

# Lost in Translation? Successful Strategies to turn Out-of-Sync Stakeholders into Cohesive Collaborators<sup>1, 2</sup>

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## Abstract

Have you sat in a project meeting with business and technical teams and felt everyone was speaking a different language, creating confusion on goals, requirements, and the path forward?

Or have you watched a completed software solution demo that the business team felt didn't meet their actual needs, causing rifts between business and IT?

Or participated in a Steering Committee session spanning multiple functions and teams with too many voices in the rooms, generating swirl and a lack of clear direction?

The truth is, different stakeholder groups have different needs and ways of working and communicating — and your approach to creating alignment needs to take that into consideration as according to [Geneca](#) (Blog, 2017) of dev teams spend half their time on rework.

Informed by extensive experiences as project managers during consulting engagements and the countless lessons learned, we will share our “Art of Translation” approach that is applicable across industries and company sizes. By integrating change management principles with emotional intelligence (EQ), this unique approach helps build alignment across all stakeholder levels during the discovery phase by **validating alignment of project end goals early and often and providing strategies throughout the process to keep true the project's north star**. This

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translator approach will reduce the unproductive spin and prevent out-of-sync project deliverables.

**The Learning Objectives for this paper are to enable project managers to:**

1. Identify the red flags that business and technical teams are lost in translation early
2. Use powerful questions to coach stakeholders when project goals don't seem clear to all parties
3. Recognize when to bring in other stakeholders to ensure the right people are present for the right conversations
4. Pinpoint the learning styles of your audience to ensure business needs are articulated into technical requirements

### **Setting the Stage: Foreword by JD Johnson**

When I started in this world of project management, it was really by accident. I wasn't a Project Manager; I wasn't trained in any methodologies. I was a language major making some money to pay for my degree. I just saw problems that needed to be solved in the organization I was working in, and I realized that just complaining about those problems didn't build any traction or get those issues resolved. I observed that leadership actually listened and made things happen when you were able to state the nature of the issue clearly, showed the cost/benefit analysis of why it was an issue and how you had a solution that would save money/create revenue or improve efficiencies or productivity and had, at the very least, a high-level plan to go after your resolution. So, I built my first business case and project plan, not even knowing that's what they were called and shared it with my manager who then put me in a place to share it with my leadership team who, lo and behold, approved it.

In one of my incarnations, I was working as a Data analyst in the organization, my leader had brought in a Six Sigma internal trainer and offered me a spot. From there, I acquired my yellow belt, and I became fascinated by the concept of a framework to create and execute project plans. From a young age, my father instilled a sense of curiosity and a love of learning so, I dug into this new world of project management and used the free training offered to dive deeper into different frameworks. Working in an organization that felt like it was in perpetual restructuring, my one constant was looking at problems that I encountered through the lens of problem solving and used a structured approach to frame the issues and develop an approach to resolve it.

Fast forward to present day and with our experiences in consulting and as working in various capacities at other organizations, my colleagues, Alex Barra, Beza Woda, and I have seen how important change management, leadership, and emotional intelligence are to being a successful project manager. To support other project managers, we have developed the 10 Key Principles of the Art of Translation approach:

1. Utilize Emotional Intelligence
2. Understand Your Stakeholder's & Their Motivations
3. Ensure all voices are heard & Acknowledged
4. Practice Active Listening
5. Validate Alignment
6. Communicate goals, expectations and timelines
7. Use Visualization Tools
8. Be transparent with your sponsor
9. Be curious and always be learning
10. Build a Collaborative Culture

In this paper we have categorized the principles into 3 main areas: Stakeholder Management, Communication & Dynamic Teamwork.

The “Art of Translation” approach is critical as according to Pulse of the Profession® Report (2013a) (Project Management Institute, 2013) reported that poor communication is the number one reason why projects fail. In fact, PMI states that poor communications is a contributing factor in 56% of the projects that failed” (Monkhouse, 2015) . At the end of the day, a successful project manager must become a ninja in communicating successfully, clearly and creatively.

