



Benefits realisation management: Responsibilities and challenges



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Background: Information technology (IT) projects are undertaken to deliver benefits to the organisation. These benefits range from financial benefits to the improvement of productivity. Yet, benefits are not realised, and organisations do not receive value from their investments. This can be attributed to various reasons.

Objectives: One of the reasons is that there is confusion on who should be responsible for the entire benefits realisation management process. This research investigates who should be responsible for the process and who is actually responsible for realising benefits.

Method: A qualitative approach was required to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and thematic analysis was done on the transcribed interviews. The themes allowed the researchers to compare the practice of benefits realisation with the theory.

Results: The results provided little insights as the interviewees are not in agreement with who should be responsible for benefits realisation management. However, this is in line with international research where there is still confusion on who the benefits owner should be. The results therefore support the current literature.

Conclusion: Organisations need to make a concerted effort to appoint a benefits owner. This will ensure that benefits are realised and that IT projects' success rate increased. Organisations should then also achieve value from their various IT investments.

Contribution: The study contributes to the current debate on who is responsible for benefits realisation and provides a South African perspective to the dilemma.

Keywords: benefits realisation; role; responsibilities; challenges; information technology.

Introduction

The realisation of benefits has two sides to it. Firstly, the realisation of benefits is perceived as a success factor in managing information technology (IT) projects (Bannerman 2008; Bannerman & Thorogood 2012). Benefits associated with IT projects include creating a larger market share, validation of the business case, developing new technology or the creation of a new market. Benefits are typically realised after the product is delivered and used by users. Secondly, the artefact created by the project needs to be beneficial to the end-user using the artefact as well as the organisation that commissioned the project (DeLone & McLean 2003; Petter, Delone & McLean 2008). To be beneficial, the product needs to adhere to certain specifications and requirements, it must be accepted and utilised by users, and it should have a positive impact on the way the users work. Examples include faster processing and informed decision-making based on better information. There are some overlaps between the benefits realisation management (BRM) process of a project and that of the artefact.

Despite the importance of benefits realisation, BRM is tainted with concerns and issues. Marnewick (2017a) highlighted the nonadherence to the BRM processes, whereas Zwikael et al. (2019) highlighted the confusion around the responsibility of benefits realisation. Zwikael, Chih and Meredith (2018) also emphasised the formulation and appraisal of target benefits as a concern as well as the intersection of the BRM process with the traditional and agile project life cycle (Marnewick & Marnewick 2022). To improve the success rates of IT projects and harvest the intended benefits, the benefits realisation aspect should be addressed.

This article focuses on two aspects. The first aspect focuses on the challenges that South African organisations face regarding BRM. The second aspect is responsible for BRM within an organisation. Based on these two aspects, two research questions were formulated for this comparative study:

- What are the roles and responsibilities involved in BRM?
- What are the challenges that organisations face regarding BRM?

As this is a comparative study, the results will be compared to that of other international studies.

This article follows a traditional structure. Benefits realisation management is briefly discussed in the literature review with a specific focus on who is responsible for BRM and the challenges that organisations face in managing the benefits realisation process. The research methodology is described in the second section, followed by the analysis section. The article concludes with a summary, limitations and future research.

Literature review

Benefits realisation management can be defined as the process for change in the organisation as a result of project management outcomes (Project Management Institute 2016). Benefits realisation management is indicated as a linear process consisting of the following processes: identification of benefits, analysis and planning of benefits, benefits transition and benefits sustainment (Badewi 2016; Ward, De Hertogh & Viaene 2007). The terms 'value' and 'benefits' are often applied interchangeably, and end-users of IT projects are concerned with meeting client requirements, whereas investors are more concerned with the anticipated return on investment (ROI) after project implementation that is sustainable over a long period (Hjelmbrekke, Klakegg & Lohne 2017; Laursen & Svejvig 2016; Svejvig, Geraldi & Grex 2019).

Benefits realisation management ensures that the deliverables created are utilised to deliver the anticipated benefits and creates the capabilities to enable the expected benefits to be realised as there is a value path from projects to benefits. After the successful completion of the project, the organisation utilises the project deliverables or outcomes to realise the value and benefits created (Zwikael & Smyrk 2015). The value and benefits of IT projects are typically realised beyond the project life cycle. A strong considerable correlation was discovered between project efficiency and delivering the expected benefits from project outcomes (Badewi 2016). By efficiently managing the project's benefits, organisations are able to perform the most valuable set of projects (Serra 2017). Table 1 compares the BRM processes as formulated by various authors.

