Antti Tammi

How to Manage International and Cross-Cultural Projects – Case CoreGo Oy

SeAMK

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Thesis abstract

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The goal of the thesis was to find efficient and effective ways to manage international projects and to define the most important project management areas that influence the result of an international project, and, thus, to create a framework for an action plan that the commissioner of the thesis can use in the future when working with international projects.

The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of the definition of the concept of project and the presentation of different project management theories and tools, highlighting the impact of cultural differences.

The empirical part of the thesis includes a tailored action plan for international projects for the commissioner. The action plan combines the best suited project management theories and tools considering the business field and size of the case organization, also providing a cultural analysis of current and potential future markets, conducted from the perspective of cultural differences.

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Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

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Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli löytää tehokkaita ja toimivia keinoja kansainvälisten projektien hallintaan ja määrittää tärkeimmät yksittäiset tekijät, jotka vaikuttavat kansainvälisten projektien lopputulokseen, ja luoda siten pohja toimintasuunnitelmalle, jota opinnäytetyön toimeksiantaja voi käyttää tulevaisuudessa kansainvälisten projektien läpiviemiseen.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu projektin määrittelemisestä käsitteenä, eri projektinhallintateorioiden ja -työkalujen esittelystä sekä kulttuurierojen vaikutusten esiin tuomisesta.

Opinnäytetyön empiirinen osa sisältää toimeksiantajalle räätälöidyn toimintasuunnitelman kansainvälisiä projekteja varten. Toimintasuunnitelmaan on koottu toimeksiantajan liiketoiminta-ala ja organisaation koko huomioiden parhaiten sopivat projektinhallintateoriat ja -työkalut. Toimintasuunnitelmassa on myös analysoitu tämänhetkiset markkina-alueet ja kaksi potentiaalista uutta markkina-aluetta kulttuurierojen näkökulmasta.

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Terms and Abbreviations

Cashless Payment   Cashless Payment System is a way to deal with purchases without physical money. The biggest advantages being transparency, speed, and simplicity. Transactions done by Cashless Payment System automatically leaves a mark in a database, making it possible to review them later (Limonetik 2017).

RFID   RFID is an abbreviation of the words Radio-frequency Identification. RFID is a technique aiming to identify an object by using radio systems. RFID system consists of two components, tag (also called transponder) and reader (also called interrogator). A tag is a microchip that has an identity information in it and is located in/on the object. A reader is a radio frequency module containing a transmitter, receiver, magnetic coupling element and control unit (Zheng & Kaiser, 2016).

Access Control   Access Control is a term that is used when controlling people flow from one location to another. It provides possibilities to restrict attendee access into certain areas by providing an option to grant different kind of safe-conducts or set time limits for different customers, that way improving security and safety (Mumford, 2019).

Special Symbols

€   Official currency of the European Union

1 Introduction

In today's global world, businesses are looking for growth by expanding into foreign markets. The client of this thesis has faced the fact of a limited home market, so the natural next step would be expanding the business abroad. From service provider's as well as IT company's perspective, international projects differ from national projects in many ways.

CoreGo Oy (later CoreGo) is a Finnish technology enterprise that was founded in 2015. Since then it has provided its services to over 500 sport- festival- and tasting events, collaborating with some of the biggest events taking place in Finland, such as Provinssi, Pori Jazz and Neste Rally Finland (CoreGo, 2019). CoreGo focuses on providing payment solutions, like Cashless Payment and RFID technology-based access control to different events, also providing detailed customer data from all those fields. So far CoreGo has been focusing on the domestic market but in the future its goal is to do business internationally as well. The lack of knowledge and experience has been factors that have held back CoreGo's opportunities and growth in international markets. It is important for them to remove those boundaries to be able to expand a customer base. The need for business expansion has been raised internally in the company after realising the fact that not many event's abroad do their processes in a cost effective, efficient and simple way as CoreGo has done their operations in Finland. To be able to accomplish their goals they need an Action Plan that provides the company with an overview on how a standard project differs from an international project to be able to adapt their processes for an international market. The Action Plan should contain necessary information of all the essential parts of project management considering international projects.

The thesis aims to provide a framework for CoreGo to accomplish its goals regarding expanding abroad. It provides detailed information about international events and how those differ from domestic events generally, and from the client's point of view. After reading and understanding this thesis an individual should be able to work as a member of CoreGo's international project team.

1.1 Research Questions

This thesis aims to answer following questions:

- How to manage international projects?

- How to make case company's project management processes more effective and efficient?

- How to benefit from the experience gained from international projects?

1.2 Research Methods

A qualitative research method was chosen as the primary method for this thesis because it provides insights into the research topic that would be challenging to collect by using quantitative approach. Qualitative research is a research method that aims to gather non-numerical data, its focus is on understanding phenomena and people's behaviour (Merrian & Tisdell 2016, 5-6). A qualitative research method is a better choice when the goal is to discover something rather than simply gaining answers to questions, which is easier done by quantitative research. Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016) describes the techniques of qualitative research by writing "Qualitative research techniques include 'small-group discussions' for investigating beliefs, attitudes and concepts of normative behaviour; 'semi-structured interviews', to seek views on a focused topic or, with key informants, for background information or an institutional perspective; 'in-depth interviews' to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective; and 'analysis of texts and documents', such as government reports, media articles, websites or diaries, to learn about distributed or private knowledge".

The case company's project management processes were studied by having open discussions with three different workers, focusing on their experiences and observations about the company's current state. As a project manager of the case company the researcher had gained knowledge about case company's operations and had a personal interest on the topic. Also, that made it possible for researcher to have access to company's internal database and gather information from there.

2 What is a Project?

There are many definitions regarding what a project exactly is. Harvey (2010, 5) explains in his book "Project Management" that common for all projects is that they have an exact starting point and the end. He states that processes are repetitive and ongoing, whereas projects are unique and temporary. Turner (1993, 8) defined a project as "an endeavour in which human, material and financial resources are organized in a novel way, to undertake a unique scope of work, of a given specification, within constraints of a cost and time, so as to achieve beneficial change defined by quantitative and qualitative objectives."

Generally, the difference between what is called a routine work or processes in a workplace and projects is that a project is usually a new state that varies from normal work. Despite the type of a project, every project has three main characteristics in common (See Figure 1). Every project is risky, limited and unique, just the weight of each characteristic differs in every project (Koster 2009, 28). From CoreGo's perspective projects are typically short-term, from a month up to 6 months. Especially during summer, when the schedule is tight and many projects are overlapping, hence requiring efficient and effective project management. For that reason, this thesis studied different approaches to project management, and adapting them as required.

2.1 Risky

Project risk can be either "individual project risk", implicating in individual events or conditions that may impact the project. Or "overall project risk", meaning the effect on uncertainty for the project as a whole. The overall riskiness of the project is always higher than the sum of individual risks (Hillson 2014). Wiley et al. (2012, 515) explains that a project risk is an uncertain action that has an impact on at least one project objective. He suggests that because of risks cannot be completely eliminated, they should be identified, assessed and managed. In the section "Risk management" the researcher explains how risks can be predicted and how to minimize the negative effects of risk for a project.

2.2   Limited

Like mentioned earlier, every project should have an exact starting point and end. Koster (2009, 28) writes that a project aims to produce a clearly defined outcome, for instance a new tangible or intangible asset. She states that outcome can be an abstract, like a higher competence level of managers or substantial, like the development of a new medical drug that has high potential to be a roaring success. Also, Villafiorita (2016, 3) writes about limitations of a project. He points out that time is not the only thing that is limited in projects, other resources are also limited, such as the available labour and budget. Moreover, when it comes to resources invested in a project, they should always justify with the value of the outcome.

2.3   Unique

According to Graham (2009, 6) all the projects are unique and differ from each other somehow, even though the outcome would be almost the same. He explains that the time frame, the people working on a project and the resources invested in a project are all factors that influence the nature of a project. The uniqueness is based on the fact that projects are not routine processes. Watt (2019) also states that the outcome of a project is always a unique product or service. She writes that the service or product itself can already be existing somewhere else, but the way it is created and presented is at all times unique. For instance, there might be projects that gives the customer always the same brand feeling, like launching new outlets of a retail chain. However, as a project every establishment of a new outlet will be different and must be planned according to the legislation and requirements of each country, for example regarding safety standards and hygiene regulations.
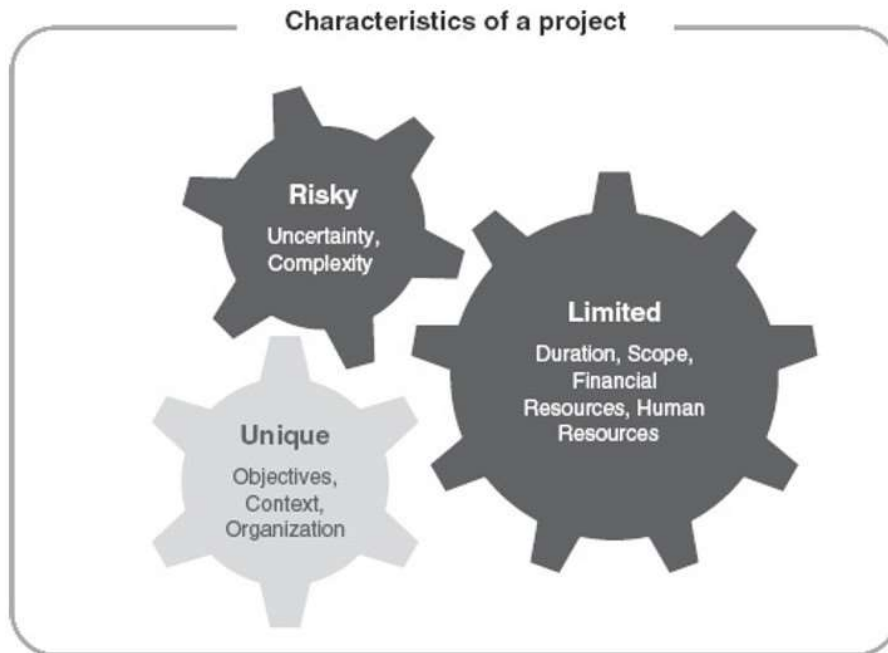
Figure 1. Characteristics of a Project (Koster 2009, 28)

2.4   Difference Between Standard and International Projects

Figure 2 introduces characteristics of an international project. Comparing it with Figure 1, it is noticeable that international project varies significantly from the so-called standard projects. The main difference in between standard and international projects is that international projects reach beyond national boundaries, causing increase in complexity. Other factors that usually vary significantly are the purpose, the scope, the main stakeholders, the risk intensity and the cost. International projects are often considerably more expensive, due to the associated transportation and coordination costs. The scope of an international project is not limited in the home market, adding more variables, for example foreign stakeholders that require communication in a foreign language and adapting to their work culture (Koster 2009, 36). To make it easier to observe how standard projects differ from international projects, the researcher has summarized all main differences in Figure 3.

