PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

Project Leadership – Top 10 Cardinal Principles

Part I

Hareshchandra Thakur, PMP

Associate Vice President, Project Management, Energy Solutions, Wärtsilä India Pvt. Ltd.

Abstract

Although all the Project Managers (PMs) have been adopting the best practices in the project management framework and have been following the guidelines and methodologies, we find that some project teams deliver consistently good results year after year as compared to the others. This paper explores the specific areas that have enabled the project teams in enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness. Based on the feedback from the Stakeholders (SHs), discussions with the project teams, vendors and sub-contractors, we have evaluated the core principles that distinguishes the PLs amongst PMs. The aim of this paper is to elucidate these core principles that enables the PMs to excel in their roles and emerge as Project Leaders (PLs).

End result: Enhanced Efficiency & Effectiveness - prelude to SHs satisfaction.

Key Words: Efficiency, Effectiveness, Stakeholders, Project Success, Project Leaders

Nomenclature:	
EI – Emotional Intelligence	PM – Project Manager
PL – Project Leader	SH – Stakeholder

Introduction

 "If you want something new, you have to stop doing something old." Peter Drucker

Digitization clubbed with operating on Internet of Things (IoT) has not only ramped up the competition and disrupted the industries, but also forced the businesses to realign their strategies, develop new capabilities, and transform their working culture. Its impact and influence can be witnessed in each and every sphere of our lives and project management is no exception.

In order to attain and sustain a leading edge in the competitive market, it is important that we innovate and work in a creative manner. Today, the leading Project organisations are emphasizing on trainings and building the competences of their PMs, particularly in the areas of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Leadership - this is the need of the hour.

This paper examines the core principles which help transform PMs to PLs (PLs). As remarked by one of our customers, "***The mark of successful PMs is that they act as project leaders, set the direction, guide their team members to reach the right destination, in a smooth and efficient way***".

Key Result Areas

Feedback received from various Stakeholders (SHs) has been collated and analysed to arrive at the key factors that have led to enhancing the effectiveness of the PL. For ease of

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

remembering and co-relating the contribution of these principles in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of the project team, the acronym "EFFECTIVE" and a letter "S" is used to best describe the top ten cardinal principles of Project Leadership.

Project Leadership – Top 10 Cardinal Principles

- **E** – Engage and Align the SHs + Each & Every SH is important
- **F** – Focus on drivers for SHs, Where We want to go and not What we Fear
- **F** - Foster healthy working relationship between SHs
- **E** - Emotions & Feelings at interplay and govern project outcomes
- **C** - Communicate – Convey intended messages - Clearly & Concisely
- **T** - Test your assumptions. Untested assumptions are Risks!!
- **I** - Identify SHs, SHs Needs, Wants & Expectations + "Wish List"
- **V** - Value SHs opinions + Look out for what is "valuable" to SHs
- **E** - Empower team members – No micromanaging please!!

+

- **S** – Social Sensitivity - Sensitiveness to culture & respecting cultural differences
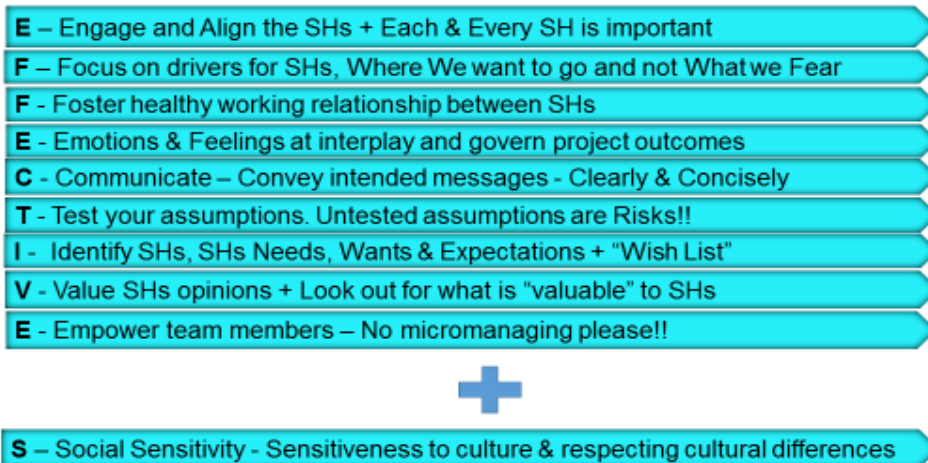
Figure – 1 : Project Leadership – Top 10 Cardinal Principles

The underlying principles, their value addition and the associated pitfalls if not acted upon are highlighted in the paragraphs below.

