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## Leadership Essentials For PMPs - Part 2 of 3

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### Introduction

The journey to project management excellence continues beyond earning a Project Management Professional (PMP) to include practicing project leadership. However, even highly skilled PMPs find success limited until they can sift through the bewildering amount of leadership information and identify actions essential for them at this point in their careers.

This is a how-to series of articles. The articles describe how PMP-level project managers can take specific leadership actions that will contribute to project success. The articles define project leadership, draw from the large body of PMI-sponsored and related project leadership research, describe the leadership role in high performance teams, give emphasis to sources of power for project leaders, and provide methods for project leaders to amplify their power. A list of specific project leader actions is included. A central theme is that PMP-level project managers can become successful project leaders by taking the actions identified.

Part one of this three-part series examined the project leadership situation, part two examines related project leadership work, and part three will examine high performance project teams.

### Good News

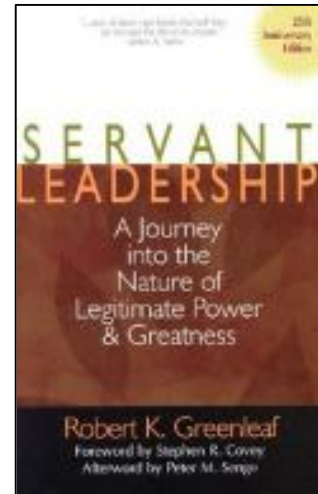
We have seen that the role of the project leader increases in importance as the project complexity increases. But what is the role of the project leader? What is the project leader's primary responsibility? In a notable new book about the leadership principles for project success by Thomas Juli, titled *Leadership Principles for Project Success* the author's message to the project leader about his/her role is that "you have to ignite this fire of performance and you have to set boundaries within the team for it to function." In an equally notable, recently published book by Camper Bull titled *Moving from Project Management to Project Leadership* the author makes a similar point about the project leaders role by stating, "leaders must be able to demonstrate to their teams why they should be committed...best ways leaders can get commitment from their followers is by demonstrating a high level of commitment themselves."

Now, the question arises about how leadership can be practiced in the context of project management. The good news is that PMI and others have published some significant work relating projects and project leadership. I have examined this body of

work and extracted the leadership essentials for PMPs. I feel the following project leadership practices are key for PMP-level project managers looking to take their performance to the next level.

## Servant Leadership

In Shackleton's story we witness leadership practiced with constant attention to the needs of others (save the men), and we view what is referred to as "servant leadership" when Robert Greenleaf first popularized this approach a quarter century ago in his book titled *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*. A servant leadership trend is well underway; according to James Hunter in his book titled *The World's Most Powerful Leadership Principle*, thirty-five of Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" practice the principles of servant leadership. Interestingly, servant leadership is precisely the subject that General Colin Powell discussed when he gave the keynote speech at the 2008 PMI Global Congress in Denver; he found it to be extremely effective in both his military and political careers. In servant leadership, the leader is a servant first. Servant leaders understand that they must meet the needs of their followers in order to enable them to meet their full potential. Servant leaders strive to respect and motivate their followers, using their influence to inspire followers to reach new heights. They lead from behind using empathetic listening skills, using persuasion, and building community within the project team.



Servant leadership is particularly relevant for project managers who find themselves in situations where they have limited authority and control over the people they must rely on to accomplish the project work. These project managers recognize that their core and extended project teams, and their key stakeholders, have competing priorities for their time and talent. These project managers understand the limitations of trying to use autocratic and authoritarian leadership styles and are favorably disposed to adopting more effective leadership approaches.

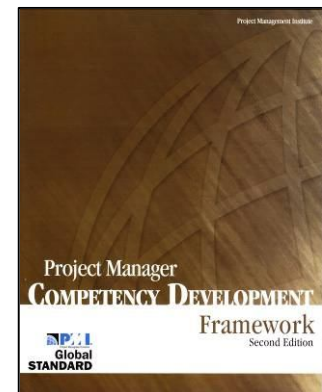
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## Competency Framework

*The Project Manager Competency Development Framework - Second Edition* published by PMI addresses the definition, assessment, and development of project manager competence; it provides an overall view of the skills and behaviors one would need to develop competence as a project manager. This document includes leading as

a unit of competence to guide, inspire, and motivate team members and other project stakeholders to manage and effectively overcome issues to achieve project objectives. Elements are included to create a team environment that promotes high performance, to build and maintain effective relationships, to motivate and mentor project team members, to take accountability for delivering the project, and to use influencing skills when required.

