On Leadership[1]

A collection of viewpoints on leadership by recognized thought leaders from around the project management world

Yu Yanjuan

Project Management Review[2]

Introduction

There have been many quotes on leadership since ancient times.

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves." This is ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu's description about good leadership.

"Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations." This is definition of leadership given by Peter Drucker.

In the field of project management, leadership is mentioned with increasing frequency. "Projects, programmes and portfolios increasingly rely on leadership," IPMA ICB 4.0 noted. In the 6th version of PMBOK Guide, there is a new section about the role of project managers, talking about PMI talent triangle which includes leadership.

So what is leadership? PMBOK Guide defines leadership as "the knowledge, skills and behaviors needed to guide, motivate, and direct a team to help an organization to achieve its business goals". In IPMA ICB 4.0, leadership means providing direction and guidance to individuals and groups. It involves the ability to choose and apply appropriate styles of management in different situations. Besides displaying leadership with his or her team, the individual needs to be seen as a leader in representing the project to senior management and other interested parties.

And IPMA has released Human Leadership Manifesto: Unleashing human potential over employing human resources; Diversity and dissent over conformity and consensus; Purpose and trust over command and control; Contributions to networks over position in hierarchies; Creating leaders over leading followers; and Courageously exploring the new over efficiently exploiting the old.

---

[1] How to cite this article: PM Review (2018). On Leadership: A collection of viewpoints on leadership by recognized thought leaders from around the project management world; *PM World Journal*, Vol. VII, Issue IX – September.

[2] This collection of viewpoints was originally published in PM Review magazine in China (http://www.pmreview.com.cn/english/). It is republished here as a courtesy to PMR and the various authors. Republished with permission of PMR.

On social media, there are quite a lot of articles that make distinctions between managers and leaders. A good manager is not necessarily a good leader. Peter Docker has pointed out, "Management is about handling complexity. Leadership is about creating simplicity. " Grace Hopper says, "You manage things, you lead people. We went overboard on management and forget leadership."

Leadership is not only competence that can be attained via learning， but also an art, as Warren Bennis said, "To an extent, leadership is like beauty: It's hard to define, but you know it when you see it."

In multi-cultural rapidly-changing digital age, what does good leadership look like? What are the important leadership competences? Here are a collection of experts' viewpoints.

Yu Yanjuan
PMR Magazine

Collection of Viewpoints

Good leadership provides purpose, direction and space to maneuver for people to get things done. It´s of utmost importance to engage the right people. This means, searching and selecting talents matching the tasks given in a project. And then, let them organize the tasks by themselves, do not intervene and trust that the team will find a suitable way towards the target state. The leader is like a gardener, you will plant the seeds, provide the necessary ingredients and protect the growth from adverse influences. Support the development of the team, for example through facilitation, supervision and mentoring. But the more you intervene, the more the team will lean back and wait on your interventions (and stop doing it on their own).

Good leaders are humble, not dominant, supporting the growth of others and not being too much focused on themselves. One leadership competence is forward looking, understanding future scenarios, developing roadmaps and "making sense" to activities of an organization. Second, setting the right context for a project team is more helpful than performing micro management. A leader is taking care for the business case and the strategic direction, providing suitable resources and space for the team. The skills listed in the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline related to the competence element "leadership" include but are not limited to personal self-awareness, listening skills, emotional strength, capacity to express and share values, creating team spirit, communication and (virtual) team development. I personally add "cultural awareness" to this list, especially in a culturally diverse context this competence is crucial for success.

Reinhard Wagner

Here are my top traits for good leaders:

Honesty – This is the basis for professional ethics, in my opinion. Leaders and followers cannot work together if there is no trust. Followers must trust their leaders, which requires that leaders

be honest in what they say and how they act. This then translates to following laws and regulations and opposing corruption of all kinds.

Knowledgeable – Leaders must know what they are talking about; they must have technical understanding of the work (and project scope). This is true in every field. Although many traits of good leaders (and good project managers) are applicable across industries and organizations, I do not believe that project managers can be effective leaders in fields they are unfamiliar with.

Open to Learning – Changes now occur continuously in every aspect of life, especially related to science and technologies. Program and project conditions are continuously changing; effective project leaders are aware of this, adapt and grow throughout their careers. Learning must apply to all aspects of leadership – personal, social, technical. Continuous learning must be a fundamental focus for project leaders. Change can be good; embrace positive changes.