Benefits realisation management responsibility

There is still no clarity as to who is responsible for BRM (Meredith & Zwikael 2019). Breese, Couch and Turner (2020) are of the opinion that the project sponsor should be responsible for the realisation of benefits. A project sponsor is typically a senior person supporting the project, the project manager and the team through the provision of political and top management support (Zwikael & Meredith 2018). Their research uncovered that the project sponsor is involved in determining the benefits during the initial phases, but that their involvement does not extend to benefit harvesting. In the most comprehensive study to date on who should be responsible for the realisation of benefits, Zwikael et al. (2019) plead for the appointment of a project owner. The project owner is an individual who is held accountable for realising the project business case and its target benefits. Meredith and Zwikael (2019) state that this role cannot be performed by the project sponsor as the project sponsor has multiple roles. To confuse the matter even further, the Project Management Institute opines that benefit owners or sponsors need to be assigned to the BRM process. They are responsible and accountable for the entire BRM process (Project Management Institute 2019). Research done by Mikkelsen and Marnewick (2020) highlights that most of the role players within a project hold the project manager accountable for the benefits. It is evident from the literature that someone specific should be responsible and accountable for BRM, but that various other roles are also responsible for the delivery of the benefits (Marnewick 2017b). A distinction should also be made between who is responsible for BRM during the project (benefits identification, analysis and planning as well as benefits transition) and after the project (benefits sustainment).

Challenges involved in benefits realisation management process

Most organisations do not succeed in realising the benefits expected through investing in project management because of poor planning and leadership in project management. The approach to BRM is still limited and not yet matured (Breese et al. 2015). However, Ashurst (2011) and Doherty, Ashurst and Peppard (2012) have reported an increase in the adoption of BRM, which has resulted in the achievement of organisational objectives. The process of redefining project success to incorporate the realisation of value and benefit from project outcomes may be challenging (Einhorn, Marnewick & Meredith 2019), and therefore it is advisable to integrate change management practices with project management practices (Hornstein 2015). Benefits of IT projects are not related back to the business case that was developed before the project commenced, and therefore it

TABLE 1: Comparison of benefits realisation management process.

Project Management Institute (2016)	Badewi (2016)	Ashurst (2011)	Terlizzi et al. (2017)	Marnewick and Marnewick (2022)
Benefits identification	Benefits identification	Benefits planning	Benefits identification	Benefits identification
Benefits analysis and planning	Business case development	Benefits delivery	Planning stage of benefits	Benefits reprioritisation
Benefits delivery	Benefits planning	Benefits review	Monitoring the ongoing benefits	Benefits transition
Benefits transition	Benefits implementation	Benefits exploitation	Evaluation of the benefits	Benefits sustainment
Benefits sustainment	Benefits audit	-	-	-

TABLE 2: Benefits realisation management challenges.

Challenges	Authors
Benefits are difficult to quantify and measure	(Aubry et al. 2021; Terlizzi et al. 2017; Zwikael et al. 2018)
The process is slow and bureaucratic	(Terlizzi et al. 2017)
Controlling costs and benefits are non-mandatory activities	(Terlizzi et al. 2017; Zwikael & Meredith 2018)
Using the tools and techniques is difficult	(Górecki 2015; Kerzner 2017; Terlizzi et al. 2017)
Business cases and requirements are unclear or incomplete	(Aguilera 2016; Einhorn et al. 2019; Terlizzi et al. 2017)

becomes difficult for the organisation to measure whether any benefits are achieved and whether the project outcome contributes to the success of the organisation (Marnewick 2016). Table 2 summarises the identified barriers to BRM.

Benefits realisation management is plagued with various issues and concerns. This is not a new phenomenon, and various scholars are investigating BRM from various perspectives to try and address some of the issues and concerns. From the literature review, the following can be concluded:

- Benefits realisation management is crucial to the success of IT projects. Benefits realisation management is a factor that contributes to IT project success, that is, the more benefits that are realised and harvested, the more successful the project.
- There is still no consensus among practitioners and scholars who are responsible for BRM.
- Various challenges are hampering organisations in realisation and harvesting the benefits associated with projects.

