

A Conversation with [Douglas Long](#)

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Douglas is a leader in marketing of technology solutions to businesses. He has over 15 years of experience in planning, building and executing marketing strategies that significantly improve the sales performance of a company. Douglas uses his technology background and his ability to deliver clear and concise messages to extract business value for IT services and software product companies. He has extensive marketing experience in several IT and Telecom companies, the most recent being in his capacity as a Marketing Director at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Canada, where he was responsible for all the marketing functions for TCS in Canada.

Notable among his specialties are strategic planning, market analysis, marketing communications, program management, and marketing resource management. He is also familiar with the Solution Focus (SF) approach.

Hi Douglas, what is the relevance of Project Management to a marketing role such as that of a Marketing Manager?

If you are running a marketing program, you really are running a series of project management steps. For example if you run a lead generation program, you have to make sure that you manage all the elements of marketing well. A good outbound lead generation program involves elements of social media, emails, corporate whitepapers, blog articles, etc. You need to manage all these pieces simultaneously to have a successful campaign. At the same time, you need to ensure that you don't leave out any team from the scene. In one of the multi-modal marketing campaigns at TCS, the sales team was not drawn into the planning phase. To compensate for this, we had to run an internal sales training very late in the campaign and we eventually got delayed by a few weeks.

Tell us a little about your experience of managing teams in the past?

In TCS, Canada, I did not have any direct reports. I had access to a virtual shared services team. In TCS, UK I had 6 direct reports and we worked from the same location.

You mentioned virtual team. As projects are increasingly conducted remotely due to outsourcing and global expansion, the communication is often just based on e-mails and conference calls. How does that affect project management?

Personally, it matters a lot to me. It can be difficult communicating remotely and having to schedule every conversation. Ideally, I'd prefer a physically co-located team to allow easy accessibility and a quick chat over coffee.

What suggestions do you have to deal with it?

The technology solution would be to have video conferencing because it allows you to become more personal and enables group engagement. In my opinion, face-to-face communication is absolutely critical. Having said that, I also think it is important to set an agenda for the conference. The discipline of running and managing the calls becomes critical.

If someone else was to manage the lead generation project that you talked about, what suggestions would you have for them?

I think the success of the project primarily depends on the planning; the execution part is easier. Marketing is changing, and the instantaneity of communication is becoming very important. A detailed rollout needs to be planned much in advance. Executing the marketing strategy is only one part of the strategy. To be absolutely spot on, you need to ensure that the upstream and downstream marketing activities are aligned and in place too.

In which areas do you measure the success of a project?

From a marketing standpoint, the real measure is the brand perception. ROI is another important area. TCS had a very comprehensive balanced scorecard with both hard and soft variables to measure against. We can gain fairly accurate information about how much stuff we are doing. You get a good idea of things such as, number of qualified leads passed on to sales team, to an extent that you can actually start putting a dollar value against these variables.

Which Project Management methodology did the team use?

Well, project management methodology is a little uncommon concept in the marketing function. The approach used was never formally articulated, but agile was probably the closest to the approach we followed.

Based on your experience, when do project managers tend to use the agile methodology?

I think agile is most used in the delivery of IT projects.

How often did you seek inputs from the customers?

We did not consult directly with the customers on a regular basis, but we were involved in doing a lot of market research, which would require us to work in close relationship with analysts such as IDC, and the sales team who were effectively our internal customers. They helped us by providing information related to market forecast, trends analysis, performance prediction, etc.

For which areas do you think organizations usually seek advice from the external consultants or change management experts?

In most cases, it is getting the people within the organizations to accept any changes in the policies or processes. It is not easy to get the individuals to buy-in company-wide or business unit-wide transformation.

How much of a role does HR have on these aspects such as people management and the human side of change management?

It depends. In some organizations, HR responsibilities mainly include the administrative functions, such as, recruitment, compensation, employee benefits, and training budgets. However, I personally think that HR role should evolve and parallel the needs of their changing organization. They should get involved in the development of the people, and work with the functional managers to enable the organization to achieve the business goals.

What do you think is more important for a project success? - The internal improvement in the project management practices or improvement in organizational management of projects. By that I mean, assessing the organizational structure and business goals to select and manage the right projects in order to meet the strategic goals.

I think both are equally important - internal alignment as well as the overall organizational management of projects.

Both SF and Agile Project Management approach share a strong grounding in the development of the next small steps associated with achieving the final goal. So, do you think it becomes it is very important to share the small successes within the team?

I agree that it is very important. Sometimes you don't have the time and the luxury to celebrate the small successes because you start focusing immediately on the next short-term goal. I think it works better if the customer buys in to the achievement of the short-term successes; for example, payment on delivery milestones.

What seems to be working well in Project Management? What would you describe as your team's top strengths?

Communication was my team's biggest strength. We were pretty clear and well articulated on the goal that we were trying to achieve, which enabled us to stay focused on the path towards the goal. We also knew each other's strengths and weaknesses very well.

What are the kinds of challenges do you think Project Managers currently face or might face in the next 3-5 years?

I think the geographical dispersion of teams is a major challenge. It creates limited opportunity for face-to-face interpersonal communication. This may negatively affect the team collaboration and performance.

What aspects of project management would you like to see develop and improve in the future?

The area that needs most improvement is the development of sophisticated tools and methodologies for performance measurement and performance review. It is critical to measure the impact of marketing. As someone said, *"You can't manage what you can't measure"*.