Also, from the leading perspective standard and international project are different. According to Rosetti (2012), it is important that the project manager and the project

team can respond quickly to change, be flexible, and are willing to take risks; be-cause, in international projects, the risk and challenges are more complex. For an international project to succeed, she recommends that a project manager has more multicultural experience, language skills, and interpersonal skills.
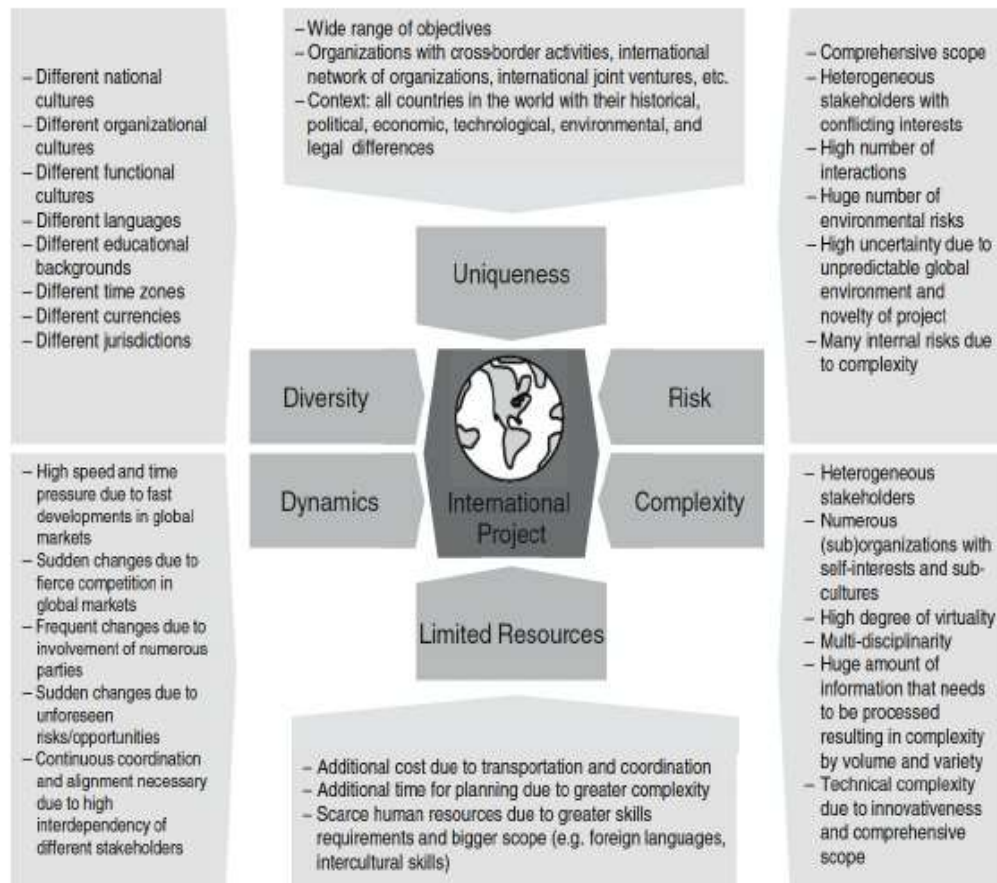
Figure 2. Characteristics of an International Project (Koster 2010)

Standard Project	International Project
Takes place in one country	Reaches beyond national boundaries
One, familiar culture	Culturally varied stakeholders → Requires more intercultural understanding, language skills, and interpersonal skills
Overall easier to manage and understand	More variables → more complex
Overall lower risk level	Higher risk level due to its complexity
Cheaper	Higher costs

Figure 3: Main Differences Between Standard and International Projects

3 Project Management

As projects are something that should bring value to the organization, instead of decreasing the value, effective project management should focus on what it takes to manage a project and create value. Thus, the most efficient way to increase a project's chance of being successful is to include project management methodology being as part of the steps that the project requires (Koster 2009, 29). Wiley et al. (2012, 12) writes that one of the main goals of Project Management Institute (PMI) during the 1980s was to define what the project management is and make it a profession. They created a book "A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge" and the project management certifications that came up from their work, helped people to understand and develop the project management field. Project Management Institute (2008, 6) defines project management to be "The application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements." PMI's definition is not the only view when discussing what the project management is. Meredith and Mantel (Wiley et al. 2012, 13) defined project management in terms of producing project outcomes within the three objectives of cost, schedule, and specifications. Their idea shares PMI's focus on the project outcomes in terms of requirements, but they added the client's expectations as a fourth aspect of project management. Also, Grisham (2009, 18) shares the idea of a client's expectations as part of project management in his book "International Project Management: Leadership in Complex Environments". He states that the customer satisfaction is a significant factor when measuring if the project has succeeded or not. He highlights that no project has ever been successful if the customer was dissatisfied, even if the scope, time and cost met the demands.

4 Project Stakeholders

Project stakeholders are organizations or individuals who are impacted by the out-come of a project (Mackay, 2018). Schwalbe (2009, 8-9) writes that project stake-holders can either be internal or external and their effect on the project might be positive or negative. Some examples of project stakeholders are: Project sponsor, who is responsible for channelling the financial resources to a project. A project owner, who provides the financial resources. A customer, who will have the ad-vantage of the project outcome. A project manager, who cooperates with all the project stakeholders and is responsible for the overall execution and performance of the project (Koster 2009, 31-32). All the project stakeholders can be divided into two groups, direct or indirect stakeholders. In each group, there can be positive and negative stakeholders. Positive stakeholders are the ones supporting the goals and purposes of the project while as negative stakeholders do not support the project and wish it to fail (See Figure 4). Typically, the group of direct stakeholders primarily consist of positive stakeholders because they are accountable to the results and phases of a project. If a project has negative stakeholders, they most likely belong to the group of indirect stakeholders (Lester 2007, 28).

Positive stakeholders				Negative stakeholders	
Direct		Indirect		Indirect	
Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal	External
Sponsor	Client	Management	Stockholders	Disgruntled employees	Disgruntled end user
Project manager	Contractors Suppliers Consultants	Accounts Dept HR dept Tech. depts Families	Banks Insurers Utilities Local authorities Government agencies		Pressure groups Unions Press (media) Competitors Politicians Residents' associations
Project team Project office					

Figure 4. Example of Different Stakeholders (Lester 2007, 28)

4.1   Project Stakeholder Analysis

It is crucial for the project managers to build and maintain a good relationship with project stakeholders subject to their role in a project. According to Schwalbe (2009, 82) stakeholder analysis is a method identifying, evaluating and analysing different stakeholders, to be able to do that, it is recommendable to do a stakeholders analysis by using a special tool. He writes that normally stakeholder analysis consists of the key information of each individual or organization, like personal information, their role in a project, their level of interest and capability to influence the project.

One effective tool for stakeholder analysis is Babou's Power/Interest chart, where each stakeholder is located to one of the quadrants, depending on their interest on the project versus their power (See Figure 5). Identification and analyses of each stakeholder should be done during the initiation phase of the project because most of the stakeholders have the highest impact on the project in the beginning, during the progress of the project the impact slowly decreases. Although, the stakeholder analysis should be checked and updated at certain intervals, depending on the total duration of the project (Babou, 2008). According to Eskerod and Jepsen (2013, 42) if an individual or an organization is located on top right quadrant, it means he or she has a high level of interest and capability towards the project and for that reason should be kept totally engaged and updated throughout the whole project. They explain that a stakeholder who is located on the bottom left quadrant should face a minimum effort since his/her influence on the project is not highly significant.

Figure 5. Correlation Between Power & Interest (Babou 2008)

5 Project Life Cycle

The project life cycle includes the phases that connect the beginning of a project with its end. The typical project life cycle consists of four main phases (See Figure 6): Initiating, Planning, Execution and Closeout (Gido & Clements 2012, 9). Also, Watt (2019) shares the idea of a project having four phases, Initiating, Planning, Execution, and Closeout. She writes that "Taken together, these phases represent the path a project takes from the beginning to its end and are generally referred to as the project "life cycle."" There are also divergent opinions regarding the number of phases, for example Grisham (2009, 87) writes in his book "International Project Management: Leadership in Complex Environments" that initiating and planning processes are hard to separate from each other because often it is impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins, and for that reason they are usually recognised as one phase. Despite that, in the theoretical part of this thesis an initiating and a planning phase are separated from each other in order to accomplish a clearer structure. Hence, it is crucial to keep in mind that drawing a line in between those two phases is difficult.

The project life cycle is always dependent on the organization and the field of business it is operating in — there might be subphases; for example, development of prototypes, acceptance of such prototypes and the period of transition to the mass production. Figure 6 introduces all four phases and helps to understand the correlation between time and effort invested into each phase. The amount of time and the level of effort invested into each phase varies significantly depending on the nature of the project (Gido & Clements 2012, 9).

