in the project successfulness. DeMarco and Lister (1999) point out that in project teams satisfied with work relationships the level of successfulness is higher.

Most of research studies (Allen, Lee, & Tushman, 1980; Allrid, Snow, & Miles, 1996; Drucker, 1986; Ford & McLaughlin, 1992; Kloppenborg & Mantel, 1990; Luthans, 1998; Patterson, 1991) are based on the analysis of individual qualities of managers and project teams’ leaders. Drucker (2007), Gido and Clements (2006), Hussain and Wearne (2005) also highlight the leader’s important role in project realization management. Katz (1955) identifies three components of the success of project teams: human factor, strategic potential of both the manager and the team, and technical skills. El-Sabaa (2001) analyses the skills and career path of successful project managers. Considerable attention is paid to the style of management, the skills of leaders to manage the emotional state of the project team (Diskiene & Pauliene, 2018; Grenčíková, Guščinskiene, & Španková, 2017). For example, Barnes and Wearne (1993) argue that a project leader should manage both positive and negative emotions of the project participants, calling it “managerial optimism”.

A number of researchers believe that if the project’s participants share its goals and objectives, they increase the chances for success (Doubravský, Doskočil, & Dohnal, 2016; Murad & Ahmadov, 2019). According to Anderson (1992), the greatest part is played by the project’s manager, since they have to clearly determine the project’s goals and communicate them to the project team. Meredith, Posner and Mantel

(1995) combine the qualities typical of successful project managers into six areas: communication, organization, team-building, leadership, compatibility and professional and technological skills.

Thus, the core factors in project management are the factors of human resources; in particular, the style of management, the socio-psychological climate in the project team, the understanding of the project goals by its participants, and the correspondence between the values and goals of the project participants. Based on the theoretical review of the problem under study, we put forward the hypothesis that there are motivational resources for project success, such as high evaluation rates of the resource potential of project realization, the capabilities of employee motives realization, satisfaction with intra-group relationships and job satisfaction.

### Materials and Methods

The present research is based on the theoretical and empirical analysis of economic and managerial resources of the project teams’ success, motivational models represented in the scientific community (including the motivational model of Harvard Business School), expert systems (Balashova & Alekseev, 2018; Chuvikov, 2017), content analysis and survey (Dominyak, 2011; Rodionova, 2016).

Eight project teams participated in the study, including 120 participants aged 24 to 30 (4 teams are considered successful based on the objective assessment of the results; 4 teams are unsuccessful, since their projects were not fully implemented). The study was held in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Twenty people were involved in expert evaluation, including 12 females and 8 males, who were former executives of successful projects, specialists in training and development, heads of project departments working in their positions for more than 2 years.

The criteria for categorizing projects as successful or unsuccessful were identified, which included: implementation of planned internships and raising money; compliance of the outcome with the set goals; maintaining the initial composition of the project team until the end of work; organization of their projects by former employees; project implementation on a recurring basis; positive feedback from partners, sponsors, and interns.

As a result of classifying the projects as either successful or unsuccessful, two groups were formed with four projects in each of them. The first group embraced the employees, whose projects were successfully implemented (24 females and 25 males aged 24 to 30). The second group included the employees who did not succeed in project implementation (21 females and 30 males aged 24 to 30).

For processing the data, we used IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0 software. The following criteria were calculated: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test the parameter values compliance with the normal distribution; Levene's test was applied to check the hypothesis about the difference of variances of the two samples, the size of which is different; Mann-Whitney U-test, as a non-parametric analogue of the Student's *t*-test, was used in those cases when there was the difference of variances of the two samples; r-Spearman correlation coefficient was applied to test the hypothesis about the relationship of the phenomena under examination. To reduce the probability of statistical error, the Bonferroni

