The causes of product configuration project failure

Several studies reporting benefits from the use of product configurators in engineering-oriented companies can be found in the literature. On the other hand, some literature also claims that companies abandon configurator projects in many cases. Such claims are, however, supported only by references to the experience of the authors and do not involve much information about the projects. This represents a significant gap in the literature, as insights from failed configurator projects could help prevent other companies from making similar mistakes and promote the development of more appropriate methods and tools. To address this gap in the literature, this paper outlines an overall framework for understanding failure in configuration projects. Using this framework, eight failed configurator projects are investigated. These cases demonstrate that poor decision-making in one phase can have escalating negative consequences in the subsequent phases until the configurator project eventually fails. Furthermore, based on the insights obtained from the eight projects studied, this paper defines a set of guidelines for avoiding failure in configurator projects.

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