There are a variety of reasons why an international project might be started; for instance in response to a new customer demand or a significant market opportunity abroad. The initiating phase of a project is typically started in response to one of these triggers.
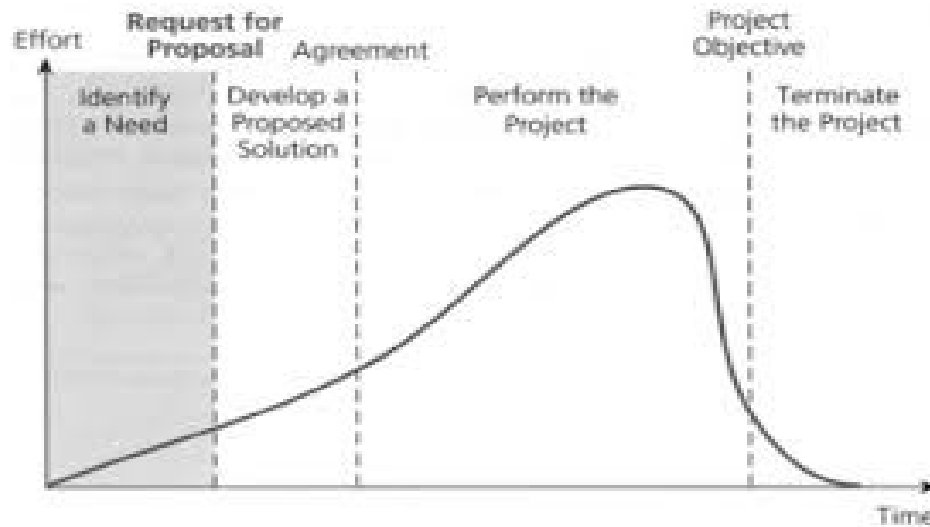
Figure 6. Correlation Between Effort & Time (Gido & Clements 2012, 9)

5.1   Initiating

The Initiating phase is the first phase of a project life cycle and often it is described as the most important phase, because if everything is initiated correctly, the likelihood of succeeding increases substantially. Pinto (2019, 34) writes that the ideal situation after the initiating phase is following: the project stakeholders are enlisted, the scope of the work is determined, and inevitable resources are identified (people, money, physical plants). Whereas the main outcome of the initiating phase is a project proposal. Koster (2009, 85) emphasizes that during initiating phase creativity is inevitable due to the uniqueness of each international project, and for that reason new ideas and techniques must be found to be able to meet the project goals. She suggests that especially during an initiating phase of a project, different tools and techniques should be used. Tools with a high level of visualization are a practical choice because they are commonly used and simple to understand. One efficient tool that can be used for brainstorming new ideas or problem solving is so called Fishbone diagram also known as the Cause-and-Effect diagram (See figure 7).

Fishbone diagram was invented in 1960 by the regarded quality management expert Kaoru Ishikawa. This tool is still widely used because it provides a better understanding of the problem, thus helping to identify the root cause and find a suitable solution (Usmani, 2019).

A problem statement or an objective that should be solved or achieved is set at the head of the fishbone and it is the starting point to trace the causes. Asking a question "why" and then listing causes will eventually build the fishbone. The question should be repeated, and causes listed until the root cause has been found or until all the possibilities have been exhausted (Alby, 2019).
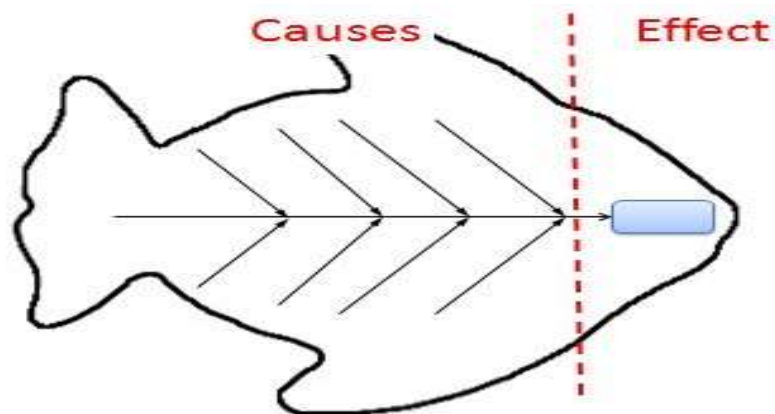
Figure 7. Ishikawa Fishbone Diagram (Alby 2019)

5.2   Project Proposal

Typically, the project proposal consists of information about the project's requirements and resources required. It forms the overall guidelines for the company's management in order to decide if a project is suitable for their strategy and resources, giving them sufficient information to make go/no-go decision. It is important not to spend too much time on the project proposal by clarifying all the details, because it can be rejected later. Instead, concentrate on the big picture and staying with an outline (Barreto-Dillon 2019). Koster (2009, 84) writes that project proposal

requires three important inputs: First, the scope definition; second, the major milestones; and third, the Work Breakdown Structure. Those three main inputs are described in the following:

1. The goal of the scope definition is to clarify as clearly as possible the answers to the following questions: What should the project do and not do? What is it that the external client really wants? Solving those questions requires ongoing interaction with the client. By getting clear answers to those questions, the project manager can check throughout the project if the project is on the right track and going towards the common goal. It is recommended to document the scope definition in a scope statement to have something that clearly specifies what has been agreed. The scope statement is not signed by the external client, just internally by the project owner, project manager and if needed by other important stakeholders (Koster 2009, 88-89).

2. Major milestones are planned checkpoints that need to be accomplished during the project life cycle. Milestones marks a point in time, and they are defined and set by the project manager with the most important stakeholders (Koster 2009, 89).

3. The idea of a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) is to identify main activities of the project and to divide the project into smaller, more manageable pieces. Also, finished WBS should offer a rough estimation of costs and time that would need to be invested in a project. WBS can be done in a form of a checklist that shows activities in a hierarchical order and includes a description of each task (Koster 2009, 91).

5.3   Planning

Peterman (2016) points out that after the company has decided to execute the project in the initiating phase it has to start work on more details. The second phase of a project life cycle is called a planning phase, during this phase rough evaluations and WBS will be analysed more specifically and at the end, a "Project Management Plan" should be ready. A well-executed planning phase helps a company to minimize the project duration and the resource cost, while simultaneously, maximizing the quality of the outcome.

First part of a planning phase is scheduling, it will tell a company how much time the project will take. To get a reliable estimation of the duration of the project, the project manager must go through all the activities stated in WBS and list them in a logical order. The time estimations must be realistic and expressed in units, such as working hours or working days (Koster 2009, 145). It is advisable to use a specific tool for scheduling, one simple and widely used technique is so-called Gantt Chart (See figure 8) where all the activities from WBS are organized from top to bottom and the time scale is horizontal. The activities are described by horizontal bars, the length of each bar depicts the time needed to accomplish the activity. More features can be added, for example arrows to show inter-dependencies between different activities or highlighting critical activities (Kashyap, 2019).
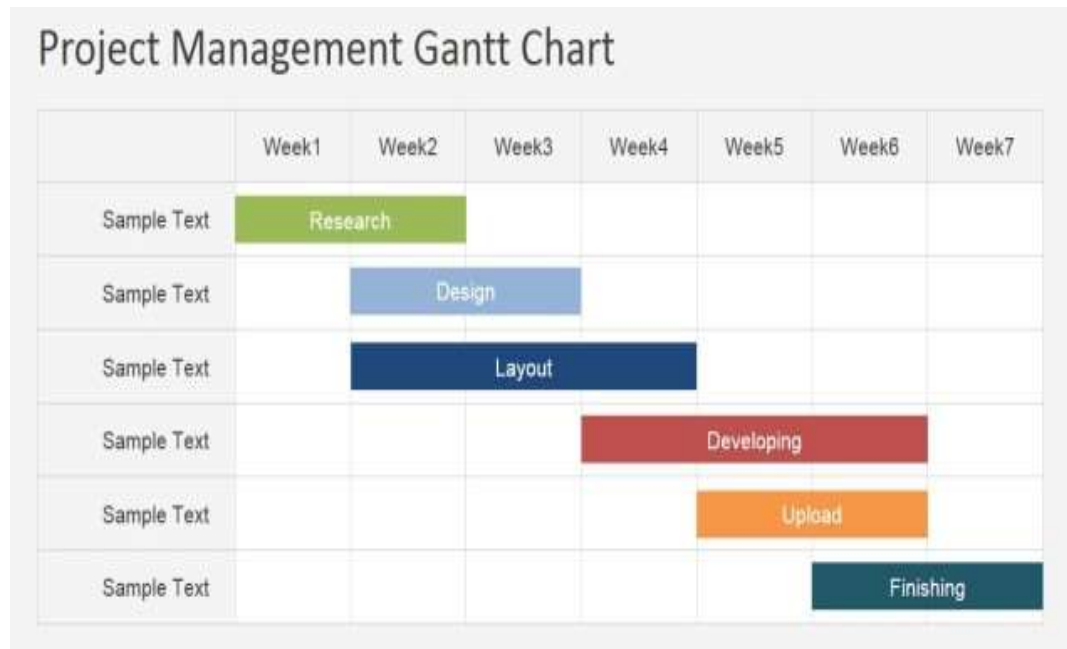
Figure 8. Gantt Chart (Hicks 2017)

Koster (2009, 160) suggests that after duration planning it is time to start detailed resource planning. She points out that of course, already during duration planning the project manager must have an estimation about available labour force to be able to set time limits for different activities. She explains that for example, a task calculated to require 48 working hours can be finished in eight hours by using six workers, 12 hours by using four workers or in 24 hours by using two workers. According to Koster (2009, 159), Knutson (2001) writes that the project manager is responsible for making sure he or she has enough people working in a team to be able to meet all the tasks documented in WBS within the agreed time period. If not, he or she has the following options:

- Re-schedule tasks

- Re-prioritize tasks

- Negotiate for additional time or resources

- Reduce the scope of the project

The number of people working in a team is not the only thing that matters; hence the project manager should be able to see behind the numbers and consider the availability and quality of team members. For example, a task can be accomplished within two weeks by two experienced workers, or by one experienced worker together with two trainees. Qualitative aspects of a team members are for example, language skills, work experience and flexibility. A project manager needs to ensure that all the team members can speak the common project language, also it is an advantage if at least one of the team members can speak the external client's native language. Flexibility of the team members comprise inter alia their willingness to travel or move to a new country if needed, as many international projects contain traveling (Koster 2009, 162).

