

*Positive Leadership in Project Management*¹

The Beneficial Effects of Transformational Leadership²

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

A question to ask yourself is, “Have you ever been in an organization or group where someone acted quickly and decisively to take control of a difficult situation by providing a clear vision of the goal or objective, demonstrated a visible passion for the work to be done, and an ability to recharge and energize the group? This person would be the manifestation of what is known as a transformational leader.

According to Wikipedia, transformational leadership is a theory of leadership where a leader works with teams to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group; it is an integral part of the **Full Range Leadership Model**.

Transformational leadership exists and can be clearly seen when a leader’s behaviors influence followers and inspire people and teams to perform well beyond their perceived capabilities and create inspiration to achieve extraordinary results. This type of leadership gives workers, team members, and other organizational leaders, autonomy over their specific jobs and the authority to make decisions that impact organizational performance and efficiency. Transformational leadership creates positive change in an organization and develops or enhances the attitudes of followers and the organization as a whole to work together for shared aspirations.

Transformational leaders typically are associated with, and demonstrate, four distinct behaviors. These behaviors, known as the four I's include:

- Inspirational motivation
- Idealized influence
- Intellectual stimulation
- Individualized consideration

Transformational leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic, passionate, sincere, trusting, and highly committed to an organization. They are concerned and involved in process development, completing objectives, and generating value, but they are also

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.

² How to cite this paper: Saladis, F. (2021). The Beneficial Effects of Transformational Leadership, Series on Positive Leadership in Project Management. *PM World Journal*, Vol. X, Issue I, January.

focused on helping each member of the group or organization to succeed. It is clearly a form of servant leadership. (A servant leader shares power, puts the needs of the employees first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible).

The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by a presidential biographer and expert in leadership behaviors and styles, James MacGregor Burns. According to Burns, transformational leadership is visible when leaders and followers work together to mutually advance to higher levels of performance through motivation, shared values, and concern for each other. The concepts of transformational leadership were further developed by Bernard M. Bass who developed “Bass’s Transformational Leadership Theory.” Bass’s definition of transformational leadership is based on the impact that it has on the leader’s followers. The areas of impact include trust, respect, and admiration. Project managers, during many assignments, face a major challenge in gaining the trust, respect, and admiration of their teams. Focusing on the factors of transformational leadership may lead to a pathway that will eventually achieve the desired relationship with the team.

Translating the behaviors of the transformational leader into a project management context:

1. **Intellectual Stimulation:** Project Leaders face many challenges. Intellectual stimulation is accomplished by encouraging creativity and innovation, and critical thinking. The team is encouraged to seek new ways of performing work, improving quality, and identifying value adding opportunities. They are also encouraged to continue their professional development through to learning and education.
2. **Individualized Consideration:** Transformational Project Leadership involves the need to team members individually. Each team member offers a unique set of talents and skills. To create supportive relationships, it is important to establish and maintain a line of communication open to ensure that team members feel free to share ideas. The leader show appreciation to the team through recognition of the contributions of each team member.
3. **Inspirational Motivation:** Project leaders have a clear vision of the assignment and the connection to the organization’s goals. They explain that vision with a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to the assignment. The goal is to create the level of motivation necessary among the team, to complete the assignment and to work together through collaboration, cooperation and focused energy to resolve conflicts and obstacles that may be experienced.
4. **Idealized Influence:** The project leader becomes a role model by demonstrating consistently, the behaviors they expect from their team members. People have a tendency to emulate those in leadership positions. The leader must remain conscious of his or her behaviors and actions in order to develop realize the expectations they have developed about their teams.

Transformation Leadership has been a popular topic within the project management community for many years. The PMBOK® Guide, 6th edition, defined it as “empowering followers through idealized attributes and behaviors, inspirational motivation, encouragement for innovation and creativity, and individual consideration.”

That is a good summary of the characteristics and behavioral aspects of transformational leadership. Project managers who aspire to be viewed in that capacity will be required to analyze their own behaviors as they relate to the Four I’s, previously described, and formulate a personal strategy for moving forward. I think it’s important to note that becoming a well-respected, trusted, and confident leader is a journey and not a destination. The most effective leaders are aware that they do not know everything and certainly do not always have the right answer. Leaders rely on their teams, they listen to suggestions, they provide mentorship, and they show respect, especially during difficult times and when dealing with individual performance issues. The leader who is feared creates an atmosphere of mediocrity at best. The leader who serves the organization’s employees or constituents will experience a continuous flow of successes and, during tough times, loyalty and commitment to work towards solutions.

About the Author



Frank P. Saladis

New York, USA



Frank P. Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow is the Owner/Founder of Blue Marble Enterprises 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.

Frank can be contacted at saladismp@msn.com