

Qualities of a Successful Project Manager

How Hard are the
Soft Skills?



Effective Project Manager

Works Well With Others

Provides information on the hard and soft skills that project managers and leaders must provide their team and users (customers).

Know your customer and understand how to build trust. Navigate rough waters using your communication skills. Mitigate conflicts and misunderstanding through negotiation. Most importantly, know your role in leading and lead by example.

Today's Topics



- Difference between leadership and management
- Common leadership mistakes
- How to improve leadership skills and involvement

Today's Topics

Communication

- Types of communication and media used
- Traits of effective communicators
- Using common terms and analogies
- Listen first to understand
- How to get a project team to communicate and the importance of knowing the customer

Today's Topics

Feedback

- Appreciate inquiry
- Paraphrasing
- Checking feelings
- Reporting your feelings
- Asking for more information
- Sharing available information

Today's Topics

Negotiate and Navigate

- Mediation vs. arbitration
- Getting to yes without giving in
- Win-win or something-something



Today's Topics

Problem Solving

- Defining the problem
- Making the right decisions
- Clearing out bias and haste
- Stepping out of the box
- Incrementalizing

Leading vs. Managing

There is a need for both leading and managing. One without the other typically produces bad results.

- Managing is primarily concerned with consistently producing key results expected by stakeholders.

Leading vs. Managing



- Leading is concerned with: Establishing direction for vision and strategies; aligning people by communicating vision (words and deeds achieve cooperation); motivating and inspiring others to overcome politics, bureaucracy and barriers

Leading vs. Managing

Leadership is doing the right thing.
Management is doing things right.

- A leader's authority is innate in approach. Good leadership is difficult to learn. It is more behavioral and emotional in nature than management skills.
- Leadership demands a self-awareness and understanding of emotions, moods and values. These aspects have a great impact on those around you.

Quotes

- “You don’t lead by pointing and telling people some place to go. You lead by going to that place and making a case.” – Ken Kesey
- “It is not enough to have great qualities; We should also have the management of them.” (both leadership and management are necessary) - La Rochefoucauld
- “Never try to teach a pig to sing; it wastes your time and it annoys the pig” (leadership cannot easily be taught) - Paul Dickson

5 Leadership Mistakes

In The Art of War for Managers, Sun Tzu states there are 5 dangerous faults that may affect a general:

- If reckless, he can be killed.
- If cowardly, he can be captured.
- If quick-tempered, he can be provoked to rage and make a fool of himself.

5 Leadership Mistakes

Continued:

- If he has too delicate a sense of honor, he is liable to fall into a trap because of an insult.
- If he is of a compassionate nature, he may get bothered, troubled and upset.

5 Leadership Faults

1

Recklessness: Does not use data effectively. Gives no forethought to doing the right thing. Frequently shoots from the hip and doesn't understand why a win occurred.

5 Leadership Faults

2

Cowardly: Fears taking risk, generally taking the greatest risk of all. Nearly all reward is associated with some level of risk taking.

5 Leadership Faults



Quick temper: Easily angered. Shoots the messenger frequently. Doesn't get correct information or at times, any information at all.

5 Leadership Faults

4

Over-sensitive: Easily embarrassed. Takes things personally and lets their ego get in the way. Easy to disgrace and often does not remain in a leadership position.

5 Leadership Faults

5

Extreme compassion: So concerned about keeping short-term harmony sometimes leading to long-term disaster.



Leadership Skills

Improve leadership skills

- Observe successful leaders and note their actions and leadership/management styles
- Choose (or request) diverse assignments and roles that grow your knowledge about leadership developing your skill sets in a variety of areas



Leadership Skills

Improve leadership skills

- Enroll in classes on teambuilding, interpersonal skills, motivation, counseling, etc.
- Become a problem solver and each day find a problem you've encountered in your project or your life. Discover the solution and share it with a colleague or teammate.



Leadership Skills

Improve leadership skills

- Make your mission, outcomes and goals known and visible. Share them with others to avoid duplicate work or things falling through the cracks.
- Inspire people. Tell them why they are important. Say thanks. Offer help and ask for help. *Show enthusiasm!*
- Give people work they will find challenging and enriching.

Leadership Skills

True leaders know

- “Success is fickle and fleeting, but living successfully is always possible. An ever enduring success must be grown from the inside out and a feeling of inner success is much more difficult to acquire than material success.”
- “Life is like a field of newly fallen snow. Where I choose to walk, every step will show.”

- Denis Waitley, Timing is Everything

Communication Skills

PMBOK defines communicating as involving the exchange of information. The sender is responsible for making information clear, unambiguous and complete so the receiver can receive it correctly.



