

# Chapter 4

## Project Success Criteria, Critical Success Factors (CSF), and Agile Projects

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### **ABSTRACT**

*There have been major developments in project management over the years; however, the success rates of projects are still far from the desired levels. The number of studies focusing on project success has been increasing over the last decades. This chapter reviews the concept of project success, project success criteria, and CSF by narrowing the focus from generic projects to IT and then agile projects. The review revealed that client satisfaction has a critical role in the perceived success of the project, along with iron triangle (cost, budget, scope). It is widely accepted that some CSF are dependent on the context of the project. Top management support, communication, clear and linked project objectives, user involvement, teamwork, and effective planning are critical factors in IT projects. There are two differences in the evaluation of the success between agile and traditional software projects: frequency of the evaluation and a stronger emphasis on ensuring customer satisfaction. There is higher importance on people-related factors and customer involvement in agile projects.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Projects are defined as temporary endeavors to generate a unique product, service, or result (PMI, 2017). A project is also defined as possessing the following characteristics: A defined beginning and end, a specific, predetermined goal or output, a series of interrelated activities, a limited budget (Pinto & Slevin, 1988a). To create a competitive advantage, improve their operations, and differentiate their products or services, the companies are turning to project management (Jugdev & Muller, 2005). Even though there have been major developments in project management over the years, the success rates of projects are still far from the desired levels (Chaos Report, 2021; PMI, 2020). The number of studies focusing

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on project success has been increasing over the last few decades. Most of these studies focus on either measuring project success or identifying the CSF of the projects with different characteristics. The concept of project success is an interesting subject from an academic perspective; however, it is particularly important to help the project management practitioners understand how improving underlying success factors will lead to increased project performance. Therefore, this chapter reviews the concept of project success, project success criteria, and CSF. The following “Background” section provides an introduction to the literature on “project success.” Then, the perception and the measurement of project success are defined. Next, the CSF for the projects are discussed. After that, CSF, in the current literature, specifically for the software development projects, are presented. In the last subsection of the literature, agile software development projects are defined. This subsection included the discussion of the perception of the project success for agile projects and the review of the CSF for those projects. In the next section, future research suggestions are provided, and the chapter ends with conclusions.

## **BACKGROUND**

The number of studies on project success has been increasing over the last few decades. The majority of the research on project success falls into two categories: In the first category, many studies are dealing with the project success criteria (e.g., Ika, 2009; Prabhakar, 2008; Davis, 2018; Oseyi-Kyei & Chan, 2017; Chan, Scott & Edmond, 2002). Those studies discuss how the success of the projects should be measured and what criteria should be used to quantify the project success. The literature on the measurement of project success and how the concept of project success is evolved is reviewed under the “Project Success” title.

In the second vein of the studies on project success, many studies are dealing with the CSF (Ika, 2009). CSF are defined as the input to the management system that supports the project’s success (Prabhakar, 2008). In this category of the studies on project success, many researchers (e.g., Davies, 2002; Nasir et al., 2015; Yalagama, Chileshe & Ma, 2016; Marzagao & Carvalho, 2016) discussed the CSF and their impact on project success for projects with different characteristics. The literature on the critical factors and their impact on the different dimensions of the project success is reviewed under the “Critical Success Factors (CSF)” title.

## **PROJECT SUCCESS, CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS, AND AGILE PROJECTS**

### **Project Success**

There are various similar definitions of the project. In one of the definitions, projects are defined as temporary endeavors to generate a unique product, service, or result by PMI (2017). Kerzner (2013) defines project management as the planning, organizing, directing and controlling of the required resources for a relatively short-term objective that has been defined to complete specific goals and objectives. A project is also expected to possess the following characteristics: A defined beginning and end, a specific, predetermined goal or output, a series of interrelated activities, a limited budget (Pinto & Slevin, 1988a).

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