

Resistance in IS Projects

A Project Manager's Sounding Board

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Abstract

Failures in information systems (IS) projects continue to be an important issue frequently addressed by practitioners and academics, and to which resistance has been often associated. Over the years, resistance to IS implementations have attracted ample attention from researchers who strived to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon as well as to uncover its origins and evolution. However, while project managers play a central role in project implementations, their own understanding of resistance, as well as their reflections on its sources and causes have been so far ill addressed.

This paper attempts to provide a better understanding of resistance in IS implementation projects, by underlining the relevance of IS project managers in dealing with its occurrences and leading projects towards success. Project managers have a central role to play when IS projects face set backs, and thus their understanding and analysis of their roles in resistance facing projects are expected to be enlightening. Based on qualitative data gathered from interviews with 10 IS project managers, this paper sheds light on the way project managers view resistance in IS project, as well as on the different roles they play to get around it to alleviate its impacts. The results of a grounded theory analysis highlights the multitude of professional identities that project managers take on when facing resistance, with each being linked to a different set of interventions that they often apply. Our data also supports the relevance of extending the concept of resistance in IS projects beyond IS users, to also include project teams and team members, who's behavior can significantly impact project success.

Introduction

« *Better theories of resistance will lead to better implementation strategies* »
Markus (1983, p.434)

Resistance to information system (IS) implementations continues to be a significant challenge that is recognized by practitioners and academics (Kim & Kankanhalli, 2009; Markus, 1983; Rivard & Lapointe, 2012), who often view it as one of the main sources of project failures (Jiang, Muhanna, & Klein, 2000; Martinko, Henry, & Zmud, 1996). However, researchers argue that, in IS implementation projects (ISIP), resistance is an inevitable phenomenon (Ferneley & Sobreperez, 2006; Lapointe & Rivard, 2007) that does not necessarily conceal negative

intentions (Markus, 1983; Rivard & Lapointe, 2012). As such, IS resistance can be beneficial (i.e. functional) or detrimental (i.e. dysfunctional), depending on various factors, such as context, initial conditions, object of resistance and stakeholders' perceptions of opportunities and threats (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005b). In either situation, it is the implementers'¹ responsibility to recognize and respond to resistance in order to avoid project and/or organizational disruptions (Rivard & Lapointe, 2012).

While resistance has been previously addressed in the context of IS projects, most studies have adopted a user centric perspective to understanding this phenomenon (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005a). For instance, some studies have emphasized on the multitude of forms that resistance can take (Ferneley & Sobreperz, 2006; Kim & Kankanhalli, 2009), and others have focused their attention on resistance types which in some cases might be more difficult to discern (Marakas & Hornik, 1996; Martinko et al., 1996). These studies have helped highlight the relevance and complexity of resistance, revealed some of its possible causes and influences, and have generally enhanced our understanding of its occurrence. However, the role of project managers, as key stakeholders in ISIP, has been to some extent neglected in existing studies.

ISIP often include several stakeholders, such as IS project managers, business or functional managers, IS analysts, IS professionals, developers and prospective users, who are expected to actively participate in the various project decisions and activities (Markus & Mao, 2004; PMI, 2013). To do so, they often rely on intensive collaborations and coordination among them, since the complex and unstructured nature of their tasks require a great deal of knowledge sharing (Boehm & Turner, 2004; Faraj & Sambamurthy, 2006; He, Butler, & King, 2007). Thus, in order to successfully implement an IS and to achieve projects' objectives, numerous interactions between stakeholders are needed, which can often lead to the development of relationships among them². The nature and quality of such relationships are expected to directly influence the manifestations of resistance as well as their intensities (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Piderit, 2000). Moreover, interactions between stakeholders are often initiated, planned, monitored and managed by project managers, which makes their interventions crucial to relationships' development and to the possible subsequent resistance behavior that can transpire. As such, failing to account for IS project manager's role in IS resistance contexts, will shade a significant portion of the ISIP puzzle (Nelson, 2007).

