

CLARIFYING LEADERSHIP ROLES IN ERP IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

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Abstract

Existence of an adequate project champion role has been identified as a critical success factor in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation projects. However, the figure of the project champion is not yet quite well understood. Some authors relate it with the project sponsor figure while others relate it with the project manager figure. This paper tries to clarify these concepts. Our research framework is based upon an extensive ERP literature review and a web survey. The findings of this web survey suggest that the adequate project champion role is that of the project sponsor, emerging as a dual-role champion; respondents also think that both project manager and project sponsor are critical to the success of an ERP implementation project and not merely the project champion figure.

INTRODUCTION

Several authors have acknowledged the importance of strong project leadership in the form of project champions, executive sponsors, project managers and steering committees (e.g., Beath 1991, Morris 1996). The terms of Chief Project Officer (CPO), project champion, project sponsor, project leader and project manager are commonly used in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation projects and there is still confusion about their similarities and differences. Typically, ERP systems are software packages composed of several modules, such as human resources, sales, finance and production, providing cross-organization integration of transaction-based data throughout imbedded business processes. Researchers such as Sumner (1999) and Parr et al. (1999) have identified the project champion role as a critical success factor (CSF) in ERP implementations, while Bancroft et al (1998) defined as a CSF that the competence of the project manager. Esteves and Pastor (2001) studied the relevance of each CSF along the phases of SAP implementation projects and they showed that the adequate project champion role CSF has the highest relevance along all the phases of a SAP implementation project except for the realization phase, since this phase is dedicated to configuration tasks, when the project champion must simply guarantee that everything goes according to the plan. According to CSF approach, the CSF identified must be accomplished in order to achieve success. Therefore, we think that in order to accomplish the CSF ‘adequate project champion role’ it is important to define who is this person (or persons) and what is his/her role.

In an ERP implementation project, the figure of project champion does not usually exist officially. The term “champion” or “leader” is used most of the times interchangeably, and applied to the project sponsor or project manager figures, which are indeed the figures that are officially represented in a project structure. Brown and Vessey (1999) mentioned that project champion may or may not be a formal member of the project team, but can play a key role in change management efforts. They also referred that in some organizations, the sponsor also serves as the business champion for the project; in other situations, a champion emerges from among key business leaders. This paper tries to clarify the concepts around ERP project championship and to analyze their criticality in an ERP implementation. We followed a qualitative research approach to address the arising research questions. The article is structured as follows. First, we explain the research questions and framework. Next, we describe the project champion, project sponsor and project manager figures based upon our literature review. Then, we explain the results of an ad-hoc web survey on the issue, which has been our main research instrument. Finally, we provide two working definitions of ERP project sponsor and ERP project manager, and we define the different ERP project structure typologies that we can find based in the project sponsor and project manager roles. We present some conclusions and further work at the end.

1 OVERVIEW OF LEADERSHIP PROJECT ROLES

Next, we present the results of the literature review that we made in order to clarify and analyze our research focus in relation to ERP project leadership. Our research shows that ERP project leadership can be basically attributed to three roles: project champion, project sponsor, and project manager.

1.1 Project Champions

Although the term "project champion" is widely used in research articles, it is often studied without a clear definition and rigorous identification process. Schon (1963) was the first to point out the importance of product champions for the success of technological innovation. Innovation literature relates champions with organizational change events (Beath 1991). According to Humphrey (1989), a champion agent is someone who maintains focus on the goal, strives to overcome obstacles, and refuses to give up when the going gets rough. Technology champions or leaders are often cited as a critical success factor in the literature on innovation adoption. "The technology champion is a manager who lobbies for project acceptance and for access to resources needed for implementation. The activities of a successful technology champion reduce employee resistance to the innovation and obtain access to resources" (Linton 2002).

Based on an extensive literature review on project champion definition, Roure (1999) discovered that definitions of a project champion found in the literature reveal wide variations among researchers. Based on the literature review, Roure (1999, p. 4) defined a project champion as "any individual who made a decisive contribution to the innovation by actively and enthusiastically promoting its progress through critical stages in order to obtain resources and/or active support from top management".