Caring about others – People will seldom follow selfish leaders for very long. The most effective project leaders, for example, are personally and visibly focused on stakeholders – employees, customers, owners, public. Those who follow selfish and dishonest leaders do so because the leader has power (and often money), not because of good leadership.

David Pells

Humility sustains leadership; arrogance limits it.

There are eight core competencies every leader should possess: Communication, Leadership, Adaptability, Task Management, Relationships, Production, Development of Others and most importantly Personal Mastery.

Successful Leadership is a demonstration of a true example. We lead by the example we set. The example that should be set is the delivery of the Desired Results for the organization. If you expound on virtues or techniques that you do not follow or demonstrate yourself, those that follow your leadership will fail and then wonder why. This can only reflect badly on you as the leader. Teach and live what you teach to be the type of leader that will stand the test of time.

Terence Jackson

Good leadership is adapted to the situation. As we all tend to recognize good leaders when we see them, I see they are exhibiting passion, they have and communicate a vision, they inspire rather than pushing, they empower and encourage rather than manage and they care about the people. The sign of a good leader is when nobody notices the leader was there.

I remember the story of a young refugee girl on a boat when that boat got into trouble and was about to sink, she jumped into the water and as a good swimmer she pulled it towards the shore. Others followed her and everybody was saved. She was invited to the Olympic Games in Rio.

Be human and try to follow the universal human values: passion and love (others), respect and embrace diversity, responsibility and commitment, honesty and trust, fairness and equality, community and care for others, courage and decisiveness, overall positive thinking. Leaders are giving hope and reduce fear and uncertainty.

Thomas Walenta

The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly."

Jim Rohn

Leaders are those who have faith in the future, himself and others. It is for this reason that leaders will not rush for immediate results, will not show off themselves, and will not flaunt their power.

Ding Ronggui

Leadership is about guiding people, by thinking openly and uniquely, looking further into the future, and acting with the fullest courage, to resolve various potential and actual conflicts in order to achieve the team's common objectives.

Wang Xiaojin

There is much I could say on what good leadership looks like, but for me the most important part of good leadership is for the leader to be authentic, to be who they are and not try to be something they are not. Of course, there will be times when the leader has to 'step out' of themselves and adopt different styles, or methods, but as long as they remain themselves in doing so, they will still command respect and will be listened to.

The leader must be able to set a vision of what his or her team can become and why embarking on that journey is right for the business, for the project, for the customer and most importantly, for themselves. He or she needs to create an environment that allows their team members to nurture and grow and they should never be afraid of someone in their team becoming more capable than they are at becoming a leader.

A great leader must inspire, motivate, challenge and encourage, but above all, they must listen. Not just to what people are saying, but to what is not being said. One of the best pieces of business advice I was ever given was 'always listen to what people don't say'. That has proved to be invaluable.

What are the important leadership competencies?

Emotional intelligence. This is key. The leader must be able to sense the mood amongst his or her team. They must, as I have just said, listen first and speak second. They must be able to

adapt to changing circumstances and have exceptional communication skills. They must have energy, desire and passion and they must realize that their responsibility is to help people to become more competent and capable than they are. They must have focus on the goals to be achieved and ensure that their team are able to play to the strengths they have. They must focus on behaviours and not on people and be clear, what is and is not, acceptable by way of behaving. They should not be afraid to say "I depend on you" and they must be resolute in doing what they believe to be right, but then not be afraid of admitting when they were wrong.

Paul Hodgkins

Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge. Leadership is not a rank or position to be attained. Leadership is a service to be given. Under poor leaders we feel like we work for the company. With good leaders we feel like we work for each other. The true value of a leader is not measured by the work they do. The true value of a leader is measured by the work they inspire others to do.

Simon Sinek

You can't be a good leader unless you generally like people. Great leaders are great listeners, who know their best asset is the people they work with.

Richard Branson

Leadership is based on inspiration, not domination; on cooperation, not intimidation.

William Arthur Wood

To learn more about PMR magazine, visit
http://www.pmreview.com.cn/english/

About the Author

Yu Yanjuan

Beijing, China

Yu Yanjuan, Bachelor's Degree, graduated from the English Department of Beijing International Studies University (BISU) in China. She is now an English-language journalist and editor working for Project Management Review Magazine and website. In the past, she has worked as a journalist and editor for China Manned Space Agency website and *Student English Times*. She once worked part-time as English teacher in training centers. For work contact, she can be reached via email yuyanjuan2005@163.com or Linkedin https://www.linkedin.com/in/yanjuan-yu-76b280151/.