To address this gap in the literature, the present paper focuses on the experience of IS project managers with resistance, as well as their understanding of their role and influence on this phenomenon. Based on preliminary interviews conducted with ten experienced IS project managers, the current paper aims at shedding lights on how project managers view their role in resistance contexts, and how their interpersonal qualities and capabilities, as well as their applied interventions can influence project success. The next section, presents a brief literature review on resistance and project management. Subsequently, the methodology used to collect and analyze data is described. Finally, the research findings are presented and their implications discussed.

¹ Rivard and Lapointe (2012) defined implementers as "those responsible for the introduction of the technology to prospective users [...] as well as those responsible for the successful use of the system implemented (p.900)". Business or functional managers, IS professionals and project managers are examples of implementers in the context of an IS project.

² Relationship is defined here as "a context of background conversations against which explicit foreground actions and communications, such as those taking place during the initiation and implementation of change" (Ford,et al. 2008, p.372)

Literature Review

Resistance in Information System Implementation Projects

In ISIP, resistance was initially addressed as reflecting unfavorable behaviors since it was expected to hinder change and evolution (Ang & Pavri, 1994). However, resistance can sometimes stem from legitimate concerns related to IS or IS-related events that are perceived as potentially detrimental to employees, or to the organization as a whole. In such situations, resistance manifestations are often driven by positive and plausibly constructive motivations (Hirschheim & Newman, 1988). As such, it is generally expected that an IS driven change that is perceived as favorable by prospective users will not be resisted, as opposed to ones that are adversely perceived (1991). In addition, IS are often not homogeneously assessed by all users. More specifically, some ISIP induced changes may be perceived as favorable by some stakeholders and as harmful by others, which will often depend on the objectives of an individual or stakeholder group, as well as on their distinct evaluation of the situation (Marakas & Hornik, 1996; Marks, Dechurch, Mathieu, Panzer, & Alonso, 2005; Martinko et al., 1996).

Resistance is a complex phenomenon, with several conceptualizations having been suggested in the IS literature. For instance, the concept of resistance has been examined as a process (Ferneley & Sobreperz, 2006), and as a multi-level phenomenon (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005a), as well as an opposition (Kim & Kankanhalli, 2009), and/or a psychological state (Ang & Pavri, 1994). However, its most commonly applied conceptualization is that of a behavior (Markus, 1983), which we adopt in this paper. Aligned with this perspective, Markus (1983) defined resistance as “ [...] behaviors intended to prevent the implementation or use of a system or to prevent system designers from achieving their objectives (p.443)”. Resistance behavior often occurs following to a conflict, which is frequently viewed as an attitudinal belief related to affective or evaluative judgments about the possible consequences of an event (Meissonier & Houzé, 2010). Such evaluations related to an IS embedded change, lead to reactions from stakeholders which may manifest in visible and overt behaviors (such as though sabotage or direct opposition) or in less obvious covert manners (such as relying on inertia to stall and ultimately kill a project) (Hirschheim & Newman, 1988).

Resistance behavior is a result of the interactions between different background variables, such as the object of resistance, threat perceptions, initial conditions in a given context, and the subjects of resistance (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005a). For instance, according to Marakas and Hornik (1996), prospective IS users manifest their resistance to an ISIP in order to regain a sense of mastery and control over their environment. As such, the implementation of a new IS can be viewed as beneficial when perceived as capable of enhancing one's environment (i.e. creating a more pleasant work environment, reducing tensions, increasing job satisfaction and affording advancement and recognition opportunities). However, ISIP can also be perceived as disadvantageous if associated with power reduction due to increased job monitoring and control or for the possible feelings of lack of self-efficacy and ambiguity it can install. Such perceived drawbacks are likely to cause the emergence and development of resistance.