1.2 Project Champion Content Analysis

Based in all the definitions we collected for project champion role, we performed a content analysis on all the definitions. Content analysis classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data (Weber 1990). In this research, content analysis was applied using Krippendorff (1980) guidelines. The first step was to collect all the definitions of project champion. Then, to coding the data we used TextSTAT software which generated a list of word frequency list (see table 1) from the original data.

<Introduce Table n. 1 here>

A good rule of thumb to follow in the analysis is to use word frequency counts to identify words of potential interest, and then to use a Key Word In Context (KWIC) search to test for the consistency of usage of words. KWIC describes a method of displaying an important word with adjoining text so that it may be seen in context. This gives the user more useful information than if the search hits were displayed one at a time, as they are in simple search procedures. Again, we used TextSTAT software functionality to develop the KWIC for the words shown in table 1. All this enables the following definition of project champion to be constructed:

"Any individual adopts an idea for a new (technological) innovation and who makes a decisive contribution to the innovation by actively and enthusiastically promoting its

implementation and progress through critical stages in order to obtain resources and/or active support from top management”.

1.3 Project Sponsors

A project sponsor could also be called product sponsor, product manager, product director, account manager or business unit manager (Whitten 1999, p. 12). According to Kale (2000, p. 230), "the sponsor point is a senior executive champion of change who by his or her actions and communications helps in maintaining project credibility, momentum, and committed support throughout the company". The author defines the figure of chief project officer as "a member of the project's steering committee that has enough responsibility and authority to manage day-to-day operational project-related issues and meet all project-related resource requirements". This figure is the project sponsor. Parr et al. (1999) evidence the confusion between project sponsor and project manager, when they write that "although they did not distinguish champions from sponsors, interviewees agreed that the presence of a champion had facilitated many successful projects. This person was the one who was unswerving in promoting the benefits of the new system, even when users lauded (as they frequently did) the advantages of the old system".

Instead of referring to the project sponsor figure, Welti (1999) explains the role of the steering committee chairman. The characteristics of this chairman are: ownership and leadership of the steering committee, respected and accepted authority, identification with the project and full support demonstration and close cooperation with the project manager. Rosario (2000) mentions that project sponsor commitment is critical to drive consensus and to oversee the entire lifecycle of implementation.

1.4 Project Managers

Bancroft et al. (1998, p. 137) mention that "the successful project manager integrates concerns that would otherwise fall between the cracks, and communicates with all those involved. These apolitical issues require sensitivity to the three perspectives - technical, business, and change management. Unless the project leader is sensitive to the impact of each of these elements on the project as a whole, he or she is likely to get caught by the sometimes conflicting requirements". In their work these authors relate project manager with the project leader figure. Jurison (1999, p. 22) quotes that project manager's "responsibility is to direct and coordinate all activities to meet the objectives of the project within budget and schedule".

Some authors (Thamhain 1991, Pettersen 1991, Einsiedel 1987) show that, apart from generic project management skills and knowledge, project managers, to be effective, need knowledge and understanding of: the technology of the project, the project application area, the organization or organizations in which the project is located and the market in which the organization or organizations are operating. Welti (1999) mentions that the project manager is

the overall leader of the project: "their main task is managing, leading and coaching. They have to make the implementation as easy as possible, and create a pleasant atmosphere and environment for the project members to work in". According to Welti (1999) the skills of a good project manager are: leadership, business management know-how, coaching, flexibility, acceptance, analytical abilities and stress resistance. The project manager reports directly to the steering committee the project status and seeks advice from the committee on a variety of project issues including direction, scope and funding (Purba et al. 1995).

1.5 Hypothesis Development

The literature suggests that almost all internal innovation processes have at least one champion, and most have two or more (e.g. Rothwell et al. 1974). However, even when there are multiple champions, one champion typically stands out as the principal champion (Day 1994). Our research focuses on the identification of this [main] champion on ERP implementation projects. Different championing functions require different power bases. Day (1974, p. 150) defines three types of championing:

- **The bottom-up championing** - It is related with ventures that require a main champion who has the appropriate knowledge and expertise and is close enough to the necessary sources of information to help the venture achieve innovative results: a champion from lower levels of the firm.
- **The top-down championing** – It is associated to the ventures that cannot remain invisible and require a corporate top manager as their principal champion to give them the resources and legitimacy they need to face the challenges they will encounter.
- **The dual-role champion** - Someone who possesses both the relevant expertise and information and the appropriate hierarchical power and control over resources so that he or she can make and implement better decisions in the face of significant uncertainties.