The next section highlights the research methodology that was followed.

Research methodology

This research was conducted based on the constructivist and subjectivist ontological orientation, and the nature of the research was derived from multiple interpretations, adopting the qualitative research method. This is in line with previous authors as the best method to obtain in-depth information. Qualitative research is concerned with the descriptive analysis and opinions of the subjects to understand the social and human conditions (Silverman 2017). The inductive approach, informed by the interpretivist philosophy, was adopted, and the empirical data were first gathered from the real world, and thereafter the theory based on those findings was created (Silverman 2017). A nonprobability purposive data sampling technique was adopted because it allowed the researcher to focus on certain characteristics when selecting the participants of the research population that led to answering the research questions. The research questions were derived from the literature review, and the data were collected by means of virtual interviews. Twelve participants were interviewed to obtain the information necessary for this study. These 12 participants represent 12 different organisations thus providing a more generalised perspective.

The interviews were conducted in Gauteng, South Africa. This excluded all other potential participants in other provinces and other countries who could have provided information to meet the objectives of this research. The data were collected, and the theory was developed based on the data analysis results. This study was exploratory to seek understanding and obtain more information and knowledge. This research was designed with the intention of describing the phenomenon, reducing uncertainties about the research evidence collected, analysing the results and therefore addressing the research problem.

The research commenced with the formulation of research interview questions that were used to gather the information required. The information obtained from the interviews is used to present the results to meet the objectives set for this study. The measurement instrument, in this case, the structured interview questionnaire, was based on the results from the literature review. The interview questions were structured into four different sections:

- Section A: Biographical information.
- Section B: The value and benefits realisation of IT projects.
- Section C: Roles and responsibilities involved in BRM.
- Section D: Challenges involved in the process of implementing value and BRM.

The interview sessions were recorded for ease of reference and the interviewees were informed about the recording. Consent forms were sent to the interviewees during the interview sessions, and the interviewees were able to read the form, sign it and return it. The first interview conducted was a mock-up, which was used to test the relevance of interview questions as well as to confirm whether participants would be able to understand the research interview questions and provide responses as expected. All participants were found to be involved in projects or BRM. The number of years in the organisation ranged from 7 to 21, and the duration of the interviews varied from 39 min to 2 h and 21 min. Table 3 is a summary of the participants' biographical information.

Data analysis

The interviewees highlighted four areas as per Figure 1 as factors contributing to project success in their organisation. This is based on the following interview question: give a brief explanation of what contributes to project success.

Six interviewees indicated that BRM had to be achieved in the project to consider the project successful. I-6 recommended that:

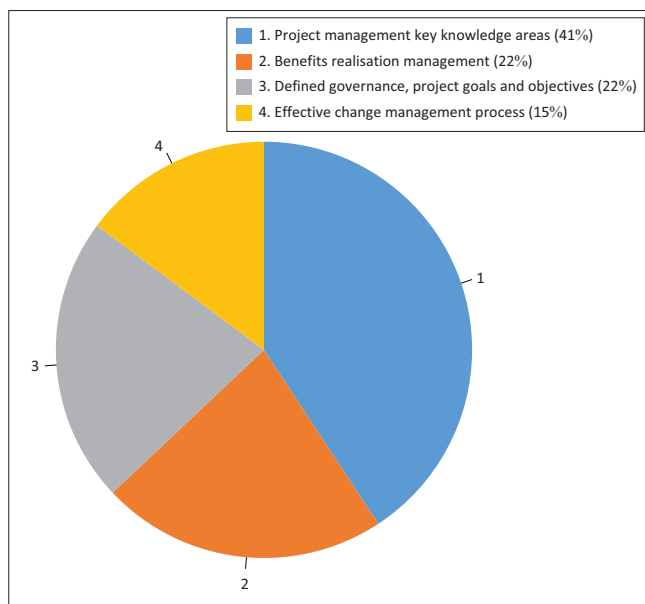
'The organisation must have Return on Investment (ROI) and that there must be benefits realisation after project implementation, and this can be achieved by proper business case in place highlighting the benefits to be realised.'

This was supported by I-8: 'the intended benefits to be achieved must be clearly defined at the beginning of the project'. I-1 also mentioned that:

TABLE 3: Summary of participants' biographical information.

