2   LEADERSHIP

Over the last 20 years the role of the Project Manager has changed dramatically. The successful Project Manager of the 21st century is expected to have leadership skills as well as the traditional managerial skills.

As a manager, the Project Manager's role is focused on producing the outcomes or products of the project. As a leader, especially on larger projects, the Project Manager establishes the vision for and direction of the project. Defining project priorities, guiding and motivating team members and Stakeholders, the Project Manager inspires the necessary collaboration and participation of all involved in the project. Effective communication with the various individuals and groups affected by or working on the project and active management of change and conflict are crucial to the Project Manager's increased leadership role. Guiding and leading Stakeholders throughout the life of the project is essential not only to the success of the project, but also to the success of the Project Manager.

The Project Manager performs multiple leadership and managerial roles, serving alternately as:

- **Catalyst:** Making things happen; identifying problems, fears, and resistance and initiating corrective action; instilling urgency and personal ownership; motivating others to step up and succeed.

- **Process Helper:** Acting as a "Super User," providing real time support for the Project Team and Stakeholders; answering process/technical questions, coaching, monitoring, and reviewing their progress, and looking for improvement opportunities.

- **Problem Solver:** Listening actively to all, contributing to problem resolution; promoting and sharing best practices within and across the Project Team and the Performing Organization; mediating and resolving conflicts; facilitating Project Team and Stakeholder communication; educating and coaching Project Team members and Stakeholders through the change.

■ **Resource Linker:** Coordinating "right people, right place, right time;" identifying and utilizing resources; anticipating and responding to Stakeholder needs; networking and sharing information and resources across Performing Organizational boundaries.

This section of the ***Guidebook*** addresses key aspects of the leadership challenge facing the Project Manager.

2.1 COMMUNICATION

The effectiveness of the Project Manager's leadership is dependent upon his/her communication skills. Some project management theorists estimate that a Project Manager spends 90% of his/her time in communication activities. Communication is a critical component of every project management process, so the Project Manager must develop skills that ensure that messages are appropriately transmitted and correctly received.

While developing the project's Communications Plan, the Project Manager formally identifies and plans for the varying informational needs and appropriate methods and frequency of communication for each Stakeholder group. (See 2.4.2, 3.4.4, and 4.4.4 on the Communications Plan.) This is the blueprint for establishing effective communications, on which the Project Manager builds by cultivating and then nurturing relationships with all identified key project Stakeholders. These include the Project Sponsor, Project Team members, Customer Representatives and Customer Decision-Makers, and Stakeholders from other groups or organizations that may influence the project's progress and success, all of whom will have different interests and expectations for the project. Their ability to interact will determine how smoothly the project progresses. Positive relationships with these individuals will help the Project Manager achieve consensus among the project's Stakeholders when needed, and understand and resolve sources of conflict during the project.

It is up to the Project Manager to provide appropriate communication opportunities for each Stakeholder. The Project Manager should ensure that there are mechanisms, formal and informal, for obtaining Stakeholder feedback. Communication with Stakeholders should be bi-directional: listening to them, understanding their concerns and issues, and actively addressing their concerns through the appropriate project management processes (change control, status reporting, etc.) is as important as providing them with information. The Project Manager should also be pro-active in seeking input and feedback. Information should be received openly and with enthusiasm and gratitude for the opportunity to improve and ensure the project's success. The Project Manager should avoid being judgmental or defensive.

Effective use of active listening and questioning techniques can enhance the Project Manager's ability to be an effective communicator:

■ Active listening techniques include seeking understanding through asking for clarification of the message, paraphrasing to make sure you have understood the message, encouraging dialogue through empathic remarks, and refraining from interrupting and making judgmental remarks.

■ Examples of questioning techniques are using open-ended questions that call for more than a "yes" or "no" answer, using follow-up questions to obtain additional information, and avoiding leading questions that put the respondent under pressure to respond in a certain way.

The Project Manager should also be cognizant of the role played by informal communications. A conversation in the hallway, a chance meeting outside the office with a Stakeholder, even overheard conversations, may have a potential impact on the project. Since the Project Manager is responsible for setting and managing the "mood" of the project, he/she must pay attention to communication undercurrents, and be prepared to bring relevant issues to more formal communication venues when appropriate.

In the case of virtual Project Teams, in which team members work across time, distance and/or Performing Organizational boundaries, the Project Manager faces special communication challenges. The Project Manager should select appropriate electronic communication and collaborative technologies, e.g., phone conferencing, email, e-meeting, web conferencing, and intranet/internet. He/she should be adept at using them to build the team, motivate and inspire team members, give and receive feedback on performance, handle conflict and ensure that project goals are achieved. The Project Manager should make a special effort to supplement virtual interaction with face-to-face contact as often as possible.

2.2   LEADING THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT EFFORT

Increasingly, organizations are becoming aware that projects they carry out involve significant changes. The Project Manager then assumes the role of change leader, steering the Performing Organization and its Stakeholders through the change process. This is a role that is sometimes neglected or assumed to be within the purview of the Performing Organization. But lessons learned from successful projects demonstrate that the Project Manager can most effectively lead Stakeholders through changes to the Performing Organization's structure, systems, culture, and people. (See Section I:3 for additional information on the Organizational Change Management Plan.)