Within the organization theory literature, champions are distinguished from sponsors. Sponsors have the funds and authority to accomplish their goals (e.g. Vitale and Ives 1988), but champions, in spite of having less than the required authority or resources, bring about change in their organizations by using a variety of other influence processes (see Beath 1991). Other studies show that champions affect three areas: level of investment, budgets, and project termination decisions; levels of support (Markham et al. 1991); and levels of new product development process integration and strategy innovativeness (Markham and Griffin 1998). Beath (1991) mentions that project champions operate using three types of resources: information to evaluate, choose and sell an innovation; material resources to obtain the necessary information and to test and make transitions; and political support to guarantee both the availability of the material resources and, eventually the rewards for successful innovations. Day (1994, p. 154) says that "if the principal champion performs functions of both the organizational sponsor and the product champion, then he or she should have better

insight and understanding when making decisions, as well as sufficient hierarchical power to grant legitimacy and provide the appropriate funding to readily implement those decisions". Furthermore, Day (1994, p. 163) points out that for one champion to have both roles, "it is best when decisions are highly uncertain and speed is important, as with some radical innovations".

The ERP literature evidences that the project champion corresponds to this dual-role champion. For instance Whitten (1999, p. 12) says that "it is important for every project or product to have a sponsor who will champion its cause from a business perspective, and help remove obstacles that might harm its overall success". Due to the investment and the organizational issues associated, the ERP adoption decision is usually made not based in one person but at top management level. Therefore, the project champion must have the adequate organizational power to influence top management to adopt the ERP system. Falkowski et al. (1998) indicated that the project champion should be a high-level executive sponsor who has the power to set goals and legitimize change. Furthermore, Charkrabarti and Hauschildt (1989) reinforced the need of project champion knowledge of the organization and the people related with the innovation project. These arguments lead to the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: due to his or her influence, the ERP project sponsor should also act as the ERP project champion, thus as a dual-role ERP champion.

Second, people play different roles in an ERP implementation projects such as: project sponsor, project manager, team members, consultants, key-users, and end-users. Thus, we state that:

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the person role and the project champion figure identification with team members associated it the project manager figure and the rest of ERP roles to the project sponsor figure.

In an ERP implementation project, the figure of project champion does not usually exist officially. The term "champion" or "leader" is used most of the times interchangeably, and applied to the project sponsor or project manager figures, which are indeed the figures that are officially represented in a project structure. Some researchers like Parr et al. (1999) noted that sometimes the identification of ERP project champion as a CSF involved some misunderstandings related with project sponsor and project manager figure. Thus, instead of defining ERP project champion as a CSF, we state:

Hypothesis 3: Both, the project sponsor and project manager roles are critical for ERP implementation projects.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- a) Who is the project champion in an ERP implementation, the project sponsor or the project manager?
- b) Who is more critical in an ERP implementation project, the project sponsor, the project manager or both?

Thus, we also attempt to clarify the above functions and roles in an ERP implementation project. We followed a qualitative research approach to answer these questions. This kind of research provides the understanding of a problem through research instruments that are oriented towards searching/determining/finding/analyzing the facts in a temporal and geographic mark, giving significance to the context and usage. The reason to choose qualitative research is due to the fact that the main concerns of this research are organizational rather than technological. We started the research by reviewing the related literature and then we created a Web Survey (WS) based in the research questions and our preliminary analysis.

We used the technique of identifying champions through peer nomination, which has been shown to be a highly reliable, valid technique and predictive ability (Kane and Lawler 1978, McEvoy et al. 1988, Howell and Higgins 1990, Cho and Schunn 2003). In the organizational context, research on appraisal sources has emphasized the peer perspective (Latham et al. 1973). Peer ratings are especially useful for purposes of feedback on leaders and managers in organizations (DeNisi and Mitchell 1978, Kane and Lawler 1978).

3 WEB SURVEY TECHNIQUE

We started the research by reviewing the related literature and then we created a WS based in the research questions and literature review on the topic. The reasons for using a WS were the fact that it was the easiest way for us to access experts in the field and gather responses fast and the low cost of this technique. Regarding the sample selection method, we opted by a convenience sample and a closed web page survey. The idea was to target Internet users related with ERP implementations. A number of Internet links for ERP mailing lists, groups and forums were collected and evaluated. This evaluation focused on the relevance of these links to the research topic, and the level of apparent activity of the mailing lists, groups and forums.