Identifier	Duration	Gender	Role in organisation	Experience
I-1	01:09:40	Male	Business Intelligence Analyst	Projects = 14 BRM = None
I-2	02:17:38	Female	Project Support Manager	Projects = 6 BRM = None
I-3	02:21:27	Male	Manager: Specialist Auditor	Projects = 15 BRM = None
I-4	01:30:12	Female	SAP MM Configurator	Projects = 13 BRM = 13
I-5	00:51:31	Female	SAP Consultant	Projects = 17 BRM = 7
I-6	01:12:33	Male	Business Intelligence Analyst	Projects = 13 BRM = 4
I-7	00:48:01	Male	SAP Configurator	Projects = 14 BRM = 10
I-8	00:59:23	Male	Group Internal Auditor Manager	Projects = 19 BRM = 5
I-9	02:21:20	Male	Project Manager	Projects = 21 BRM = 21
I-10	01:20:05	Female	Specialist Auditor: Information Technology	Projects = 12 BRM = 12
I-11	00:39:53	Female	Analyst Programmer/ Assistant Project Manager	Projects = 7 BRM = 7
I-12	01:26:31	Female	Finance Information Support Analyst	Projects = 4 BRM = 18 months

BRM, benefits realisation management.

**FIGURE 1:** Factors contributing to project success.

'[I]t is the responsibility of the business to ensure business processes have been improved and whether the business is able to realise the value and benefits of an IT project since the purpose of embarking on a project is to improve the process and or deliver some value in the business.'

I-11 emphasised that 'project success is dependent on the realisation of benefits on the project'. Only half of the interviewees indicated the importance of benefits realisation in achieving IT project success. This emphasises the fact that people involved in projects do not understand the importance of benefits realisation or do not understand the processes involved in harvesting the intended benefits. The results correlate with South African as well as international studies. Although these studies indicate that benefits realisation

should be part of IT project success (Bannerman & Thorogood 2012; Petter, Delone & McLean 2008), the results of this study as well as other studies confirm that benefits realisation is not done (Bennington & Baccarini 2004; Marnewick 2016; Marnewick & Labuschagne 2010; Paivarinta, Dertz & Flak 2007; Zwikael & Chih 2014). When it comes to international studies, the phenomenon is to classify project success based on multidimensions (Ika & Pinto 2022). One of these dimensions is benefits realisation with a lesser focus on the iron triangle. The interviewees are still biased towards the iron triangle with a lesser focus on benefits realisation, which contradicts international trends.

Responsible person

Two questions were asked of the interviewees in relation to BRM responsibility. The first question focused on who is currently responsible for BRM and the second question focused on which role is best suited to be responsible for BRM. Based on the interview analysis, there is no consensus of who is currently responsible for BRM. The analysis of the interviews highlights that various roles are responsible for BRM. These roles include the project manager and a business process manager. I-4 reported that 'the project manager is responsible for managing benefits realisation in the absence of business analysts in the organisation'. This was echoed by I-8 mentioning that the 'IT project manager is responsible for benefits realisation in terms of post project closure'. I-9 has an opposing view stating that 'business change managers working together with benefits owners/main beneficiaries are responsible for benefits realisation management in their organisation'. I-11 also mentioned that:

'[T]he project owner or organisation executive always ensure benefits are realised. There is no specific role currently responsible but from experience with other projects, the project owner is the role responsible for benefits realisation.'

In some instances, the responsibility is passed down to the end-user: 'the end-user within the specific business unit is responsible for benefits realisation management' [I-8]. Two of the interviewees that indicated the finance team was responsible for BRM in their organisations were I-2 and I-3. I-8 and I-12 mentioned that the steering committee was responsible for BRM in their organisation. 'The steering committee for the project is responsible for benefits realisation management' [I-8] and the 'project manager and steering committee for the project are both responsible for benefits realisation management' [I-12].