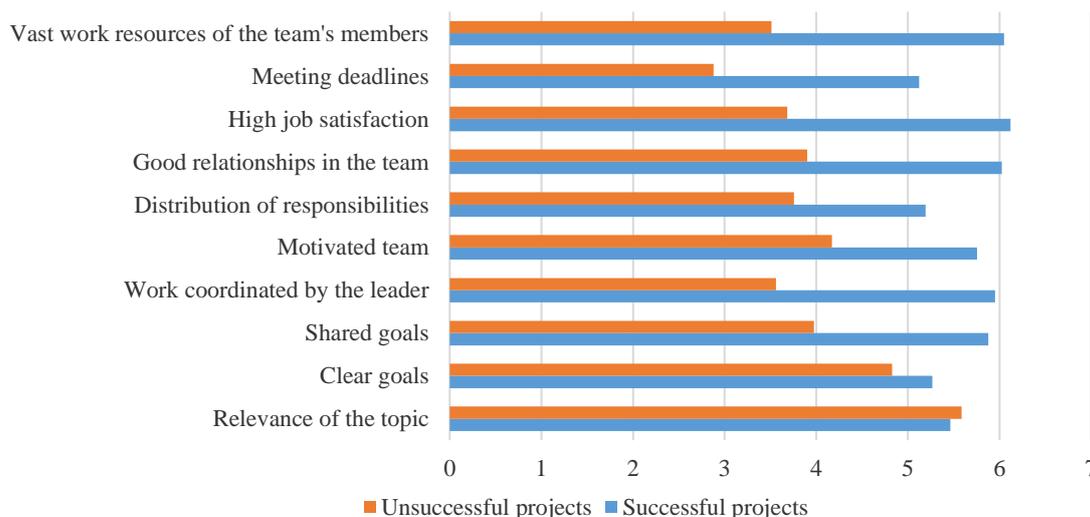
correction was used. For processing qualitative data, content analysis was utilized.

Calculation of data on resource assessment and various aspects of job satisfaction was carried out using the Likert scale. Respondents agreed or disagreed with each statement provided using a seven-point rating scale – starting from “completely agree” to “completely disagree” option, and its place on the final scale was determined by the sum of the ratings of each statement.

Based on the analysis results, we developed the motivational model of the project teams successfulness.

**Results**

Comparative analysis of evaluation results of the project implementation process showed that there were significant differences in all aspects under consideration excluding “the relevance of the topic” and “clear goals” at a high level of statistical significance (Fig. 1).

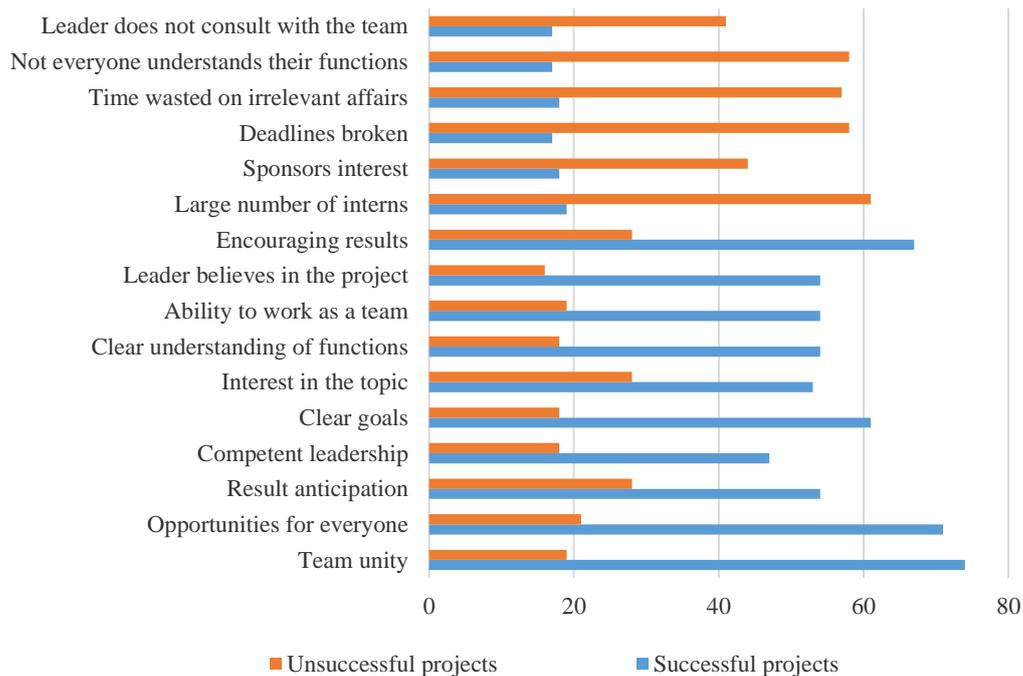


**Fig. 1.** Expert survey on the indicators' significance by the parameter “Evaluation of project implementation”

As seen from the data, the groups of successful projects evaluate the process as positive and satisfying. The participants clearly understand the project goals, share them, are aware of and perform their functions. In the group of unsuccessful projects, the project is conceived as something interesting, but the implementation of the idea and the entire project is not clear. Not every team member is clearly aware of their roles and responsibilities, the work is not fully planned

by the leader, the team is poorly motivated, therefore, the team often breaks the deadlines. We hypothesize that these differences can have a significant impact on the outcome of project activity and its success.