The Project Manager should promote widespread participation in the change process. In this leadership role, the Project Manager needs to be prepared to be the motivator and the cheerleader, to generate enthusiasm for the project and continually obtain buy-in, support, commitment, and participation from the various Stakeholders. To assist with these efforts, the Project Manager should identify and actively recruit change champions from the Performing Organization and the key Stakeholder groups. These individuals, along with the management team of the Performing Organization, will play a critical role in the change process and have great influence over whether the change will be interpreted as positive or negative by the organization and its Stakeholders.

The Project Manager should forge a partnership with the change champions and the management team to lead the change effort. The management team will collectively own the change initiative and set a strategic and organization-wide direction that encompasses the change. The Project Manager and the change champions will lead the management team in these efforts, coordinating effective communication throughout the Performing Organization regarding the need for change.

The Project Manager, along with the change champions and the management team, should do the following to support the change process:

■ Serve as credible role models.

■ Create a shared sense of urgency about the need for change.

- Effectively communicate the vision and strategy for change by creating and using a common vocabulary.

- Empower people to take action and to get rid of obstacles to change.

- Generate and implement immediate "wins" (visible improvements in performance to get people on board).

- Anticipate and handle disruptions during change.

The change champions within the Performing Organization should be given an opportunity to acquire the new skills and information necessary to sustain the change effort "locally." The Project Manager should coordinate all efforts to distribute responsibility for managing the change effort outward to the Performing Organizational units most affected by the change.

Because change is challenging for a Performing Organization, the Project Manager should assess the Performing Organization's capacity for change, or its "readiness for change." Change in technology, in particular, is a transforming event for a Performing Organization. It can trigger reactions that go well beyond the project to impact all parts of an organization's structure and systems, as well as its culture. If the transforming nature of the change event is not taken into account, even the best-designed technology can cause long and painful disruption to the activities of the Performing Organization, or can fail altogether.

At the individual or group level, resistance to change is to be expected, and indicates that the Stakeholders are actively involved in the project, but it must be managed and mitigated. The Project Manager can take the following actions:

- Identify changes in the Performing Organization's structure, systems, culture and people.

- Identify impacted users.

- Clarify the impact of the change on the users.

- Gauge reactions to the change; acknowledge and understand the sources of resistance to change.

- Manage negative reactions to change through selling and articulating the vision, creating a liaison with the local site transition team, involving the user, as appropriate, in the project lifecycle phases.

■ Develop skills and knowledge, through training, discussions, roundtables.

■ Support the transition of responsibility for the outcome of the project from the Project Team to the Performing Organization.

The Project Manager should also make plans for sustaining the project changes after the project's conclusion. People in the Performing Organization should share ownership of the changes affected by the project if the changes are to become permanent. Under pressure, it is common to revert to old ways of doing things. Changes also may not be perceived as complete because results are not yet visible or tangible. The Project Manager should ensure that proper education and training are offered to those affected by the project's outcomes before related new responsibilities are imposed, and arrange for assistance and support in implementing new work processes. Formal acknowledgement of people's resentments and losses arising from the change process can facilitate acceptance of the change and its adoption by the Performing Organization.

<div style="color:purple">**2.3**</div> **MANAGING POLITICS AND CONFLICT**

While the Project Manager typically has a lot of responsibility for the project, he/she frequently has limited authority or control over human, material and financial resources for the project. This is especially true in a matrix organization where members of the Project Team are assigned part-time to the project and report to a line manager rather than to the Project Manager.

In order to achieve project goals, the Project Manager will often have to rely on his/her political skills to effectively influence others on the Project Team and in the Performing Organization. In attempting to do so, he/she will inevitably encounter people with different interests and approaches. This may lead to conflicts that should be resolved. Since a project is by definition temporary, the Project Manager cannot usually afford the luxury of waiting until a conflict "blows over," but must work to create a setting where the conflict can be resolved quickly and with as little damage as possible.

The following four steps can help the Project Manager develop political skills and anticipate and resolve conflicts:

Identify project Stakeholders: Stakeholders should be identified specifically by name and role so that there is a clear understanding of who is involved in the project. Potential project Stakeholders include: the Project Sponsor, Project Team, management of the Performing Organization, Customers, Customer Representatives and Decision-makers, the public, the media, regulators, vendors, and unions. In New York State government, the Division of Budget, the Department of Civil Service, the Office for Technology, and other agencies, commissions, and boards are often project Stakeholders.

Analyze Stakeholder interests: After the project Stakeholders have been identified, the Project Manager should assess the range of their interests and expectations for the project. The convergence or divergence of the Stakeholders' varied interests, goals, and values will help identify the sources of conflict that may occur during the project. Anticipating these potential conflicts, understanding their origins, and creating action plans to mitigate and diffuse conflict are an essential role for the Project Manager.