3.1 Web Survey Design and Advertisement

The WS was designed using the Microsoft FrontPage tool. First we explained the WS objectives. Then, five questions were presented:

Who do you think is the ERP project champion: the project sponsor or the project manager, both or other figure? And why? This was an open-ended question.

Who do you think is more critical: project sponsor, project manager, both, don't know? This question was an option selection question.

Please, can you justify your option? This was an open-ended question in order to justify the above selection.

What is your function: project sponsor, project manager, team member, consultant, other? This was an option selection question.

Your ERP professional experience? This was an open-ended question.

We also presented a box for comments and information about the author in case he would like to receive a copy of the WS findings. Following Dillman and Bowker's (2001) recommendations, we designed the WS as simple as possible. The WS was answered on-line, and the responses were sent to our e-mail address. The WS was spread in all the main forums and mailing lists related with ERP systems that we considered relevant. The types of respondents were: project sponsors, project managers, team members, implementation consultants and others.

3.2 Web Survey Publicizing

A number of Internet links for ERP mailing lists, groups and forums were collected and evaluated. Then, the WS was spread in all the main forums and mailing lists related with ERP systems that we considered relevant. The WS was answered on-line, and the responses were sent to our email. During the initial three months we received 23 answers. After 17 months, the number of respondents increased to 164 (see figure 1). We made four advertisements of our WS. This was done by sending messages to the same forums and mailing lists selected at the beginning of the research effort. As figure 1 shows, each time we undertook a new advertisement effort the number of responses increased considerably. In each advertisement posting, in the e-mail subject we put our research subject, while in its body we briefly explained the survey objectives and we also committed to give feedback to all respondents.

<Introduce Figure n. 1 here>

3.3 Web Survey Sampling

In terms of sampling, we opted by a convenience sample in terms of subject and we tried to obtain a maximum-variation sampling in relation to the role of respondents. The types of respondents are shown in figure 2. The number of respondents was 164, with implementation consultants as the most significant. We think the main reason for this relies in the fact that implementation consultants use more forums and mailing lists to share information.

<Introduce Figure n. 2 here>

4 RESULTS

In this section we analyze the two WS questions in detail. Note that we did not provide any definition of project sponsor or project manager before the questions, to avoid conditioning the opinions of respondents. Next we describe the findings for each hypothesis.

4.1 Project champion role

P1 - Who do you think is the ERP project champion, the project sponsor or the project manager, both or other figure? And why?

Most of the respondents answered that the project sponsor is the champion (see figure 3). The peer nomination process supports our first hypothesis. The main reasons for that choice were:

- Because usually s/he has authority to bring the required resources to the project. Most of the respondents focused on financial resources.
- To control costs and time of the project rather than to manage them.
- To convey the right message to the organization and choose the right people to run the system after the implementers have left.
- Because s/he is in a position to influence the people and business processes.

<Introduce Figure n. 3 here>

Regarding this question, we opted by code the answers using ‘open coding’. Open coding is the “analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 101). One of the researchers started coding as soon as some answers became available. Then, the two other researchers analyzed the coding process. Disagreements on coding were settled through consultation between researchers. The coding process of all the answers allowed four themes/categories to emerge:

- **Economical** – related with obtain the resources and funds necessary for the ERP project.
- **Managerial** – related with the typical management activities of a project.
- **Strategic** – related with the ERP project vision, its definition and control.
- **Organizational** – related with the organizational factors of an organization and the underlying issues of structure, culture, power and influence within an organization.

In the same answer respondents gave more than one reason in most of the cases, within different categories (see table 2).

<Introduce Table n. 2 here>

Table 2 shows that strategic and organizational categories are the most expressed by respondents to argue project sponsor choice while managerial category is the most expressed to argue project manager choice. Regarding both choices, the most used categories are strategic and managerial concerns. We analyzed the answers by respondent type (see table 3) and all types confirmed that the project champion is the project sponsor, except for project team members that opted by the project manager figure. In our opinion, this is because the operational leader of the project team is in fact the project manager, the figure that is in permanent contact with team members and helps and controls their work. One of the consultants answered that neither project sponsor nor manager are the figure of project champion. His comments were: “the project champion is an operational manager, responsible for ‘championing’ the project at senior management level“.