Analysis of the project resource potential evaluation made by employees also revealed significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) for a number of indicators (Fig. 2).



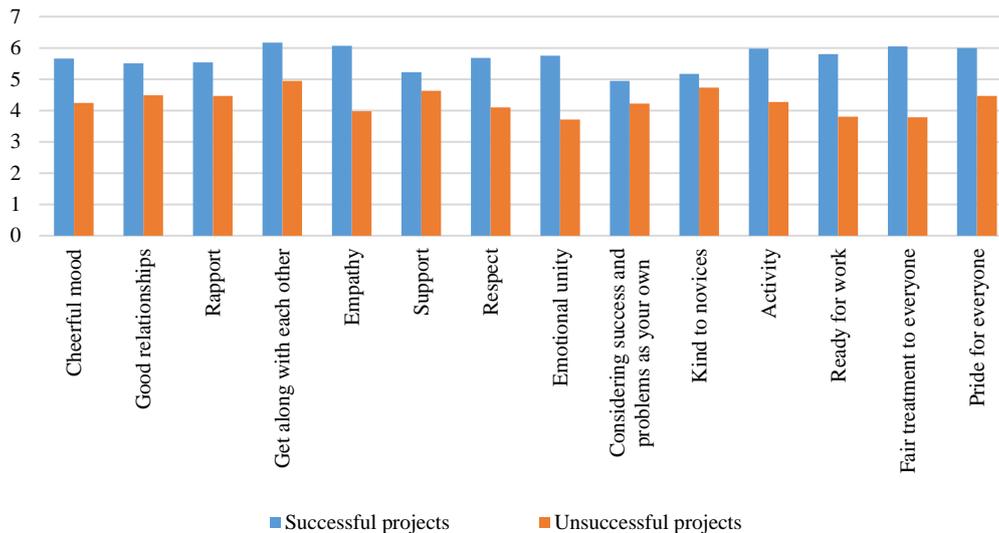
**Fig. 2.** Expert survey on the indicators' significance by the parameter "Evaluation of project resource potential", in %

The results of content analysis showed that the members of the two groups display different perception of the resource potential of the projects they work for. For the group of successful projects, the most valuable resources in their work are well-coordinated team work, the relevant topic of the project that is interesting to employees, and clear objectives set by a competent leader. It is also important that all employees have an opportunity to realize their abilities, which further motivates them towards success. For the group of unsuccessful projects, the most valuable resources are their own abilities and knowledge, interest in the project and the relevance of the topic. It is also important to realize the project's prospects, its features that attract sponsors and interns and provide opportunities for development in the

organization. The most common problems in this group are the difficulties with organization of work, working time, and communication within the project, which is confirmed by other researchers (Litau, 2018a, 2018b). Employees perceive themselves separated from the project they work for and do not feel as part of it.

These facts demonstrate that a subjective evaluation of the project resource potential, analysis of its advantages and problems reveal significant differences in the perception of project work between the two groups.

The differences in the estimates of satisfaction with intra-group relationships were also revealed ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Fig. 3).