The “Art of Translation” is a methodology to help Project Managers to lean into change management and emotionally intelligent leadership skills to augment their project management plans, boost their communication skills, and improve stakeholder engagement and alignment for project success.

Further, we will discuss how each principle is used and can help with the learning objectives. In complex projects, it’s not unusual to have to deal with large stakeholder groups and when there are a lot of people in a room, who each have their own priorities and work that needs to be accomplished, it is crucial to ensure that all parties are clear on the goal of your current project and how it ties into corporate strategy.

## Stakeholder Management

### **Principle #1: Utilize Emotional Intelligence:** By JD Johnson

Leading people informally as a Project Manager can be the norm as you are often not the manager of those that are involved in executing the work. It can become a delicate balance of influence through trust, communicating effectively and persuasively, and through formal authority granted via the project / sponsor. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has been described by Daniel Goleman and Richard E. Boyatzis as 12 competencies that fall under 4 domains which are Self-awareness, Self-Management, Social awareness & Relationship management (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). Goleman and Boyatzis express that "Leaders need to develop a balance of strengths across these competencies" (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017) in order to be successful. Key to hacking your emotional programming is digging into flexing self-awareness, self-reflection and self-command to look inwards before looking outwards by taking accountability of self to become a better team player, leader and project manager.

For example, let's say you are leading a software development project, and you have a team of developers and testers working on it. You might not be their direct manager, but you are responsible for ensuring that the project is delivered on time, within budget, and to the required quality standards.

By being accountable to how you show up, how your actions affect others and being in tune with your own motivations helps to create trust with your stakeholders and teams, leveling up your leadership and influence.

### ***Principles in Action***

EQ is knowing yourself and being able to detect and influence the emotions of others and you can deep dive into this by understanding:

**Motivations of self & others:** What are the drivers behind this emotion/ reaction/ attitude: What are the values being displayed? Are there any particular triggers to this behavior? Is validation required to continue the discussion?

**Span of control aka what can you control:** Your thoughts? How do you speak to yourself? How do you speak to others? How do you react to triggers, traumas, other's emotions displayed or

words?

**Connecting Principles back to the [Learning Objectives: 1, 2](#)**

Being able to control yourself can lead you to better influence others. By truly knowing yourself and being honest about your strengths, weakness, and opportunities you can start to work on yourself before working on others. When you start by first identifying your own motivations, it becomes easier to understand your audience's motivations or to **start asking the right questions. These questions will help you** dig into what is driving your sponsor, stakeholders, or even the organization, and will help guide to you to pick the most appropriate tactics in communication, leading, presentation and training styles to guide your projects to success. You will also pick up on how the others around you learn as well as identify the red flags **when your stakeholders are out of sync.** You will also identify when you may need to pivot or intervene to reorient **all parties to the goals that the project is aiming to address.**

**Principle # 2: Understanding your stakeholders & their Motivations:** By JD Johnson

Handling your stakeholders is a key part of project management as you know you will either spend a great deal of time with them in meetings or communications or chasing them down therefore, it's helpful to first understand identifying what are your stakeholder's motivations as well as any limitations as that could deprioritize this project importance. This can help the project manager comprehend the many demands on your stakeholders and be sympathetic to their needs. Calling out how this project will not only support the organizational goals but also their own priorities could lead to engagement and buy in as well as momentum and motivation for stakeholders to be more invested.

In some organizations, you may be embedded and understand the political climate and have visibility into the different currents that are influencing your stakeholders and their investment in the success of your project. If your sponsor, or client is willing to be transparent about the different personalities that will play important roles in engendering the success of your project, it's crucial to take note of resistant personalities, overloaded and/or under resourced contributors, conflicting priorities, or a lack of trust in the project as they can all be reasons that create roadblocks to success. Getting keyed into motivators can help a project manager develop the best strategies for engagement and hitting the right note in communication. In the case that you need to do a deeper dive to uncovering motivations, there are some tactics that you can use.

