Proactive Project Management

——Experience of Project Management in Three Gorges Project

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Three Gorges Project is the largest Hydro-complex in the world. After 11 years’ construction, three major goals have been smoothly achieved in 2003, namely the initial impoundment of the reservoir, navigation through the double-lane five-step ship-lock and power generation of the first batch of units. The construction achievement could be summarize as: the construction process advances fully according to plan and slightly ahead of plan; the quality can meet the design needs; construction cost is fully controlled under budget.

To sum up the experience of project management in Three Gorges Project, the author considers the most characteristic point is proactive project management mode. Proactive project management means in the course of project management, the owner is always in the favorable position, before the commencement, in the process and to the end of project, the owner is leading the whole process all the while. This is the experience of project management in Three Gorges Project, that is to say, successful project management is from leading, not just from administering.

As for super large project implementation, proactive project management is of great importance. Because there may be several
contractors participating in the project, each one is responsible for a certain part of work, and only the owner can be in control of the whole situation; secondly, to some extent, although there are terms specified in contract, only the owner cares for the implementation result.

The guiding principle of proactive project management is that under the leadership of the owner, all parties carry out fine cooperation and form the concept of together-win. There are no winners in a failed project, thus, each party participating in the project should hold this concept, and all this can only be guided by the owner. The foundation of contract is cooperation, not contradiction.

Detailed measures are as follows:

Proactive preparation: before the commencement of a project (including single item), especially before a very important project, besides design party should do a good job in technical preparation work, other independent experts will be employed to hold argumentation on the issues, such as important technical problems, quality control, etc. The owner should be fairly familiar with those important issues and take effective control measures beforehand. In other words, after contract awarding, the responsibility of the owner and other parties is to undertake work according to the requirements subscribed in the contract, meanwhile the owner will also help and lead contractors accomplished the tasks, but the owner will neither overlook the contract nor indulge the contractors.
For some certain very important aspects, when estimating the contractors may lack in experience or cognition, the owner should analyze the situation beforehand; when it comes to technology or equipment allocation, the owner may propose a reward, discuss with the contractors and sufficiently provoke their initiatives, but not merely based on the tough requirements in the contract. One thing should be mentioned, as for some certain project, no matter to whom, it is the first time experience to them that no one can assume 100% hold in it, and once failed, no party can afford the losses, neither the contractors nor the owner.

Once an emergency comes out, when dealing with losses and shouldering responsibilities with other parties, the owner should go all out to reduce risks of the contractors. Under some circumstances, the owner will compensate initiatively and hold negotiation beforehand in order to strive for the positive cooperation among all parties.

In order for the smooth development of the project, and to ensure that it could be under control all the while according to the intention of the owner, quick communication and decision making system concerning four parties on site should be established.