

Module: Project Management

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Google Headquarters Project in London, UK



Google's Project Review and Plan

Effective project plans enable a business to initiate and complete a project without many variances and hindrances. Project management entails creating clear goals and objectives and having set quality standards and measures. It is also the practice of planning, organising and executing tasks needed to turn an idea into a tangible deliverable. Some of the key aspects of a project include defining the scope, identifying deliverables, managing risks and ensuring effective communication across teams. A well-completed project creates job opportunities and revenue in the economy. This essay is a project management plan of Google as it plans to inaugurate its project at King's Cross, London UK. The plan intends to use a large area of land alongside King Cross Station which comprises over 60,400 sqm of prime office space (Gillespies, 2022). This will be the first entirely owned Google building outside the US. This new building is ongoing and is being developed from the ground up and will contribute to the Knowledge Quarter and King's Cross's growing knowledge-based economy. Upon completion of this project, the spaces will hold up to 4500 people across its 11 stories (Partridge, 2022). There will be space for retailers, training and an event centre on the ground floor. The building will also have ancillary spaces such as a gym, cafes, pools and a multi-use game area (MUGA). The rooftop will have landscaped terraces where the running track will offer outdoor amenity and recreation spaces for staff. This Google project will be a significant investment in the UK economy opening great chances for retail, innovation and technology sectors. Based on the current progress of the Google project, this essay is going to review the core elements of the project while evaluating the project plan.

Core elements of Google's ongoing building project

Budget; Google has set one billion pounds that are being used to facilitate its building construction in London. The one billion pounds will cover the entire cost of constructing the

60,400 sqm offices in the 11 stories (Levy, 2022). The amount is also budgeted for labour, materials, permits and other facilities and spaces within this area. Effective management of cost is very necessary in this project to ensure the budgeted amount does not have a huge variance from the actual costs. Another challenge that might occur includes cost overrun as material prices can fluctuate with the changes in the business environment creating unforeseen expenses. The cost overruns could also be caused by environmental sustainability requirements, and regulatory fines during the project. As such, there is a need for effective cost management. This can be done through regular monitoring of expenses and management of unexpected costs is crucial.

Timeline; this project is currently ongoing and has been planned to end and be inaugurated by next year 2025. Some of the key milestones of the project entail the identification and preparation of the site at King's Cross, London. The company have purchased a 2.4-acre plot at the King's Cross Centre development one of London's biggest regeneration schemes (Shead, 2022). Other milestones of this project entail laying the foundation, completion of the structural phase and installing of internal system. The project is on its final milestones and one of the key challenges the project would face entails finishing within the limited remaining time for it is planned to be inaugurated next year. Already according to Shead (2022), the project is running several years beyond the schedule as the project was initially hoped to be occupied by 2016. The ability to effectively manage all tasks that are dependent and in the critical path could minimise the hindrances of completing this project within its set timeframe.

Resource; represents one of the most valuable in Google's one billion projects. The resources including human, material, technological and financial elements play a crucial role in ensuring the project successfully comes to completion. Google has hired key experts, diverse and skilled workers and effective managers ensuring each role is assigned to the right person. On financial

matters, one billion pounds have been budgeted to ensure the project is successful. Besides, Google is looking for sustainable vendors/suppliers who will provide materials that will suit the needs of this new project of a sustainable building (Levy, 2022). More so, Google has applied and continues to leverage technological and innovative solutions to help manage resources, time and quality of the project. However, some of the key challenges that may arise are poor allocation of funds and rising cost of labour before the completion of the project.

Quality; ensuring high-quality office spaces with added amenities and facilities is a key priority in Google's project. Through proper quality planning, the Google project manager has outlined effective construction quality control; a system of management that ensures that deliverables meet the standards and guidelines set by the stakeholders of this project. The project has incorporated the ISO standards; ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (Environmental management) in the project to ensure quality. ISO 9001 gives a framework the project will follow to ensure consistency and quality by streamlining operations, reducing waste and improving overall efficiency (Xia et al., 2018). The material selection strategy of this project has used BREEAM and LEED criteria as a benchmark and where possible the project has sourced materials that have obtained an Environmental Product Declaration and Health Product Declaration (Ongreening, 2022).

