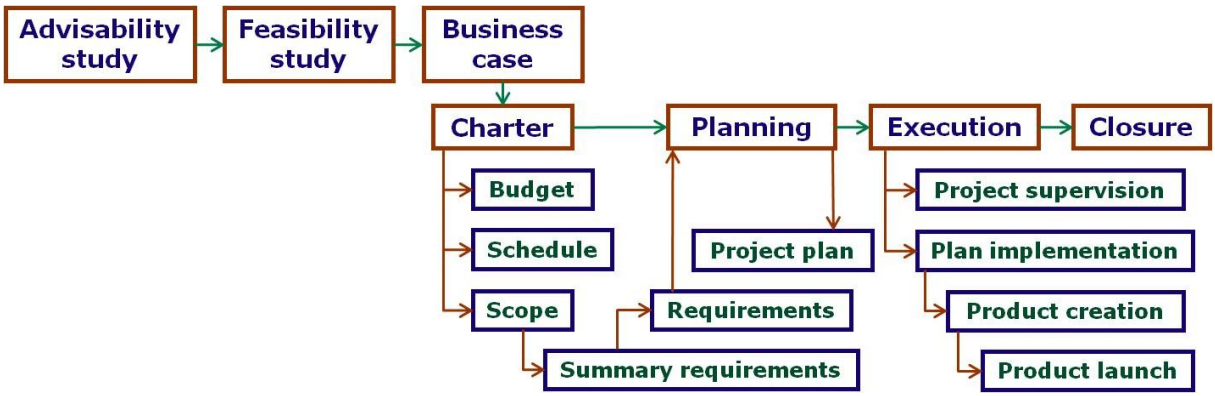
19) Factors of success of a project

In conclusion of this Project Management guide, I briefly address below some key factors of success of a project. This is also an opportunity to provide a recap of the various phases of a project and of areas of project management which require planning, direction/supervision, monitoring and control.

As a reminder, here is a diagram that features the main phases of a project:



The success of a project is the achievement of the objectives defined in the project charter, which generally means providing deliverables that meet requirements in terms of functionality, performance and overall quality, in compliance with budget and schedule constraints.

Needless to say, as a **prerequisite** for success the project's (and the PM's) **objectives must be "SMART"**!

- *See chapter 2: "The functions of a Project Manager".*

The **first factor** of success of a project is a **solid business case** that justifies the project and that all major stakeholders agree upon, which will guarantee support throughout the project from the project owner/sponsor and the PM's management.

- *See chapter 3: "The life cycle of a project".*

The **second factor** is a **precise charter** that clearly specifies the project's objectives with unambiguous definitions of the project's scope, budget and schedule, as well as of the PM's role and level of authority.

- *See chapter 7: "Project charter".*

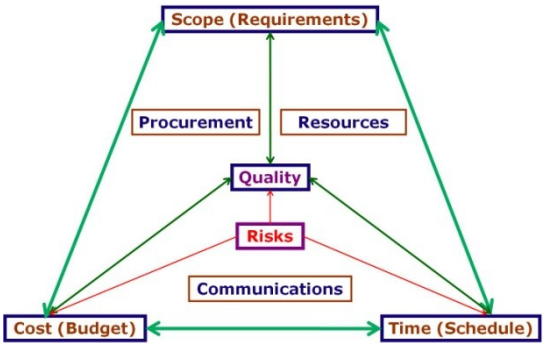
The **third factor** of success of a project is the **quality of the requirements specification**, which must be exhaustive, precise and detailed down to the appropriate level, in order to provide a clear understanding of expectations and to avoid any misinterpretation.

The requirements specification is extremely important since it is the **basis for project planning and product design**.

The requirements specification does not necessarily need to be frozen before product design is undertaken. For some projects, **a certain degree of flexibility** may actually be allowed in order to reach a "perfect match" between requirements and design. Changes to the requirements specification should however not be allowed after a certain point in the execution phase, in order to **avoid a negative impact of too many changes on cost, schedule and quality**.