Literature findings about roles and responsibilities involved in BRM are not sufficient. The project sponsor, business change manager, project manager and programme manager have been identified as the roles involved in benefits realisation. This research has identified various roles involved in BRM, some of which are mentioned in the literature (Breese et al. 2020; Zwikael & Meredith 2018; Zwikael et al. 2019). These include the business change manager, project sponsor, project manager, programme manager, project steering committee, finance and audit team and business

process owner/operations/end-user of the asset. This research was therefore able to reveal other roles that the literature did not cover. As with the previous section, this creates more confusion and contributes to the fact that benefits realisation is not done in a proper way and manner. The results of this research are in line with international research as there is still no consensus on who should be responsible for BRM. This is an ongoing debate and should be further explored in future research.

Proposed roles

The interviewees were asked who should be responsible for BRM. Again, various answers were provided as to who should be responsible for the BRM process. 'The person requesting the IT solution should be responsible for benefits realisation management' [I-1]. I-8 also considered 'the business area/initiator to be responsible for benefits realisation management'. I-11 stated that 'the project manager and/or project management team should be responsible for benefits realisation management in the organisation'.

I-5 also considered the role of project manager to be responsible for BRM. Some interviewees suggested that a BRM team should be responsible for BRM:

'There is a need to establish benefits realisation management team to assess progress of projects on quarterly basis so that the situation can be assessed well on time. This can further assist in eliminating irregular and wasteful expenditure on time.' [I-3]

This was supported by I-6 and I-11. In some instances, responsibility is shared: 'If the organisation has business analysts the three will be responsible for benefits realisation, i.e. business analyst, project manager, and project owner' [I-4]. I-7 preferred the role of business analyst to be responsible for BRM.

No consensus exists among the interviewees of who should be responsible for BRM. In an international study, Mikkelsen and Marnewick (2020) determined that the responsibility also varies and that the project manager, steering committee and the project sponsor are the dominant roles responsible for BRM. Even the project management standards and best practices do not provide clarity on this and contribute to the confusion (Office of Government Commerce 2009; Project Management Institute 2021). The literature mentions roles such as project sponsor, business process owner and client as responsible for BRM. In some organisations, these are three different roles performed by three individuals, whereas in some organisations, the roles refer to one function performed by one individual and the titles are used interchangeably. The findings of this study also suggest that the roles and responsibilities of project sponsor, business process owner and the client/end-user are interchangeable (Zwikael & Meredith 2018). This information is sufficient to prove that the literature makes no recommendations about the roles responsible for BRM. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined in the process of BRM to lead organisations in realising the value and benefits of IT projects. Based on

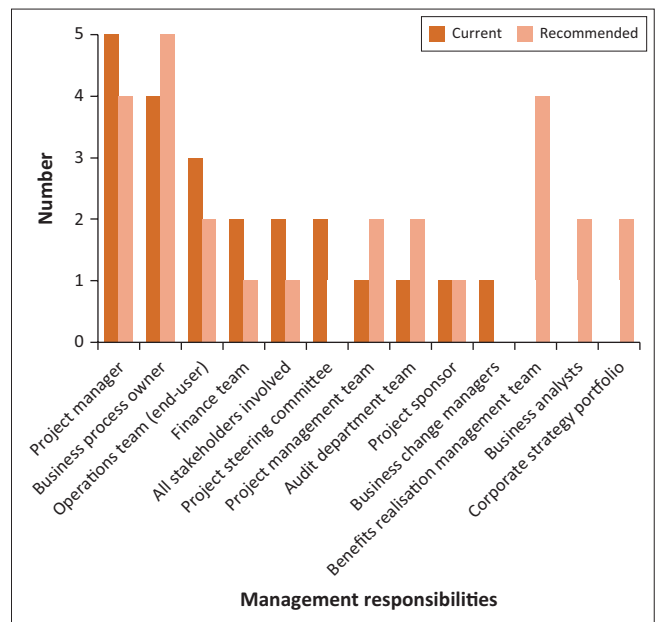


FIGURE 2: Comparison between current and recommended benefits realisation management responsibilities.

the information provided by interviewees, it is evident that roles and responsibilities can be clearly defined when there is a specific business unit for BRM, such as a Project Management Office (PMO).

Figure 2 compares the interviewees' response regarding who is currently responsible for BRM and who should be responsible. There are some overlaps as well as some clear differences. The two roles that stand out are that of the project manager and the business process owner. This contradicts the results of Mikkelsen and Marnewick (2020), and further research should be done on the influence of the local environment on who should be responsible for BRM.

