

## ***Positive Leadership in Project Management*<sup>1</sup>**

### **Creative Change Leadership Part 2<sup>2</sup>**

**By Frank Saladis, PMP, LIMC, PMI Fellow**

Creative Change Leadership, as previously defined in Part 1 of this series topic, is “the ability to deliberately engage one’s imagination to define and guide a group towards a novel goal—a direction that is new for the group.

People in leadership positions are aware of the need to develop goals, set direction, and motivate their teams and constituents to move forward and achieve those goals. Imagination is necessary to develop those goals. Consider imagination as the first step in the creative process.

Imagination is defined as “the faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects that are not present to the senses. Another way to define it would be “the ability of the mind to be creative and resourceful.”

There is no doubt that the greatest leaders, the people who really make a difference, the ones who change the world, have exercised their creative abilities and their imagination.

According to an article by Teach Thought Staff, ([8 Types Of Imagination \(teachthought.com\)](https://teachthought.com/8-types-of-imagination/)), there are eight types of imagination:

**1. Effectuative Imagination** - This combines information together to synergize new concepts and ideas. This type of imagination could be associated with people in new product development and R&D.

**2. Intellectual (or Constructive) Imagination** - Utilized when considering and developing hypotheses from different pieces of information or pondering over various issues of meaning say in the areas of philosophy, management, or politics, etc. This may be associated with critical thinking - the analysis of available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments to form a judgement

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<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup> How to cite this paper: Saladis, F. (2022). Creative Change Leadership Part 2; Positive Leadership in Project Management, series article. *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue I, January.

**3. Fantasy Imagination** - Creating and developing stories, pictures, poems, stage-plays, and the building of the esoteric (Esoteric - intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest). Fantasy Imagination is prevalent among musicians, song writers, and artists. Creativity and imagination are often associated with people who possess artistic talent.

**4. Empathy Imagination** – This form of imagination helps a person understand, from an emotional perspective, what others are experiencing from their specific frame of reference. This can be associated with Emotional Intelligence - the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically:

**5. Strategic Imagination** is concerned with vision. Looking into the future and asking what if? or attempting to visualize *what could be*. The ability to recognize and evaluate opportunities by turning them into mental scenarios. Strategic thinking may not generally be considered as the use of imagination but if you think about what is involved in strategic planning. You can see the connection. Strategic planning is a process used by organizations to identify its goals, the strategies necessary to accomplish those goals and the internal performance management system used to monitor and evaluate progress. Identifying goals and developing a view of what an organization *could* be is clearly the utilization of imagination. The key is to bring the visions created in the imagination to actual realization.

**6. Emotional Imagination** is concerned with manifesting emotional dispositions and extending them into emotional scenarios. Emotional imagination is concerned with the responses that may result when confronted with changes in both the external and internal environments. The thoughts, and then the responses you generate in your mind when facing a particular situation or encounter with an issue.

**7. Dreams** are an unconscious form of imagination made up of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that occur during certain stages of sleep.

**8. Memory Reconstruction** is the process of retrieving our memory of people, objects, and events.

Considering the type of work performed by project managers, and the challenges often experienced during implementation, it is safe to say that each of these types of imagination have been utilized by most project managers many times during most project assignments. It is often said by many project managers (and people in general as a matter of fact), "I'm not creative", or "I have no imagination." If that were true, most projects would simply fail very early. Project managers, in their leadership roles, have the unique ability to anticipate problems, develop workarounds when needed, and find creative solutions to numerous issues. The planning process is, in fact, a combination of imagination, creativity, and application of experience.

Most project managers understand that every project is unique and therefore will always require some new and or different approaches to achieve objectives. This is where imagination and creativity become an integral part of project leadership.

## **Building and Exercising Your Imagination**

In the project management world, Risk Management is something that should be included in any project. Consider that the process of identifying risk situations is a form of Intellectual, Strategic, and Memory Reconstruction Imagination. The “what if?” discussions are used to generate possible future scenarios. The continued practice of developing scenarios increases the ability of the team to develop deeper and more complex scenarios that may be useful in strategic planning and improving overall organizational performance.

Emotional and Empathy imagination may be used to further develop one’s ability to create strong work relationships and help to find ways to resolve conflict issues and create stronger teams.

There are many ways to exercise your imagination. The first step is the personal desire to make a change or to experience something new. It is easy to get your imagination in gear. As an example, most organizations have operational processes in place for just about everything. Many of these processes have been around for a long time and most could probably be improved. Select a process that you use every day and imagine how much time you could save if the process was improved. Then look for the opportunities where a change is feasible and beneficial. Develop a brief “business case” for the process improvement. This will help to solidify your thoughts and details about the change. The business case will help you “sell” your idea. When implemented and the benefits are realized, you will feel a sense of accomplishment and a desire to exercise your imagination again.

An article published by TEDxMileHigh [How to Expand Your Imagination in 8 Days - TEDxMileHigh: Ideas Worth Spreading](#) provides some great ideas about how to get your imagination in motion.

Everyone has an imagination, and everyone has some ability to be creative. Just like any muscle, imagination and creativity should be exercised regularly. Imagination allows us to shape the future. It simply requires a different style of thinking.

Get in the practice of asking “what if?” Develop your organization’s capacity for imagination. Encourage the development of new ideas. Don’t criticize a new idea, ask questions about it. Ask about what motivated the new idea?

Project Managers – consider your current project to be a “work of art.” What makes it unique? What makes you proud to be a part of it? How will it affect its stakeholders? What new opportunities will it create? How can you make the project more fun for the team? Use your imagination!

## About the Author



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**Frank P. Saladis**, PMP, LIMC, 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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