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Series Article

Enhancing Project Team Competency and Effectiveness
through Authentic Leadership – Part 2
Positive Leadership in Project Management
by Frank Saladis

Positive Leadership in Project Management[1]

Enhancing Project Team Competency and Effectiveness Through Authentic Leadership – Part 2 [2]

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

Continuing the focus on enhancing team competency and adding to the concepts presented in part one of this article, we begin by once again asking the questions:

What organization would establish a slogan or motto that says "We're really not too bad" or "We are not quite as good as everyone else but we are ok!" or "Someday we will actually get it right?

Or how about: "We have more under-achievers than anyone!"

Organizations need top people or people who, through training and mentoring, can perform at levels that will meet client demands, exceed expectations, and provide the value needed to achieve strategic goals. Experts in the subject of leadership know that strong, effective leaders surround themselves with good people who are innovative, willing to learn new skills, and willing to test limits now and then. Creating this type of "opportunity environment" will attract the best people and encourage them to stay.

When it comes to attracting and selecting people, General Colin Powell offered some "rules" for picking people:

> o "Look for intelligence and judgment, and most critically, a capacity to anticipate, to see around corners. Also, look for loyalty, integrity, a high level of energy, a balanced ego, and the drive to get things done."

In the project environment, managing a project is a challenging job and it takes a person with a very wide range of skills, especially leadership skills, to become an effective project manager. The project manager position also requires high levels of energy to sustain that effectiveness while managing and leading a project team and engaging stakeholders at the appropriate levels. Most project managers will agree that the title "project manager" is actually a dual role – Leader and Manager. These major roles include several "sub-roles" that will emerge during the life cycle of a project. As Vijay Verma explains in his book "Human Resource Skills for Project Managers, PMI ®, project managers have several unique roles:

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[1]This article is one in a series on Positive Leadership in Project Management by Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow, popular speaker and author of books on leadership in project management published by Wiley and IIL in the United States. Frank is widely known as the originator of the International Project Management Day, the annual celebrations and educational events conducted each November by PMI members, chapters and organizations around the world. Learn more in his profile at the end of this article.

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As a leader
- Set direction and vision
- Inspire teamwork
- Align employees
- Motivate and support
- Listen more
- Demonstrate compassion
- Drive innovation and creativity
- Acknowledge successes and victories

As a manager
- Plan the project and prepare a budget
- Organize work groups
- Staff the project
- Ensure the project is in control
- Emphasize timeliness and quality
- Review team performance
- Manage processes
- Provide status to key stakeholders
- Protect organizational interests
- Act as an agent for the organization

For project managers to achieve greater levels of effectiveness and to advance within their organizations, they must continuously fine-tune their leadership skills. By doing this they will be also be fine tuning the skills and competencies of their project teams. Leaders who continually develop their skills will see a by-product: the skills of the team members also improve. This is often referred to as "Servant Leadership."

The term "Leader" is defined by J.D Batten, in his book, Tough Minded Leadership- AMACOM, as the development of a clear and complete system of expectations in order to identify, evoke, and use the strengths of all resources in the organization, the most important of which is people. In the project environment the project manager relies on his or her team to perform the work, report status as well as problems and work together to achieve the project objectives. If we consider the people on the team as the most important resource, it makes sense to focus on their needs as well as the needs of other stakeholders to ensure project success. This is a further definition of the previously mentioned term "Servant Leader."

Leadership in the context of project management, can then be defined as the ability to get things done efficiently, to meet stakeholder expectations, and to deliver the project's product with high quality and business value, through the efforts of the team.

Considering all of the factors mentioned, here is a very simple way to explain the key elements of leadership. It's basically Project Leadership in a Nutshell – adapted from "Human Resource Skills for The Project Manager," Vijay Verma

L = Listen to your project team and stakeholders. (really listen!)

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E = Encourage the heart of the team members (motivate them through your actions and empower them. Create the WOW environment that will drive performance
A = Act (demonstrate your abilities by setting the example, inspire the team, walk the talk. (You know this: actions speak louder than words)
D = Deliver (provide what you said you would provide and follow through on promises. Don't make promises you can't keep and make sure you meet your commitments.

Continuous Self Development

Project leaders should continuously look for ways to improve their leadership abilities. The Professional and Social Responsibility element of professional project management as defined by a Project Management Institute ® Role Delineation Study a few years ago, emphasizes sharing of lessons learned, consciousness of ethical behavior, and appreciation for cultural differences, as part of the overall role of the project manager. This applies to leadership also. Leaders should look back at decisions they have made, analyze what has been accomplished, identify where improvements are necessary, and act on those lessons. A good practice is to ask yourself a few questions after a decision has been made and implemented – "Did it really accomplish what I had intended? How do I know that? Who was affected by that decision? How could I have handled it differently? Am I personally satisfied with the outcome? Why or why not? Take a minute to analyze the results. Think about the decision and the rationale that made it the "right decision." Think about how the decision was communicated. Was it clearly explained? If a decision results in a negative reaction, discontent, conflict, and lower morale you may want to ask yourself "How could I have done that better? What didn't I do? Where did the breakdown occur? Not all decisions should be deeply scrutinized but it is a good practice to understand the impact of a decision and how people react to decisions, especially those that will have a significant impact on your stakeholders.