Different causes of resistance have been identified in the IS literature, with factors such as *lack of perceived need*, *lack of involvement*, *redistribution of resources*, *organizational invalidity*, *lack of management support*, and *poor IS quality*, being some of the most frequently

cited (Hirschheim & Newman, 1988). Moreover, ISIP often face prevalent uncertainties (e.g. power loss, job loss, etc.) that can directly affect different stakeholders, as well as the IS project manager (Barki, Rivard, & Talbot, 2001; Hirschheim & Newman, 1988). This uncertainty combined with the prospective risk aversion of impacted individuals and groups will often lead stakeholders to strive to maintain the status quo and resist IS implementations in the process (Kim & Kankanhalli, 2009). Furthermore, while resistance can occur early during an ISIP, it may also remain latent for some time before emerging (Hirschheim & Newman, 1988). As such, resistance is not static and is not directly connected to specific phases of an ISIP. For example, resistance may be manifested when users decline to participate in the development phase, or when they refuse to use the IS following to the implementation (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005a).

Resistance as Conflict

Resistance has been suggested as being a reflection of dysfunctional conflicts³ (Ford et al., 2008; Meissonier & Houzé, 2010), where it has been observed that bad relationships between ISIP stakeholders (Ford et al., 2008; Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001; Markus & Mao, 2004) can lead to conflicts between them, which in turn can transpire into resistance (e.g. Barki & Hartwick, 2001; Hirschheim & Newman, 1988; Rivard & Lapointe, 2012). Accordingly, IS project managers are expected to identify potentially conflicting situations and adapt their decisions and actions to avoid or reduce resistance occurrences (Meissonier & Houzé, 2010). Moreover, time plays a significant role in shaping the nature of resistance behaviors of different project stakeholders, making it a relevant factor to account for (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005a). The decisions and actions made over the lifespan of an ISIP by project stakeholders are often intertwined, where it is expected that the action of one can potentially affect the actions of others over time.

One perspective often taken explaining the conflictual situations emerging between project stakeholders during an ISIP is the political perspective (Lapointe & Rivard, 2007; Markus, 1983; Sabherwal & Grover, 2010). According to this view, the various decisions and actions undertaken by ISIP stakeholders can be explained based on their conflicting interests. Thus, stakeholders are viewed as central actors competing between each other to gain power and to obtain greater share of available resources, which will result in various resistance manifestations (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005a; Markus, 1983; Meissonier & Houzé, 2010). Such relationships can emerge between various project stakeholders, such as between project promoters and business managers or between project managers and users or even between IS project managers and team members, among others (Hirschheim & Newman, 1988; Joshi, 1991; Rivard & Lapointe, 2012). However, since IS project managers play a central role in ISIP (Reich, 2010; Yang, Huang, & Wu, 2011) and since they are often viewed as key decision makers mandated to deliver an IS that is consistent with organizational intents (Bagayogo, 2013; Nelson, 2005), it is relevant and potentially useful to explore how IS project managers perceive resistance in IS projects, how they see their roles in such contexts and what types of interventions they deploy to manage resistance.

The Role of Project Managers

³ Conflict is defined here as “disagreement of persons or groups of persons perceiving a situation as being inconsistent with their own interests” (Meissonier and Houzé, 2010, p.542).

Previous studies have shown that resistance can develop from individual to groups within an organization and that over time the level and object of resistance can change based on various triggers relevant in a given context (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005b). Furthermore, even if most studies have examined resistance from a user-centric perspective, resistance in an ISIP can come from other key stakeholders such as project team members (including team members in offshore locations), upper management, external suppliers and business partners, among others. While existing literature have helped explain the multitude of resistance behaviors from different theoretical perspectives (Lapointe & Rivard, 2007), most studies did not account for the role of project managers and their influences on the evolution and culmination of resistance (Rivard & Lapointe, 2012), even when the changes and interventions that they apply during an ISIP lifecycle could be very critical to resistance and to project success. Thus, one might wrongly assume that their role might have been similar across the different examined organizations/projects. In sum, previous studies have advanced our understanding about the resistance phenomenon, yet little work has been undertaken so far to analyze the role played by key implementers in ISIP, such as the project managers, to diminish and/or to overcome the impact of resistance during IS projects (Kirsch, 2000; Meissonier & Houzé, 2010).