### ***Principles in Action***

- **Roadshows or onboarding workshops** that combine introducing the project with the gathering of business/ technical requirements, importance of the project to the organization and Call to Actions required by stakeholders
- **Formal or informal assessments** of communication, leadership or coaching styles:
  - Are your stakeholders: Driving? Analytical? Amiable? Expressive? (Merrill & Reid, 2013)
  - What are their personal coaching styles (CoachU, 2023): Director? Strategic? Presenter? Mediator?
- **Assessing the state of the organization and leaders by asking**
  - Is the organization used to running lean?
  - Will this stretch the teams who need to do the work?
  - Are your stakeholders harried and pressed for time?
  - Do they have conflicting priorities?
  - Who has what power & influence?
  - What are their interests, concerns & goals?

### ***Connecting Principles back to the [Learning Objectives 1, 3](#)***

These tactics will help you **identify red flags on alignment**, by highlighting if your stakeholders have different agendas, are in competition with one another, or are working in silos. The answers they provide will show you where you will have to **flex your communication and leading styles to influence your participants to enable collaboration and alignment**. You can start planning activities to bridge gaps you have identified and push towards clearly articulating goals and decisions in the manner in which your stakeholders are most responsive.

### **Principles #3 & #4: Ensuring All Voices Are Heard & Acknowledged & Active Listening:** By Alex Barra

In project management, Stakeholder Management is so important that the PMI added a section about it in a later edition of the PMBOK. When dealing with stakeholders, they can be from all different departments, levels of seniority, and different perspectives.

Ensuring all voices are heard and acknowledged helps to build a sense of ownership and buy-in from stakeholders, and it can also help to identify potential roadblocks or risks early on in the

project. For example, imagine a project team that is working on implementing a new HR management system. The project manager ensures that all departments within the organization are represented in project meetings, including HR, IT, and finance. During a project meeting, the finance stakeholder raises a concern that the proposed system may not be compatible with the organization's existing financial systems. The project manager acknowledges the concern and works with the technical team to identify a solution that addresses the concern. By ensuring that all voices are heard and acknowledged, the project manager is able to identify potential roadblocks and address them early in the project, resulting in a smoother implementation. On the other hand, if some stakeholders feel that their opinions are not valued or heard, they may disengage from the project, leading to a lack of buy-in and potentially poor project outcomes. For example, if end-users are not included in project meetings and their concerns are not addressed, they may be less likely to adopt the final product, resulting in a project failure.

### ***Principles in Action***

Ways to ensure voices are heard:

- Follow up conversations with those who can't make the meetings - Scheduling meetings can be quite challenging in the hybrid world. Can you offer to do 1-1s with people who have missed sessions to catch them up?
- Record the meetings - People can go back and watch on their own time if they can't make the sessions or offer to do a follow-up session
- Facilitation of the meeting - Calling on people who are quiet or silent / Make sure one voice doesn't dominate the conversation.

Active listening is also a critical component of effective communication when working with many stakeholders. Active listening involves paying close attention to what is being said, seeking clarification when needed, and summarizing the speaker's message to ensure that it is understood correctly. When listening, be sure to not make assumptions on what stakeholders want or need. For example, a technical stakeholder may feel that the business stakeholders are not interested in understanding the technical aspects of the project, leading to a breakdown in communication and a lack of alignment between the two groups. This can result in delays and poor project outcomes. The best way to actively listen is by asking thoughtful & powerful questions to clarify stakeholder's points of view, as well as to bring to light areas such as gaps in understanding or unclear items others in the room may have been thinking of but may not have felt comfortable voicing. Sometimes it's as easy as inviting another to tell you more about their

thoughts or “what I think I am hearing is....” At other times, you may need to dig deeper to ask more complex questions to artfully tease out a better understanding of risks, issues or uncertainties your stakeholder's may have while avoiding the blame game or questioning an expert's experience or intelligence.

### ***Principles in Action***

The first step to improve your listening is being aware of it in conversations. In the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” (Covey, 1989), Stephen Covey talks about the different levels of listening. Here are some questions for you to ask yourself as you reflect on your past interactions.