Communication Skills

Types of communications and dimensions:

- Written and oral (listening, speaking)
- Internal (within the project) and external (customer, media and public)
- Formal (reports, briefings) and informal (memos, conversations)

Communication Skills

Types of communications and dimensions:

- Vertical (up and down organization) and horizontal (with peers, partners)
- Sender (receiver models and feedback loops)
- Types of media to communicate: writing, oral, memo, formal report



Communication

Improve the project communication process. Be an active listener

- Focus on the moment (no multi-tasking)
- Participate in the conversation but wait your turn to speak
- Clarify the information processed. Paraphrase back to the speaker. Repeat what you think you heard

Communication



Improve the project communication process. Be an active listener

- Ask if there is more, if you missed anything or if you understood correctly
- Empathize with your team members, teammates or customers. Understanding their situation helps build stronger relationships.



Communication

According to behavioral research, the most effective communicators

- Speak often but briefly (15-30 seconds)
- Ask more questions
- Make fewer solution statements early in a discussion



Communication

According to behavioral research, the most effective communicators

- Summarize frequently, “here’s where we are”
- Invite everyone to share their views
- Typically interject their views after others have had a chance to speak

Use Common Terms

The moment you start using acronyms (SQL, ODBC, DNS, HL7, CCHIT) eyes may glaze over. It's a good way to alienate your customer and cause confusion.

- Choose common terms
- Know your audience
- Spell out acronyms and terminology
- Find analogies to simplify difficult scenarios and technical issues

The Life Coach

Learning to Listen to Understand

Improving your listening skills with The Life Coach, Israel Johnson -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUvM_v7IYvM

- Listen to understand first and then listen to respond
- You don't always need to respond
- Work on understanding. You don't have to agree with team members, you just have to understand.



Know Your Customer

- Without customers, organizations cease to exist. Therefore, every organization must constantly strive to communicate effectively. Know and satisfy their customers (stakeholders) to stay in business.

Know Your Customer



- In Customer Driven Project Management (CDPM), customers are *all* those touched by a the project or service, internal and external. The project team must listen to all customers.

Know Your Customer

- Customer needs and expectations must be determined and turned into specifications (they are dynamic and may change).
- Customer management is *ever changing and ongoing!* And requires excellent communication soft skills.

Quotes

- “There must be a happy medium somewhere between being totally informed and blissfully unaware.” – Doug Larson, English Gold Medal winner in Distance Running, 1924 Olympics.
- “Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after”. - Anne Morrow Lindberg

Quotes

- “The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.” – Rachel Naomi Remen
- “What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.” – *Cool Hand Luke*

Communication

- One study shows the average employee gets 2.3 million words over 3 months. When bombarded by overstimulation, the brain stops processing information to prevent psychological burnout. In that respect, too much *may* be worse than too little.
- Right sizing communication is most difficult!

Whole Team Participation

Small group discussion - Most helpful when the topic is complex and there are many factors to consider. Ask a question, determine amount of time to discuss, announce the time, divide into small groups of 4 to 5 members (becomes difficult beyond 10) and vary the teams by department or titles.

Whole Team Participation

Brainstorming (blamestorming) - Collecting as many ideas as possible at one time. Leader's role is capture key words, from all involved and ask people who aren't speaking to speak up. End the session when no new ideas are added.



The Talent Zoo by Gary Kopervas

Whole Team Participation

Nominal group work feedback involves brainstorming and group discussion. It provides groups with a priority list of ideas to consider.



Whole Team Participation

Round robin feedback allows every person in the group to have the opportunity to share his/her opinion or response *before* any team member can speak a second time. Typically allow each member several minutes to think, write out comments and take turns telling the group their thought/ opinion.

Whole Team Participation

Parliamentary procedure is a formal way to implement majority rule decision making in a group and typically involves a vote.



Whole Team Participation

Consensus is an alternative to parliamentary procedure that occurs when everyone in the group chooses to agree without taking a vote. It is usually a more cooperative team effort. It takes more time, especially in a larger group. Consensus also requires a discussion leader to keep the group focused.

PM Communication Tips

Communication with a group is most effective when it is simple. Choose common terms.

- Most people can only absorb 80% of what they hear. Information should be offered to a small group in small chunks.
- Try to refresh the group's memory periodically in the discussions to help recall the basic information.
- Try not to offer more information than is needed for decision making.

PM Communication Tips

- Stay objective
- Offer information in more than one method. Write it, say it and even demonstrate ideas
- Give step-by-step or checklist when possible
- Ask group for feedback (“How do you interpret?”)

Quotes

- “Stand up straight so they will see you. Speak loudly so they will hear you, and sit down quickly so they will like you.” – Galion
- “Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you. But a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say ‘We did this ourselves’. ”- Lao Tzu



Quotes

- “Keep things informal. Talking is the natural way to do business. Writing is for keeping records and putting down details but talk generates ideas. Great things come from our luncheon meetings.” - T. Boone Pickens



More Feedback

- Feedback is essential. Try to keep it positive. Try to determine what you did to right, instead of focusing on the negative.
- Start with something simple. At the end of the meeting, ask “What did we, as a group, do well in this meeting?”
- You will likely get stunned silence and then depending on your position in the organization your team will begin to figure out the politically correct response to provide you.