The interventions that IS project managers apply during ISIP can have significant effects on resistance and on continuous IS usage, since they can help ease the change transitions by providing the required support. The lack of such interventions will leave resistance behaviors solely dependent on factors driven by individual differences, such as habit (Ram, 1989; Sheth, 1981), self-efficacy and personal evaluations of threats (Beaudry & Pinsonneault, 2005). Thus, IS project managers play a central role in ISIP and their decisions/actions can significantly influence project outcomes (Napier, Keil, & Tan, 2009; Papke-Shields, Beise, & Quan, 2010; Skulmoski & Hartman, 2010). For instance Papke-Shields et al. (2010), identified good communication with project's client, adequate understanding of client's expectations and cohesive team development as core project management activities significantly related to project success. Skulmoski and Hartman (2010), also highlighted the central role played by project managers and identified several important skills and competencies describing successful project managers (i.e. truthfulness/honesty, listening skills, ability to share information and credit, ability to get along with others, team playing, consensus building, effective questioning, generating feedbacks, etc.). Most of these competencies can help IS projects managers develop quality relationships with prospective IS users and stakeholders, as well as assist them in minimizing conflicts.

Methodology and Findings

To explore resistance in ISIP from the perspective of IS project managers, a grounded theory approach was adopted. Accordingly, ten IS project managers, working in different industries and with divergent experiences, were interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and typically lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. All interviews, conducted based on an interview guide, were recorded and later transcribed. The guide was used as a mean to steer the discussion and not as a fixed set of questions for the respondents to answer. During the interviews, IS project managers were asked to discuss their experience with resistance as encountered in the different projects they were involved in. More precisely, during the interviews respondents discussed the following: what resistance means to them, how they identify resistance in IS

projects, what the sources and causes of resistance in their opinions were, how they go about managing resistance, how they perceive their role regarding resistance and what they believed were key interpersonal qualities/skills that are required to adequately manage and workaround resistance.

While the sample of ten interviews could be considered relatively low to insure the generalizability of the findings, it was deemed adequate as a first exploratory phase of this inquiry, in which we hope to uncover an initial understanding of the resistance phenomenon from the perspective of IS project managers. Moreover, each IS project manager was asked to discuss more than one incidence of resistance they have experienced, without limiting their answers to one specific project. Moreover, additional interviews will be conducted in the future to reach a more adequate sample.

Several sense making strategies and data analysis tools were implemented to explore the gathered data. Guidelines proposed by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as well as the grounded theory strategy as described by Langley (Langley, 1999) were followed. The first step of the data analysis consisted of a careful reading of each interview transcript leading to the extraction of key elements that project managers associated to resistance. To simplify the inductive research approach, all identified elements were grouped into themes as they emerged from the data. More precisely, the following categories were tackled: resistance definitions, project manager's role, sources of resistance (i.e. stakeholders), causes of resistance, resistance manifestation, interventions deployed to manage resistance and interpersonal skills and qualities. The next section presents and discusses the findings.

Findings

As the objective of this study is to examine resistance in IS projects from the perspective of project managers, it was most relevant to begin by exploring how IS project managers understood and defined resistance. Our analysis shows that for IS project managers, resistance stems from the failure to adhere to the objectives of a given project, due to divergent interests and/or personal insecurities, and is often exhibited by behaviors that challenge project goals. Table 1 provides supporting quotes.