**Level 1 Listening:** Are you ignoring what was said? Are you not even allowing them to finish their thoughts?

**Level 2 Listening:** Are you pretending to listen? Are you re-centering the conversation on yourself? Are you giving unsolicited advice?

**Level 3 Listening:** Are you beginning to be curious about the subject matter? Is your body language focused on the subject.

**Level 4 Listening:** Are you able to pick up what is unsaid? Are you connecting the dots? Are you asking good question to get more information? Are you using your intuition?

### ***Connecting Principles back to the Learning Objectives 1,2***

Active listening helps to build trust and rapport between stakeholders, as it shows that each stakeholder is valued, and their opinions are heard and respected. If you do this well, you can prevent misunderstandings and ensure that project goals are aligned with stakeholder expectations. Ensuring all voices are heard and acknowledged will also enable **identifying red flags early enough to pivot or provide further clarification** to the bigger picture and goals of that the project is meant to address.

## **Communication**

**Principles #5 & #6 Communicate goals, expectations and timelines & Validate Alignment:** By Alex Barra

Clear communication of goals, expectations, and timelines is essential in project management. Clear communication ensures that everyone is on the same page and has a shared understanding of what needs to be accomplished, by when, and how. It also helps to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts between stakeholders.

For example, imagine a project team that is working on developing a new product. The project manager communicates clear goals for the product, such as a target launch date and specific product features. The technical team understands the goals and works towards them, while the business stakeholders are able to communicate the product's value proposition to potential customers. Clear communication of goals, expectations, and timelines ensures that everyone is working towards the same end goal and that the project is completed on time and within budget. On the other hand, unclear communication of goals, expectations, and timelines can lead to confusion and delays. For example, if the project manager communicates vague goals and timelines, stakeholders may have different interpretations of what needs to be accomplished and by when, leading to misalignment and delays.

Alignment validation is the process of ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned on project goals, requirements, and timelines. Alignment validation helps to prevent misunderstandings and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goal. For example, imagine a project team that is working on developing a new marketing campaign. The project manager ensures that all stakeholders are aligned on the campaign's target audience, messaging, and channels. However, during the campaign's execution, the technical team realizes that the chosen channels are not effective in reaching the target audience. If alignment validation had been conducted at this stage, the issue could have been addressed early on, potentially saving time and resources.

### ***Principles in Action***

1. Identify a common language & understanding
  - One easy way to figure out if you are communicating clearly is to ensure you are "speaking the same language."
  - When you hear "Go-Live", what does that mean? Is it a tech go-live, business go-live, business readiness?
  - This is the first step to breaking down the communication barrier and aligning on the vernacular of the initiative. If this doesn't happen, you might notice meetings getting derailed and confusion amongst participants. This alignment must also span across other aspects of a project.

2. Another way to communicate is through tools (See principle #7).
  - Today, there are so many project management / tech tools that can help your organization effectively manage projects. First ask your team, what are the agreed upon tools that will be used to communicate information about the project, the budget, and the timeline? Who has access/licenses to those tools? What information is missing for key stakeholders? You can do this all through aligning + validating.
3. Check in Often
  - It is important to build in alignment validation at various stages of the project, such as at the beginning of the project, after major milestones, and before finalizing the project

### **Connecting Principles back to the [Learning Objectives 1, 3](#)**

Effective communication is critical in project management. Ensuring all voices are heard and acknowledged, alignment validation, and clear communication of goals, expectations, and timelines are all essential components of effective communication. By practicing these concepts, project managers can build trust and rapport with stakeholders, prevent misunderstandings, ensure alignment, and ultimately achieve project success.

#### **Principle #7: Use of Visualization Tools: By JD Johnson**

Ever been in a meeting or even a discussion with a group and it felt like the conversation was going in circles? Did you think to yourself; are we all pretty much saying the same thing or that we all want this to succeed but why can't we find a path forward?