- *See chapter 8: "Requirements specification".*

The **fourth factor** is **detailed and exhaustive planning** in all areas of project management, as featured in the following (now familiar) diagram:



Time spent on planning saves time in project execution. Indeed, poor and/or incomplete planning generally leads to problems during project execution, such as inadequate resources, unforeseen tasks, longer-than-expected task durations, unexpected costs.
In particular, establishing the **work breakdown structure** and determining the corresponding **sequence of tasks** are essential processes that need to be performed with extreme care and at an appropriate level of detail in order to ensure that the **estimation of task resources, durations and costs** is comprehensive and realistic.

- *See chapter 9: "Project planning".*

The **fifth factor** is the **quality and motivation of the project team**. Hiring the right people is essential. Team members must be skilled in their respective areas of expertise, they must be hard workers and have a good team spirit. They must remain motivated throughout the project, which the PM (and subproject managers, if any) must ensure.

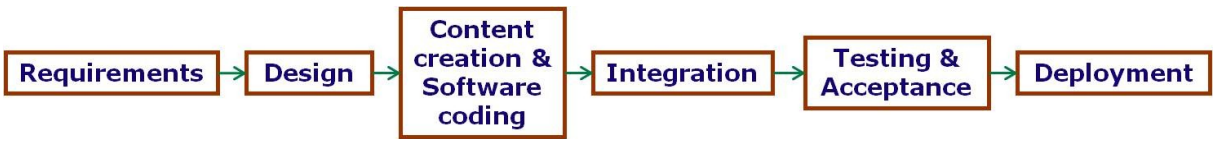
- *See chapter 10: "The project team".*

The **sixth factor** is the **quality and reliability of contractors** (and, more generally, vendors). Selecting contractors is a time-consuming process (as is hiring people) that should not be rushed. It should be done with due care and attention.

- *See chapter 11: "Contractors and contracts".*

Project success is obviously facilitated by **excellence in execution**, which is enabled by the quality of the project team and contractors, and by other factors addressed below.

The **seventh factor** is the **quality of project deliverables**, which requires rigour and excellence in execution of all tasks involved in the successive phases of product creation, as featured in the following (now familiar) diagram:



The quality of a product is dependent on **good design** (that complies with the requirements specification) and on the **quality of the product's content, user interface and software**. Of course, quality assurance implies **thorough and effective testing**.

- *See chapter 12: "Software development life cycle models and methodologies".*
- *See chapter 13: "Design specifications".*
- *See chapter 14: "Content creation".*
- *See chapter 15: "Development and developers".*
- *See chapter 16: "Testing".*

The **eighth factor** is permanent and **effective direction/supervision, monitoring and control of project execution** (ie the implementation of the project plan), which requires an **excellent organization**, a **well-oiled mechanism for information flow** and a set of **meaningful performance indicators** (which make up the "project dashboard") that are **kept up-to-date** and used to trigger **appropriate and timely action**, in particular to solve problems, to deal with issues, to settle conflicts, to arbitrate disputes, and to manage risks.

- *See chapter 17: "Project direction/supervision – Monitoring and control".*

The **ninth factor** is related to the one above; it is made explicit here because of its paramount importance: **effective communications**, which is indeed essential in order to ensure that information needed to correctly carry out project tasks is available in a timely manner to those who need it. It also enables the PM to keep abreast of what is going on and to "feed" the performance indicators. Effective communications also applies to the reporting of progress and issues to the project stakeholders.

The **tenth factor** is **close and efficient cooperation between the PM and Marketing & Sales** at various stages of the project, because the success of the project is tied to the success of the resulting product.

- *See chapter 18: "Relationship with Marketing & Sales".*

Finally (in this non-exhaustive summary), the **eleventh factor** of success is **a great Project Manager who is also a true leader**!

Indeed, the achievement of a project's objectives is highly dependent on how well it is managed. **The skills, experience and professional as well as personal qualities of the project manager, as a true leader, are key to the success of a project**.

- *See chapter 2: "The functions of a Project Manager".*
- *See chapter 17: "Project direction/supervision – Monitoring and control".*

Here are a few links to interesting **articles relating to the subject of this chapter**:

>> www.projectsmart.com/articles/eight-key-factors-to-ensuring-project-success.html

>> www.projectsmart.co.uk/six-ways-to-give-proper-project-leadership.html

>> https://www.pmhut.com/the-abcs-of-project-management-for-project-managers

---

As a **final note**, I want to offer the following personal opinion.

- **The job of Project Manager is probably one of the most challenging and intellectually rewarding**.