> Note : While Part 1 focuses on the first five cardinal principles, balance five would be covered in Part *2 i.e. second and concluding part of this paper.*

Top 5 Cardinal Principles leading to enhance Efficiency & Effectiveness

1. E – Engage and Align the SHs

"Great Leaders tell purposeful stories. They move people to action by aiming at the heart."
-- Peter Guber

PLs primarily operate with an understanding that working in a project team is akin to performing in an orchestra where the team members work in unison, striking the right notes at the right time leading to perfectly synchronized soothing music.

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
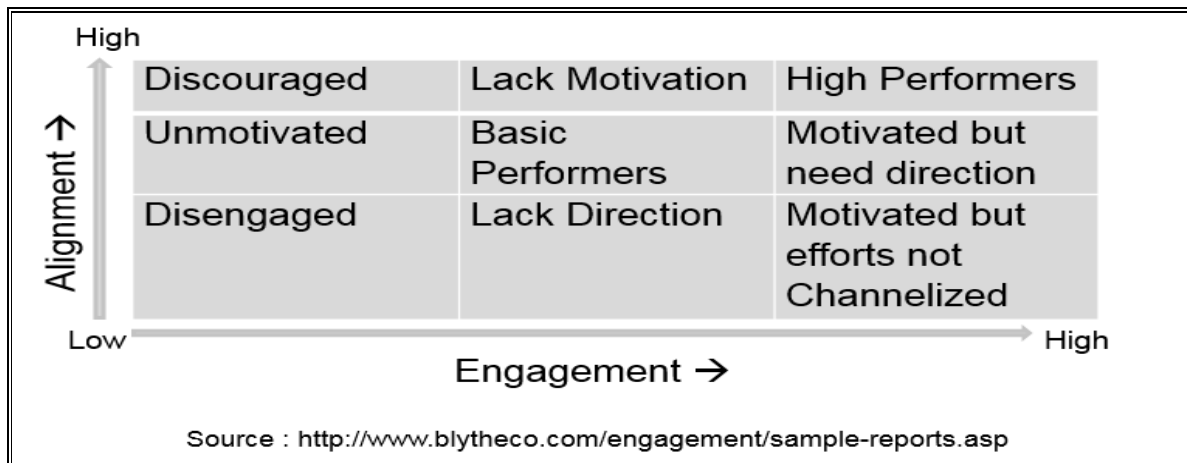by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

Figure – 2 : Relationship between Engagement & Alignment

Research Scientists have proved that the alignment and engagement plays an important role and has a direct impact on an individual's performance. Individuals with high engagement as well as high alignment are high performers whereas those with low engagement and alignment, work half-heartedly, display lower energy levels and lack of enthusiasm.

A PL works towards alignment of the work force. He ensures that each team member understands and appreciates the need of the projects, the team's role in meeting the project objectives and above all the business needs of the organisation. Engaging the SHs right from the planning stage sets the ball rolling, leading to elevated team spirits. More importantly, the PLs are quick to sense and pick up the signals about misalignment and disengagement, if any. They initiate corrective action to realign the team and create a conducive environment leading to higher levels of engagement. Higher engagement becomes evident when the individuals take ownership, work as a cohesive unit and displays higher energy and enthusiasm. As rightly remarked by one SH – ***"Working with such teams is always exciting, the individuals not only take ownership but also support each other, the team members act with beaming energy as if they have some special shoes fitted with special launching pads".***

2. "F - Focus on the drivers for SHs, Where We Want To Go <u>and not</u> What We Fear

"Individuals may win matches …………… but the team wins trophies". -- Anonymous

Daniel H. Pink[3] in his book, "Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us" has pointed out that the chief drivers for work are:
1. Gratification of our needs, wants & desires.
2. Rewards or Punishments.
3. Feel good factor - the work itself acts as the source of inspiration & enjoyment.

Monetary benefits in form of spot bonuses act as a motivator for some individuals whereas some feel elated when they receive attention and appreciation. Recognition in the form of a merit certificate, equally serve as a booster for some individuals. As such, using monetary benefits as the motivator do not always yield the desired results. Dr. Daniel Pink further argues that the old models of motivation driven rewards and fear of punishment are predominantly based on extrinsic factors. These have a limited usage and are usually associated with "If-Then" scenarios which over a period have lost its impact and

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

acceptability. Dr. Daniel Pink recommends that in order to maximize the enjoyment and productivity for 21st century work, we need to upgrade our thinking to include Autonomy (Desire to be self-directed), Mastery (to acquire better skills) and Purpose (Desire to do something that has meaning and is important) in our motivation model. The upgrade we now need, is based on the fact that humans have internal drive to learn, to create, and to improve the world, showing clear signs of intrinsic motivation.

