

Project Failure: A Bad Communication (Case Study)

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Abstract: The most common cause of project failure is miscommunication. It is often underrated and not thoroughly planned by most contractors, such as Sujata, who become confused when changes and updates are not communicated correctly and promptly. This ambiguity leads to errors, missed steps in the process, conflicts, and other problems. All these scenarios ultimately impacted the project, resulting in delays or budget overruns. In this case, multiple stakeholder communications and changes in client requirements contributed to the project's failure, as updates were not communicated effectively and promptly. This ambiguity leads to errors, missed steps in the process, conflicts, and other issues. Ultimately, all these scenarios will result in delays or budget overruns. In this case, multiple stakeholder communications and changes in client requirements led to the project's failure. As a result, internal conflicts will arise, with teams blaming each other for inefficiencies and poor deliverables. This case also highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement at various levels of the project and the strategy to be implemented for effective stakeholder management. The goal of this case study is to draw attention to the difficulties that arise when small and medium-sized businesses fail to recognise the value of communication management in stakeholder engagement, which has contributed to their success but has been unable to account for the losses they suffered. This will enable them to account for the costs associated with change management involving stakeholder engagement.

Keywords: Communication Management, Failure in Success, Interior Project, Project Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sujata Kalpade, a project manager at Adhan Bharat LLP, was disenchanted on June 3, 2022, after hearing from the site supervisor about the delivered light of a fit-out project. Chuliars India (CI), a Singapore-based company, was chosen as the general contractor by Udhav Swiss (US), a foreign-based bank (NBFC), to develop the new office fit-out project as part of their expansion plan. Further, GC has awarded Adhan Bharat LLP (ABL) a civil and interior package for a fit-out project with a total value of INR 24 million.

Sujata required a robust solution to the problem; however, the lights being delivered are not ABL's responsibility. They provide SK with a sense of pride in timely completion and enhance ABL's reputation. Meanwhile, Deepak Arora, the US representative, is equally concerned about the timely

completion of the US office, given the upcoming visit from foreign dignitaries. A critical component of the project is the development and handover of the new regional office to the business operations unit by July 7, 2022. (EOT approved)

This new office is part of an expansion plan for the US in India, as it will boost operational occupancy and provide an easy commute for top officials, given its proximity to the International Airport in Delhi.

The US (the client) had awarded the project to CI as the lowest bidder for the general contract work. MEP services, LV services, data and networking, and civil and interior works are all included in the INR 58 million total. The US also appointed Jalandhar Laung Elaichi (JLE), an American-based company in India, as a PMC for the project. The architect and consultant were chosen as partners by the US in a separate contract to execute all projects in India. The client has also appointed its AV vendor.

According to the tender terms and conditions, the project must be developed and handed over to the client within three months of the construction phase contract being awarded. The PMC is the entity responsible for coordinating between the architect, consultants, and the client. It is authorised to represent the client in ensuring the quality and timely completion of the project.

The Similar Nature project was completed earlier in Pune, India, for the US, where the JLE, consultants, and architects were the same. The client aims for the project to achieve LEED certification with a platinum rating.

II. CONTRACT DIVERSITY

The packages have also been sublet by the general contractor

- Illuminate Electricals as the electrical vendor partner.
- Saaf Air is the HVAC partner.
- Liram as the LV partner.
- ABL is the C&I and PFF (plumbing and firefighting partner).
- Armer is the carpet partner.
- Kimra was named loose furniture partner, and Layvord was named modular furniture partner.

The Plumbing consultants, electrical consultants, mechanical consultants, and cost consultants based in Mumbai have been appointed.

A. Abbreviations and Acronyms

LV: Low Voltage Works, C&I: Civil and Interior Works, HVAC: Hydraulic Ventilation and Air Conditioning, PFF: Plumbing and Fire Fighting Works, NBFC stands for Non-Banking Financial Company. General Contractor; PMC: Project Management Consultancy; MEP: Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing Services; LVT: Luxury Vinyl Tile; EOT: Extension of Time.

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B. Communication Plan

- The meeting for project progress between the GC, PMC, and client is held once a week to monitor the progress of the project.
- The meeting for design augmentation between the GC, PMC, client, architect, and consultants of the project occurs at a frequency of once a week.
- The site update meeting between GC and its affiliate partners, as well as PMC, takes place once a week.
- Issues related to meetings between the architect, consultants, GC and its affiliate partner, and PMC as per the requirements previously informed
- ABL and similar affiliates are not allowed to communicate directly with JLE, consultants, or the architect.
- They can communicate all their queries to CI, which can further discuss them with other stakeholders and provide the answer.

C. Project Planning and Its Features

The project is planned to last three months. The total area of the project is 5000 sq ft (464.52 m²). The region comprises the following facilities: two 6-person meeting rooms, an 18-person boardroom, two senior manager cabins, one finance room, two additional rooms, one store, one cafeteria, one washroom, and a hall accommodating 20 workstations. The project consists of Italian marble flooring, LVT, carpet, acoustic paint on the ceiling, rafter ceilings, baffle ceilings, and gypsum ceilings. Grid ceilings, modular partitions, gypsum partitions, block works, texture paint, wallpaper, graphics, and signage.

III. PROJECT EXECUTION AND CHALLENGES

Sujata and Changez Gupta, a project manager from Chuliars India, visited the site for due diligence on March 16th and discovered that the existing floors were not levelled, which could cause a quality issue later with the carpet installation. The floor where the marble flooring will be installed must be removed in any case. Sujata requested that Changez provide her with the necessary approval for the complete floor dismantling after noticing the quality issue.