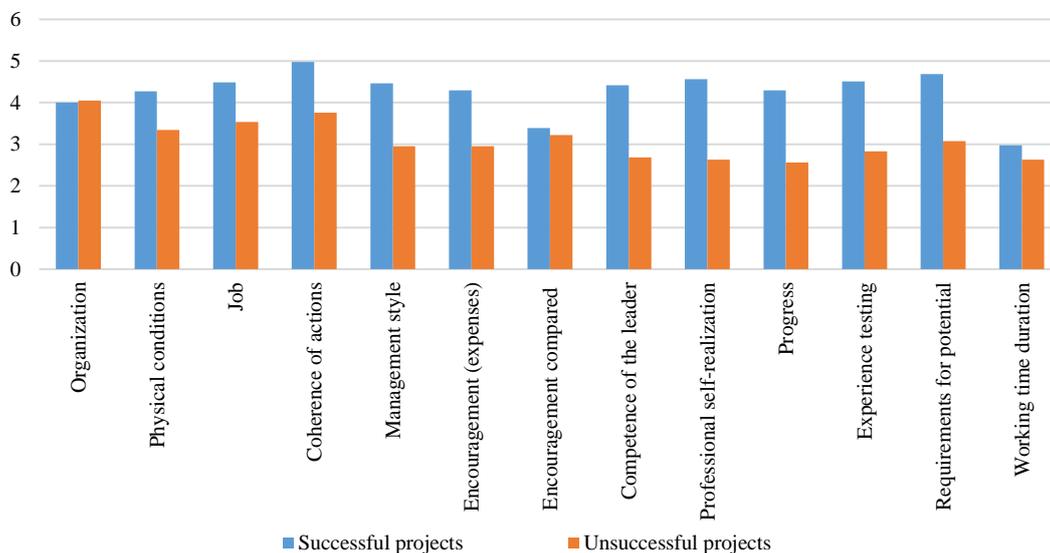


**Fig. 3.** Expert survey on the indicators' significance by the parameter "Satisfaction with intra-group relationships"

Thus, we can say that in the group of successful projects people work as a team for achieving a common goal. On the one hand, the employees of unsuccessful projects are comfortable to be together and spend time together, but as for the

project work, there are no sense of team and readiness for coordinated work.

We identified changes in satisfaction with various aspects of work (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4.** Expert survey on the indicators' significance by the parameter "Job satisfaction"

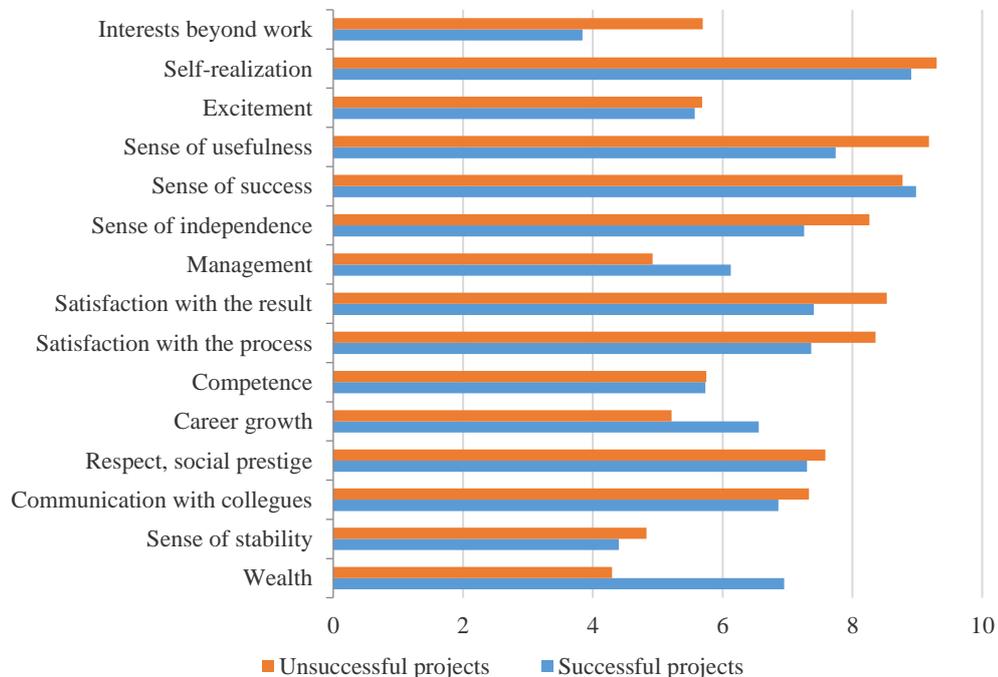
High satisfaction with many aspects of the work among the employees of successful projects demonstrates that they are contented with the job itself, regarding it as an opportunity to uncover their potential, as well as with the team and

competence of the leader. As for the employees of unsuccessful projects, the findings show that, although many of them are satisfied with the job and the team as a whole, not all of them believe that the project can help them realize their

professional potential and that their leader is competent enough for the job.

In our study, we also analyzed the extent, to which the employees' significant motives were

fulfilled in both groups. The obtained data showed that there were significant differences in a number of factors (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** Comparative analysis of the indicators by the parameter of motive realization possibility in the project work

We identified the differences in the possibility to implement behavioral motives. For all of the mentioned motives, the indicators in the group of successful projects are higher. Unsuccessful project employees cannot realize the motives significant for them. The employees of unsuccessful projects do have strength and desire to do the work effectively, but they do not know how to realize themselves, they do not feel neither satisfaction with work, nor the sense of self-realization. Thus, for the employees of both groups it is important to do an interesting and useful work, to realize themselves, be aware of their role and perform necessary functions for a successful project implementation. For the employees of unsuccessful projects, it is also important to understand what professional benefit and prospects the project provides.

