

IMPLEMENTING STANDARDISATION IN MEDIUM-SIZED CONSTRUCTION FIRMS: FACILITATING SITE MANAGERS' FEELING OF FREEDOM THROUGH A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Construction projects are often referred to as unique and construction processes often described as inefficient. The amount of waste in projects is claimed to be in the range of 10-80% depending on the definitions of waste and the methods used to study them. There is a general understanding that the proclaimed uniqueness of construction projects is a reason for the claimed inefficiency and it is suggested that the processes in construction should be more standardised to increase the efficiency and reduce waste in accordance with the lean principles.

Another characteristic of construction projects is that site managers are usually given the authority to run a project as if it were their own firm, effectively running a company within a company. They value the freedom to run projects their own way and to develop ways of working with which they are comfortable and do not always consider their colleagues' experiences.

Construction firms must accordingly struggle with finding efficient ways to standardise in order to avoid the perception of dealing with unique projects while simultaneously retaining what makes the organisation special and provides them with a competitive edge. This can result in construction firms implementing modern management principles that site managers are expected to accept without considering their need for individuality.

This paper discusses the challenges faced by construction firms' need for standardised activities and processes to reduce waste and increase efficiency, while simultaneously emancipating site managers so that they continue to find freedom, value and motivation in their work.

Based on interviews with eight site managers in three medium-sized Swedish construction firms, the indications are that processes should be developed slowly with a bottom-up approach.

KEY WORDS

Lean principles, standardisation, construction projects, management, processes, freedom.

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