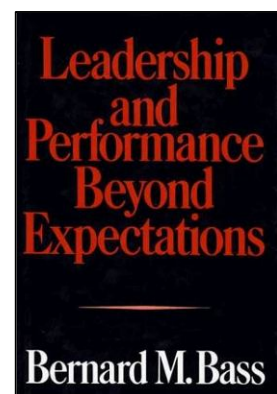
While attention is paid in this framework document to the leader of a project team through all phases of the project life cycle, particular emphasis is provided for the phase to monitor and control the project. In this phase the management of the project team explicitly includes team building, team satisfaction, and team performance. Here we see project manager actions being influenced, not only by the explicit project objectives, but also by the needs of the project team.



## **Transformational Leadership**

The transformational leadership approach, which has become one of the dominant theories of organizational leadership, has now been shown to correlate with project success. In a PMI study titled *Human Side of Project Leadership – Transformational Leadership and Project Success*, authored by Dominick, Zvi, and Lechler, we learn that all four of the examined measures of project success were significantly more likely to occur when transformational leadership was used by the project manager; projects were more likely to be completed efficiently, projects were more likely to be completed effectively, the client was more likely to be satisfied, and the underlying business objectives were more likely to be achieved.

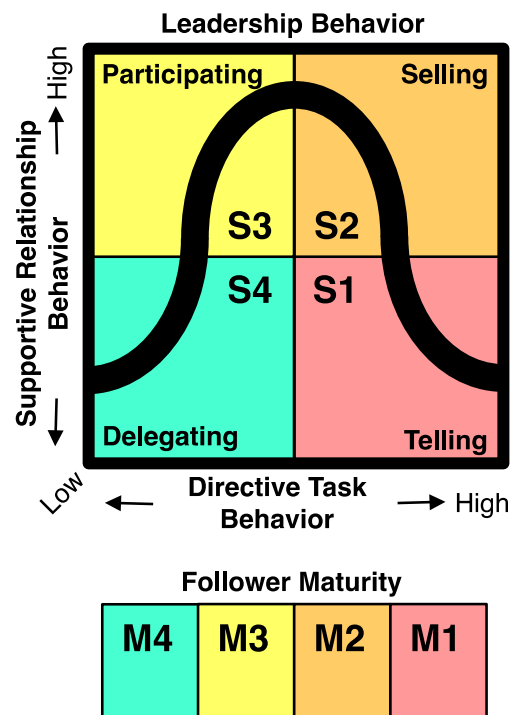
Transformational leadership behaviors are about coping with and even inspiring change; transformational leaders motivate followers by heightening their awareness of task outcomes, encouraging them to transcend self-interests for the good of the team. Followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward the leader. As a result transformational leaders broaden and elevate followers' goals, providing them with confidence to go beyond minimally acceptable expectations. Transformational leadership also implies a more positive personal connection between leaders and followers. The study results suggest that project managers can sometimes compensate for a lack of formal authority by developing their transformational leadership skills.



## Situational Leadership

The value of adjusting the style of the leader to the individual and situation is a well-established and accepted approach. Hersey and Blanchard, with their groundbreaking *Management of Organizational Behavior* book first published four decades ago, provide us with a powerful model for assessing the organizational state and applying a leadership style to fit the situation. The fundamental underpinning of the situational leadership theory is there is no single "best" style of leadership. Effective leadership is task-relevant, and the most successful leaders adapt their leadership style to the maturity of the individual or group they are attempting to lead/influence. Situational leaders address different people and different situations in different ways; one size does not fit all.

In Exhibit 3 maturity is assessed using a four-point scale, ranging from a general lack of willingness and ability to a high level of willingness and ability.



- M1 - They generally lack the specific skills required for the job in hand and are unable and unwilling to do or to take responsibility for this job or task.
- M2 - They are still unable to take on responsibility for the task being done; however, they are willing to work at the task.
- M3 - They are experienced and able to do the task but lack the confidence to take on responsibility.
- M4 - They are experienced at the task and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They are able and willing not only to do the task but to also take responsibility for the task.

The leadership styles are characterized by according to their degree of supportive relationship behavior and degree of directive task behavior.

