

***Positive Leadership in Project Management*¹**

The Continuing Need to Upskill Organizational Leadership²

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

Change, as everyone knows, is a constant challenge for any organization. It challenges leaders to regularly review the organization's vision and mission and to find new ways to nurture employee growth and to develop new leaders.

Moving forward in the journey to the future, leaders can expect some significant turbulence, shifting markets, new technologies, increased competition, shortages of certain skills, and possibly shortages of employees at many levels of the organization.

Today's leaders have two major responsibilities: Setting the direction through vision and mission, and then leading the organization to success.

Leaders know that the "vision statement" articulates why the organization exists. This is a concrete statement that expresses what you are as an organization and the impact you make in your business environment. The vision must be articulated to the entire organization clearly and often and with enthusiasm and passion. The leader must show that he or she is fully committed to the vision. This is only one part of leadership. The part that is more challenging is the act of leading. A simple definition of leading is "to provide direction or guidance." That is the very basic premise of leadership but there is much more. The leader, whether leading a small team or large Fortune 500 organizations must establish a "framework of inspiration" that will drive the organization forward through the engagement of every employee or associate.

Upskilling and Nurturing Current and Future Leaders

1. **Create or review your current vision.** Ensure that the vision captures very clearly what your organization is. Your vision frames what, in most cases, already exists within your organization. It reflects upon the culture and fabric of what the organization is. The vision captures the essence of the organization in a simple but inspiring phrase.

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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2. **Live your Values** – Not value as in products and usefulness, but values. This is about how people behave and treat one another. Values are about how business is conducted. Things like promoting positivity, creativity, and respect. Create a culture of caring – for all employees and for customers and other stakeholders.
3. **Training** – The rapid changes in technology and the continuing changes in societal behavior organizations to ensure they have a plan for the development of new skills to meet the needs of customers, to address new methods of doing business, and to stay ahead of the competition. The need for training applies to public, private, and not-for-profit organizations.
4. **Continuous Process Improvement** – Consider the processes currently in use. How long have they been in use? Many processes are based on needs that existed years ago. Schedule periodic “needs-analyses” and look for opportunities to improve or replace existing procedures. Digital transformation and use of Artificial Intelligence can identify many areas for improvement.
5. **Organizational Agility** – This is an ongoing need for any organization. Focus on conditioning and training employees, team members, and managers to become change ready. Worldwide business is in a sustained VUCA environment (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) and thinking flexibly is essential.
6. **Developing and grooming successors** – There are people within every organization that possess unique skills or have an aptitude for leadership. Managers should keep focus on these individuals and develop a path for succession. The qualities, skills, and capabilities needed to be successful in the future are not clear and are always evolving. There is a need for a leadership career track. This involves coaching, mentoring, training, visible support, and challenging job assignments. The development of new leaders also requires the gradual assignment of increasingly complex projects and job functions. Some organizations may insist on a more rapid succession of complex assignments. Caution should be used here as this could cause burnout, failed assignments, discouragement, and the loss of people who have great potential if they are set up for failure.
7. **The skills needed** to meet the demand of the changing and evolving business environment **change every year**. The book title, “What Got you Here, Won’t Get You There” by Marshall Goldsmith, really tells you in a very simple way – **UPSKILL** to stay relevant. The Forbes list of the 10 most in demand skills for 2024 includes Artificial Intelligence, Project Management, and Communications. [The 10 Most In-Demand Skills In 2024 \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com).

The key is to focus on continuous professional development. Leaders should encourage a culture of learning and sharing. This also requires some “unlearning of old skills, to make room for the new and essential skills necessary to sustain the organization and also to ensure that employees and team members continue to build their own personal brand.

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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