Acting on the above recommendations, the progressive PLs consciously study their SHs and align their motivational strategies based on the SHs drivers – extrinsically or intrinsically motivated.

"Failure is unavoidable in our lives. But if I can learn something from it every time, the chance of success will only increase." – Anonymous

"It is how you deal with failure that determines how you achieve success." - Anonymous.

Success and failures are an integral part of our lives and Project Management is no exception. Some PMs are known to carry the baggage of their past happenings and ruin their professional career fearing about reoccurrence of their past events. PLs follow a simple principle advocated by Anthony Robbins – "***Focus on where we want to go, <u>not on</u> what we fear. Our ability to bounce back determines our success in the long run***."

Overwhelmed by our past experiences, we tend to carry the setbacks and failures, thereby clouding our minds and hampering rational thinking. Decisions made in such moments are almost always erroneous. PLs have high resilience and act with vigor without getting perturbed by their past failures. In fact, they utilize failure as their guiding blocks. They quickly learn from their mistakes and develop their confidence in handling similar situations.

Some of the PMs do not like to share the negative aspects, for they fear about the repercussions which burden their minds and restrict free flow of thought. This fear is usually ill founded and influenced by other's perceptions. PLs act proactively and raise the early warning signal for all the SHs clearly elucidating the foreseen risks, its impact, probable solution and its cost. Well-equipped with the possible cause and effect, the SHs find it easier to arrive at the solution and minimise the impact of risk.

It is important to set our sails and adjust with the currents and winds not only to stay in the race but win it convincingly.

3. F - Foster healthy working relationship between SHs

"Working on any project requires working in harmony with other team members. Else, we only produce chaos." - Anonymous

"Respect for self, Respect for others and Responsibility for what we do". – Dalai Lama.

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

Research scientists have proved that Trust, Openness and Transparency are the foundations for building harmonious relationships and integrating these with the above 3 R principle advocated by Dalai Lama have immensely helped in bonding and fostering the working relationships with the SHs. Discord and disharmony often results in conflicts and the same is reflected in poor quality of work, time and cost overruns. It is a well-known fact that the effort, time and cost for repairs are always a strain on any project and need to be avoided at first place.

Conflicts within the team often acts as speed breakers and impede our speed of work. Traditionally, conflicts were perceived as something dysfunctional and failing to serve any purpose. However, today, conflicts are mainly attributable to difference of opinion and not necessarily clash of personalities. A PL leads the way in creating an environment where the team members are encouraged to share their viewpoints, consider the alternatives and adopt the best solution thereby ensuring success. In fact, PLs are good at utilizing this aspect (difference of opinion) as an opportunity to look at the possible solutions emanating from different perspectives and resolve the differences. As such, effective conflict resolution has paves the way for the team members to work collaboratively and enables the teams to achieve actions once deemed as impossible.

"A healthy relationship doesn't drag you down, it inspires you to be better..." Mandy Hole

A word of caution here, particularly while working in a shared office space on site – open/semi-open layouts, it is essential to show respect for others - avoiding loud conversations on phone calls, switching over to soft ring tones, lowering the ring tone volume etc. go a long way in demonstrating care for others, avoiding distractions and reducing the irritation levels. Above all, it is important that we maintain a professional & courteous attitude and observe the code of conduct with sacrosanctity.

4. E - Emotions & Feelings are at interplay and govern the project outcomes

"Our emotions are driven by biological impulses. These biological impulses are beyond our control, but the resulting emotions are not. When emotions are running high, they certainly cannot be ignored – but they can be carefully managed. This is called self-regulation, and it's the quality of emotional intelligence that liberates us from living like hostages to our impulses." – Daniel Goleman

Social scientists have proved that any outcome is a culmination of our decisions, actions and the actions of others. Moreover, our behaviour and actions have a direct bearing on others actions, ultimately influencing and impacting the end results as is evident from the Fig-3. Our emotions and feelings are at interplay and govern the end results.

