

Positive Leadership in Project Management ¹

Developing “Connectic - Energy” ²

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

The mindful and effective leader inherently knows that organizational success depends on the commitment of the employees or the team. This requires the leader to “lead with purpose.” The person who has assumed a leadership position becomes the team enabler and, through his or her actions, creates the environment for success. Project managers who believe that they must control the team through orders, disciplinary measures, and formal authority are missing the point. The primary role of the project manager not to be a boss, it is to work with the team members to ensure that each team member is in control of his or her job assignments and making sure the team members understand the integrative and collaborative nature of the work. As stated many times in project management publications and articles, project managers, when assigned to a project, are placed in a leadership position and must assume accountability for project success in addition to any other responsibilities. Some project managers are what we may call “hybrid” managers, part project manager and part functional or technical manager with the dual responsibility of performing a technical function along with the duties associated with ensuring the integration of the many components and entities associated with the project.

The leadership part of the job can present some major challenges. This area of responsibility and accountability requires the project manager to demonstrate the ability to focus the team on the total project and how their specific pieces of the project puzzle fit together to create the total solution. It is not simply about making sure each task is completed on time. Leaders know that each person and each part of the project is critical to achieving the **desired** result. The project leader knows that it is important for each team member to be committed to **total project success** and not to individual accomplishment. There is no question that setting expectations about performance is important, but if leaders focus more on results than on supporting the efforts of the performers, the team members may lose interest or develop an adversarial relationship with the project manager. This would likely lead to failure in achieving the goals of the

¹This 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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project. Specifically the project could experience a break down into independent working units (basically internal project silos), a shift from team focused results to individual performance, and a failure to achieve the inter-connections needed to bring each part of the project into one total and complete deliverable.

Customers generally don't accept pieces of a project. They want the whole thing and they want what was defined in the requirements and performance agreements. If the project leader cannot create a team of inter-dependent performers who support each other and focus on the total end result, there is no authentic leadership and synergy. Success would be doubtful.

Project managers must build an inspired, committed team. This is accomplished, in part, by project managers who understand the connection of the project to the organization's purpose, can visibly demonstrate that understanding, and are capable of deeply connecting with the project team by inspiring confidence and utilizing an empowering form of leadership.

Project managers who understand leadership know that people can be influenced (not manipulated) by creating relationships in which there is respect shared between the team members and the leader. This is accomplished by creating an “environment of acknowledgement” in which team members feel that their work is appreciated and respected by the leader.

The Environment of Acknowledgement

There are many people who accomplish their goals through other people simply by asking for support. The question is “How do they do it?” A major factor is the connection the leader forms with the individual and with other team members. Leaders don't give orders; they inspire people to take action. The inspiration comes from establishing a feeling of self-worth within the performer, and a true belief that the task they have been asked to perform is beneficial not only to the person performing it, but to the project or organization as a whole.

Leadership is about encouragement, motivation, and creating value, not about giving orders. Team members or employees, in most cases, desire to do a good job. If they are provided with the appropriate work environment and receive visible support from the leader, along with some direction, guidance, and encouragement, they will do their best.

Considering these factors, it is important for the leader to make a strong connection with his or her team members. Genuine support from the team cannot be demanded or ordered by the leader, it has to be earned. The most effective leaders are seen, almost on a daily basis, mingling with and connecting with team members, asking questions, listening to suggestions, and offering support.

The Connective Leadership Institute (<https://connectiveleadership.com/connective-leadership/>) refers to today’s economic and business environment as the Connective Era and suggests that there is a call for new leadership strategies to enable individuals and groups with diverse – and potentially conflicting – backgrounds, talents, and agendas to live and work together productively, creatively, and harmoniously for their mutual benefit.

Connectic-Energy

Considering the presence of the Connective Era, today’s leaders must create a different and higher form of energy and commitment than what is typically used today in the pursuit of project or organizational success. I describe that energy as “**CONNECTIC-ENERGY**”©. This term is derived from the words Kinetic -relating to, or resulting from motion, and Energeia - activity, operation, the strength and vitality required for sustained physical or mental activity. Using these definitions as a basis, Connectic-Energy is defined as:

- *The sustained energy experienced through a continuous movement forward, refueled by authentic leadership, communication, lessons learned, teamwork, sharing of experiences, and visionary leadership.*

Effective leaders will create Connectic-Energy and take the necessary steps to ensure that they are well connected with their teams. It is important to remain visible, ask questions, offer encouragement, and most importantly, listen to ideas and suggestions. Create an environment where your team members feel that you are genuinely interested in their views and want them to be involved in decisions about the future of the team and or the organization. A connective style of leadership is instrumental to success, especially in the current worldwide situation.

About the Author



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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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