Types of Feedback

- Appreciative inquiry - Doing more of what works. Doing less of something we do not do well. "What do we do well?"
- Paraphrase – Saying what we think the speaker said and clarifying what was meant. "Did I hear you say that we should start the planning phase today? And hold off on initiating?"

Types of Feedback

- Checking feelings – Check to see if we are correctly interpreting the emotions of the team. “Are you frustrated? Do you want to talk about this?”
- Report your feelings – Tell others your emotional state. “I’m not productive after working 20 hours this weekend. Could we talk on Monday in our meeting?”

Types of Feedback

- Tell me more – Ask for more information to allow the other members of the team to expand.
- Sharing all available information – A PM should consider everyone's opinion as added value, being open and honest with other members. Staying objective is difficult. As a PM, consider all of the options before making a decision and be as patient as possible.

Negotiating

Per the PMBOK:

- Negotiating involves conferring with others to reach an agreement. Agreements may be negotiated directly or with assistance. The two types of assisted negotiation are mediation and arbitration.
- Negotiations occur around many issues, at many times and at many levels of a project.

Negotiating

Per the PMBOK:

- During the course of a typical project, staff is likely to negotiate for:
 - Original scope, cost and schedule objectives
 - Changes to scope, cost or schedule
 - Contract terms and conditions
 - Assignments

Negotiating



Don't be a Grinch:

- Start slow with some small talk
- It's like physics. Action typically gets equal reaction. Avoid strong statements.
- Look for points of tentative agreement
- Look for possible trades. "If I give you this, would you give me that?"
- Hold out some attractive concessions or giveaways and use them as needed.

Getting to Yes

Without Giving In



- Try to use questions to better understand positions.
- Try to separate people and emotion from fact.
- Don't let people read you easily, keep your cool. Sometimes emotional reactions lead people to feel you have a weak stance.
- Always try to return to the facts and try and find common ground.
- Use meditation or arbitration when necessary or know when to walk away.

Problem Solving

Per the PMBOK:

- Problem solving involves a combination of problem definition and decision making.
- Problem definition requires distinguishing between problem causes and symptoms, and determining whether the problem is internal, external, technical, managerial or interpersonal.

Problem Solving

Per the PMBOK:

- Decision making includes *analyzing* the problem to identify the viable solutions and then making a choice from among the alternatives. Once made decisions must be implemented.

Avoid Bias and Haste

Problem solving that is the most results-driven requires time to define and understand the problem. Impatience and bias create more problems than it solves. Some people has solutions in search of problems.



Step Out of the Box

- Get out of your comfort zone. Many busy people rely too much on solutions from their own history and industry. We may see similarities in problems that may not be there.
- Beware of the thinking process “we have always done it this way” or “usually we just...”
- Busy people also tend to be too self reliant and may not ask others for input as frequently as they should. Many of us try to do too much ourselves.

Incrementalism

The Key to Bigger Problem Solving



- Sometimes the key to big problem solving is breaking down the larger problem into a series of smaller problems.
- Incrementalists breaks up a large problem into small problems. Collect data, make small decisions, get quick feedback, correct your course, collect more data, move forward again, make more small decisions, collect feedback, re-establish course, *until* the bigger problem is solved.

Problem Solving Skills

- Ask more questions.
- Go slow, get fresh ideas, loop deep and talk with others.
- Look for parallels in other organizations and in remote areas totally outside your field.

Problem Solving Skills

- Put problems into a visual format or a pictorial chart called a storyboard (crime-solving) where the problem is illustrated by its components being depicted as pictures.
- Tell stories that illustrate the pluses and minuses of a problem and then flow chart those according to what works and what doesn't.

Influence and Trust

Per the PMBOK, influencing the organization involves the ability to “get things done.” It requires an understanding of both informal and formal structures of the organization, customer, partners, contractors, other vendors and others. *Influencing involves an understanding of the mechanics of power and politics.*

Summary



- Leading and managing – stepping out, taking risks, mentoring your team
- Using good verbal and written communications and most of all, listening
- Establishing trust and acting as a team player as well as, a team leader!

Summary



- Be flexible, adaptable and learn from the criticism of your team
- Be confident and project a sense of calm. Inspire confidence in others, even when your project is blowing up or in crisis mode
- Negotiate for a win-win and recognize when it is necessary to negotiate

Summary



- Work well under pressure and handle the stress that accompanies deadlines and tight timelines
- Manage your time and prioritize your tasks and your team's tasks
- Be resourceful and creative when it comes to solving problems. Take ownership of problems, don't leave them for someone else.



We Can Help!

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