It's a little like the game we use to play as children called broken telephone, where each time something was said from one person to the next, the message could change minutely or even drastically and by the time it got to the last person the message was often unrecognizable? According to Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience, the percentage of information do we retain can be summarized by the wisdom that people remember (Thalheimer, 2015):

- 10 percent of what they READ
- 20 percent of what they HEAR
- 30 percent of what they SEE
- 50 percent of what they SEE and HEAR
- 70 percent of what they SAY and WRITE

- 90 percent of what they DO

Using visual tools to help your team see at the same time that they hear, and say at the same time they write, will help them retain information to build alignment and agreement.

### ***Principles in Action***

There are a plethora of tools that can be used for a variety of purposes:

- **Everyday meetings:** OneNote, Google Docs, Word
  - **Suggested usage:** Create a chain of agendas for meetings with the group of attendees with a pre-populated template. Share the agenda ahead of the meeting and invite attendees to provide feedback or additional topics that are timeboxed then share it during meetings as you take notes, so all can see the points you are capturing, invite the team to share changes or correction during a Q&A or using chat in real time or in a prepared parking lot that you set aside time to walk through
- **Brainstorming or problem-solving/ decision making sessions:** [Miro](#), [Mural](#), [Google Whiteboard](#), [MS Whiteboard](#), In person white boards, [Stormboard](#), [Tricider](#)
  - **Suggested usage:** Start with rules of engagement in the session to clarify what behaviors are acceptable. Create a structured flow outline with questions to be answered or problems to be solved and space for participants to populate, give the participants directions for the exercise and rules of engagement then provide time for them to populate the areas. Facilitate by taking time to read out answers, categorizing answers towards similarities, highlight gaps, risk or disagreements and talk through the pros and cons. By the end of the session, speak to what was agreed to and path forward. Send out a summary of discussion and everything that was aligned on and any decisions with a timeline for response if there are any disagreements on the summary. Record session wherever possible.
- **Workshops for presenting information, gathering business requirements or CTAs (Call to Action):** PowerPoint, Interactive Polls; [Mentimeter](#)/ [Poll Everywhere](#), Templates in Word/ Excel, Ideaboardz
  - **Suggested usage:** Set up is similar to brainstorming or problem-solving/ decision making session but where those are meant to help create a build a collaborative environment, these are more about providing and presenting information in an

interactive and engaging way to help with the dissemination or validation of information or clarify expectations of next steps. These interactive components can be used to help control Q&A, as Icebreakers, conversation starters and build engagement.

### **Connecting Principles back to the [Learning Objectives 3,4](#)**

Using visual tools are a crucial way to help everyone **align on the main points, plans, gaps, risks and possible paths forward**. It's through this experimentation that you learn your stakeholder's learning styles. Getting visual with a group helps serve several purposes:

- Can set up visual reminders of the rules of engagement and make a safe space for uncovering answers to problems
- Helps control the flow of the discussion, creating a viewable plan for how the meeting will be structured with timeboxing
- Can help everyone better **understand each point being made, for less variation in understanding**
- Can help categorize similar points together to highlight agreement
- Can highlight gaps / or disagreement for discussion and resolution
- **Allows all voices to be heard**

### **Principle #8: Be transparent with your sponsor:** By Beza Woda

Knowing how and when to level set with sponsors is an important skill to hone. How many times have you managed a project and your stakeholder is insistent that they can't move forward unless a different group provides information, and the other stakeholder is making the same claim. Sure you can update the milestones on the project plan to reflect this disconnect and provide more time for this issue to get solved. However, despite the project dates being "corrected", the overall project health is declining. These are flags to indicate it's time to speak transparently with your sponsor to discuss the risks and issues you are encountering with the project as well as highlighting possible solutions.

