Project succeeded or failed: who says?

It seems such a simple question: has the project succeeded or failed? Usually you get an answer: is it delivered within time and budget? If so, then succeeded. In my view, this is a very and even too limited view of this question. To answer the question correctly, it is necessary to know who is asking the question and what his or her intention or expectation was with the project.

Who

Our view on projects is influenced by the role we play in or with a project. It always gives a certain look based on our background, experience and expertise of the role we hold. The following roles can be distinguished here:

1. Business (demand): those who determine the requirements and wishes for the product and / or services that the project has to deliver.
2. Architect (architect): those who come up with and design solutions.
3. Suppliers (delivery-supply): those who detail, build and implement chosen solution.
4. User: the user who uses the delivered product, with which the objectives are achieved.
5. Investor (funder): those who belong to the party that makes and approves the investment for the project.
6. Program / Project managers (program / project manager): those who lead the execution of the project.

Each of the roles has its own expectations and goals, and 4 different angles can be distinguished:

1. Content: what is made, with what objective and expected results
2. People: what is satisfaction, motivation and support among all those involved in any role
3. Control: how and under what conditions and criteria the delivery takes place
4. Decision-making: the good decisions are taken well

These 6 roles with these 4 perspectives provide 24 criteria for success or failure, as outlined below.

stakeholder	create is it true		communicate is it inspiring		control is it feasible		choose is it well decided	
demand do I get what I need or want	coverage required functionalities with required performance		user acceptance, customer satisfaction		according time to market constraints		proper justification decision based on costs and benefits	
architect does the solution covers the needs now and in future	solution compliant with architecture vision and roadmap		recognized excellence, state of the art		fit in time lines of architectural roadmap		proper solution decision with advantageous life cycle management costs	
supply do we deliver required functionalities	delivery agreed functionalities		pride on what is delivered, defect free and robust		within boundaries of promised timelines, costs and quality		proper delivery decision	
user do we get needed functionalities	my job can be done properly with delivered functionalities		functionalities complete and easy to use		functionalities delivered bug free and with adequate training		proper decision on acceptance	
funder does it bring value I want to pay for	delivered benefits		cooperation all involved, market response		according investment scheme		proper business case based funding decisions	
P&PM'er am I loyal to myself, to my funder and to my other stakeholders	as business & IT consultant did we uncover the truth and did we let bring forward the right COPAFITH deliverables		as change manager did we achieve the necessary alignment with all the necessary to be involved parties		as delivery process manager did we control delivery without surprises		as decision facilitator did we assure sound balanced decision making	
maturity	create knowledge maturity		communicate behavioural maturity		control process maturity		choose management maturity	

It is my experience that it is never the same opinion on this whole field in terms of success or failure. In one case senior management called from supply: what a success !, but project was only delivered within time and budget, but users were very dissatisfied and the complainant complained that the return on his investment was far too low. Or it was said in a stopped project: what a failure! But funder and demand were happy, because due to changing circumstances, going ahead was a worse decision than continuing.

So you can see many situations if you look closely, where success or failure can be close to each other and the distinction is wafer thin.

Here, too, it is all about: do you see clearly.

Paul PM Witteman

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