Benefits owner

One of the interview questions focused on which role is best suited as the owner of the benefits. It must be noted that benefits are typically realised long after the closure of the project. Just as the project manager is responsible for delivering the project, the product owner owns the product or service delivered (Zwikael & Meredith 2018). In the same vein, the question is who should be the benefits owner. I-6 considered the business process owner as the best-suited role because 'they own the business process and the project, and they are responsible for the change because they will be directly affected by the change'. I-8 also recommended the business process owner and further considered 'senior management in the specific business area as the role best suited for benefits owner'. I-9 stated that the 'project sponsor is best suited as benefits owner'. Some interviewees considered the role of operations manager best suited as the benefits owner. I-10 stated that 'the operations manager (end-user) from the business as benefits owner since they are using the systems (end product)'. The project manager is also suggested as best suited to be the benefits owner. 'The project manager is best suited as benefits owner if there is no benefit

realisation manager and they are responsible for exploring all documents for potential expected benefits' [I-5]. I-12 also considered the role of a project manager because 'they are responsible for the overall project from start to finish and they also receive all the recognition for project success'.

The concept of BRM cuts across all the resources involved in the implementation of projects in organisations. It was quite challenging for the interviewees to identify the roles and relevant system tools best suited for BRM. Departments within the IT portfolio follow different processes for managing projects and realising benefits because there is no specific role or team responsible for BRM. Therefore, different titles are used in BRM based on the structure of the specific department. Based on the information received from the interviewees, it is evident that the concept of BRM is not properly structured in organisations and there is no dedicated team appointed to work on it. It is not clear who is responsible for BRM in organisations and there are no penalties when benefits are not realised because this function is not formally assigned to employees. Some of the interviewees recommended a benefits owner for each stage of the project for the BRM process to be effective.

In some organisations, the project team was expected to work on BRM. However, this is not effective because after the project closes out, the project team is assigned to work on other projects, which leaves the area of BRM unattended. The project team is dedicated to work on the project during the project life cycle and is not formally appointed to work on BRM. Some interviewees reported that they were only able to attend to benefits realisation after project close-out when the project team was still available to complete project close-out activities.

Organisations are therefore advised to properly structure a BRM business unit so that this concept can be structured effectively and efficiently. This will assist organisations in eliminating projects that are not adding value and thus causing the organisation unable to realise the value and benefits of IT projects.

Figure 3 summarises the interviewees' responses. The most popular role is the business process owner followed by the project sponsor, operations and project managers.

Pinto et al. (2022) opine that three roles should be involved as benefit owners, that is, the project owner, the project funder and the key stakeholders. This again contributes to the ongoing confusion of who should be the benefits owner.

The next section focuses on the challenges that organisations face in managing the benefits realisation process.

Challenges

The interviewees highlighted seven areas as per Figure 4 as the challenges experienced by organisations in capturing the benefits from project outcomes from the governance perspective.

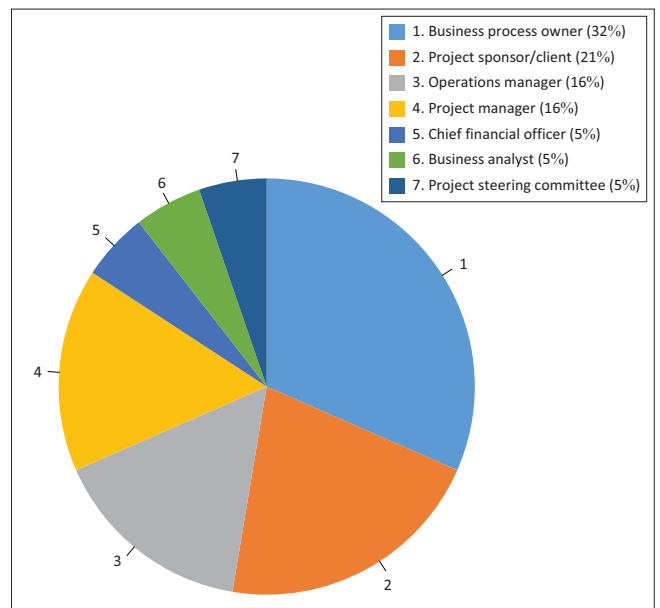


FIGURE 3: Role best suited as benefits owner.