Table 1: Definitions of Resistance

Resistance as...	Project Managers' Citation
... a manifestation of insecurity felt by individuals	<i>"Resistance is a natural reflex of insecurity when an individual is confronted with a risk or chance to fail in meeting key objectives."</i>
... a confrontation of conflicting interests that are difficult to reconcile	<i>"Several individuals, stakeholders are involved in a project and everyone has its own objectives. Everyone in a project will manifest resistance in some way, which sometimes go into different tangents."</i>
... a lack of adhesion toward project/IS objectives	<i>"It's the reason for not using something, be either refractory to new technologies, or to the project ways. It's mostly a blocking against new things."</i>
... a behaviors or set of behaviors that can hamper the completion of project/sponsor objectives	<i>"Since the project manager is the sponsor's 'agent' or representative and that he was put in charge of conducting the project to attain the clear and validated objectives provided by the sponsor, the resistance represents for the project manager all behaviors or decisions of the project stakeholders which can hamper the achievement of this objectives."</i>

The interviewed IS project managers reported that an important proportion of resistance in IS projects is initiated by users. As mentioned by several researchers (e.g. Lapointe & Rivard, 2005b; Rivard & Lapointe, 2012), project managers often underscore the importance of being attentive and sensitive to users throughout a project life cycle since ultimately it is them who will use the implemented IS (or not). This usage will eventually help generate the anticipated value of the IS project. However, IS project managers have also suggested that resistance can be instigated by other key stakeholders, such as upper and middle management, business partners, external suppliers, and IS project team members (sometimes even from offshore locations).

However, the object or causes of resistance of such stakeholders often differ from those of users. For instance, our informants have reported that sometimes, project team members tend to resist the meticulous use of extensive and frequent project management practices: “*If there is too much project management, if everything has to be justified, every week, every day, every hour, team members have the impression that they could not do their work, and they become frustrated*”. This can also be amplified when issues related to cultural differences arise, particularly in global projects. For example one project manager suggested that, “*resistance can come from the offshored part of the team because of important culture differences. They will never say no. However, you never really know what they think or if they have really understood what you have asked them. You have to ask them again and again. At a certain point you do it yourself... It is faster*”. Table 2 presents various causes of resistance behavior as identified by IS project managers.

Table 2: Causes of Resistance

Causes of resistance	Project Managers' Citation
Requests for change	“ <i>In a project, one of the main sources of resistance is related to RFC [request for change]. As a project manager I am accountable for delivering on time, on budget and on features. The sponsor representative is responsible to generate value out of the project. So, for each RFC, we sit together to evaluate the RFC and try to accommodate them as much as possible. However, if the RFC increases project risk or if it affects schedule, it can be refused and then resistance will appear. If the RFC can bring value to the project, but affect the schedule, it is brought to the project's steering committee.</i>
Increase in workload	“ <i>Overtime an increase in workload can be another source of resistance.</i>
Lack of Project Management Experience	“ <i>The clearly lack of project management experience. They [the project's sponsor] had any knowledge and no respect for the planning. They did not understand the importance of respecting and following the planning.</i>
Too Much Project Management Practices	“ <i>The ‘project management’ itself can become a source or an object of resistance from team members because it can add stress and pressure when you have to justify everything, actions and small delays.</i>
IS limitations	“ <i>The IS is not doing what the client wants, so he resists. We had to explain that, in a cloud solution, the client needs will be met but it's the client who needs to adapt to the technology and not the other way around. As a project manager, it is my role to explain and raise the client's awareness.</i>
Role distribution in the team	“ <i>It is usually when roles' description and responsibilities will be affected by the project that people will resist.</i>
Novelty	“ <i>Resistance will arise when you present new things, new ways of working. Before accepting and changing ways of doing things, people will ask questions.</i>

Having been confronted with various sources and causes of resistance, the interviewed IS project managers have had to play various roles throughout their experience when dealing with the divergent groups of stakeholders. When discussing these roles, project managers sometimes described their roles as reflecting multiple professional identities. For example, in some instances project managers had to assume the role of a judge, assessing a situation, juggling between rules/laws and alternatives and ruling on the best possible option that they believe is aligned with the sponsors' objectives. In other situations, they were lawyers, protecting the interests of their teams, or a coach attempting to keep his team players engaged and motivated. At other moments, the role of a teacher was needed, where project managers had to educate, evaluate and explain, while allowing for all stakeholders to understand the intricacies of the IS project at hand. Also, sometimes the job of a project manager can be artistically driven, were they become painters, drawing portraits to share with the different project stakeholders, based on their view of the project world. Table 3 presents a summary of the various roles identified.

