

Project Management Skills to survive in Pandemic Times ¹

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Nobody could imagine some months ago the current pandemic worldwide situation. We, as project managers, that need to dream, reflect upon, plan and take action, now are constrained by the current challenging and difficult environment finding ourselves living in **pandemic times**. It's apparent that this extreme experience is new for everyone, everywhere. It is hard to see how this tragedy is little by little getting worst. Risk and uncertainty are surrounding us day by day.

I don't know how many people prepared themselves for these times. In fact, as a PM consultant I have experienced a lack of training and consulting business demand since February this year. Even when all of us should be aware of our current situation and need to move forward for business and personal survival. I had the misfortune of losing my sister-in-law because of the pandemic. It was an unexpected event that happened. It was a shock for the whole family, she was still young and healthy, but she passed away. How to be prepared for challenging and hard times is also a need for any **complete project manager**. We need to develop better and better skills, that for sure will not avoid events like what I mentioned, but at least they will be enduring us for the future.

During these times I had some time to reflect about our pandemic situation and want to share my thoughts with you:

1. **Develop project manager immunity:** I believe we need to cultivate physical and mental health. The physical immune system needs to handle the infection and invasion of the COVID-19 virus. The second kind of immunity we need is the emotional immune system to deal with the rapid infection and spread of fear, anxiety, negative attitude and worry.
2. **Learning to deal with continuous adversity:** Some people called resilience, flexibility or endurance. We now need to deal with 360-degree adversity arriving all day long. It's a situation in which we attempt to solve a problem but it is resulting only in temporary or minor improvement. One part of me barely gets upright before getting knocked down by the COVID-19 mallet, then another part pops up and gets whacked, and then another part gets whacked; you know the feeling. Be persistent by learning from previous experiences and you will improve.
3. **Cultivate a positive attitude:** To whack back, it's important to gather the energy and resources needed to get up every morning, stay upright during tough days,

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and bounce back fast as new challenges emerge throughout the day. Be focused on the small positive things that we have. Please find them every day (they are there, you are still alive, you need to manage projects to contribute to your society, business, family...).

Develop your Pandemic Mindset

You need to be inspired to inspire anybody else. Some skills are coming to my mind that I suggest you to develop:

- **Compassion** comes first because we are navigating a colossal amount of suffering. This situation requires a new kind of mindset. Breath deeply every day and concentrate on the positive small facts. You cannot change the facts but you can manage your reactions in front of them.
- **Being connected** with everyone we know and don't know. We are all in this together. Please think about you are an excellent person (I mean you are always ready to run a more mile to achieve your objective.).
- **Being kind**, kindness and care for ourselves and our fellow human beings, some who are in harm's way and others who are doing their best to avoid or prevent harm.
- **Being calm** because we can't focus, think straight, or make the right decisions and choices in each moment without calming a fearful, frenzied mind.
- **Being strong and positive** is being grounded in our inner and outer resources – resources gained from past adverse experiences, unique strengths we've cultivated, and support systems that we can lean on for a boost from time to time. Strength also comes from consciously and continually attending to the positive - harvesting the good things in our lives, all that we have to be grateful for, and all the possible upsides of this experience.
- **Being purposeful** is very important. We need an inner compass to give our activities direction, one that is deeply motivating. What is our vision for who we want to be in these times? What meaningful contribution do we want to make? What higher purpose does this experience serve? What can we do that we will be proud of when this phase is in the rear-view mirror? What intention is important to bring to each moment?

Some habits for Pandemic Times

These difficult times call for new habits of mind and body that fuel and refuel, similar habits to those that foster well-being in better times, but with an upgrade to deal with extremes. Engage in mindset habits of compassion, calm, strength, positive attitude and

purpose to keep moving forward. Your team members and stakeholders will thank you because now you are not physically close to them.

Be disciplined, wake up at the same time every day and do some physical exercise, take a bath or a shower, have healthy food, sleep well, and zooming warm social connections and rich conversations. A little fun, humour and creativity go a long way too, like dealing with social isolation, or singing or playing music. Skype with your team members and peers and chat about non business-related subjects. Exchange thoughts and ideas.

Leading in Pandemic Times

As project managers we are supposed to be good leaders, but we need to start by leading ourselves in our current situation. Start with you. We have been converted into virtual workers, now you are managing people by engaging them with your comments, gestures and expressions. Many of us cannot exit home and we need to get our teams working and connected looking for effective results. Practice in front of the mirror every day and smile as your first feeling in the morning. Charge your batteries of positivism for the day and persist.

Apply my three Ps (passion, persistence and patience) and I am sure you will succeed as a human being and as a good leader.

TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER!

About the Author



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