Managing Multinational Research Projects

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Thesis Structure

• ACTS background
• Applying for a research project
• Project contracts
• Technical guide
• IMMP background and results
• IMMP – lessons learned
ACTS

• Advanced Communications Technologies and Services
• Research programme in the 4th Framework Programme (1994-1999)
• Promotion of the use of information technologies, particularly in the public sector, but also through promotion of teleworking
• Promotion of investment in basic trans-European services, for Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) and high-speed networking
• Creation of an appropriate regulatory framework to ensure competition, guarantee universal service and security of information and communication systems
• Development of new technology training
• An increased industrial and technological performance in European business, notably through increasing research and technology development
Applying for a Research Project

- Writing a proposal
- Software tools
- Proposal submission
- Project organisation
- Project documentation
- Cost claims
- Project audit
- Project modifications
- Differences between ACTS and IST
Contracts and Technical Guide

- Model contracts
- Consortium agreement
- Associate contract
- Subcontract
- Non-disclosure agreement
- Helpful documentation
- Basic requirements for the proposal
- Proposal format
IMMP Background

- Integrated Multimedia Project, IMMP (AC023)
- Ran from September 1995 until June 1999
- ACTS project in the 4th Framework Programme
- c. 900 man months
- c. 9 M
- 12 partners from 5 countries
IMMP Trials

Cable network
ATM/Ether
HE
Router
Server Pool
UK National Host
ATM

ATM/Ether
ISDN
IWU
Router
Server Pool
SPAIN National Host
ATM

ADSL
Cable network
HE
Router
Server Pool
FIN National Host
ATM

TRANS-European ATM network (JAMES)
IMMP Results

• Developed platforms and components that allow creative, interactive multimedia applications to be developed, used and tested
• Studied multimedia environments, applications, and services
• Demonstrated and evaluated the feasibility of multimedia services
• Evaluated and tested end user requirements and needs and measured the acceptance of these services
• Measured and studied economic and social impacts
Lessons Learned

Deadlines are extremely hard to keep

• Multiculturality means that there are many different attitudes towards deadlines
• The nature of deadlines in multinational and multicultural projects is quite flexible
• Needs a good control mechanism
• Needs efficient communication
• Requires good planning and timing
• Might mean shipping unfinished deliverables
Lessons Learned

Reporting on results is tedious

• When something is done it is often forgotten

• Reporting is made easy by
  • doing everything in a suitable way to begin with
  • keeping record of accomplishments
  • gathering those information into the monthly and annual reports
Lessons Learned

Reaching consensus

• In meetings it is hard to reach consensus
• Multicultural groups have multiple ways of coping with issues
• Reaching agreement in a meeting is important
• The agreement should be recorded
• The minutes should be ratified by the attendees afterwards
• Issues agreed upon can not be changed but unanimously
• Trust between the partners must be maintained
Lessons Learned

Short-term technological expectations

- These can not be basis for long-term planning in EU projects
- If the expectation is not fulfilled the plan is severely altered
- If the expectation is fulfilled the project loses its appeal
Lessons Learned

Having customers or competitors as partners

- Having many different customers as partners can compromise a partner's role as a supplier and lower the ability to coordinate the project effectively.
- Having competitors among the partners can narrow down Nokia’s possibilities and actions.
- Agreements external to the project may affect the project relationship.
- Might lead to horse-trading.
Lessons Learned

Small manpower allocation

• Small amount of manpower often means shallow commitment
• Project needs true commitment, not 10% work share
Lessons Learned

Rapid exchange of employees

• Poses serious threat to the project quality
• Long projects see many people come and go
• Project efficiency will suffer
• New people have new interests, incorporating these is hard
• Motives might change
• The actual work and its quality is dependent on the people performing it, not on the partner organisations
• It is important to build good chemistry between people, listen to their opinions and accept compromises
Lessons Learned

Disseminating the project results

• During the course of a long project, the funding parties must be kept awake by informing them about the project status.

• Even though there is euphoria after finishing a long multinational project, the results should be communicated across to all the potentially interested parties, not just to the EU Commission.

• Disseminating the project results is very important but must depend on the nature, appropriateness, timeliness and quality of the results achieved.
Lessons Learned

Possibilities unique to multinational projects

• Networking across country and company boundaries
• Open exchange of ideas between culturally different minds
• Self assessment through cultural exchange
Why EU Research?

- Too few own resources
- Networking
- Image-building
- Organisational visibility
- Risk management
- Knowledge-building