<Introduce Table n. 3 here>

Most of respondents that answered both roles as the project champion, related project champion role and the project timeline. Thus, they mentioned that project sponsor acts as the project champion in the initial phases of the ERP project and at the end, while the project manager is the champion on the middle phases. They share the championing in the last phase of the ERP project, the go live phase. This may explain why project champion role has a high relevance along the ERP implementation phases (Esteves and Pastor 2001) independently of who plays this role, the project sponsor and project manager.

Pearson’s chi-square (X^2) tests were performed to assess the second research hypothesis. We performed X^2 to the contingency table presented in table 4. However, in the case of project champion figure variable we only defined two options: project sponsor and project manager. The X^2 ($X^2=28.079$, $df=4$, $p=0.05$) reveals that as hypothesized, the different types of respondents tended to identify different project champions figures. More of the project sponsors, project managers and consultants identified the project sponsor as the project champion figure while more team members opted for the project manager as the project champion figure.

4.2 Critical success factors

P2- Who do you think is more critical, project sponsor, project manager, or both?

To this question, 90 respondents mentioned that both functions are critical to the ERP implementation project success (see figure 4).

<Introduce Figure n. 4 here>

The second most mentioned was the project manager figure. The argumentation for project sponsor choice was that:

- The project sponsor is the critical link in the whole process. The seriousness of the management or the business is required at all times and s/he must make sure all are involved.
- The project sponsor always has more authority and power. Typically s/he is the CEO.
- The project sponsor is the one that has the financial responsibility and the project ownership.

The reasons for project manager choice were:

- The project manager has the responsibility to perform the commission of the sponsor and to report to the sponsor those key factors, which keep the project alive. It is not the responsibility of the project manager to make decisions on whether or not a project is completed but to report concerns of the project and cost performances that are necessary for the fiscal intermediary (sponsor) to base their decisions on.
- Operational management of the project is critical to its success; a project cannot succeed with a poor manager, while it can succeed with a poor sponsor.
- The project manager must have a complete understanding of the entire ERP package and the business processes within the company. S/he must look at the entire organization in order to make sure that all business processes can be accounted for. The project sponsor only needs to be able to discuss the advantages of the ERP project on an extremely high level.
- Project manager conducts effective planning along the ERP project lifecycle.

The reasons for the choice of both roles as equally critical were:

- A good project manager brings all the pieces of the implementation together in a timely, effective manner, which builds and keeps team company morale high on the new system. A good project sponsor keeps the company and its managers focused on the new system, keep distractions out of the way, and lead the company into the new system. Both complement and may help each other. Both are key to a successful system. Each person separately can be successful but will not deliver a fully useful system. During the implementation you definitely need project sponsor support. The sponsor has the authority to allocate resources to the project. The project manager assigns tasks to those resources based on the project plan.
- The project manager is critical because of his/her responsibilities mentioned above. The sponsor has the resources or can provide the resources, like people or money and something very important which is the motivation for everyone else.

The X^2 ($X^2=28.211$, $df=8$, $p=0.05$) test reveals that as hypothesized both project sponsor and project manager are critical success factors. The X^2 test supports the relationship between

respondent type and the identification of project sponsor and project manager as CSF. The analysis of answers by respondent type (see table 4) shows that not all types agreed who is more critical in an ERP implementation project. Most of the project sponsors mentioned their role as the most critical. We think there is some bias in this result due to the importance that each individual gives to his role. Most of project managers defined that both roles as critical and in second (and expected) their role. Consultants, which we think, represent the most neutral type in this answer, opted for both roles. Finally, project team members are divided between project managers and both roles. As we mentioned before, project team members have direct contact with the project managers. Therefore, it seems obvious that project managers are more critical. Another aspect that we think can explain their option is the type of typology of the ERP project (see project structure typology section below). In some ERP projects the figure of project sponsor is not present, at least officially and in some cases it is represented by the president of the company.