Table 3: Project Manager's Roles

Roles	Project Managers' Citation
Judge	<i>"In a project, the project manager will be the arbitrator between the various stakeholder. I am in charge to ensure that the objectives formulated by the project's steering committee will be applied."</i>
Lawyer	<i>"It is essential to explain why I see things this way and why such decisions are made."</i> <i>"I always try to identify each individual heartstring. I try to understand his or her personality. Try to figure out how they like to be managed. What are their aspirations."</i>
Teacher	<i>"Sometimes, it is a good thing to make 2-3 demos to reduce anxiety and to explain what is coming"</i>
Doctor	<i>"As a project manager I must, as much as possible, proactively manage resistance by listing the possible project's "pain points" that will come with the changes brought by a project. Then, I must identify who will be affected by these "pain points", meet them to explain the reasons behind the changes, insure that they understand and provide the necessary support such as training, coaches, support, etc."</i>
Painter	<i>"My role as I see it, is painting a picture of where we are heading, what we want and how we will get there. I'm someone who will go fishing a lot with my team and say: "Look, here's where we want to go. Here's where the client wants us to go. Here is how I see it. Now, how do you think we will be able to achieve that with the tools we have, over the time we have, with the resources we have". As a project manager, I am in charge of the final objectives, and I will work with my team to determine how we will get there"</i>
Gatherer	<i>"I try to create a safe environment for the team, for all the work world in the same direction on the same common goal. I want members to have confidence that I will unlock the roadblocks which will appear."</i>
Coach	<i>"I think he must keep his team motivated. As a responsible project manager, if the team is breathless, tired and burned, he has to find ways to have them get there energy back. He has to protect his team, even if there are some delays. You have to have an equilibrium otherwise people will get burned out"</i>

The different roles played by IS project managers often shape their approach to managing the resistance they encounter. More precisely, IS project managers have identified several concrete decisions and actions that they often apply when dealing with resistance, and are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Project Manager's Interventions to Manage Resistance

Interventions	Project Managers' Citation
Investigate a situation	<i>"When I don't have the right information, I cannot start by trying to defend an idea because I know it will kill the idea right away. So usually I will start by asking questions, try to find out what and how people work, what is going well and what needs to be improved, etc..."</i>
Explain, dissect and Discuss	<i>"It is important to put everything in context and depersonalize the decision which have been made."</i> <i>"When you explain the context and people understand, it makes a big difference."</i>
Use prototypes	<i>"Now we work with methodologies based on prototypes. Therefore we can more quickly build a solution for the customer that he sees and that he can experience. Lots of user have to see and experience in order to understand."</i>
Maintain proximity	<i>"To be more present on site, it is essential although the methodology does not do that sometimes or, from a spending view point, it is not the best thing to do. In the end it is all about human relations."</i>
Clarify stakeholder's interests	<i>"Since project can be the meeting point of several stakeholder interests', which sometimes can be divergent, the first thing a project manager must do to manage resistance is to understand the situation and identify the interests of the stakeholder who is showing resistance."</i>
Create and maintain relationships	<i>"I think it is crucial to maintain harmonious and respectful relations in the project ecosystem."</i>
Create secure environments	<i>"Individual who have the impression to work in a secure environment will resist less. They will be in confidence. They will accept more difficult decision."</i>
Provide feedback	<i>"To provide day-to-day feedback is important to make sure they understand what they are doing, to keep them mobilized. It is a way of taking the pulse and evaluates their potential reactions."</i>
Set engagement Rules	<i>"The first thing I do before accepting a team member, I clearly state with that person the engagement rules. For instance, I clearly mention that, during the project, there will be changes, that there will be overtime, that probably some tasks will have to be redone, etc. Clarifying there rules upfront, help minimizing resistance later."</i>
Align resources and competencies	<i>"Even if it is not always perfect, trying to align the resources competencies with the right project responsibilities can help minimize resistance upfront."</i>

