



# Nordic Project Zone

3-5 November 2014, Radisson Blu Falconer Hotel, Copenhagen

5<sup>th</sup> Annual Nordic Project Program  
and Portfolio Management Summit



## Rikke Østergaard

Head of Program and Project Management  
SDC

Interview

## Key for reaching the project goals

**Thank you for sharing your experience and knowledge with us! You are an experienced project manager currently working at SDC, but you have gained expertise throughout the years in several companies. Please tell us a bit more about yourself. How did you find project management and why have you decided to grow your career in this field?**

After starting my career it fast became clear to me, that I needed a large variety in tasks to have a good working day and that I really liked making things happen and having a day with many meetings and touch-points with other people. Project management covered all these aspects and I found that I could make a major difference as project manager. During my PM work I also experienced success with people management and strategic business development. As project manager, I often had long term projects and worked with the same employees for several years and I participated in strategic business development within the products, where I delivered projects. It was natural for me to move into line management, combining people management with Programme Management and project ownership. In my current position, I focus mainly on people management and Programme ownership, combining my favorite disciplines – getting people to perform better, making things happen and working with implementation of business and company strategy.

**Your job title also includes “people manager”. As far as you are concerned, to what extent would you say the “people factor” in project management matter?**

As project manager it has always been important to me to

work extensively with people management, as I think that is a key for reaching the project goals, and besides that it is something I find highly motivating myself. I have worked with project agreements for the employees working long-term on my projects and during project life regularly provided feed-back to them.

In my current position, people management is a major part of my job. I work with management both for teamleads and for senior project managers. One of the success criteria for my unit is to ensure effective delivery of projects and that can only be done by having highly competent and motivated PM's. Competence development, clear requirements and focus on management sparring is key.

**Can you share with us a few innovative methods you use to ensure perfect collaboration among the team members you manage?**

The project managers do not collaborate closely in their daily work, but it is important that they help to enforce the strategic objectives of SDC and use the same high level method and learn from each other. Each project manager has her own way of delivering the project, so it is also important that there is a high degree of freedom to decide for and use the methods that fit. In order to ensure that project management is in focus and that the project manager has someone to discuss project and stakeholder issues with, we focus on 1-1 sparring with teamleads and mentoring with other project managers. We also discuss project management method, using some basic guidelines to ensure best practice and share knowledge in SDC. As an examples this year we have had best practice

workshops covering risk management and have a day planned regarding Management in November. I am not sure it is very innovative, but it works...

### **How do you cope with differences of experience, skills and maturity within your unit of project managers a single project team?**

In order to focus both on competence development, but also to match the project manager with the right project, a PM competence model has been developed. The model is based on 10 important basic's for project managers working at SDC. All project managers have done a self assessment of their PM competencies, followed by an evaluation by former manager or project owner. A career model for PM's has been made and it is used to allocate the right project managers, but also to focus on competence development for each PM. We follow up this at the bi-yearly PA meetings and set education plans and focus areas in relation to competence mapping.

### **“Merging and building strong team of project managers” will be the main topic of your presentation at Nordic Project Zone Congress next November in Copenhagen – Can you tell us what it takes to be a successful project leader?**

I think that depends a lot on the company. In SDC, one of the most important skills is to manage the project stakeholders in a good way. It is also very important to understand the SDC specific issues, such as a very complex test environment set-up and release management system, being important when you plan critical path for the project. And then, it is just important to be a good project manager, being in control of plans, budgets, risks etc.

### **Finally, would you mind revealing the top 3 “take-aways” people attending your presentation in Copenhagen will be able to bring back with them to the office?**

The main conclusions will be something like:

- Inspiration for building up a competent PM team, focusing on PM competencies.
- How to create an attractive PM role and how to use the PM's to develop a unit.
- Effect of PM's in matrix compared to line – why is it a more attractive job? Using PM's as change agents.

**Thank you!**

#### *More about Rikke*

Rikke is an experienced people and project manager, with practical knowledge from many different roles in the area of project and programme management, mainly within the financial IT sector. Rikke has in depth knowledge of all sorts of IT projects and programmes, from large change management initiatives to ownership or management of large commercial programmes. Rikke is currently working at SDC, building up a project management unit with some 55 people with large differences in experience and focus and at the same time acting as owner of strategic programmes. Rikke has a degree in both engineering and business management and is resident in Copenhagen area.