Analyze power relations: Power is usually attributed either to an individual's personal attributes, or to structural and positional sources including formal authority, control over resources and information, and interpersonal relationships. Where Stakeholders have equal power and compatible interests, decisions are obtained most easily when the Project Manager uses facts and data to support the development of a logical argument. Where there are unequal power relationships, the Project Manager must be prepared to deal with situations where interests conflict, relying on his/her instincts to know when it is time to capitulate or to continue to try to influence the Stakeholders to achieve the desired outcome. Concise and to the point discussions with the Project Sponsor regarding advice and direction are crucial at this time.

Some techniques the Project Manager can use to influence Stakeholders and mitigate conflict include:

- Reasoning – Using facts and data to support the development of a logical argument
- Consulting – Seeking input and ideas to generate a viable plan in order to meet common concerns
- Appealing – Connecting with the emotions, predispositions, or values of those involved, conveying that a request is not at the cost of their interests
- Networking – Actively including other Stakeholders who hold relevant information or authority to gain the support from the reluctant Stakeholder
- Exchanging – Offering an exchange of favors to convince the Stakeholder that a proposal can satisfy the needs of both sides
- Bargaining – Negotiating with the Stakeholder to reach an agreement that meets his/her needs
- Pressuring – Making direct and forceful demands to the Stakeholder, even through resistance on the part of the Stakeholder
- Counteracting – Blocking efforts of the Stakeholder or acting in the opposite direction

The way in which a Project Manager deals with conflict depends on his/her personal style as well as on the compatibility of interests among the divergent parties, their power relationships, and the length of time available for decision-making.

Develop negotiating style: Collaboration is often useful for finding a "win-win" solution that satisfies all parties involved in a conflict. In the collaborative negotiating style, all parties work together to find a solution that satisfies all concerns. (A compromise solution is less desirable because each party has to give up something, resulting in a "win-lose" situation for both.) While facilitating a collaborative approach, the Project Manager must actively confront issues of negativity and try to address them by articulating a common vision of the project and its benefits. When all parties participate in initiating ideas, investigating options, sharing information, and negotiating solutions, there is a better chance of reaching a collaborative decision on contentious issues.

In an emergency or when there is too little time available to reach a collaborative solution or even a compromise, the Project Manager may have to make a unilateral decision. This decision should be well documented in the project repository. When the Project Manager makes such a decision, Stakeholder interests must still be fully considered to ensure future buy-in for the project.

Managing politics and conflict is a dynamic process that occurs throughout the life of a project. Stakeholder interests and power may change; the individuals themselves may leave, causing new people to fill the ranks. Strategies and tactics used to build and maintain working relationships will have to be constantly re-examined and modified.

2.4   LEADING THE PROJECT TEAM

A key to project success is developing a high-performing Project Team, which should ideally have:

■ specific, challenging goals, which have been agreed upon collaboratively.

■ well-defined deliverables.

■ proper mix of skills and personality types. (see Pitfall #1 – 'You have the wrong team' in Section I:3, Project Planning)

■ adequate resources.

■ sense of discipline and cohesion.

■ ability to achieve the desired results.

■ ability to work with Customers.

■ ability to integrate diversity, e.g., contractors and staff.

Research has shown that most teams do not immediately become high-performing. In actuality they go through stages, beginning with the forming stage, in which the group decides on its purpose, composition and leadership patterns; a storming stage, characterized by initial conflict; a norming stage, in which trust and confidence are established, and finally the high-performing stage, in which project execution is smooth. The Project Manager's role is to use a leadership style appropriate to guiding the team through these various stages:

■ A directive approach to organize and guide work in the forming stage

■ A coaching approach to set high standards and work collaboratively at the storming stage

■ A supportive approach to allow the team to structure work and find ways to work together and solve problems during the norming stage

■ Delegating, to allow the team to carry out the work, in the performing stage.

In Project Closeout, sometimes referred to as the "adjourning" stage, the Project Manager should take a coaching approach to bring formal closure to the project and assist the Project Team members in transitioning from the project to their next opportunity.

Another important factor in developing the high-performing team is motivating individual team members and the team as a whole. The Project Manager's role is to:

■ Try to determine what motivates individual Project Team members – the desire for challenging work, professional development, recognition, possibility for promotion, visibility within the Performing Organization, or collaboration with other team members.

■ Identify the characteristics of the individual project that have an impact on individual motivation, e.g., the degree of innovation involved in the project, the level of support from senior management, the duration of the project, and the nature and frequency of interaction of Project Team members.

■ Use appropriate techniques and style to enhance individual and team motivation, taking into account the above factors. For example, scheduling regular and ad hoc feedback sessions for individual team members, including recognition for good performance in the individual's formal performance appraisal, giving public recognition for team contributions, and creating team spirit.

2.5 BUILDING TRUST

In the final analysis, project Stakeholders must trust the Project Manager in order for the Project Manager to be an effective leader. Trust is developed over time, and is most easily inspired when the Project Manager exhibits a willingness and ability to:

- share information.
- discuss personal feelings.
- listen to and understand others' perspectives.
- admit mistakes.
- encourage others.
- confront others.
- keep promises.
- be credible and sincere.
- be responsible and accountable for actions.

Development of leadership skills requires a conscious effort. The Project Manager must continually examine his/her own effectiveness, be aware of shortcomings, and be willing to devote time and energy to improvement.