Google also has deployed Heatherwick Studio as their landscaper who will ensure the project underhand has a rooftop garden and set a precedence for buildings of the future showcasing high-tech quality buildings (Partridge, 2022). The project is integrating different sustainable and innovative building ideas and materials to ensure they deliver high quality. The project uses forward-thinking design and innovative solutions to create spaces where people will enjoy working. However, some of the anticipated challenges include complexity in the project design that requires strategic planning and highly skilled labour. Besides, to meet quality there is a

need for a high level of coordination among all stakeholders such as the project manager, project team, workers, contractors, suppliers, architects and engineers among others. Any miscommunications and lack of coordination may result in problems with quality.

Key Stakeholders and their roles

The ongoing Google construction project has several stakeholders who are making the project progress in the right direction. The following are the key stakeholders and their roles in the project;

Google executive and management team; this is the team back in the US Google main headquarters. The team is made of executives and management who are the key decision-makers regarding this project. The team provides direction, and budgets and decides on the project timeline, objectives and scopes (Harrison and Lock, 2017). The team is responsible for ensuring this project is aligned with the company's overall corporate goal and strategy.

Project managers; are the other key stakeholders in the project. They are the heads and leaders at the ground where the project is being undertaken. Their major entails overseeing the entire project lifecycle and work breakdown structure beginning from the initiation to the execution and completion phase (Harrison and Lock, 2017). The managers also coordinate and monitor resource allocation including time, materials and money allocated for the project.

Engineers and architects; in any construction project, architects and engineers are needed to design and lay the construction plan. While the engineers focus on safety measures, regulatory standards and structural and mechanic operations the architects, on the other hand, architects design and manage construction documents (Carstens and Richardson, 2019). The coordination between the engineers and architects has enabled this project to run smoothly with minimal delays.

Contractors and subcontractors; the contractors have been responsible for overseeing this Google project together with the project manager have been responsible for building permit applications, providing (temporary) facilities on site, on-site personnel management and site surveying (Xia et al., 2018). On the other hand, subcontractors have been hired often to perform various specialised tasks including excavation, concrete pouring and stonework.

Suppliers/vendors; these are other key stakeholders in this project, they have been providing materials, services and equipment needed in the project. While most of the suppliers/vendors are local, there are also some suppliers from international countries to ensure all the needed materials and services are readily available.

Local government/regulatory authorities; London Borough of Camden; these stakeholders have played a great role in the progress of this project. Since the initiation phase to this milestone, the local government particularly the London Borough of Camden have closely worked with project managers, engineers and architects during the processing of permits, site inspection and checking whether the project is complying with the stipulated local building regulations and codes. The local government and other regulatory bodies have ensured this project observes safety and environmental measures. Huge costs have been incurred to ensure these stakeholders approve and inspect the project.

Employees and future office space occupants; are the end users of the finished project. Google intend to house 7,000 employees once the building is finished. There will be outdoor amenities and recreation space for employees (Gillespies, 2022). The building also intends to host offices, cafes, gyms, MUGA and pool facilities which will accommodate other occupants besides Google employees. These stakeholders are very important as they are the end users of this project.

Legal advisers; including advocates have actively been involved in this project thus becoming key stakeholders in the project. Their main role has been giving legal advice on regulatory matters, guidance on contracts and risk management. They have played a great role in ensuring all legal matters on this project have been addressed ensuring the project tasks and stakeholders have protection against any potential issue that can arise.

Local community and other businesses; are key stakeholders in this Google new project. The local community will benefit largely due to job creation, close access to services and improvement of surrounding amenities and infrastructures. Similarly, other nearby businesses will face new competition allowing them to increase their innovation level to achieve a competitive edge; in the end, building the local economy in London (Shead, 2022).

Risk factors

As this project comes to its final phases the nature of the risk factors keeps changing as operations move to completion and handover for inauguration. Some of the risk factors include;

Project delay for the inauguration. Major reasons for delay include delay in getting inspection and final approval by the local government and regulatory bodies (Carstens and Richardson, 2019). Also, there could be delays in the final fit-out of fittings and fixtures and final touches thus pushing the completion date beyond the expected time. Besides, integrating new sustainable technologies in the entire building might take more time than expected causing more delays. These delays might postpone the completion and inauguration of the project by next year.