The biggest challenge faced by the interviewees is the lack of resources in capturing the benefits. 'Identify benefits and how the benefits can be measured and assign ownership. The organisation is experiencing lack or unavailability of resources for benefits realisation management' [I-5]. I-6 mentioned that:

'[T]here are no dedicated resources for BRM and the business process owner is currently responsible but don't have sufficient time since they have more commitments. There are no consequence management in place for not measuring the benefits. There is no proper BRD process in place.'

The second biggest challenge is the lack of relevant project information and documentation for capturing benefits. I-6 reported that 'there is no proper Business Requirement Document (BRD) process in place'. I-8 was in agreement and stated that 'there is lack of benefits realisation management data or poor quality management'.

Lack of standardised BRM processes in organisations also poses a challenge in capturing the benefits of project outcomes. 'There is no formal process for benefits realisation management and therefore there is even nothing to be audited' [I-4]. I-6 claimed that 'the process is not defined clearly and explicitly, and it is not understood by people involved in the process'.

The use of inappropriate tools and technology is perceived as a challenge in capturing the benefits:

'The use of inappropriate management tools poses as a challenge in the success of effective BRM process. Selection of inappropriate technology that should assist the business in capturing, monitoring and document progress, etc. causes BRM issues.' [I-9]

I-12 stated that:

'It becomes difficult to get people to use the new system because people are already used to working with the old

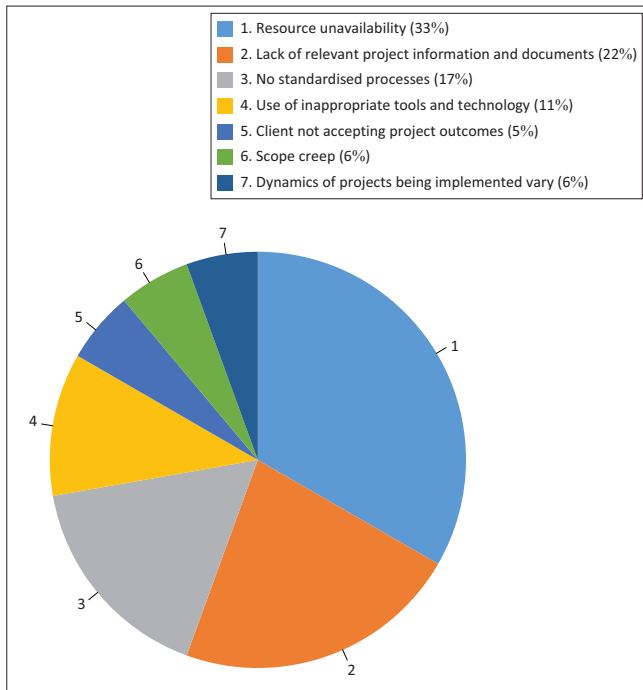


FIGURE 4: Challenges related to benefits realisation management.

system. The organisation needs proper tracking and monitoring system.'

Some other challenges are the following:

- 'Some clients are not accepting the end product due to various reasons and have stated that if projects are completed by the service provider and handed over to the client and the client not accepting the product due to various reasons and as the result, organisation ends up not using the project outcome and therefore not realising the value and benefits of the project, and that can be the challenge' [I-2].
- 'Scope creep as the cause for some of the challenges due to poor project planning. Scope creep leading to variation orders. Project manager is responsible for project planning and also responsible for scope creep' [I-8].
- 'Organisations need to take into account that projects are different and cannot be treated the same, need to take into account that the dynamics of projects being implemented vary' [I-10].

This study revealed misalignment of IT projects with the strategic objectives of organisations and has identified various BRM processes from different authors, but the processes differ per organisation and are therefore not standardised. The findings of this study are also that the processes in place are not properly formalised. Conclusions drawn were that the concept of BRM is not clearly defined in organisations and is not properly structured or organised as there is no clear understanding of what contributes to project success. The conclusions made regarding project success are in line with the theory that the definition of project success should incorporate both successful project management implementation and BRM. Based on feedback from the

interviewees, organisations lack effective governance, and project goals and objectives are not clearly defined. The findings have revealed that the departments within the IT portfolio follow different processes in terms of managing projects and realising benefits because there is no specific role or team responsible for BRM. There is no dedicated BRM team in organisations, and therefore it is not clear who is responsible for BRM. Most of the challenges in BRM emanate from a lack of proper processes in place, leadership and culture, as well as internal and external politics. Management can see the gaps, but politics hinder the resolutions. In summary, the literature does not have sufficient information on the way the BRM process can ensure that the project and programme outcomes are utilised to deliver the anticipated benefits; this research has discovered a new theory in this regard by recommending various dimensions to be in place.

