PM World **Journal** *(ISSN: 2330-4480)*
Vol. X, Issue IV – April 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

The Demands of Project Leadership
Positive Leadership in PM
by Frank Saladis

Positive Leadership in Project Management [1]

The Demands of Project Leadership [2]

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

Most people who study the concepts of leadership, or observe leaders as they perform their roles, are certain that leadership involves setting direction, creating a sense of purpose among their teams, motivating for high performance, and gaining commitment to achieve the goals that have been set for the organization.

Leadership is also about building strong relationships with the people in the organization. This is accomplished by developing a set of clearly defined values and establishing a high level of trust. Leadership is also about consistency. Demonstrating that the leader's values remain constant, even during periods of great challenge.

That does not mean the avoidance of change and creating an inflexible environment. Agility, these days, is a necessity and leaders must continually adapt to the fast-paced transformations taking place in the business world, especially in the discipline of project management.

Project managers are leaders and are expected to accomplish difficult assignments, in many cases, without much visible support from their executive management. This means that project managers must build and continue to develop a set of skills to meet the challenges of each project assignment.

According to an article in a recent edition of Harvard Business Review, March – April 2021, the skills needed in many roles today have a **_short shelf life_**, partly due to the "frequent and disruptive technological breakthroughs that continue to change the way people live. The shelf life of many leadership skills is, if we look back at the many articles and books written about leadership, and the behaviors of great leaders, is actually quite long and some skills may not have an expiration date. However, the pandemic and the changes it has forced into the project environment, have required project managers, and

---

[1]This 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 Demands of Project Leadership: Series on Positive Leadership in Project Management. *PM World Journal,* Vol. X, Issue IV, April.

---

most leaders, to adapt, revise, and develop new ways to manage their teams and their organizations.

The new environment has redefined how people work and how leaders lead. More than ever before, leaders must focus on the ***critical skills*** necessary to remain effective and successful, and to ensure they are respected by their constituents.

A GALLUP study conducted in 2007 and summarized in an article published by The Business Journal – The Demands of Executive Leadership – indicated that there are 7 essential leadership demands that require a leader to build the skills necessary for success:

- Visioning
- Maximizing Value
- Challenging experience
- Mentoring
- Building a constituency
- Making Sense of the experience
- Knowing self

I'm sure that most students of leadership would agree that this set of demands is applicable in today's business environment and there may be a few more demands to add. We may include managing diversity, virtual work teams, constant technology change and perhaps even more.

These demands require a set of foundation skills and a mindset to continue "upskilling" as the business and project environments change.

According to Melissa Daimler's article, Three Leadership Skill Shifts for 2021, Forbes, November 24, 2020 Three Leadership Skill Shifts For 2021 and Beyond (forbes.com), leaders must adapt their behaviors and leadership techniques in three areas:

- **Communication to empathy** –More emphasis on listening, asking questions, and "feeling" with other people

- **Emotional Intelligence to Emotional Agility** – More than knowing oneself. This is about navigating through emotions and understanding intent and impact of behaviors

- **Time management to Context management** – The pandemic has caused organizations to "rewire people" to a new work environment. Leaders must consider what kind of work needs to be done synchronously vs. asynchronously; when do we come together for meetings, and who needs to be in the meetings,

when to connect with people, how people work remotely, and how work is being accomplished.

There are other skills to consider. According to the World Economic Forum: What are the top 10 job skills for the future? | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

- 50% of all employees will need reskilling by 2025 as technology changes

- Critical thinking and problem solving top the list of skills employers believe will grow in prominence in the next 5 years

- Self- management, including active learning, resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility are emerging as critical in the current and (hopefully soon to be) he post pandemic environment.

Looking toward the Future

Leading is a complex responsibility. It requires a well-balanced approach of management and leadership. It also requires an understanding of the critical skills needed by the leader and his or her constituents for an organization to remain competitive, productive, and agile enough to meet the challenges that are coming. The top 5 skills needed for 2025, according to the World Economic Forum are:

1. Analytical thinking and innovation
2. Active learning and learning strategies – how you plan to continue upskilling
3. Complex problem solving
4. Critical thinking and analysis
5. Creativity, originality, and initiative

To be effective as a leader, it is necessary to have a strong awareness of one's own strengths and weakness. The most effective leaders know what they are capable of, and who they are. They understand and live their values. They know they are not all things to all people. Their personalities and behaviors are consistent between work and home. They demonstrate that they are genuine and can be trusted. They earn respect through their treatment of other people and their ability to follow through on commitments. Effective leaders are self-aware, are understanding of the needs of their teams, and they develop the resources necessary to accomplish goals. These elements form the foundation and essence of Positive Leadership. Look to the future and plan your leadership enhancement path now; and be ready for 2025 and beyond.

PM World *Journal* *(ISSN: 2330-4480)*
Vol. X, Issue IV – April 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

The Demands of Project Leadership
Positive Leadership in PM
by Frank Saladis

About the Author

Frank P. Saladis

New York, USA

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.

Frank can be contacted at saladispmp@msn.com