<Introduce Table n. 4 here>

5 PROPOSED DEFINITIONS

Based in the literature review and the WS answers, we propose a definition for both the project sponsor and the project manager figure:

- The ERP project sponsor is the person devoted to promote the ERP project, who has the ownership and responsibility of obtain the project resources. He must actively encourage the ERP project by promoting the new ERP system, overcoming resistance and involve everyone in the innovative business and organizational changes. He must control and monitor the project, helping remove obstacles in order to facilitate the success of the ERP project. Usually this figure is a senior executive of the company.
- The ERP project manager is the person devoted to plan, lead and control the project on the run in its several tasks. He is also responsible for ensuring the scope is properly and realistically defined, and communicating it to the whole company. One of his/her most important tasks is to promote good working relationships across the project. He is the person that puts in practice the strategic vision of top management for the new ERP project. Therefore, he acts as the intermediary between top management and the project team members and consultants.

6 ERP PROJECT STRUCTURE TYPOLOGIES

Based on the comments of respondents and the literature review, we identified different types of project structure typologies. These typologies are only related with the project sponsor and project manager roles. An important aspect of the typologies is if the ERP project is single or

multi site. We categorized the types of typologies using this distinction. Thus single site typologies are:

One project sponsor and one project manager.

One project manager and top management usually represented by the president or organization owner.

One project sponsor and two project managers: functional and technical project managers.

One project sponsor and a project manager for each functional area.

Regards multi-site ERP projects we found that in terms of project sponsor role there are two ERP project structure typologies: a global project sponsor, or the more common typology is a global project sponsor and a local project sponsor for each site. In terms of project managers, we found all the possible combinations but all have at least one project manager for each site. Although we did not ask for the type of ERP project structure typology, we do not have statistics related with the relationship between this dimension and definition of project champion. However, we analyzed qualitatively the answers of some respondents that mentioned the ERP projects structure typology. We evidenced that when there is a figure of a project role in the typology (especially on multi-site typologies), people see him as the project champion. Regards which is more critical, if project sponsor and project managers or both, they answers were for both.

7 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results suggest that project champions are associated with project sponsor figure. The results of testing hypothesis 1 provided the first evidence that project champions in ERP implementation projects should act as dual-role champions, both project sponsor and project champion. The dual-role champion is not unusual as the findings may suggest. Some studies (e.g. Day 1994) have shown that they make up for more than 36% of champions.

We think that these findings help to clarify the concepts of project champion, project sponsor and project manager roles in an ERP project. Until now, in many cases this distinction is not clear and allows to some misunderstandings in terms of findings. Researchers must be aware of the differences when they describe and use these roles in their research studies. We agree with Day (1994, 168) when she mentions that “given that dual-role champions have been largely ignored in previous research yet they make up 36% of the champions in this and other studies, more research needs to be done on these champions”.

One of the limitations of this study is that we do not categorize the respondents by the type of ERP project, if single or multi site, and the type of organization, big, medium or small organization. We think that this distinction can give new insights in terms of the comprehension of project champion and most critical role selection in an ERP project. We only analyzed the typology in terms of number of ERP project sites. In the future we attempt

to analyze these typologies and the type of organizations. The evidence shows that in the case of small and medium enterprises, usually there is no steering committee, and the figure of project sponsor is in most cases the organization president or owner.

Research is needed in order to understand the relationship between project sponsor and project manager, and to analyze how this relationship affects the ERP project success. Some respondents focused the issue of collaboration versus competition. Conflicts between both roles are mainly expressed in terms of lack of commitment, experience and contention for resources, and personal reasons in terms of career promotion and rewards.

An important question that arises from this study is how project sponsors and managers can be found within organizations? Another aspect upon which some interviewees focused was that sometimes project sponsors and managers are people external to the organization, which may difficult the apprehension and diffusion of ERP knowledge within the organization. Further research should focus on these aspects and on the resources needed to help both roles in the accomplishment of their work. As we mentioned before, in some ERP projects there is no project sponsor figure, at least officially defined as such. Until now, there is no studies that show the impact of the absence of project sponsor figure or what is the impact of the owner of the company as unofficial project sponsor. His implication can be seen in two perspectives, one if the organization owner is involved is because the project is very important and the second is that instead of seeing the organization owner as a motivator of ERP system use, employees can see it as a mandated event.