- S1: Telling – The relationship is characterized by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of the individual or group and provides the what, how, why, when, and where to do the task.

- S2: Selling - While the leader is still providing the direction, he or she is now using two-way communication and providing the socio-emotional support that will allow the individual or group being influenced to buy into the process.
- S3: Participating - This decision making about aspects of how the task is accomplished is now shared; the leader is providing less task behavior while maintaining high relationship behavior.
- S4: Delegating - The leader is still involved in decisions; however, the process and responsibility has been passed to the individual or group. The leader stays involved to monitor progress.

## Certification Standards

A number of notable organizations have developed project management related standards that are used by practitioners worldwide to guide their professional actions. These standards, which are largely competency-based, have been examined, and treatment of project leadership has been noted. Those standards that do include a significant treatment of project leadership do so from the team-based, servant-based, situational-based, transformation-based perspective that has been so pronounced in the other related work summarized in this paper.

- *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) – Fourth Edition*: Mention is made of leadership as “important through all phases of the project life cycle” (PMI, 2008, p. 240). The document states that the body of knowledge associated with this topic is too in-depth to cover in the publication.

### **Leadership Emphasis**

***PMBOK® Guide*: mention**

***BABOK® Guide*: mention**

***PRINCE2® Standard*: mention**

***FAC-P/PM*: required competency**

***IPMA Competence Baseline*: required element**

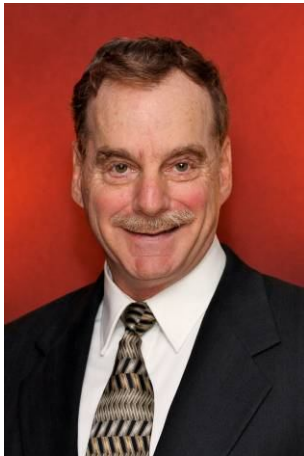
- *A Guide to the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK® Guide) – Version 2.0*: Leadership and influencing is included as one of the underlying competencies that support the practice of business analysis. The document states that the business analyst must understand the individual needs and capabilities of each team member and stakeholder and how those can be most effectively channeled in order to reach the shared objectives.
- *Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM)*: Leadership is included as one of five core competency sets; significant elaboration is included. Required skills include problem solving, conflict management, interpersonal skills, resilience, flexibility, accountability, written communication, customer service, oral communication, team building, political savvy, strategic thinking, decisiveness,

creativity/innovation, developing others, entrepreneurship, external awareness, and vision.

- *IPMA Competence Baseline (ICB) – Version 3.0*: Leadership is included as one of the elements of behavioral competence associated with project management; it is described as a vital competence. The document states that leadership involves providing direction and motivating others in their role or task to fulfill the project's objectives, that it is required throughout the life of a project, and that leadership is particularly important when a project encounters problems, when change is required or where there is uncertainty about a course of action. The document includes the need for the project manager to know what leadership styles exist, and to decide which one is appropriate for the project, the team being managed, and senior management.

*Projects In Controlled Environments 2 (PRINCE2®) – 2009 Refresh*: Mention is made of leadership as “immensely important in project management but impossible to codify in a method.” The document states that leadership styles vary considerably, and there are many effective leadership models.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



***Michael O'Brochta, ACP, PMP***

*Author*



**Michael O'Brochta**, who has managed hundreds of projects during the past thirty years, is also an experienced line manager, author, lecturer, trainer and consultant. He holds a master's degree in project management, a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, and is certified as an ACP and a PMP. As Zozer Inc. President, he is helping organizations raise their level of project management performance. As senior project manager at the Central Intelligence Agency, he led the project management and systems engineering training and certification program to mature practices agency-wide. Mr. O'Brochta's other recent work includes leading the development of standards and courses for the new U.S. Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers. He serves at the PMI corporate level on the Ethics Member Advisory Group where he led the development of an ethical decision-making framework that was released PMI-wide, and at the chapter level where he built and led the international PMIWDC Chapter-to-Chapter program; he is a graduate of the Leadership Institute Mater Class. Mr. O'Brochta has written and presented papers at every PMI North American Global Congress during the past decade as well as at many international, and regional conferences. Topics that he is currently passionate about include how to get executives to act for project success and great project managers. Since his recent climb of another of the world's seven summits, he has been exploring the relationship between project management and mountain climbing. He can be contacted at [mobrochta@zozerinc.com](mailto:mobrochta@zozerinc.com).