

*Positive Leadership in Project Management*¹

Creating Project and Organizational “Connectic- Energy”²

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

Most people in leadership positions will agree that organization, team, and project success depends significantly on the motivation and commitment of the employees or the team members. The leader assumes the role of “enabler” and creates an environment for success at all levels in the hierarchy. Leaders who believe that they must control their members and employees through orders, disciplinary measures, threats, intimidation and the use of formal authority at all times, in my opinion, do not fully understand the true goals of leadership and the role of a leader. The primary role of the leader, in the project environment, is not to control the team, but to work with the team members to ensure that each team member is in control of his or her job and that the team members *understand the integrative nature of the work*. People, when assigned to manage a project, are placed in a leadership position regardless of their other responsibilities. Some project managers are placed in a situation and become what we may refer to as “hybrid” managers, part project manager and part functional and/or or operations manager. In this situation, they must balance their leadership role with their daily operational duties and their technical or functional role within the project. This can be a significant challenge from the leadership perspective, which must focus on ensuring the integration of the many components and entities associated with the project.

The leadership part of the job can certainly be a challenge. This means demonstrating the ability to focus the team on the total project and how their specific pieces of the project puzzle fit into the bigger picture, rather than having the team focus only on their specific tasks.

Leaders know that each person and each part of the project is critical to achieving the desired outcome. The leader knows that it is important for each team member to be committed to the project objectives and project success and not to an individual accomplishment. Setting expectations specifically for each team member, and the team as a whole, regarding performance and results is absolutely necessary. There is no question that setting expectations is important but if leaders focus more on results than on the efforts of the performers, the team members will lose interest in 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, break down into independent working units and fail to make 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 (at least in the Predictive Project Environment). They want the whole thing and they want what they asked for. 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 real leadership and no synergy, and success will be difficult to attain. This does not mean that everyone is treated exactly the same in terms of compensation and rewards if a project is successful. Performance appraisals and compensation policies differ by organization and how performance will be rewarded will vary among project team members. It is likely that there may be one or two MVPs within the team and they may receive some additional attention regarding reward and recognition. In any case, it is essential to communicate the goals of the project, assign roles, and set expectations regarding performance, at the start of the project.

During the project lifecycle, the project manager/ leader should observe, document and provide feedback on the performance of the individual on a regular basis. Frequency of the feedback will depend on the leader's judgement. Some project managers may not have the responsibility or the authority to provide input to a team member's performance appraisal. This may be true in terms of organizational procedures, but project managers who understand leadership know that people (team members) can be influenced by leadership style, regardless of the project manager's actual authority level. It is not about giving orders, delegating work, and checking on status. It's about creating a relationship where the team members respect the leader, feel that their work is appreciated and they are respected by the leader. There are many people who accomplish their goals through other people simply by asking for help or support and they receive it with little or no push back. The question is “How do they do it?” A major factor is the connection the leader forms with the individual and with a team. 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, the customer and the organization as a whole.

Leadership is mostly about encouragement and empowerment, and not about just giving orders. Team members or employees, in most cases, want to do a good job. If they are provided with the right work environment and visible support from the leader, they only need direction, guidance, and encouragement to do their best.

CONNECTIC - ENERGY

Project leaders will face many significant challenges as the project is implemented and maintaining a strong connection with the team is essential. The leader must create a higher form of energy and commitment to achieve success. That energy is what I refer to as “*CONNECTIC - ENERGY*”

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

The term “Connectic-energy” is derived from the word Kinetic – from the Greek word *kinesis*, meaning "motion," and the word “Energeia” - the strength and vitality required for sustained physical or mental activity.

Project leaders and organization leaders must develop a high level of Connectic – energy, and find ways to sustain it to ensure continued success and growth. This is accomplished through a combination of leadership factors:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Frequent communication
- Transparency whenever possible
- Respect
- Trust
- Empowerment
- Transformational leadership
- Creativity

CONNECTIVE LEADERSHIP

According to the Connective Leadership Institute (<https://connectiveleadership.com>) *Connective Leadership* is one of the new leadership styles that have come into existence in the past 2 decades. Connective Leadership is the leadership style that, in simple words, enhances the connectivity between different elements of business. In today’s era, companies are working with collaborative and joint efforts of teams and individuals that might spread all over the globe. In the connective leadership style, the leader has to ensure all the different roles and responsibilities of the team are working in a synchronized manner to achieve the common goals of the organization or company (or the project).

Effective leaders will take the steps necessary to ensure that they are well connected with their teams. It is important to remain visible, to be visibly supportive, to ask questions, offer encouragement, and most importantly, listen to ideas and suggestions of their team members. Create an environment where your team members feel that you are genuinely interested in their views and want them to be involved. A connective style of leadership can be rewarding in many ways and instrumental to project and enterprise wide success.

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