A Personal Leadership Plan

The reality is that improving the effectiveness and competency of the project team starts with the project manager (the project leader). Every project manager should consider developing a personal leadership development plan. A self-assessment using a SWOT analysis type approach may provide a good basis for developing an ongoing improvement program. Assessing personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats can help establish priorities, especially if the project manager aspires to achieve higher levels of responsibility and advance within an organization.

Leadership SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis technique, commonly used in strategic planning and in identifying and managing risk, is also an effective model for mapping out a strategy for personal development. Organizational leaders use the model to develop a framework from which to determine their long and short term objectives. Project managers and team leaders can use the model to analyze their leadership and managerial abilities and create a plan for developing new skills or for enhancing existing skills. It also assists in identifying areas that could cause significant team performance problems or open new doors of opportunity.

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Leadership SWOT Analysis Template

Strengths	Opportunities
What skills do I possess that help me accomplish my goals? Examples: - Communication - Presentation - Planning - Organizing - Listening - Facilitating - Problem Solving - Innovation and Entrepreneurship - Creativity / Innovation - Relationship building - Negotiating	What opportunities exist at the project level and at the personal level? Examples: - Additional revenue and sales at project completion - New and more challenging project assignment - Sharing of knowledge with others in the organization - Promotion of team members - Promotion to higher level position - Increased customer satisfaction - Add on business and new clients

Weaknesses	Threats
What weaknesses have I noticed or have been defined through feedback? Examples: - Failure to follow through on promises - Technical knowledge is limited - Slow response to team requests - Time management - Lack of visibility - Failure to provide feedback on a timely basis - Lack of availability to the team - Micromanaging the team - Failure to set clear expectations	What threats exist that should be removed? Examples: - Project failure due to poor leadership - Loss of job assignment - Loss of key project team members - Project cancellation - Loss of personal credibility and integrity - Legal issues - Ethics violations - Behavioral issues

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A leadership SWOT analysis will assist the project manager in identifying where additional training, support, or mentoring is required. A similar approach can be taken for the project team. The key is to exploit strengths, resolve and strengthen weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and remove or minimize threats. The action items developed to address these areas, when properly executed, will result in higher levels of performance and efficiency within the team, and increased leadership effectiveness.

Closing Thoughts

People who study leadership and attempt to define it may not fully agree on one universal definition, but we all know that strong, effective leadership is essential in every organization. People will respond to leaders who can set direction, gather the right resources, and get things done by working with the talents of their team members. Those leaders who set aside their egos and their personal goals in favor of the greater needs of the organization will generally receive the respect and loyalty of their team and colleagues. Those factors are worth far more than the momentary glory associated with an "ego feeding" episode. Keep your leadership approach "positive." It's not about being popular, it's about being fair, respectful, and focused on team success.

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Frank P. Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow is the Owner/Founder of Blue Marble Enterprizes Inc. and Project Imaginers. Frank is an accomplished leader and contributor in the discipline of project management. He is the author of 12 published books, the past editor of the All PM Newsletter and the author of over 160 project management articles. Frank provides training and consulting internationally and has educated and entertained countless audiences with a special blend of project management knowledge and tasteful humor. He is also an experienced and well-known project management instructor and consultant and a member of the PMI ® Seminars World team of trainers. Mr. Saladis' 35 year career includes 28.5 years with AT&T, 3 years with Cisco Systems, and more than 25 years as a professional trainer, facilitator, mentor and keynote speaker.

Frank is the Originator/Founder of International Project Management Day which launched in 2004 and has been growing in recognition yearly. The goal of International Project Management Day is the worldwide recognition of the many project managers and project teams in every industry including nonprofit organizations and health care who contribute their time, energy, creativity, innovation, and countless hours to deliver products, services, facilities, and provide emergency and disaster recovery services in every city and community around the world.

Frank was PMI's 2006 Person of the Year. Frank is a Project Management Professional, a graduate from the PMI Leadership Institute Master's class, and has contributed significantly to the organization's growth and knowledge base for more than 20 years. His leadership activity within PMI included the position of President of the New York City PMI chapter from 1991-2001, President of the Assembly of Chapter Presidents, and Chair of the Education and Training Specific Interest Group. He received the high honor of the "PMI Fellow Award" in October 2013 and received the very prestigious "PMI Distinguished Contribution Award" in October 2015.

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