Also, setting up a budget for the project is an inevitable part of a planning phase. Pinto (2019, 298) writes that all the costs must be estimated and then controlled in a project budget. He states that finished budget spreadsheet should be divided into different cost components, like equipment, logistics, labour, travel, administration fees and licences etc. Estimations can be based on previous experience and on current prices. Costs can be direct or indirect, depending if they are exclusively linked to the project that the budget is planned for. Direct costs include for example travel, subcontractor and logistic cost, whereas equipment could be an indirect cost if it could be used again in the future. There are a few particular features in international projects that the project manager has to observe. Firstly, currency conversion rates can fluctuate significantly during the project, for example due to unstable political situation in the target country. A conversion rate of some exact date should be chosen and then used for the budgeting. Also, an extra line to the budget spreadsheet should be added, so that fluctuations can be documented and reacted to. Secondly, travel expenses are often much higher than in domestic projects. Usually, at the beginning of the project face-to-face meetings are necessary. Among geographically spread out stakeholders this means a lot of travel activities. It must also be remembered that, even though Skype calls could do the same job and are a more cost-effective solution, in some cultures personal meetings are still seen as a mandatory part of doing business (Koster 2009, 149-150).

A well-executed initiating and planning phase has a strong correlation to the success of an international project. Grishman (2009, 85) states that according to studies of international IT projects, the failure percent varies in between 60% to 84%. He explains that the biggest single reason why projects fail, was due to an inefficient initiating and planning phase. According to him, "70% to 80% of the success of a project is attributable to the work during the initiating and planning phase, and we strongly recommend that all international project managers focus accordingly".

5.4   Execution

Once the project management plan has been developed in the planning phase, the execution phase can start. During this third phase the project manager with his/her team will execute the project management plan. Grisham (2009, 89) writes that the progress of a project should be checked, monitored and reported on a continuous basis during the execution phase. He states that project manager's main responsibility is to take location readings and check them against the plan, then react if necessary. If the project is not going according to the plan, course adjustments must be made, as even small deviations in early stages of this phase can lead to major problems at the end.

For controlling the progress of the project there are variety of different tools and techniques. According to Koster (2009, 214) one of the most suitable tools for controlling international projects is so-called "Traffic Light Approach" (See Figure 9). She explains that the idea of this tool is to set parts of the project management plan and project proposal in the boxes on the left side. On the right side there is a traffic light that indicates the status of the project. Green light indicates that everything is going according to the plan, whereas yellow light means that there are activities or milestones that have high potential of being delayed or bearing a cost overrun. Red light indicates that there are milestones or activities delayed or running seriously behind the schedule.

Criteria for project status
light setting

Total project traffic
light status

Milestone review

Profitability

R&D costs

Project resources

Specific project risks

red, if any of the criteria
are red

yellow, if any of the
criteria are yellow

green, if all the criteria
are green
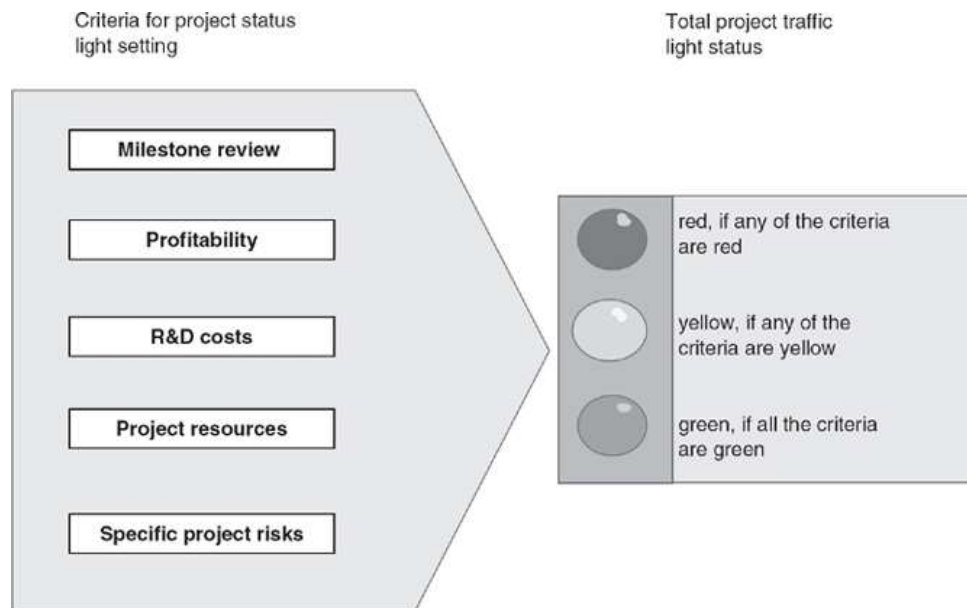
Figure 9. Traffic Light Tool (Koster 2009, 215)

Also, reporting is a significant part of the execution phase. Ongoing reporting within the team should follow the guidelines set by the project manager at the beginning of this third phase. Koster (2009, 213-214) propose that guidelines set by the project manager must be clear and simple to become a routine, containing limits for un-budgeted expenses and overtime. For example, all unbudgeted expenses of more than 100€ and overtime of more than four hours must be approved. As well, the preferred type of communication should be agreed within the team, for example, using email for routine communication and urgent issues should be handled via phone call. She remarks that as international projects contain a high level of uncer-tainty and changes happen fast, they often contain problems that require quick de-cisions made together by the project owner and the project manager. She suggests that, in case of a problem, the project owner should be confronted with the following information:

- What is the problem?

- How urgent is the decision?

- What are the costs?

- Are the costs covered by the budget?

- Suggested solution?

- What are the consequences if no quick decision is taken?

According to information gained, the project owner together with the project manager can make decisions about what actions, if any, need to be taken.

Overall, the finished execution phase should result in an achieved project objective, without a delay, within budget and meeting the agreed quality level. Thus, leaving the external client satisfied with the full scope of work (Gido & Clements 2012: 11).

5.5   Closeout

Closeout is the fourth and final phase of the project life cycle. There are two different type of endings for a project, natural closeout and unnatural closeout. Natural closeout refers for the desired alternative of project closeouts. It means that a project has achieved its goals and is going towards its logical conclusion. Whereas, unnatural closeout refers to the undesired alternative, where a shift in economic, customer, political, or technological condition has quit the project without intention (Pinto 2019, 520). In this chapter the focus is on theories and procedures related to natural closeout.

According to Koster (2009, 31), the goal of the project closeout should be to take stock off the problems, mistakes and successes confronted during earlier phases. She writes that during the closeout phase a project management team is supposed to evaluate the project in terms of its effectiveness and efficiency. In this case effectiveness means the extent to which the result of the project "works", while efficiency indicates how well the team has succeeded in doing the work with the minimum effort and cost. Pinto (2019, 536) points out that one of the major challenges confronting project teams during the closeout phase is the lack of the energy and motivation to push the project over the finish line. According to him it is the responsibility of the project manager to recognize that it is natural for team members to lose their focus and enthusiasm after the actual outcome has already transferred to the external client. The project manager must plan the steps required to finish the project in the most effective way. Hence, Pinto (2019, 522) suggests that the closeout of the

project is treated as a project in its own right, checklists and other easy control devices used to remind the project team of the fact that the project is not yet completed.

As stated earlier, due to the nature of international projects, like riskiness and high level of uncertainty, all sorts of problems appear more often than in domestic projects. Koster (2009, 322) emphasises that to avoid the same problems appearing in the future, all the problems faced during the project should be documented and each problem located into one of the four main groups (See Figure 10):

- Problems related to the cultural diversity of stakeholders.

- Problems related to the inherent characteristics of a project.

- Communication problems impeding knowledge transfer.

- Problems concerning the overall organization.

Issues regarding learning in and from international projects related to ...			
... cultural diversity	... the nature of a project	... communication	... the overall organization
• Avoidance of loss of face	• Discontinutities	• Marginality of sender	• Lack of support by organizational culture
• Impact of collectivism	• Fragmentation	• Stereotypes of and against the sender	• Not Invented Here Syndrome
• Impact of multidisciplinarity	• Lack of transparency	• Linguistic ability of the sender and the receiver	• Lack of incentives and motivation
	• Lack of time		• Lack of discipline
	• Focus on evaluation at the end		• Lack of skills

Figure 10. Impediments to Learning in and from International Projects (Koster 2009, 325)

In closeout phase project manager evaluates the project by comparing actual results with plans and assumptions focusing on following areas (Koster 2009, 335):

- Scheduling: were the milestones and the project delayed or on time?

- Estimations: were the estimated resources accurate to the actual need?

- Impacts: did the resource availability or shortages impact the project?

This comparison is relatively simple to perform as all the data should be available. However, it is more complicated to address so-called performance evaluation, where the focus is on "soft" areas, such as:

- Quality of communication

- Quality of project leadership

- Quality of co-operation within the team and between the team and other stake-holders

- Timeliness and accuracy of feedback provided to the team by the project manager and sponsor

The performance evaluation should be done individually by each team member to get as reliable data as possible, regarding to the quality of project leadership for example. The closeout phase is accomplished when a specific set of sub-activities are completed, such as the evaluation process and the final project report. After that the project shrinks in scope and costs decline rapidly (Pinto 2019, 35).

6 Scrum Framework – New Approaches for Complex Environments

6.1 What is Scrum?

Scrum is a "framework within which you can employ various processes and techniques", rather than a process, or a technique, for creating products (See Figure 10). The Scrum framework is team based and defines associated roles, artefacts, events and rules. Scrum teams are responsible for adapting and creating their processes within this framework (James & Walter 2018, 1). Scrum framework suits small organizations with short-term projects and whose team members play multiple roles during one project (Gancarczyk & Griffin 2019). The client of the thesis fits these characteristics, therefore the researcher decided to include a section "Scrum Framework - New Approaches for Complex Environments" as part of the thesis.

6.2 Scrum Roles

Scrum framework consist of three primarily roles:

- The product owner who represents the stakeholders.