Cost overruns are the other risk factors in this project. The rising cost of living has significantly increased the cost of raw materials and labour forcing projects to run with higher costs than the budgeted. An unanticipated rise in the cost of materials and labour may increase the cost of the

project (Venkataraman and Pinto, 2023). Besides, unanticipated final corrections will increase the cost. Warranty, maintenance costs, and installation costs of technology and equipment may have additional costs that have not been initially budgeted.

Environmental factors are the other risk factor such as adverse weather like heavy rains significantly affects outdoor activities and transportation. This may lead to more delays in the project. Besides, changes in law and regulations may also impact Google's project operations. Further, acquiring certificates on sustainability like the BREEAM and LEED will need thorough verification and documentation where any lapse may lead to delayed certification and inauguration (Ongreening, 2022).

Disruption in the supply chain is the other major risk anticipated. Just like how the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, Covid-19 and Brexit caused a significant supply chain disruption, any of these occurrences could occur thus influencing the project (Vu et al., 2023). Disruption in the supply chain can largely impact final delivery leading to delays in fittings, fixtures, furniture, and equipment thus affecting the completion timeline. Disruption of logistics and transport may lead to a requirement of extra costs and time which may not have been budgeted.

Summary and recommendations

Examining the progress in Google's one billion building project in London, it is worth noting that major steps that involve project management have been made. Google initiated a project at King's Cross in London with an aim to wholly own and design Google buildings outside the US. The building is anticipated to host high-quality designed office space, facilities and amenities for both employees and occupants that may come later. Having observed all elements of the project starting from the budget, timeline, quality, stakeholders and risk factors, this assessment has found some of the anticipated challenges and risks that might influence the

completion and inauguration of this project as planned. Some of these risks include cost overruns that are expected, project delays, environmental factors and supply chain disruption. These risks may hinder the effective completion of the project leading to postponement of the project. As such, to ensure these challenges and risks are addressed and mitigated the following recommendations are vital to implement;

It is recommended that some amount may be reserved through a contingency budget. This amount will be used to cover unexpected costs that may arise, due to various risk factors such as delays, disruptions in the supply chain, or price rises in materials, labour and logistics. Having a contingency budget allows the project to stay on track despite any fluctuations in cost (De Marco et al., 2016). Thus, by setting aside a portion of the budget for unforeseen events, Google will protect itself from financial strain and potential project delays.

There should be rigorous quality assessment and assurance to ensure this project aligns with the goals and objectives that the company intended. This can be done by crafting a comprehensive quality assessment and assurance plan. The plan should have clearly defined quality standards and benchmarks based on the best industry practices and project specifications. The plan should incorporate regular audits and inspections where a third party can be engaged to perform unbiased quality assessment and provide feedback ensuring the project quality is maintained. The integration of Building Information Modelling (BIM) is recommended to visualize the progress of the project thus helping the project managers and the team to point out potential issues at every phase (Borrmann et al., 2018). This will greatly help in improving the project quality.

It is also recommended that this project should utilise the PMI's project management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) model. The model is an entire collection of processes, guidelines, best practices and terminologies that are accepted as standards within the project management

industry (Abd Elhameed, 2018). PMBOK is considered valuable for firms as it helps them standardise practices across all teams in a project, tailor processes to suit specific needs and prevent project failures. As such, employing PMBOK in Google's one billion building project at King's Cross, London will offer a comprehensive approach to achieving success.

It is also recommended that there should be a detailed stakeholder mapping to ensure effective stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders should be mapped based on their impact, interest and influence on the project. The stakeholders should also be involved in various decision-making processes to ensure this project addresses their key needs (Xia et al., 2018). Google being a leader in technology, should leverage digital collaborations and interactive platforms to further engage the stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement and involvement will foster collaboration, support and trust throughout the project thus significantly contributing to the successful completion of this project.

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