An Investigation of the Role of Trust in Virtual Project Management Success

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Information Technology of Murdoch University

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I declare that this thesis is my account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

(Chanda Kabungo Mumbi)
Abstract

Studies show that virtual project teams, as an organizational working structure, are on the increase so organizations need assurance that they can be managed just as effectively as traditional projects. The virtual project structure introduces new challenges for project managers tasked with the job of delivering project success. One such challenge is the development and maintenance of trust within the virtual environment. Trust plays a major role in fostering relationships not only in teams but also in society in general.

The aim of the research is to explore the role of trust in virtual project teams and to investigate how trust influences project outcomes. Data was collected from a survey of members of the Project Management Institute. A model of trust in the virtual team environment is proposed and tested using Partial Least Squares (PLS). Analysis of the data shows that team trust predicts project success. Institution-based trust is found to have an influence on swift trust; however, the role of swift trust on virtual project success was less clear. The study also finds that the perceived traditional experience of the project manager does not have any influence on virtual project success.

Project managers must be aware of both interpersonal as well as organizational factors of trust as they plan for project success. They may find that there is a need to review their skills in readiness for the virtual project environment. This dissertation adds to the body of knowledge by providing insights into trust dynamics in the virtual project structure.
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