# PROJECT MANAGEMENT, PEOPLE MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Business leaders often overlook an important asset in their organisation when it comes to restructuring or managing transformational change.   The company's project and programme managers have real insight into all things good and bad within an organisation as they often have to work round inefficiencies and internal politics to get things done, through influencing, cajoling and working around unnecessary bureaucracy.   Often, talking to your project managers will give you real clues of how to streamline your business, or highlight which departments are trouble zones.   However, you need to be vigilant in choosing which project managers to share your plans and aspirations with, as not all those labelled as 'project managers' really are.   Choose wisely and you will be building your next generation of leaders

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Management within a modern organisation is an exciting vocation, attracting those individuals that relish the challenge of creating something new and the opportunity to apply control over what might appear to be a random array of tasks and activities.   Projects by their nature are transitory, with finite plans and deliverables – here one day and gone the next.   The good project manager looks forward to building a high-performing virtual team to help him/her deliver something really worthwhile and when the job is done, moving on to the next challenge.

The reasons for project failures, of which there are many is pretty well documented in many volumes on the subject, but what makes a project a success really boils down to is how good the project manager is and how well the organisation can support his/her aspirations for project success.

We have all met those project managers who spend their time building intricate plans of hundreds of activities, dependencies and risks, often getting lost in the detail and escalating through line managers when things start to go wrong.   An excellent mentor of mine once  pointed out that these 'plans' are only 'lines on paper' without the constant attention to detail, clear communication and control over the activities in real-time to deliver what is required.   The question always is what differentiates the

good project manager from a mediocre or poor one, but we're more interested in what makes good project manager great. The Top 10 characteristics of a great project manager would be likely to include the following:

1. **Communication, Communication and Communication** – Able to communicate freely with people at all levels of the organisation, from CEO to engineer. Project leadership calls for clear communication about goals, responsibilities, expectations, individual and team performance

2. **Inspirational and Visionary** – firm believer in the term 'build your dream and people will come'. Inspires others to perform and live their part of the dream

3. **Relationship Builder** – especially with key stakeholders to clear road-blocks people tend to put in the way of change projects

4. **Insight and Awareness** – almost a second-sense of identifying issues before they start to impact the project. Firmly linked to communication and keeping in touch with people around the project

5. **Highly Motivated** –believes that enjoyment in the chase infects others and people will want to be associated with a team that works and plays hard

6. **Innovative** – imaginative and always on the search for the best solution in project delivery

7. **Integrity** – more than just walking the talk, but managing to a set of defined values and expecting the project team to so the same

8. **Leader in Project Management** – leader in developing the Project Management body of knowledge and standards for the company, not just a 'technician'

9. **Thrives on Pressure and Challenge** – sees issues and stressful times as an opportunity to be creative in problem solving and to push the envelope

10. **Transparency** – no hidden agendas or politics, but clear communication, telling it as it really is.

What is worth considering is that the characteristics of a great project manager are not that far removed from those that people look for in a good business leader – a charismatic big-picture visionary who creates a sense of stability and who recognises that communication is the real work of leadership. As a business leader, you will find a lot of personal traits in common with your highest performing project managers.

The List also begs the question – how good are the project managers in your organisation and how do you really measure them? Do they all display the characteristics of a 'great' project manager? Get to know your project managers and you will soon be able to tell which ones are outstanding, which ones would benefit from close mentoring and which ones, frankly, are 'not up to snuff'.

Building trust in a few chosen high-performing project managers will pay dividends in getting insider knowledge on how the organisation really works, how it embraces or protects itself from change and which processes or departments are often working against the business goals of the organisation.  Robert McGannon[1] suggests that great project managers have 'Intelligent Disobedience' meaning they question the status quo of business methods and processes, especially when they are counter-productive, laborious or bureaucratic.  These project managers will have valuable insight which will be of great value in business transformation or streamlining.

Also parachuting one of these project managers into a strategic, high-cost initiative such as a major BSS/OSS transformation will provide essential insider information on the risks and likelihood of delays before they become real issues for the organisation. Build strong relationships with your top project managers and they will repay the investment seven-fold.

## PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Great Project Managers are also strong people managers and team leaders, recognising that they have to build a virtual team quickly and apply to right style of team and people leadership appropriate to the maturity of the team and people they are managing.  **Figure 1** shows a  model for stages of a project team's development and the approriate situational leadership style[2] to apply at each stage.
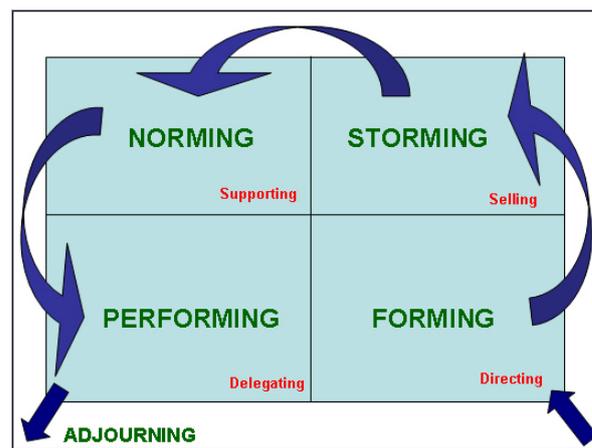