Later, on March 20, 2022, Changez received approval and permitted Sujata to perform the dismantling work. While the dismantling work appears to be done to achieve high quality, it later proves to be a nightmare for all stakeholders.

The work can only be done at night to avoid disrupting the work of other tenants during official working hours. The previous night's work had been halted because the developer had rented the adjacent, similar space to a company that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This issue was discussed further, and an agreement was reached to work at night from 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM, Monday through Friday, with 24/7 weekend coverage until 6:00 AM on Monday. This knowledge modified Sujata's plan, which she must revise according to the approved timelines.

On March 26th, 2022, the project site was dismantled and cleared. Site marking was carried out according to the received drawings, and it was discovered that there was a discrepancy between the drawings and the actual site dimensions. Sujata highlighted this to the GC, who brought it

up with the PMC, which in turn relayed it to the architect, who informed the client of the discrepancies. Another three days passed in vain, with no word from Sujata on how to begin the work. Fortunately, another ABL site is on the upper floor to accommodate the labourers' idle time.

The proposed alterations by the architect were authorized on March 30, 2022, following input from JLE's top management. Because ABL is not directly bound to the project's primary stakeholders, Sujata advised establishing a direct connection with the architect after observing the significant time being lost in this process. However, this suggestion broke the contract for the project.

The client purposefully opposed her request because, according to the contracts, ABL has no right to communicate directly with the project stakeholders appointed by the client. She issued an RFQ, requesting that the queries be forwarded to the GC in the hopes that they would be resolved in time for the project to proceed smoothly.

Sujata was informed of a change in drawings on April 17, 2022, and some drawings were kept as originals. Sujata requested that the GC provide the consolidated drawing set for the latest drawings. The team was unsure which drawing to follow, and she was uncertain because she had never attended the regular weekly design meeting with the general contractor (GC), project manager (PMC), architects, consultants, and clients.

On April 20, 2022, a new challenge arose, as the building was ancient and the floor height above the slab bottom was 2,900 mm, as per the drawings. Work is being done to raise the ceiling to 2400 mm. This turned out to be another communication problem, as the HVAC drawings suggested a ceiling height of 2300 mm, which the consultant duly approved. No change is being made to the interior drawings, and no information is being shared with Sujata. This halted work for nearly ten days, and on May 3, 2022, the revised ceiling heights of 2,350 mm and 2,200 mm were received.

Sujata was just happy enough to realize that the EID festival had become more of an issue for her, causing further delays in bringing the labour. On May 8th, she received her planned labour, and a revised completion date of June 30th was requested, highlighting the issues being recorded and approved by the clients.

Sujata received the revised consolidated drawing on May 17, 2022, following a long battle. On May 20, 2022, after a client visit and a follow-up visit from the architect, the drawings were revised again, and the changes were communicated informally.

The battle for consolidated drawings has resumed, and a meeting has been scheduled for June 3rd, 2022, to resolve the issues that highlight two 6-pax meeting rooms that should be identical, resulting in rework. Sujata also demanded that AV vendors visit the site before she began the final stages of the project. The AV vendor recently visited and suggested some additional changes.

The client, a foreign delight, visiting the office, declared a deadline; the ultimate due date was July 7, 2022. All required clearances were received.

When the major lights failed to arrive in time for the three-day visit on July 3, 2022, the lights were delivered as hanging lights with clutch wire arrangements, and the challenge was figuring out how to install the lights. The ceiling was explicitly designed to receive the concealed linear lights in the cabins.

Sujata had previously highlighted the same for cross-checking with the light supplier, but the supplier never visited. To accommodate the lights, the entire ceiling had to be dismantled and rebuilt.

The general contractor was aware that the electrical consultant had previously authorised the lighting plans; however, neither the architect nor the C&I vendor had been informed.

IV. OBSERVATION

Sujata deployed more staff and teams to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the next three days, and the site visit became a success [4]. The above scenario is apparent since the client failed to communicate his requirements to the architect properly [5]. As a coordinator, the PMC failed miserably [1]. The company erred in communicating the change to the affiliate member [2]. If Sujata's request to directly contact the stakeholders had been granted, the story might have turned out differently [3]. It also raises the question of how this type of diversity can harm the project; what do you recommend?

V. CONCLUSION

The communication channel must be properly designed at the beginning of the project. The preceding scenario demonstrates the significance of stakeholder involvement. Multi-level communication, such as including subcontractors in design-related meetings, will not only aid in subcontractor planning but also facilitate significant progress and serve as a valuable tool in accurately assessing the project's impacts due to design changes mid-project. Additionally, the levels of attention and impact—both actual and desired—of various stakeholders will vary. The sunk cost related to stakeholder engagement can be reduced, allowing the client to manage expenses more effectively.

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Sahil Kumar Arora, Education: PGP ACM from NICMAR (2020 batch), B.E.-Civil Engineering. Project Manager, Special Construction Division, Maldives Transport and Contracting Company plc, Maldives. He was born in Saharanpur and plays district cricket. He also has an interest in singing. He graduated in 2016 from AKTU (formerly UPTU). Later, he began working in the construction industry. Before joining the NICMAR, he worked as a project engineer in Nepal for an ADB-funded project. The post-graduate experience instilled in me the ability to write and a keen interest in research publication. He was assigned to an interior design project. During that time, the idea of writing this case study occurred to him, as he had previously experienced similar challenges in another project.