### Discussion

Further research is aimed at determining the interrelations between the revealed indicators and the processes and resource potential of the

project, as well as the nature of the internal relationship between them. The assessment was carried out using the Spearman correlation coefficient. At the high level of statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ), we found stable relationships for the majority of the parameters. These parameters can serve as resources for implementing projects successfully:

- Team unity, cohesion;
- Opportunities for everyone;
- Clear goals shared by everyone;
- Distribution of responsibilities;
- Ability to work as a team;
- The leader and the team believe in the project;
- Motivated team;
- Well-planned work, meeting deadlines;
- Team members possess resources to do their work.

Thus, the given factors correspond to various aspects of project work and characterize the style of management. All this helps the project to be

successfully implemented, achieve the stated goals and bring the expected benefits.

The reliability of the obtained results can be confirmed by a literature review, where theoretical principles include the basic principles, which, if followed, should lead to the success of the project. In the generalized form, the principles embrace:

1. Proper project start-up. The sense of success is important to be formed before the work starts, so that enthusiasm would spread among the project participants and dispel their doubts and concerns. It is important for everyone to understand their personal benefits in the case of successful project implementation, and how they can fulfill their potential in this particular project.
2. Selection of participants. The project team's motivation is mostly determined at the stage of selecting its participants. It is necessary to determine the main roles for the project participants in advance and develop knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for each employee. It is also important to take into account the psychological compatibility of team members.
3. Creation of a team spirit. It is important to make sure that during the project participants have feelings of camaraderie, but not isolation.
4. Determining the project's mission. High identification with the team helps to ensure that the goals and mission of the team members are seen as one's own and, therefore, are more valuable.
5. Maintaining motivation during project implementation. It is necessary to keep the project's participants motivated, so as to avoid reducing one's efforts at the expense of the other team members. Motivation is weakened when personal contribution is not identified or evaluated.
6. Proper project completion. It is useful to emphasize the contribution of individual participants to the successful implementation of the project and recognize their achievements.

On this basis, we developed a comprehensive model for evaluating the success of project activity. The model consists of two parts.

The first part identifies expectations of future employees prior to start of the project, helps them to evaluate if the work is attractive to them and subjectively assess the feasibility of the project. It includes the following components:

- a. Feasibility of project.
- b. Potential evaluation of the project resource potential.
- c. Evaluation of the possible process of project implementation.
- d. Job attractiveness.
- e. Appeal of intra-group relationships.

The second part of the model also consists of 5 components, the identification is carried out in the process of work. Here, instead of studying the aspects of subjective potential evaluation of a number of parameters, they are assessed during the work. These parameters encompass the following:

- a. Possibility of subjective motives fulfillment.
- b. Evaluation of the project resource potential.
- c. Evaluation of the project implementation.
- d. Job satisfaction.
- e. Satisfaction with intra-group relationships.

Thus, while at the first stage employees' expectations and conceptions regarding the future work are analyzed, at the second stage it is considered how these expectations are fulfilled and whether they match the reality. In the current study, we evaluate project activity at the second stage, i.e. during the actual project implementation.

## Conclusions

The obtained results indicate the importance of taking into account a whole range of parameters to achieve success in project work. Taken together, they characterize a special management style that helps the project to be implemented, achieve its goals and provide the expected benefits. Both hypotheses were confirmed and we managed to identify 9 components of project work that can contribute to its success: team unity, opportunities for everyone, clear goals, distribution of responsibilities, ability to work as a team, belief in the project, motivated team, work planning and meeting deadlines, availability of team members' work resources.

The study revealed that there was an interrelation between the capability of employees' motives realization in the project with the resource potential and project implementation. For the group of successful projects, this is a satisfying process, while for the group of unsuccessful projects, a project is regarded as something interesting, but the implementation of the idea and the entire project is not clear. For employees involved in successful projects, the most important work resources are coherence, the relevant topic of the project that is interesting for everyone, and clear goals set by a competent leader. For employees involved in unsuccessful projects, these are their own opportunities and knowledge and the interest in the project. The analysis of the possibility to realize the motives of the employees of the two groups showed that it was important for employees to perform interesting and useful work, to attain self-realization and derive satisfaction from the work process and their achievements.

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