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
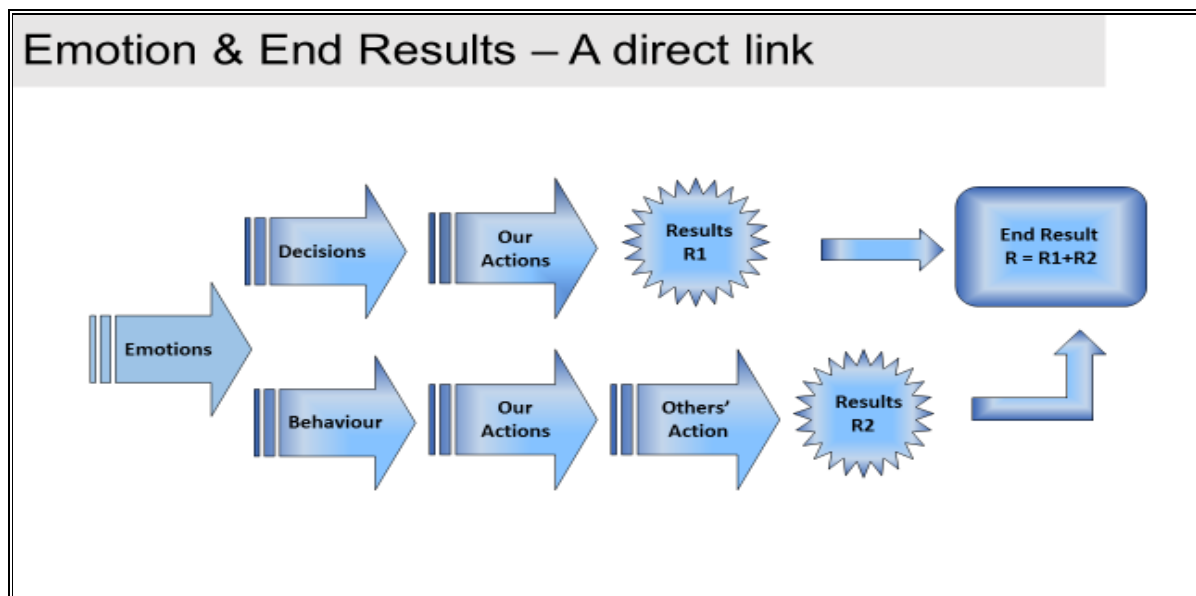by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

Figure – 3: Emotion & End Results – A direct link

Emotions & feelings are integral part of human beings and are often equated with the chief constituents of human body i.e. blood and water. Some social scientists have stressed that without emotions and feelings, human beings would be mere robots.

"The giant key to success is to deal with the challenges of the moment without losing sight of the promises of the future". ...Robin Sharma.

This quote emphasizes the need for being in the present, handling the current challenging situations rather than allowing the past to cloud our minds. PLs understand that the decisions we take now have a direct bearing on the results in future. They demonstrate application of EI and reflect on the probable causes of the failure - Was it a lack of effort? Was there something holding his/her team at a disadvantage? What responsibility is he/she willing to take up? After a thoughtful reflection, a self-regulated leader brings the team back together and discusses the consequences before providing his objective assessment to reach a solution.

Handling criticism is yet another area where PLs excel. They realize that each of us carry a wealth of experience and knowledge and that we all have the tendency to cling to our opinions. We usually take criticism as a personal attack and end up viciously thinking as to why he/she made such comment. Remember, we are not our beliefs. If others disagree with our beliefs, it does not mean we are any less intellectually capable. At the same time, the PLs simply do not abandon their beliefs and just adopt others' viewpoint indiscriminately. Respecting individual's perspective by effective listening and valuing others' opinion have been the key factors that have helped the PLs in better understanding and evaluating their team's success

"Emotions are the next frontier to be understood and conquered. To manage our emotions is not to drug them or suppress them, but to understand them so that we can intelligently direct our emotional energies and intentions.... It's time for human beings to grow up emotionally, to mature into emotionally managed and responsible citizens. No magic pill will do it."
-- Doc Childre

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

"By starving emotions we become humourless, rigid and stereotyped; by repressing them we become literal, reformatory and holier-than-thou; encouraged, they perfume life; discouraged, they poison it."-- Joseph Collins

5. *Communicate – Convey the intended messages - Clearly & Concisely:*

Research has proved that over 70% of the project conflicts are attributable to improper communication. Primarily, communication gaps are as a result of the following - gap in conveying the intended message, delay in receipt of the needed information, incomplete and inadequate information, and improper usage of words and tonality of messages. PLs recognise that communication is the backbone for any successful project and evaluate the information needs of various SHs to determine the communication channels.

Some PMs are known to operate on - "I am responsible for what I say, not for what you understand" and at first it seems like an irrefutable axiom. However, it is essential that we all understand that we are not only responsible for what we say but also for what is understood by recipients. Above all, we are responsible for our intention in the communication. There is no way around it as the responsibility is ours!