Finally, all interviewed project managers asserted that interpersonal qualities and skills are key factors in managing resistance in IS projects. More precisely, most informants highlighted that empathy and humility, as well as the ability to listen, are essential skills that IS project managers need to master and frequently display. Furthermore, one project manager made a parallel between the project management triangle (aka the triple constraint, i.e. cost, scope and schedule) and what he suggested as the resistance triangle that is driven and constrained by empathy, humility and the ability to listen. Informants also identified other relevant individual characteristics, such as integrity, honesty and transparency as key qualities of an effective IS project manager, which can be of crucial importance in resistance contexts. Table 5 present relevant qualities of IS project managers as identified in the interviews.

Table 5: Project Manager's Key Interpersonal Qualities to Manage Resistance

Qualities	Project Managers' Citation
Transparency	<i>"You will know everything on the project, and I want to know everything of what is going on, good or bad. I do not want any finger pointing or blaming because we are all together on the same boat."</i>
Honesty and integrity	<i>"I try to have an honest and transparent behaviors so that team members adopt the same."</i>
Fairness	<i>"You have to be strict and fair, otherwise you will lose your team confidence."</i>
Listening	<i>"People need to express their resistance. When they do, you start to understand why there is resistance and on what, as a project manager, you will then be able to intervene"</i> <i>"It's not just to listen passively, absorb and do nothing. Listening should help question ourselves and ensure that we have not forgotten anything. Listening brings us new information. It should help us review the project's portrait in the light of this new information. So you should listen to people and not just hear them."</i>
Empathy	<i>"Being able to put themselves in the shoes of the person who is in front of us."</i> <i>"It is important to manage stress and human relations. To do so you need to have empathy, to listen, to really listen."</i>
Humility	<i>"I adapt to the person in front of me. I admit that I am not perfect, that I am open to questions open to comments and that I made mistakes. I do my mea culpa. It can be difficult, but if you are open, that you do not resist yourself, people will open themselves."</i>
Social Capital	<i>"Your social capital can help you manage resistance."</i>

Conclusion

Failures in information systems (IS) projects continue to be an important issue frequently addressed by practitioners and academics. Moreover, resistance to IS implementations has been often cited as a central cause of IS failures. While extant literature has recognized the relevance of resistance in IS implementation projects and highlighted its effects on implementation success by exploring its origins and evolution processes, little is known about project managers and their roles in this context, as well as the reasoning behind the intervention strategies they apply.

Project managers play a central role in project implementations, and their own understanding of IS resistance and their reflections on its sources and causes, as well as the actions they implement to overcome it are crucial elements of project success. As such, the pilot study discussed in this paper aimed at investigating a gap identified in the literature and the presented findings are but a first step towards uncovering the relation between project managers and resistance facing IS projects.

To address this gap in the literature and to provide a rich analysis of resistance in IS implementation projects, this paper underlined the relevance of project managers' own understanding of resistance and its relation to their perceived roles in such contexts. When IS projects face setbacks, project managers are often at the front lines and their analysis of their roles in resistance facing projects are expected to be enlightening. Based on qualitative data gathered through interviews with 10 IS project managers, this paper sheds light on the way IS project managers view resistance in IS projects, and the different roles they play to get around it and alleviate its impacts. The results of a grounded theory analysis highlights the multitude of roles and professional identities that project managers take on when facing resistance, with each being linked to a different set of interventions that they apply when needed. Interview data also suggest that project team members can also be active sources of resistance with significant impact on project success, which is a worthy avenue to explore in future research.

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