- The scrum master who is responsible for managing the team and the Scrum process.

- The Scrum team that consist of about five people.

Scrum teams are cross-functional and self-organized. Cross-functional means that, the members of the team are competent enough to accomplish the work without depending on anyone from outside the team. Self-organized meaning that, the Scrum team aims to choose how best to accomplish the given work, rather than being guided by anyone outside the team (Schwaber & Sutherland 2017, 6).

6.3   Scrum Process

The main elements of Scrum Framework are Product Backlog, Sprint Planning and Sprint. Each of them is briefly explained in the following:

- The product owner prepares a prioritized list of ideas for the product, called a product backlog. The product backlog helps the team break the product into smaller, more manageable pieces and build it gradually in a series of short time periods called sprints. Sprints typically last from one to four weeks (Pries & Quigley 2010, 47).

- The idea of sprint planning is that the team chooses a few tasks from the top of the prioritized product backlog to create a sprint backlog. Then negotiates and decides how to accomplish those tasks during the next sprint (Pinto 2019, 415).

- It is advisable that during the sprint the team meets every day at the same time to have a Daily Scrum, it is supposed to be a brief meeting, maximum of 15 minutes. Aim is to assess progress and make necessary adjustments, not to solve problems, rather identifying them. Three questions should be asked in every Daily Scrum: What did you do yesterday? What will you do today? What impediments have you faced? Along the way, the Scrum Master keeps the team focused on its goal. At the end of the sprint, the tasks chosen should be accomplished. Once a sprint is complete, the team chooses again a few tasks from the product backlog, and the next sprint begins (Schwaber & Sutherland 2017, 12-13).

Figure 11: Scrum Framework (Aziz 2019)

7 Nature of Risk

According to Hillson (2014) The Project Management Institute (PMI) (2013) describes a project risk to be "an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or a negative effect on at least one project objective, such as time, cost, scope, or quality'". This definition is important because generally risks are understood to be something that always have a negative impact on the project, instead of being a factor that provides opportunities or threats (Pinto 2019, 265). Project risks are categorized in two different groups, anticipated risks and risks that cannot be predicted. Even though, anticipated risks are rarely completely known, they can be identified, and the probability of appearance and the impact can be calculated. They can arise for instance because of a bad communication or due to poor selection of team members, in these cases they can also be called internal risks because they are created by a company itself. Other anticipated risks can be for example, a high level of inflation in a target market or corruption. Emergent risks arise from the sources that are non-predictable for example, natural disasters or outbreak of pandemics like coronavirus. Because of the characteristics of international projects, such as a high level of uncertainty, risks they are facing are often emergent. Still, the success of international projects depends on the extent to which both types of risks can be handled (Koster, 2009, 117-118).

8 Risk Management

In this section, the focus will be on the risk management process, aiming to cover all of the necessary information about risk identification and risk mitigation. According to Koster (2009, 117) in a dynamic and rapidly changing environment there are variety of risks that are difficult to manage systematically. However, there are certain actions that help to deal with general uncertainty, like suitable project culture and a flexible project structure. She emphasises that because many international projects involve significant financial investments and are often more complex than domestic projects, risk management plays a key role in international projects. She also points out that risk management and project planning have a close connection because proper planning includes identifying risks and minimising their negative effects on the project.

Risk Management covers identifying, analysing and responding to risks throughout the project life cycle. The difference between projects that end up being successful or unsuccessful has nothing to do with the fact that one lacks problems the other had. Rather, the key factor that separates them concerns the plans that have been prepared to act with issues when they appear (Pinto 2019, 265). Grisham (2009, 249) writes that a key to a successful risk management is to actively manage a limited number of identified risks (maximum six). He states that each risk should have an associated risk plan, in the budget, with a defined scheduled and preapproved response. So, in an ideal situation, if the risk occurs, all that needs to be done is to implement the plan.

To put it in a nutshell, the goal of a risk management is to decrease the negative impact of a risk for a project and to make the most out of opportunities that some risks offer. Helping to reach those goals the researcher has divided a risk management process into three key stages, risk identification, risk analyse, and risk controlling and monitoring. Each stage is explained as follows:

8.1 Risk Identification

Risk identification focuses on defining a realistic group of risks that the project will possibly encounter; this is easiest done by analysing checklists and project documents. The next step is to categorize risks into different classification clusters, for example financial risks, technical risks, and execution risks. The one of the most effective ways to identify risks is hosting a brainstorming meeting. The members of the project team are brought together with the most important stakeholders to generate a list of potential risks. Meetings should not focus on making decisions, to be effective they should be completely free of criticism of others' viewpoints, pressure to conform, and judgements (Pinto 2019, 268-269). Koster (2009, 121) points out that risk classification clusters are highly dependent on the industry where the company operates and the nature of a project, also they should always be chosen for one particular project in mind. Also, Wolke (2017, 5-6) emphasizes that types of risk and their importance depends significantly on the features of the business, but some basic tools can be applied to risk identification regardless the nature of the business. These basic tools can be for example, analysis of operational processes and interviews. After listing potential project risks, the so-called risk register, the team can move on to the second stage of a risk management process.

8.2 Analysing and Prioritizing Risks

The process of analysing and prioritizing risks is based on presumptions and limitations of risks. Risks need to be analysed regarding to the probability of occurrence in relation to its effect on the project, the so-called qualitative risk analysis. A ranking of risks related to their impact on the project is complemented by a quantitative risk analysis focusing on the numerical evaluation of the probability and effect of risks. According to the prioritized list of risks prepared, the project manager must choose what activities to take to be able to minimize threats while maximizing the opportunities founded in the risk analysis. In an optimal situation, each risk will have a risk

owner that is responsible for taking actions if a particular risk occurs (Koster 2009, 121). It is impossible to list all project risks, for that reason the focus should be on identifying the most important risks. The suggestion is to only list risks that have minimum of 10% likelihood of occurrence, if lower risks will be listed the effectiveness of a list becomes too weak and risk planning loses its accuracy (Roseke 2016).

8.3 Monitoring and Controlling Risks

In this phase of a risk management process the status of a risk will be monitored according to the risk register prepared earlier and making sure that risk response plans are suitable. The monitor and control process is a proactive technique and it should provide early warning of possible risk, so the project team will have enough time to respond. The aim is to reduce risk's effects to acceptable level (Kerzner 2017, 621-622).

9 Cultural Differences

9.1 Determinants of Culture

To be able to deal with cultural differences, it is necessary to understand what is meant by a word culture. One of the classic definitions according to Browaeys and Price (2015, 10) is Hofstede's (2011, 25) definition: "The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another", elaborating it by writing "Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of the culture". They emphasize that Hofstede's definition is "Blurry enough to encompass other definitions, but sharp enough to reflect key elements of a culture". Among sociologists' culture is described to consist of the beliefs, values, communication, language and practises that people share in common and can be used when defining them as a collective. Moreover, culture is made up of our common sense, knowledge, expectations, and assumptions (Cole 2019).

Each culture can be seen having three layers. The first layer refers to the first impression that you get from the new culture, like language, the food, and architecture. Second layer consist of the norms and values. Norms are the rules of a society, for example what is seen as good or bad behaviour. Values refer to what is right or wrong, or what is seen as beautiful or not. The third and inner-most layer is the core of the culture, it consists of assumptions and beliefs. For example, are people eating with chopsticks or by using a fork and knife, and why? The reason lies in the inner-most layer of their culture (Browaeys & Price 2015, 13).

9.2 Hofstede's Country Analyses – 6-D Model

Geert Hofstede is a Dutch social psychologist who is best known of his theories about cultural dimensions. Between the year of 1967 and 1973, while working for International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) Hofstede performed a global study for 117 000 IBM employees around the world and analysed the gained data by using his self-designed cultural dimensions; power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. After analysing the results, he found people to

have distinct patterns of value systems that related to various aspects of their be-haviour. Because his research focused exclusively on IBM employees, he could at-tribute those patterns to national differences, and minimize the impact of company culture (Nowrin 2018).

Originally there were four dimensions described, but together with Michael Harris and Michael Minkov, Hofstede expanded the number of dimensions to six (See Fig-ure 11). First, by adding "long term orientation" to be the fifth dimension, and later in 1993 according to Minko's findings, "indulgence" was added to be the sixth di-mension (Clayton, 2016). The large amount of external validations that proves cor-relations between the study of IBM's employees and the results of other studies is important to be able to evaluate the accuracy of the study. Hofstede lists over 400 significant correlations in his book "Culture's Consequences: Cultural Differences in Work-Related Values" (Hofstede 2011). Also, Pogosyan (2017), points out that Hof-stede's research on cultural dimensions have been externally validated and widely used across different fields like, international marketing, intercultural communica-tion, and international management. She states that Hofstede is one of the most cited social scientists in the world and his cultural dimensions have become a para-digm for understanding cross-cultural differences and comparing different cultures.

Although, there is also criticism about Hofstede's original research, concerning that most of the IBM employees during 1960's and 1970's were white collar men. There-fore, representativeness of the sample were almost completely men. Using that to represent the whole country is somewhat questionable (Clayton 2016). Also, Browaeys & Price (2015, 40) write that many scholars as well as practitioners in the field of cross-cultural management training have found it complicated to apply Hof-stede's dimensions to real-life.
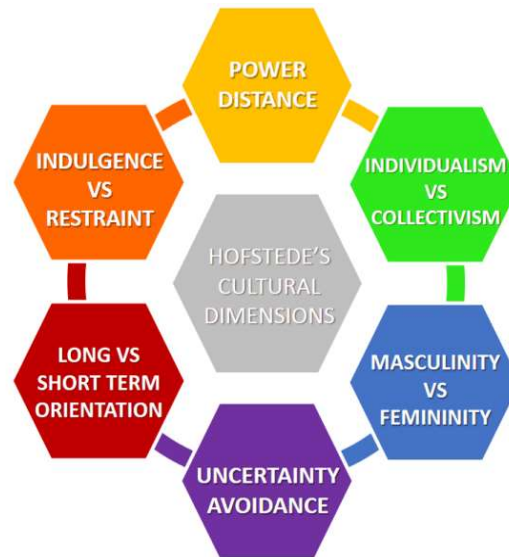
Figure 12: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Business to You, 2017)

Each of Hofstede's dimensions are explained briefly in the following:

1. According to Geert Hofstede (2011, 9) Power Distance measures how the less powerful people in societies or organizations accept and expect the inequality of power distribution to take place. It does not measure how equally the power is distributed, rather how people feel about it. He points out that all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others. Scoring low demonstrates that control is disliked and an attitude towards managers is informal, while as scoring high indicates that hierarchy means existential inequality.