Prosci defines sponsors as individuals that "contribute to successful change outcomes via active and visible participation by building coalitions of support and communicating directly with employees [and key stakeholders]" (Prosci). Additionally, sponsors have a host of levers they can pull when facing project setbacks. In our earlier example, sponsors could make an executive

decision on who can continue on the work, escalate issues that are out of the scope of the project team (e.g. funding issues), or promote the value of this work across the org. At their core, a project sponsor should be an advocate for the work being done and if they're not in the know, it's always worthwhile to rein them back in as an effective sponsor are **active, visible, and throughout.**

### ***Principles in Action***

Some tools that can support efforts to be transparent with sponsors, throughout the project: include:

- Risk logs: Documentation where concerns of varying levels and urgencies can be shared
- Status reports: Regular series of updates, whether a meeting, presentation or email (tuned to your sponsor's how they prefer to digest project updates)
- Decision-making logs: Log that documents important project pivots, scope changes and other relevant realignment tools, also covers who the decision maker was and a summary of the rationale

As a project manager, your aim is to keep sponsors knowledgeable so that **they can do their job** and tackle larger or stickier roadblocks with you head on.

### ***Connecting Principles back to the [Learning Objectives 3](#)***

A project will run into issues when the right team members aren't informed, accountable or even staffed. While filtering what information is shared with sponsors is a best practice, underutilizing them only works to the project's detriment. Catering your communication to your audience is essential here because when you keep your sponsors aware, and what your specific ask of them is, you empower sponsors to tactfully use their influence saving team resources by efficiently navigating hurdles and building trust with your sponsor that you'll surface the right issues. Ruts are broken when the right people, at the right altitudes and authority level, come together to tackle a problem head on. Transparency with your sponsor matters because your sponsor is both a facilitator and active participant in these project shifting conversations.

## Dynamic Teamwork

### Principle #9: Be Curious and Always Be Learning: By Beza Woda

Years ago, it was common to hear "unless you have technical experience, you can't lead technical projects". And no doubt, having absolutely zero technical experience or savviness is definitely a roadblock and can make communicating with technical stakeholders difficult. However, with a growth mindset that is always interested in learning new things and open to increasing your knowledge it is possible to successfully bridge this gap. As a consultant, when you go into a new organization, it is common knowledge that you will not be the SME in all aspects of the project. You will certainly not be up to speed on how the business runs nor all of its processes or their technical jargon. But you will be experienced in best practices, you will also be knowledgeable in being able to get up to speed and learn the necessities to be an asset quickly. As well as being skilled in asking the right questions, leaning on the right experts and being able to articulate and document goals, processes and communicate concisely and clearly. All of this requires curiosity and a love of learning new things and skills. Curiosity is a project manager's best friend when managing shifting dependencies and different timelines. According to a study by Stanford University researcher Carol Dweck, individuals with "a growth mindset are more likely to embrace challenges, persist through obstacles, and **learn from feedback**" (Dweck, 2008) (Dweck, 2008). These are all important traits for project managers who must navigate complex and ever-changing environments.

### **Principles in Action**

Being curious and open to learning more means you are better equipped to identify holes in logic and better challenge updates to ensure you're driving to the most meaningful outcome. For those that have taken their PMP, a common grievance/comment is that it's not about finding the right answer, but the best fit and as annoying as that sounds, it's a common theme in the day to day of this work! Ways to embrace curiosity:

- Ask open-ended questions that encourage the other person to share more about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Seek out feedback from colleagues and ask for suggestions for improvement.
- Research new strategies or techniques to improve your skills or the quality of your work

- Reflect on your experiences, thoughts, and emotions to gain a better understanding of yourself and the world around you

### **Connecting Principles Back to the [Learning Objectives 2, 3](#)**

*Each situation is unique and requires its own onboarding* whether you are a consultant or full-time employee within an organization. Let past experiences inform your approach to learning, not narrow it down or block it. **Asking seemingly simple but powerful questions** allows you to understand what assumptions stakeholders are carrying as fact. Lastly, you will always learn something in a project, even if it's an area you've seen multiple times, different curveballs will come along the way. Use everything you learn as additions to your PM toolkit, that you can utilize with every new project. Utilizing an always curious and learning approach is something that you can bring to every project and will always lead to strong outcomes. Carrying a growth mindset and curious demeanor will enable you to level up and **become** the best PM for your project. Your curiosity will lead you to question if the **right stakeholders are in the room** for the right conversations to happen and **identify red flags in stakeholder alignment**.