Figure 1:  Project Team Development Phases

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[1] Intelligent Disobedience: The Difference Between Good and Great Project Managers  By Robert McGannon, PMP (2010)

[2] Situational Leadership: leadership theory developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard (1969)

The five stages of project team development have been characterised as:

**Forming:**

− The Project Manager has identified individual members as required for the project
− Some feel anxious, as individual roles and responsibilities are unclear
− Highly depending on the project manager to lead the team

Situational Leadership style: **Directing**

**Storming:**

− The Project Manager leads brainstorming of ideas and  how to proceed with the task and provides:
− clarity on purpose of the task
− task priorities
− roles & responsibilities
− The Project Manager needs to be aware of challenges to authority and potential differences of opinion within the team on how to go about the task

Situational Leadership style: **Selling**

**Norming:**

− The Project Manager supports team-working on the task
− Individual roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted
− Team begin to exhibit participative behavior & decision making is facilitated by the project manager
− Commitment, trust and unity increases

Situational Leadership style: **Supporting**

**Performing:**

− The Team. Led by the Project Manager, has high levels of:

  • goal orientation
  • independence, motivation
  • knowledge and competence in team members

− Team know what,why & how of the task they are executing
− Team expects the Project Manager to delegate tasks instead of instruction/assistance

Situational Leadership style: **Delegating**

**Adjourning:** Happens when project completes and needs to be carefully managed.

Unfortunatetely, Project Managers do not have the luxury of time to build a team slowly and carefully, but need to take the team through the various stages of team development as quickly as possible, so that team members have a common sense of purpose, vision and plan of how to get to the end result.  This requires great attention

to the people in the team – the personalities, approaches, and potential for synergies within the team to cut down effort and improve efficiency.  Also, as the team undergoes a development lifecycle from Forming to Storming, so each team individual may be at a different stage in development in terms of skills and experience and working within teams.  Similarly, the project manager will have to adapt situational leadership on an individual and team basis to ensure a high-performing team.

A crucial people skill the project manager must have is the ability to spot the negative team member, who left unguarded can infect the whole of the team.  That team member must be coached and if not willing to change, quickly excluded from the project team's activities, if the momentum of the project is not to be jeopardised.

The great project manager should also recognise that once the team members have been part of a high performing team and shared in the vision and excitement, there may be a period of 'mourning' when the team is 'adjourned' or disbanded at the end of the project.  It is really good practice to recognise the contribution of team members and to celebrate the success of the project, so that the project ends on  a mental ' high' and will motivate people to be part of future project teams., or to follow the project manager onto other challenges.

# BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Business Management requires close attention to financial spend and management, together with a clear view of the strategy to achieve business growth.  The Business Manager must also have an appreciation of Sales, Marketing, PR, Research, Operation, data processing, statistics, product development and financial and management accounting.

There is not one of these disciplines that does not involve an element of project management, although the project managers may be building experience only in particular vertical disciplines.  Regular movement of project managers across the various business disciplines together with close mentoring may help grow future business leaders, who will have a good appreciation of how the business operates end-to-end.

Furthermore, great Project Managers understand the contribution of their projects and programme portfolios to the business strategy and plan.  They build business cases showing those clear relationships and link, with strategy.  In managing a project, with costs and benefits, they are, in effect, managing a small business within a business, with defined budget, spend and return on investment.  As with business leaders, the great project manager should understand when a project investment is worthwhile and provide a good pay-back, but also be able to decide quickly if it is not worth starting, if the benefits don't add up or to stop when the project conditions become adverse.  The worse thing the project manager can do is to continue when common sense or 'intelligent disobedience' is telling him/her to stop.

Financial management is also central to project management – setting a budget and carefully tracking spend against projected, including setting contingency against unforeseen issues.  How often do we see businesses fold up because the owners are not paying attention to the bottom line or planning contingency for lean periods.

The good Project Manager is also one who is familiar with risks – as an invitation to manage a project is always seen as an invitation to take and manage risks in real time.  Understanding the benefits that can arise from taking calculated risks in projects against taking a safe path marks a great project manager from an average one.  However, this does not mean that a project manager does not have a contingency plan in place, should key risks become real issues, nor that he/she is not able to steer the project around them to keep the project on track.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, you will find the great project manager will be a business ally and through his/her experience and knowledge be able to point to inefficiencies within the business and potential solutions in dealing with them.  Certainly, when planning any major initiative or transformational programme, you should consult your good project managers and maybe select one of the 'great' ones to advise on and to potentially lead the programme.

When selecting new business leaders, the 'great' project managers should certainly be candidates, but be aware of one key trait, that they thrive on challenge, change and tackling new initiatives.  Put one of these potential business leaders into a humdrum, routine job and you will stifle his/her imagination and performance.   Build a challenging role, requiring real innovation and vision and the 'great' project manager will excel.

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