2. Individualism vs. Collectivism measures how strongly people are integrated together, high scoring in this dimension means that people have loose relation with other people. They see other people as individuals and tend to think that everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself only. Whereas, low score indicates a "We" –consciousness and a strong need on belonging (Hofstede 2011, 11).

3. Masculinity vs. Femininity measures how strongly the society is driven by masculine values like success, achievement and competition. Scoring low in this section indicates that feminine values like caring for the weak and quality of life are dominant values. "The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine)" (Hofstede 2011, 12).

4. Uncertainty avoidance measures how people in a society feel in unexpected and unknown situations. Cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to have strict behavioural codes, rules, and laws to avoid unstructured situations. Whereas, cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, rules are disliked, and people feel more comfortable with ambiguity and chaos. The fundamental issue here is how a society deals with the unknown future (Hofstede 2011, 10).

5. Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation. Hofstede's (2011, 15) findings show that this fifth dimension has the strongest connection to the country's economic growth. He points out that scoring high in this section indicates faster economic growth. According to him It is related to the fact that long term-oriented countries appreciate more values like education, adaptation, spending wisely, acquiring skills, and patience. While as, short term-oriented countries see traditions as sacrosanct and are characterized by values like, personal steadiness and stability.

6. Indulgence vs. Restraint. The sixth dimension compares indulgence with restraint, focusing on the overall happiness. Countries with a high level of indulgence allow relatively free gratification of fundamental and natural human desires related to having fun and enjoying life. Scoring high in this section indicates of higher importance towards freedom of speech and leisure, while as scoring low is related to fewer

percentage of very happy people and for example, higher number of police officers compared with the total population (Hofstede 2011, 16).

6-D model provides a scale from 0 to 100 for each dimension (See Figure 12). According to Hofstede (2011), "Each country has been positioned relative to other countries through a score on each dimension. The dimensions are statistically distinct and do occur in all possible combinations, although some combinations are more frequent than others." This Hofstede's 6-D model will be used later in CoreGo's Action Plan to compare how Finnish, Swedish, Latvian and German cultures vary in terms of these dimensions.
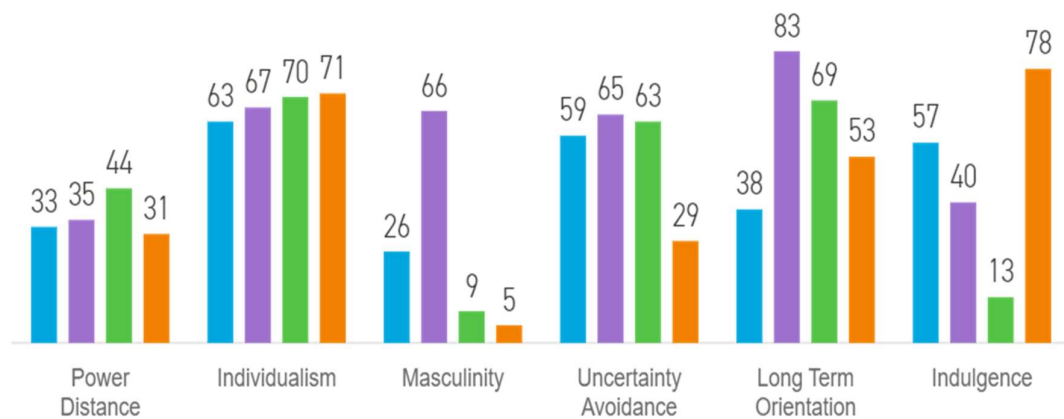

Figure 13: Culture Analyses

10 Action Plan for an International Event – Case CoreGo

The goal of this Action Plan is to help CoreGo's project team to successfully accomplish an international project, whether it is a music festival, tasting event or any other project taking place outside of Finland. This Action Plan covers all necessary steps that must be taken care of in order to have a successful project execution. The following topics are strongly linked to the theoretical part of the thesis and all project management tools and techniques that are used in the Action Plan are explained in the theoretical part. The main purpose of this work is to help a person who works for CoreGo to manage or have a positive impact on a cost, schedule, specifications and customer satisfaction of an international project.

This Action Plan concerns issues that are related to international projects from CoreGo's perspective, for example, a mobile network, logistics, and electricity. It consists of common project management tools, cycles and approaches that are introduced in a theoretical part. The Action Plan has a linear approach, emphasizing a logical progression of steps. It cannot be followed strictly due to its flexibility and aim to present things in a big picture. Instead, it must be adapted to every international project one at a time. It provides practical tools and examples for various challenges regarding international projects, instructions for the usage of tools can be found in theoretical part. The Action Plan also provides accessibility (templates and instructions) to be adapted for different stages of project management regarding risk management and project closeout for example. The importance of templates is to document necessary themes related to the project. Due to the lack of experience in international projects, all data regarding specialities and challenges faced during international projects must be documented in the company's data base. That way helping to accomplish projects in the future.

11 Understanding Cultural Differences

For the culture comparison (See Figure 10) the researcher chose countries where CoreGo already have operations (Finland and Sweden) and two possible new markets (Latvia and Germany), that are also part of the European Union (EU). Geographical location also had an impact on the selection. Since from Helsinki where the headquarters of CoreGo is located, there are good transportation links to both Latvia and Germany. In Latvia, the economic growth is strong and the unemployment rate lowest in ten years, offering a suitable basis for business expansion (OECD, 2019). While as Germany is the economic engine and the largest economy of the EU, hereby providing the biggest market (Amadeo, 2019).

11.1 Country Comparison

It is important to keep in mind that results of a cultural analyse does not mean that certain cultures are better than others, it only provides a rough overview about a culture's attitude towards each dimension introduced above (Nowrin 2017). Overreacting to the scores can lead to stereotyping and pre-judgements towards a certain culture. Whereas, it can easily create a work environment where people do not feel comfortable and feel discriminated against, or harms company's business opportunities. Discrimination might lead to productivity issues, legal problems and can seriously hurt a company's brand image (Leonard 2018). The results of the cultural comparison are summarized in the following:

11.2 Finland

The reason for Finland being included in this study is that, most of the employees of CoreGo are familiar with the Finnish culture, thus it can easily be used as a comparison to other cultures in the study. When looking at Finland's results, prominent detail is its score in Individualism. It was the lowest of all (63), meaning that in all other cultures in a study people have looser relation with other people and they tend

to see other people more as an individual. Although differences are quite small and do not require any special actions.

11.3 Sweden

When examining Swedish culture in the light of Hofstede's 6-D model it is noticeable that the level of Indulgence is relatively high (78) compared with other countries, and Masculinity (5) is almost non-existing. Regarding to that information, in Swedish culture liking what you do is seen important and values like competing and achieving are less important. Difference compared with German culture for instance is prominent and must be taken into account. Scoring high in Indulgence indicates that the Swedish culture allow relatively free gratification of fundamental and natural human desires related to having fun and enjoying life.

11.4 Germany

When considering doing business in Germany, Long-Term Orientation and Masculinity must be taken into consideration. Scoring high in Masculinity (66) and Long-Term Orientation (69) indicates that a German culture is run by values like competing, achieving, education, adaptation and spending wisely. Comparing the results of those two dimensions with Finland, it is noticeable that the difference is relatively high and might cause challenges. Also, Long-Term Orientation is the dimension that according to Hofstede (2011, 15) has the strongest connection to the country's economic growth, thus it is expected that the German economy will stay strong.

11.5 Latvia

Latvia's culture in the light of Hofstede's 6-D model does have its extreme in Indulgence. Scoring low (13) indicates lower importance towards freedom of speech and leisure, as well as a fewer percentage of very happy people. It is noticeable that the difference is big in comparison with Sweden that scored 78. In turn, Latvian culture is the most feminine together with Swedish culture, indicating that caring for the

weak and quality of life are dominant values. Also, the Power Distance was highest of all countries (44), which means that control is more accepted and an attitude towards managers is more formal than in other cultures in the study. Although score of 44 is not relatively high and Latvian culture does not have high Power Distance in a worldwide comparison.
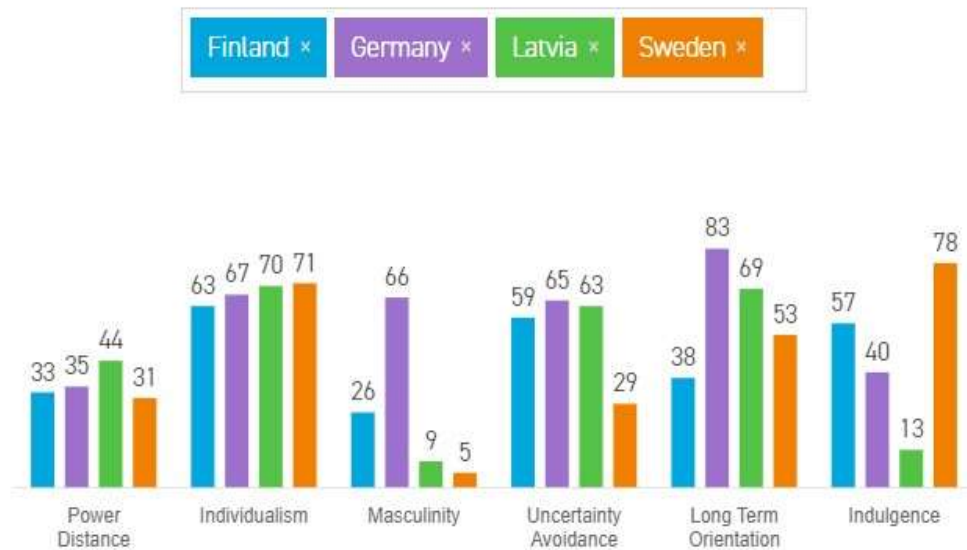

Figure 14: Results of a County Comparison

12 CoreGo's Risk Management

As it is emphasized in the section "Risk Management", the possible risks and risk mitigation plans must be identified, updated and maintained throughout the duration of the project. Therefore, the suggestion is that project managers start listing and evaluating possible risks also during the planning phase of the project and continuing it throughout the project, this is easiest done by analysing checklists and project documents, like final reports of previous projects. In this way, a project can benefit from the experiences and lessons learned from earlier projects. The suggestion concerning international projects is that final reports are categorized by a country in the company's database, to make it easier to find what projects have been made earlier in a same country. Also, at the start of the project brainstorming meetings can be hosted with important stakeholders to be able to find possible risks. When the so-called risk register is done, all risks should be evaluated from one (1) to five (5), regarding to the probability of occurrence (1= Not likely! 5= High probability!). The prioritized risk register must have a risk response to each risk and be monitored throughout the project life cycle to spot possible risk early enough.