Finally, the cultural and social issues were not address in this study. Empirical evidence shows that the word “champion” is associated with “winner”, power, autocracy and competition. “Champion” also means to support or fight for someone else. This two definitions may explain why in certain cultures is not usual that project champion role is officially defined. Instead, people prefer the word project leader. Future research should analyze this social and national issues in IS projects in general. Shane et al. (1995) also shown that national culture impacts on championing strategies. Their findings suggest different championing strategies according to different countries and not a solely strategy worldwide. Probably in ERP implementation projects should be the same, and perhaps ERP strategies and implementation methodologies should consider national culture and its effect on stakeholder roles, in particular project champion, project sponsor and project manager roles.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides the findings of a web survey based upon a prior literature review that attempts to clarify the roles of project champion, project sponsor and project manager in ERP implementation projects, and to define their criticality. The survey shows that the project champion is definitively the project sponsor. Thus, the project sponsor acts as a dual role

champion. Second, the survey evidences that both project sponsor and project manager are equally critical in an ERP implementation project. Both have important roles to play during the ERP implementation project, the success of which is facilitated by the adequate combination of both roles. While the project sponsor is devoted to promote the ERP project and has the ownership and responsibility to obtain the project resources, the project manager is devoted to plan, lead and control the project on the run in its several tasks. The usage of both roles depends on the size of the ERP project and the resources the organization dedicates to it. This issue is especially important in ERP projects related with Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) due to the limited number of human resources available.

This study helps to clarify the confusion related with the definition in a flat homogeneous manner of an adequate project champion role as a critical success factor. We also think that although we have focus this research study in an ERP environment due to our research field and that project champion is one of the most cited CSF for ERP implementations, the topic discussed in this article may also be applied to other IS implementation projects as we evidenced in the literature review.

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FIGURES

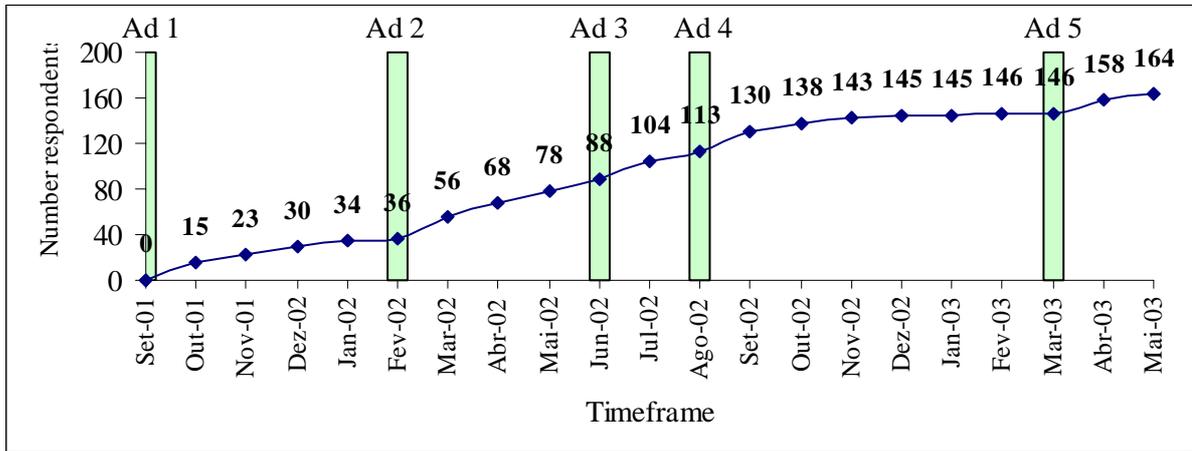


Figure 1 - Number of respondents along the research period.