It is suggested that we adopt Mehrabian's "7%-38%-55% Rule". The findings in support of this golden principle states that the verbal impact is just 7% whereas the non-verbal impact of tone (38%) and gestures (55%) adds up to 93%. When speaking on phone, the chances of being misunderstood is 55% (one cannot see the gestures of speaker), whereas while communicating on emails, the chances of being misinterpreted/misunderstood can be as high as 93% (both the tonality (38%) and gestures (55%) are missing) as it solely depends upon the recipient's interpretation of the contents irrespective of our good intentions. The emails and letters therefore have to be crisp and clear. Simply said adopt *KISS* – Keep it Sweet & Simple.

"What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention". Herbert Simon

Special care needs to be exercised while communicating with the individuals from different cultures. While communicating with SHs from high-context culture (Japan, Finland, Germany & other European Countries), few words can communicate a complex message very effectively. However, communicating with individuals from low-context culture (North America, India, Middle East and Asia), requires that the messages are more elaborate in order to ensure that the intended message is conveyed correctly. Also, individuals coming from low-context culture need detailed background information so as to understand the big picture and where they fit in the scheme of things before committing to anything.

It is worth mentioning here that developing trust is the first and foremost step for any business transaction. Body language, pauses, silences and other non-verbal cues have more meaning to individuals coming from high-context culture whereas in a low-context culture, creating good rapport and building interpersonal relationships are the key areas. This emphasizes the need for aligning ourselves, fine tuning our communicating styles and exercising care when dealing with individuals from different cultures.

To sum up:

The top five cardinal principles discussed above are the required tools in the tool box of the PMs. They need to be mindful of availability of these set of tools in their tool box. It is

PM World Journal
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

sincerely hoped that appropriate usage of these principles and balance five (to be covered in part 2 of this paper next month) would enable the PMs in enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness and emerge as successful PLs.

To be continued….

References:

1) Daniel Goleman: Self-regulation star leaders' secret weapon.
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/self-regulation-star-leaders-secret-weapon-daniel-goleman
2) Andy Jordan, Managing Stakeholder Expectations on www.projectsatwork.com March 09, 2009.
3) Daniel H. Pink – "Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us"
4) Stephen M. R. Covey – "The SPEED of Trust"
5) Dr. Stephen Covey – "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People".
6) Swami Kriyananda (J. Donald Walters) - The Art of Supportive Leadership, A Practical Guide for People in Positions of Responsibility.
7) Project management articles & white papers on LinkedIn groups, http://pmworldjournal.net and http://www.projecttimes.com
8) H M Thakur, "Stakeholder Management at the Centre Stage of Project Management" Paper presented at 23rd IPMA World Congress on Project Management, Helsinki, Jun 16, 2009.
9) H M Thakur, "Project Management and Leadership An integrated Approach to Project Success" Paper presented at 24th IPMA World Congress on Project Management, Istanbul, Nov 3, 2010.
10) H M Thakur, "Enhancing Project Management Effectiveness in Complex Projects" Paper presented at 26th IPMA World Congress on Project Management, Crete Greece, Oct 2012.
11) H M Thakur, "Stakeholder Management – A human dimension" paper presented at PM conclave 2015, Mumbai, India, Jan 2015.
12) H M Thakur "Determinants of Project Success in Multicultural Environment: A Project Team's Perspective" featured Paper published in PM World Journal, Vol. IV, Issue VIII – August 2015.
13) H M Thakur "Resilience – A Key Enabler for Project Success" featured paper published in PM PM World Journal, Vol. V, Issue II – February 2016

PM World *Journal*
Vol. V, Issue VIII – August 2016
www.pmworldjournal.net

Project Leadership: Top 10 Cardinal Principles – Part 1
by Hareshchandra Thakur
Advisory Article

About the Author

Hareshchandra M Thakur

Mumbai, India

Hareshchandra M Thakur is a professional in the Power Sector with over 30 years' experience in setting up of multiple Power Plants in Nuclear, Oil & Gas sectors in India and abroad. Presently, he is working as Associate Vice President, Project Management, Energy Solutions with Wartsila India Pvt. Ltd. Hareshchandra has held various positions in Financial Management and Project Management with Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd., Wartsila Finland Oy and Wartsila India Pvt. Ltd.

He has closely worked with cross functional and cross cultural teams and has vast international Exposure in key areas - Project Management, Strategic Financial Management, Contract Management and Resource Management, Competence building, Formulation of Business Strategies and Establishing way of working for Indian & global projects. He is Certified NLP Practitioner and has been visiting various Engg and Management institutions as a guest lecturer. He has made presentations at IPMA World Congress at Helsinki, Istanbul & Crete and Global Symposiums on Project Management in New Delhi.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from College of Engineering, University of Poona and a Master's degree in Financial Management from Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management, University of Mumbai. He obtained PMP Certification in April 2002. He lives in Mumbai, India and can be contacted at hareshthakur@yahoo.com.