Especially when working on international project risk documentation should be done throughout the project life cycle to gain data of risks, that way making it easier to avoid them in the future. At the moment the data that the case company has relating to international projects is really minimal, thus the recommendation is to document all the risks that appear, even though their possible cause would be small.

12.1 Probable Risks

The following section provides examples of possible risks that CoreGo might face at some point while working with international projects. By accepting the likely occurrence of a risk, it is possible to start planning how to manage each risk, thus decreasing the possible negative impact on the project.

12.1.1 Internet Crash

In case of an internet crash the reason for it must first be clarified and then the necessary actions completed. It is advisable to inform an event organizer and internet provider about the loss of a connection and discus possible reasons with them. Sometimes a lost connection can be due to unconnected wires for example between a pole and a rooter. When creating a network, it is important to double check all the connections and secure all of the wires safely to avoid anyone accidentally kicking them when working or walking in the area.

12.1.2 Power Outage

If there is not electricity available or an insufficient number of sockets, it is important to firstly inform the event organizer as it is their responsibility to make sure there is electricity available throughout the whole event. While all of CoreGo's devices work without electricity a limited period of time, it is not advisable to rely on batteries for many hours without charging.

12.1.3 Broken Devices

A broken device should always be replaced by a well-functioning one as soon as possible. If the device is physically damaged, it is important to clarify what has happened, in case it is possible to submit a claim for financial compensation. The most commonly physical damage is caused by someone dropping a device or spilling liquids on it.

12.1.4 Problems Related to Logistics

Problems related to logistics can be for instance an airline losing baggage or a logistic company not being able to deliver baggage in the right place at the right time. These problems are best avoided by researching what is the best possible method

of logistics in that particular project and reserving enough time to take care of logistics. Another challenge is damage to equipment during logistics. This is best avoided by using proper transport boxes and packaging materials.

12.1.5 Weather Conditions

Sometimes the weather can play a big role in outdoor events, hereby requiring special actions from CoreGo. It is good to remember that the devices CoreGo uses are water-resistant but not waterproof, thus must be protected from direct rain. Also, cold weather has its own effect on devices by decreasing the battery life. Cold batteries discharge faster than warmer batteries, for that reason it is advisable to always keep warm spare devices in reserve. The probability of thunderstorms also increases probability of a power outage, thus making it important to prepare more spare devices with full batteries and having full charged power banks in reserve.

13 Start of the Project – Case CoreGo

For the case company CoreGo an initiating phase is somewhat different than described in the theoretical part. Mainly because as a service provider, it becomes part of the already running project and the project has already been accepted during the sales part, thus the chance for it getting rejected later is minimal. That is why there is no need for a full project proposal, only for the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS).

Figure 15 illustrates CoreGo's project life cycle in a shape of a pyramid. It shows that an initiating phase is missing because only WBS is needed from there, and it can also be added as part of a planning phase. As was stated in a theoretical part, drawing a line between the initiating and planning phases is difficult because they are strongly overlapping, just like in CoreGo's case. Therefore, WBS is part of the planning phase and it alone creates the base for the project. In Figure 15, the size of a part of the pyramid correlates to the time and effort required. Like it is shown in a Figure 15, the workload in a planning phase is lighter than in an execution phase, mostly because in CoreGo's case an execution phase is a two-step process, including all preparations before the event and everything that happens on site. In an ideal situation after execution phase the workload decreases significantly since there is nothing that requires further attention, just a final meeting with a customer and post-event evaluations within the project team. When comparing Figure 15 with figure 6 it is noticeable that CoreGo's project life cycle follows the same guidelines as Cido & Clements's idea of distribution of time throughout the project. An execution phase requiring most time and a closeout being the most effortless and the least time-consuming phase. The only difference is that in Figure 15 a planning phase requires more time and effort than a closeout. This is due to the fact that in Figure 6, the WBS is not part of a planning phase like in Figure 15.

It is important to keep in my mind what Grisham (2009, 85) writes about the importance of initiating and planning, "70% to 80% of the success of a project is attributable to the work during the initiating and planning phase, and we strongly recommend that all international project managers focus accordingly".
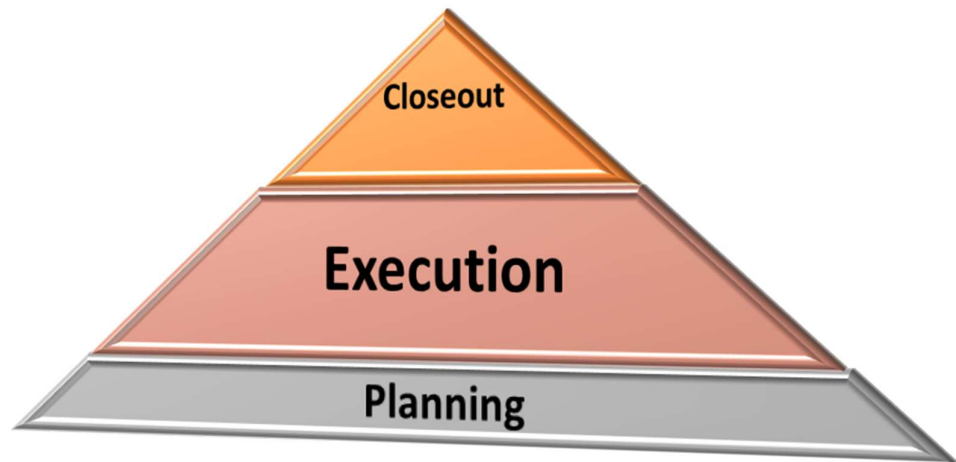
Figure 15: CoreGo's Project Life Cycle

The guidelines for a project schedule with rough time estimations can be seen in Figure 16. The suggestion is to start working on details immediately by preparing precise Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) to be able to identify resources and then continue the planning phase of the project. Premade template for WBS can be found from company's Microsoft Planner (See Figure 16). The project manager should add the project in Planner and then go through the template, simultaneously adding missing tasks as well as deleting unnecessary ones. When the task list has been updated, all the tasks should be listed in a logical order. When the WBS is ready, time estimations can be included by using Gantt Chart. Instructions for the usage can be found in page 23.

Name of the Event:
Date:
Contact person:
Devices have been sent:

Rough estimation of the schedule:
* 2-3 months, gathering the basic information via "Event Information" template
* 2-3 months, pre-sales for tickets and the info about them
* 1-3 months, (depending on whether the event will sell tickets at the venue), SAIO contract for Verifone
* 1 month, mobile app (if needed)
* 2 weeks, Preparations in coregocloud (f.ex. creating companies, programming cash registers, and creating product buttons)
* 2 weeks, Programming payment terminals
* 1-2 weeks, Other event preparations
* After the event, send feedback survey (link below)

NB! The client is required to fill all of the specs about cash registers, products and SAIO contract to "Event Information" template (below). Suggestion is to get the info about the SAIO contract earlier.

Figure 16: Example of a Schedule

○ Collect event information about the cash registers, products and SAIO contract via the link below:

○ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1z-mMwdD3hgl2dJDbuVfamVnH6TaFr68Ktpuq5ml7ciI/edit?us...

○ Companies created

○ Cash registers transferred

○ Cash registers charged

○ CoreGo POS app versions checked

○ Products created

○ Scalefusion group created

○ Back-up devices, receipt rolls, correct holders for devices, and correct chargers are packed

○ NFC-readers, cash boxes, and payment cards are packed

○ Payment terminals programmed (batches sent and parameters downloaded)

○ Mobile app

○ Coregocloud username and password sent to an event organizer

○ SAIO contract

○ Paytrail id?

○ Feedback survey sent

○ Accreditation for the event is done

○ Accommodation booked

○ Elisa contracts are opened

Figure 17: Example of a Task List

13.1 Two Months Before the Event

The suggestion is to start sorting out the basic information from the customer two months in advance. The contact person will be contacted via email and all the necessary information gathered via the "Event Information" template (Appendix 1). At the same time information regarding which payment agreement will be used should be clarified.

13.2 Two Weeks Before the Travel Date

Around two weeks before the travel date it is time to start preparing devices and creating content in CoreGocloud software. Also, this is a good time to send the instructions (Appendix 2 and 3) to the contact person and advise him/her to share them with the people who will be using devices during the event.

13.3 Mobile Application

If a customer is going to use CoreGo mobile application, the following information must be gathered:

- Banner (less than 1mt).

- Starting and ending dates for deposits (adding balance).

- Is it possible to request a refund through application? (Yes or No) If yes, will there be a service fee? How much?

- Starting and ending dates for requesting refunds.

- Seller safety code.