### **Principle #10: Building a Collaborative Culture:** By Beza Woda

We're inclined to place technical skills at a premium, whether it's being deeply skilled with a particular programming language, being a process expert, or dashboard SME, these hard skills that are necessary to drive certain work, however as project managers, our role is to utilize all of our project teams capabilities to do great work, be aware and **curious** of other departments needs with the end goal being to drive to the project success. When work is done in siloes, different team members at best are only worried about their scope and at worst, have a reactive, disengaged approach to their work – making project managers "deadline police". A collaborative work culture is crucial within teams because it ensures that people are speaking at the right altitudes. As a project trucks along, it is so easy for IC's to lose sight of the vision/end goal. A collaborative culture means that teams know **WHY** they're doing the work that they're doing, and ensuring their efforts drive to the **vision of the project** not just line items on a planning software. From a communal perspective, a collaborative culture also ensures that people can supportively assist on or be curious about their team member's work and ensure that it's solving for the right things or that the pieces are connected. The way to beat the rigidness of a disengaged stakeholder group almost always starts at opening the avenues for communication and providing a community where individuals have psychological safety.

### ***Principles in Action***

In action, this looks like many things. From a team values perspective it means people being seen as people, this can be accomplished through providing grace and support when you're falling short, willingness to step in when you have the bandwidth and scheduling non-work avenues for team members to come and unwind together. **Side note: the value of a good vent builds more trust than you think!** These opportunities allow for team mates to become people and provide a failsafe/non-graded way for people to understand one another - which ultimately improves how people engage with one another.

From an engagement activity perspective this can mean:

- Creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration - Identifying time for in-person or remote working sessions where you can brainstorm and/or solution together
- Prioritize/incentivize cross workstream work - celebrate those wins, team strides the big gain here being interdependence and improved communications that aren't owned by you as the project manager

Benefits of a collaborative culture are innovation, creative problem solving, increased ownership as well as honest and responsive communication. And a healthy collaborative culture helps to avoid blaming and incongruent parts that PM will have to sort out and restructure retroactively.

### ***Connecting Principles back to the [Learning Objectives 3](#)***

Having a healthy and positive collaborative culture makes it easy to ensure the right voices are in the room as new perspectives are welcomed and working in silos is not the norm. By connecting the right cross functional teams to provide their expert opinions on the work can reduce re-work and avoid project results not meeting the desire end goals.

### **Final Thoughts**

Every project is made up of people. Those who will strategize & execute the change and those who will be the end users as well as how you flex their collective power for success. Your mastery of skillfully leveraging Emotional Intelligence & Change Management core competencies will level up your ability to manage and execute projects successfully.

Using the "Art of Translation 10 Principles will help build a frame of mind where you lean into continuously learning and always being curious while building your growth mindset. This framework is designed to help embrace and build positive and collaborative environments while being another tool in your arsenal of toolkits to elevate your project leadership capabilities.

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## About the Authors



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**Alex Barra** is a Change Management Consultant based in San Francisco who has 9+ years of experience in human resources & people consulting in various industries. Specializing in technology change projects, digital transformation, and culture change, they enjoy diving into any change no matter how big or small. Alex holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University.



**Beza Woda**

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**Beza Woda** is a Dallas native that holds 6+ years of project and change management experience. With a diverse background in different sized companies (pre-revenue Startups to Fortune 500 companies) and across industries (tech, retail and consumer

packaged goods), she relies on cultivating strong relationships, strong communication, and grit to simplify even the most complex issues. Her advice to clients, business owners, and team leaders is to invest in building a culture where change is a constant.



## **JD Johnson**

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**JD Johnson** is a consultant with more than 10 years of experience leading projects and facilitating change through the implementation of operational and technical projects. She has a proven track record of utilizing her strong analytical skills to identify insights that drive the formation of inventive strategies to resolve underlying root cause issues. JD's projects consistently exceed expectations due to her attention to building lasting relationships; structured, yet creative problem-solving approach; flexible and clear communication style. She can be contacted at [jd.johnson@propeller.com](mailto:jd.johnson@propeller.com)