

How Project Start-up occurred internationally as a key issue of Project Management

By Morten Fangel
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As project manager for the IPMA World Congress in Copenhagen in 1982, I had the privilege to be exposed to impulses from project management environments:

- ◆ From a Dutch consultant, **Gert P. Groote** we received a proposal for a paper using the label start-up.
- ◆ As part of the preparation for the Congress a study tour was organised to North America. In Montreal at the Canadian Pacific, I had the chance to meet **Robert Gilles** who presented the concept of using a facilitator when planning projects – and applying an interactive method with cards and graphical presentation on walls.
- ◆ Personally I had recently published a book describing a method for **situational planning of projects**. For the application of this method I found it expedient that some kind of “time out” in the beginning of projects was needed.

Altogether, this inspired to include a half-day seminar in the Congress Programme with focus on **Project Start-up Planning**. In the programme the seminar was introduced as follows:

“The project start-up is a key challenge to project management. The start-up planning of the strategies and organisation will decisively affect the success of the project. The seminar will present various approaches to and tools for this project start-up planning. Also, the team-building aspect will be dealt with”.

According to my knowledge, this was the first event internationally that introduced project start-up as a key issue of project management.

Inspired by the good response from the participants of the seminar, we arranged a meeting during the Congress where **Peter Morris** and **Michael Wright** from the United Kingdom and I planned additional activities on promoting the concept of project start-up:

- ◆ The first activities were a series of short **Seminars on Project Start-up in Scandinavia**.
- ◆ The second was an **IPMA Expert Seminar on Project Start-up** organised in Oxford in 1984.

These activities verified the increasing interest in the issue. Therefore, another workshop was organised in December 1984 in Copenhagen with the purpose to found an **IPMA Committee of Advancement of Project Start-up** of which I was appointed to

be the chairman. The workshop had representatives from Finland, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and USA. The IPMA Board was represented by **Steen Lichtenberg**, president and **Roland Gutsch**, incoming president.

One of the first milestones of the new Research Committee was to provide papers on project start-up for the forthcoming **IPMA World Congress in 1985 in Rotterdam**. Further, a one-day workshop with some 30 participants was organised during the Congress. The workshop was chaired by **Gert P. Groote** and the purpose was to provide insight in the application areas for project start-up – and to find solutions regarding the structure, contents and effect of project start-up.

From 1985 up until 1988 the – briefly named – **Committee on Project Start-up** held 10 extensive development meetings. From mid-1986 **Alex van den Honert** and **Roland Gareis** were two key figures of the committee.

The first major outcome of the research work was the **Handbook of Project Start-up** which was published in 1987 and included some 700 pages. (ISBN 87-982547-1-5)

The main chapters were:

1. Introduction to Project Start-up
2. Analysis of Project Start-up Processes
3. Planning Project Start-up Processes
4. Special Topics on Project Start-up in Practice
5. Implementation of Project Start-up in Home Organisations

The second outcome was a three-day **Workshop on Project Start-up** organised in June 1987 in Elsinore, Denmark with some 50 participants from some 12 countries. During the workshop parallel group sessions took place on planning real life start-up processes – facilitated by the members of the Committee. Since the first workshop was overbooked an additional workshop took place in December 1987 in Copenhagen with another 50 participants.

From 1990 the workshop on project start-up has been converted into the first **IPMA Training Course on Project Start-up**. Since then, more course modules have stepwise been added to the **Bouquet of IPMA Advanced Training**. The latest bouquet of now eight modules was organised in March 2005 in Copenhagen with nearly one hundred participants.

One of the most popular courses is still the project start-up course, now named **Course A: Effective preparation and start-up of projects – Through a structured approach to the processes and skilled facilitation**.

This indicates that the concepts, methods and facilitation of project start-up today are even more essential for the success of projects than was the case nearly 25 years ago when the issue was introduced internationally.

About the Author



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Morten Fangel is Managing Director and Chief Consultant of Fangel Consultants Ltd. and one of the founders of the Danish Project Management Association, (IPMA Denmark) of which he today is the Managing Director. Morten is also a member of four other Nordic PM Associations, the International Project Management Association (IPMA), the Project Management Institute (PMI ®) and the Association of Certified Management Consultants (CMC). He is former president, past Chair and an Honorary Fellow of IPMA, and an honorary member of the Icelandic Project Management Association. Morten is also a global advisor for the *PM World Journal*.

Morten Fangel holds a Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering, and Ph.D. in industrial research from the Technical University of Denmark and a Diploma in Economics degree from the Copenhagen Business School. After years in consulting Engineering companies, he founded Fangel Consultants Ltd., from where he has more than three decades of experience in management consulting.

Morten Fangel has introduced and is a specialist in methodologies for project preparation and start-up, and for planning and evaluation of project management. He is the author of the book *Proactive Project Management: How to Make Common Sense Common Practice*, published in 2013. He organizes and teaches the annual IPMA Advanced Courses. Morten can be contacted at morten@fangel.dk