14 CoreGo's Project Life Cycle – Planning Phase

As was stated in a theoretical part, a well-executed initiating and planning phase has a strong correlation to the success of an international project. That is why it is suggested to reserve sufficient time for planning in order to give a project a reasonable chance of success. The project manager is responsible for making sure he or she has enough people working in a team to be able to meet all the tasks documented in WBS within the time period agreed. If not, he or she has following options:

- o Re-schedule tasks

- o Re-prioritize tasks

- o Negotiate with project owner for additional time or resources

In the following sections there is information regarding the different subjects that need to be covered during the planning phase of the project.

14.1 Setting Major Milestones

Major milestones are recommended to be set at the start of a planning phase of the project. The date of the event is the major milestone, and everything must be scheduled and planned according to that. If this deadline cannot be met, then the chance of a project failing increases significantly. Other important milestones are the date when all preparations must be finished and the point of time when everything must be ready on site. Those major milestones must be set during a planning phase together with all members of the project team.

14.2 Logistics

Planning logistics is an important part of the planning phase of the international project. By choosing an appropriate method for the logistics is the best way to ensure that the physical material will be at the right place, at the right time, and at the right

cost (Mocan, 2016). In CoreGo's case there are three main factors that impact the decision what logistical method is recommended to use.

- Amount of material

- Destination

- Method of travelling

The size of the event typically closely correlated with the amount of devices and other material that needs to be brought to the venue, this has a big impact on the decision of, which logistics solution is the most appropriate.

The destination country is an important factor since not all logistic companies can handle all of the destinations where CoreGo will operate in the future. It is always the responsibility of the project manager to map different options and then choose the most appropriate one. A recommended way to find the best solution is to do research into service providers websites and consulting more experienced colleagues.

If the project team is planning to travel by plane, it is convenient to take all the equipment there by plane as well. There are exceptions of course, for example if the total size or weight of all the equipment is too big to be taken by a plane, then another solution must be found. Also, the total cost can be too high when carrying everything by plane and then finding more economical alternatives should be discussed with the project owner. Information regarding costs and allowed weight/size of packages can be found in an airline's website.

The case company have been using DHL's services for national logistics and have found it to work. DHL is the world's largest logistics company and is doing operations in over 220 countries worldwide (DHL, 2020). Making it a good option for CoreGo when starting to do international projects. All prices and package size/weight requirements can be found in DHL's website. Other well-known companies offering international logistic services are for example, FedEx and United Parcel Service (UPS). They also provide all the necessary information on their websites, which makes comparing and decision making easy.

14.3 Legislation and Bureaucracy

Working with international projects also means that a company must deal with different legislation from their home market. A good example of how a target market's legislation and bureaucracy can impact company's business is what happened when CoreGo started to expand its operations in Sweden. Swedish authorities demanded detailed explanation of money transactions in order to get a permission to do business in Sweden. That kind of requirements are important to sort out and take care early in order to avoid problems appearing in the future. A good and suggested way to find out variations in legislation of different countries is to use European Union's official website (Appendix 9). This website is practical guide to doing business in Europe, allowing a person to search information regarding business legislation country by country. This procedure is recommended to do during the initiation phase of the project, and it is the responsibility of the project owner and project manager. Also, information about legislation regarding logistics can be found in EU's official website and it is important to be covered, to avoid unpleasant surprises.

14.4 Electricity

Since all devices GoreGo uses have a need to be plugged all the time or charged daily, it is important to know what type of a plugs are used in the destination country. During the planning phase of the project the project manager must ensure what plugs and sockets are used in the destination country. The full list of countries with their plug and socket types used can be found in World Standards' website (Appendix 10). Company's existing chargers can be used in international projects as well, since most of the countries in EU are using the same plug type that we use in Finland, called Europlug (Except: United Kingdom, Ireland, Cyprus and Malta). Europlug (also called "Type C") is the most common type of a plug in the world (Worldstandards, 2018). If the destination country is not using Europlugs, the suggestion is to get necessary adaptors already in Finland, in order to avoid having to deal with this possibility on site. If the required adapters or plugs cannot be found in Finland, enough time must be reserved for purchasing them from the destination

country. Different types of plugs and sockets are always a risk and must be listed in a risk register.

14.5 Mobile Data

Unless CoreGo's own internet connection is built on-site, mobile sim cards will be used. In most cases, the sim cards CoreGo uses in Finland can be also used in international projects. If not, the suggestion is to always purchase "Saunalahti Prepaid -roaming" sim cards from Finland and use them in international projects. They work in most of the EU countries, the full list of countries can be found in Elisa's website (Appendix 11). The suggestion is to test the speed of mobile data connection when arriving at the venue, in order to ensure of having enough time to deal with the situation where the mobile data connection is too slow. For testing the speed of connection, the suggestion is to use "Ookla Speedtest" application that can be downloaded from Google Playstore (Android) and App Store (IOS). If the results of the speed test show that the connection is slow then the project manager must be informed in order to plan how to proceed. Having a slow internet connection is always a risk when doing operations in a new environment and must be listed in the risk register. A Suitable risk response for a slow connection is to purchase local prepaid sim cards. It is important to notice that local legislation and bureaucracy might present challenges for purchasing prepaid sim cards, for example in Germany a person is allowed to buy just five prepaid sim cards and identity must be proved by a passport.

14.6 Stakeholder Analysis

During the planning phase it is important to list all the important project stakeholders in order to gain an understanding of whom CoreGo will be collaborating in the project. After the list of stakeholders is prepared the suggestion is to mark possible negative stakeholders and then place each stakeholder in the Power/Interest chart. This makes it easier to get a clear picture who are the most important stakeholders with whom the co-operating will be the most intense during the project and to see

whose participation to the project is less important from CoreGo's perspective. Instructions about a usage of Power/Interest chart are in page 17.

14.7 Communication During the Project

Well-functioning internal communication is necessary to achieve project goals. The suggestion is to make use of a mix of different communication tools for internal communication. The preferred type of communication should be decided within the team at the start of the project.

The suggestion is to create a WhatsApp group for the project team, where daily issues can be discussed on a fast schedule and use email for sharing documents and to forward customers' emails for example. To communicate with a geographically diverse group of stakeholders the suggestion is to use email and for phone calls the best option is to use online chatting tools, like Skype or Microsoft Teams.

15 CoreGo's Project Life Cycle – Execution Phase

The execution phase can be divided into two separate parts, preparations and what happens on-site. For the preparations part the suggestion is to use project management methodologies of Scrum Framework (Appendix 8), instructions are in page 31-32. Time frame in between so-called Scrum Prints must be tailored to suit each particular project, considering the size of the project and the labour force available. This is done by a project manager during the planning phase. The most important things to remember are to have short daily stand-up meetings where important issues are discussed within the team and possible problems solved, as well as to choose tasks from the prioritized task list in correct order and mark them as having been done when completed.

If unexpected problems appear during the execution phase on the spot, the project owner must be informed with a following information:

- What is the problem?

- How urgent is the decision?

- Suggested solution?

16 CoreGo's Project Life Cycle – Project Closeout

After the execution phase it is important to continue interaction with the customer to ensure customer satisfaction. The suggestion is to set-up a feedback meeting with the customer where going through all necessary things regarding the project. If customer is satisfied with the project outcome, the feedback meeting is also good chance to discover possibilities for future collaboration. It is also recommended for the project team to have a meeting during the closeout phase to discuss how well the project was executed, expectations were met and what was the project team's overall performance. The results of that meeting will be documented in "Plans Vs. Results" template (Appendix 5) and "Performance Evaluation" template (Appendix 6). After a meeting with the project team, the project manager must prepare the "Final Report" (Appendix 7).

17 Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, nowadays in this global environment of tough competition, companies must carefully plan how they practise project management. Especially when working with international projects that tend to have a high level of complexity due to geographically diverse project stakeholders for example. It is challenging to ensure customer satisfaction while trying to manage cultural differences and deal with project risks and complexity at a same time. Yet, adapting correct project management tools for each project helps a company to improve efficiency and effectiveness. As a project manager of the case company, the researcher had access to all of the case company's internal data, therefore making it straightforward to collect all necessary information.

This thesis gathered the most important factors from theories regarding international project management to make it easier for the case company to do business internationally in the future. All theories presented in a theoretical part of the thesis were analysed and discussed with the case company to find out the most suitable ones for their operations. Hence the chosen theories were adapted to the empirical part of the thesis, forming the base for the so-called Action Plan.

The Action Plan was checked during the writing process by CoreGo to make sure it will contain all of the necessary information, thereby delivering the most positive outcome. The goals for the Action Plan were to keep it compact, covering all of the necessary information to assist both current future employees in their role as part of CoreGo's international team. It is a fundamental working tool for international projects that employees working with a project can benefit from. Using this Action Plan as a part of daily operations will provide a valuable reference resource, delivering tangible benefits to the case company, such as enhanced customer satisfaction, and improved efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of international projects.

17.1 Findings

This research study concentrated on the challenges and opportunities of international projects and was successfully able to identify deficiencies in CoreGo's project management processes and to provide solutions on how to make them more efficient and effective. Especially concerning risk management and overall project planning. For example, at the moment the case company is not doing risk documenting or prioritizing at the start of a project or during an execution phase. Currently, if risk documenting is prepared, it is done by the project manager at the end of the project by listing risks that were actually faced during the project.

Comparing theoretical review with CoreGo's ongoing project management methods it is noticeable that there is definitely a need for project managers to have practical knowledge about project management processes and to have the flexibility to deal with unforeseen challenges and to be able to take advantage of unexpected opportunities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.   Event Information Template

Event
Information.xlsx

Appendix 2. Cashless Payment Instructions

Cashless
Exhibitors.pdf

Appendix 3. Ticket Reader Instructions

Ticketreader ENG.pdf

Appendix 4. Risk Register

Risk Register.docx

Appendix 5. Plans Vs. Results

Plans vs. Results.docx

Appendix 6. Performance Evaluation

Plans vs. Results.docx

Appendix 7. Final Report

Final
Documentation.docx

Appendix 8. Scrum in five minutes

Scrum in five
minutes.pdf

Appendix 9. European Union's official website

https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/company-law-and-corporate-governance_en

Appendix 10. World Standards website

https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/

Appendix 11. Elisa's website

https://elisa.fi/prepaid/saunalahti-prepaid--roaming/