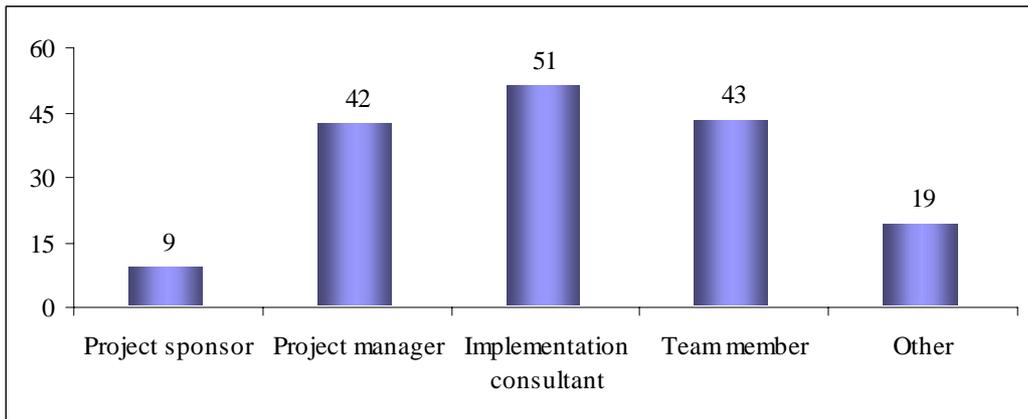


Figure 2 - Types of respondents in our web survey.

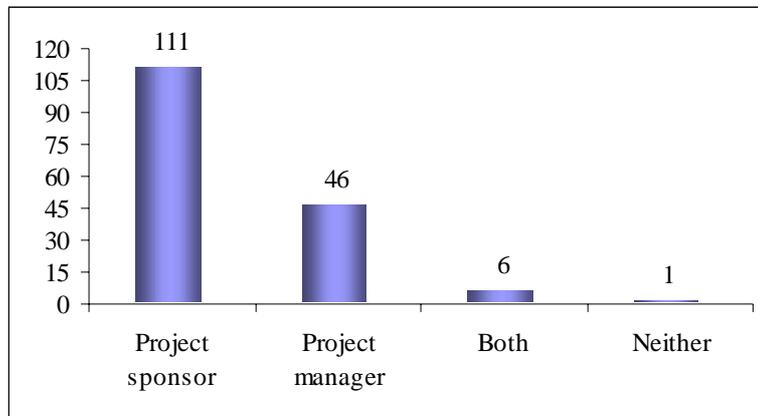


Figure 3 - Identification of project champion figure.

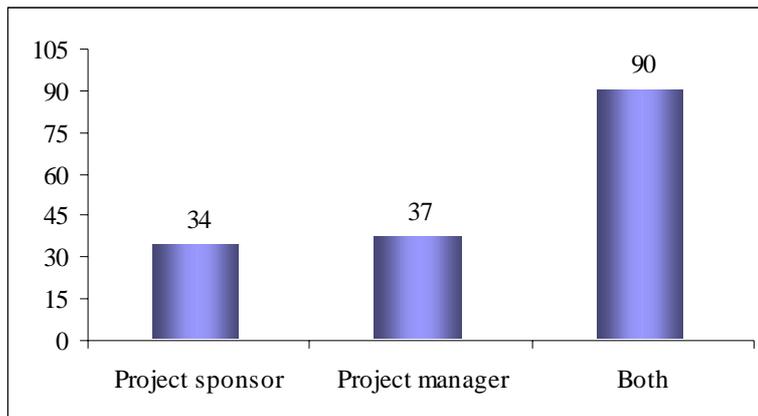


Figure 4 – Identification of the most critical figure in an ERP implementation.

8 TABLES

Frequency	Word
11	Innovation
5	Idea, organization, project
4	Actively, individual, management, resources, technology, champion
3	Access, contribution, decisive, enthusiastically, implementation, new, obtain, process, product, progress, promoting, support, willing

Table 1 - Words count for project champion definitions.

Category	Project Sponsor	Project Manager	Both	Neither
Economical	22.2	-	25	-
Managerial	-	71.4	50	-
Strategic	44.4	14.3	50	50
Organizational	44.4	42.9	-	50

Table 2 - Categories of answers (%) for project champion role choice.

Respondent type	Project champion figure				Total
	Project sponsor	Project manager	Both	Neither	
Project sponsor	9				9
Project manager	32	7	3		32
Consultant	39	8	3	1	58
Team member	18	25			46
Other	15	4			19
Total	111	46	6		164

Table 3 – Identification of project champion by respondent type.

Respondent type	Most critical figure			Total
	Project sponsor	Project manager	Both	
Project sponsor	6	1	2	9
Project manager	8	14	20	42
Consultant	9	4	38	51
Team member	5	15	23	43
Other	6	4	9	19
Total	34	37	90	164

Table 4 – Identification of the most critical figure in an ERP implementation by respondent type.

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