

Positive Leadership in Project Management¹

Creating a Positive Team Culture²

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

“Behind every great team is a strong culture: great leadership and passionate, committed people”

Jon Gordon - The Power of a Positive Team

The need for a strong and highly cohesive team to achieve organizational objectives is something every leader is aware of, and the best, most effective leaders focus on creating that team.

The culture of the organization impacts every functional group and the interaction between those groups. This includes department performance, employee performance, engagement of employees to achieve organizational goals, productivity, retention, and relationships with customers and other stakeholders. It's more than the daily sum of moods of your team; it's your values, the way employee development and feedback is handled, and the communication choices made by your leadership.

Trinet.com defines culture as a term used to define the customs, achievements, values, norms and general beliefs of a certain group of individuals. Considering this definition, organizational culture will affect every activity and transaction that occurs within the organization. It establishes the behaviors that drive the work and interrelationships that define how you conduct business, and it is the basis for how people perceive your brand.

The most important job for a leader, or a self-managed team, is to create a culture that energizes and encourages each team member to give their best performance each day, and to foster empowerment, a need to grow professionally, and a desire to help each other succeed.

Leaders of organizations can create, change, and even break organizational culture. The leaders are essential in developing and sustaining culture and how it's perceived by employees. A major factor in establishing culture or changing it, is the need for alignment between the leadership team and the organization's employees. Open, honest,

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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respectful, and frequent communication create a pathway to a desired culture. This will create an environment where employees believe they are heard and their views and suggestions are valued.

Why is creating a positive organizational culture important?

According to an article at [Creating a Positive Organizational Culture With Employee Assessments - TTISI](#), research showed that “More than half of employees were willing to go to a competing firm in search of a better culture, and 48% said they’d consider working a 60 hour week in exchange for a better culture.”

Based on that research alone, creating a positive culture should be the top priority of any leader. Keep in mind that culture is dynamic and will change as new leaders emerge and make organizational changes based on their own styles and priorities.

There is a pathway to creating a positive culture and it takes commitment, energy, resiliency, and determination. The pathway begins with establishing a shared vision and purpose.

“When you know your why and you know the way, you won’t let obstacles get in the way” – From “The Power of a Positive Team”, Jon Gordon

The leader’s main purpose is to rally the team, unite everyone in the organization and bring everyone together to achieve a goal. There should be a plan, and everyone should embrace the plan. To accomplish that, excellent communication is essential, which means there a need for a lot of **listening**.

Positive Culture Through Motivation

Most employees today are not motivated by numerical goals. They won’t get excited by “increase productivity by 20%” or reduce costs by 30%. The focus should be on “Purpose Driven Goals. The question is “How well is the organization living and sharing its values and goals?”

Purpose driven goals include providing opportunities, creating the best possible customer experience, creating an environment that deeply engages its employees. The emphasis is on outcome. What is it that you really want to accomplish?

Chances are, what your are looking for is differentiate your organization from your competitors, become the standard to be compared to, and to be an organization that delights is employees, customers and suppliers. Then ask yourself and your team “How do we get there?”

What it comes down to, within an organization, is to have people who are **on a mission**. Not just to be aware of a vision and mission statement. It is commitment, a desire to make a difference, an interest in personal growth, and a willingness to help others along the way.

Creating a positive culture requires leadership commitment. The leader must bring the vision and mission to life through actions and behaviors that will excite the people of the organization. It is more like a journey than a destination. The journey will include some steep climbs, a few detours, some obstacles and probably a few “naysayers”. Keep your values and your purpose in mind. They are the fuel that will keep you on the journey.

About the Author



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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.

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