The results from this study do not align with that of international studies (Table 2). International studies highlighted other challenges, and again, the challenges should be viewed from a local context and perspective. Results should be contextualised, and in the case of South Africa, the focus is still on the product and delivering the product within the triple constraints of time, cost and scope.

Conclusion

Two research questions were posed. Regarding the first research question, it can be concluded that organisations are still in the dark who should be responsible for BRM and what the responsibilities are associated with this role. This is in line with the research. If organisations want to realise the benefits associated with IT projects, then they need to appoint a specific person in the role as a benefits owner. This role should typically be able to manage the benefits across the entire BRM process. The biggest challenge is to ensure that the benefits are transitioned and sustained. This implies that the project manager cannot be responsible for benefits realisation.

The second research question focuses on the challenges that organisations face regarding BRM. Various challenges were highlighted, but these challenges do not correlate with the challenges highlighted in the literature. The challenges stipulated by the interviewees are more on a tactical project level, whereas the challenges highlighted by the literature are more of a strategic nature. This raises the question whether the respondents are aware of any strategic challenges and what the maturity levels are of the BRM process.

Research limitations

The interview guide was designed for the participants with project management and BRM knowledge and experience, and the questions were generic and were not designed for each organisation. The questions were limited to the knowledge of the researcher and the literature information available during the time of conducting the research. The sampling population size was relatively small as the

participants were selected based on the experience they had in project management and BRM. The time required to conduct this research was very limited as it was for academic purposes. The research interviews were conducted in English, and the participants were from different backgrounds with different home languages, and as English was not the first language, it was a bit challenging for some of the participants to express themselves when responding to the research questions.

Future research

This study obtained information, within its limitations and considerations for future research are initiated by the results of this study as well as its limitations. The results clearly indicate that there is still confusion around who is responsible for BRM and who should be the owner of the benefits. This is in line with the analysis of the literature. Future research can focus on the influence of the environment on BRM. Future research can investigate environmental aspects such as the type of organisation, the type of projects, the locality of the organisation as well as the characteristics of the project and the organisation. Benefits realisation management ownership and responsibility have been investigated from a general perspective but never from a specific perspective to determine whether environmental aspects influence BRM ownership and responsibility. Context is everything.

Further research can also be done on the categorisation of benefits. Will the categorisation of benefits influence BRM ownership and responsibility? Again, context is everything.

Concluding remarks

The virtual discussions with participants were more engaging and created more open and authentic conversations; extensive information was thus obtained. It was easier to be an objective in discussions with the interviewees as it was not yet clear what the outcomes of the research ought to be, and that strengthened the credibility of this research. Conclusions were drawn from the research objectives. Based on the findings of this study, the concept of BRM exists in organisations but in an informal manner. Based on the interview discussions, it is evident that the interviewees were knowledgeable about the concept, but the challenge is the way it is structured and applied in organisations. As most interviewees highlighted a lack of dedicated resources for BRM, it is evident that this will hinder the successful implementation of BRM.

Taking into consideration all the facts, recommendations from the interviewees and results from the literature, it can be concluded that most organisations do not have proper BRM structures, and for this reason, they are not able to realise the value and benefits of IT projects. Therefore, it is evident that there must first be effective and efficient BRM structures, systems and processes in place in the organisation prior to answering the research question of whether organisations are able to realise the value and benefits of IT projects. The BRM structures, systems and processes will differ for each organisation based on the nature of the

business and the size of the organisation. The objectives of this study were therefore not fully met because most organisations have not structured the concept of BRM properly and therefore are not able to measure the results. The findings of this study have revealed that organisations still need to structure this concept well to determine whether the intended IT project benefits are realised and derive value for the business.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

M.M. and C.M. conceived of the presented idea. M.M. developed the theory and performed the computations. M.M. verified the analytical methods. C.M. supervised the findings of this work. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg (No. 2021AIS006).

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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