Chapter V

The Importance of Leadership in Project Management

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ABSTRACT

A project manager’s role on any project goes far beyond task-related deliverables. Although the project manager must be able to effectively manage goals related to time, scope and cost, his or her work does not stop here since the project manager must also be able to manage numerous issues and goals, and be able to lead the people performing them. The desired leadership qualities for a project manager are discussed. As the project manager develops his or her leadership skills and uses them to encourage, motivate, and relate to the members on his or her team, he or she can expect to see the emergence of a more positive environment. Not only will such an environment improve job satisfaction and make the overall functioning of the team easier to handle, studies have also shown evidence of improved job performance and productivity, as well as a decline in the undesirable qualities that are known to occur on a project.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been a part of a team that had great potential but could not achieve excellence because of the components of the team? Have you ever been a part of a team whose components seemed to be lacking until everyone pulled together to accomplish something great? Why do these things happen? What is the difference between those two scenarios? The difference is
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the leadership. A poor leader fails to bring out the best of an already great team, but a great leader can create winners out of a team of individuals who may seem to lack ability. Leadership is a critical and essential component for any project management team.

To better understand the impact of leadership, it may be helpful to consider the following definitions of leadership:

- Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality (Bennis, 2003).
- Leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project (Cohen and March, 1974).
- Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation (Hersey and Blanchard, 1984).
- Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization (House, 1996).
- Leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).
- Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007).
- Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives (Yukl, 2002).

Leadership involves the ability to influence people to take actions toward completing a goal or project. Projects contain a number of components – the main three being scope, cost, and time. For the project team to effectively meet scope, cost, and time goals, one must appreciate the impact of positive leadership. It is up to the project manager to manage issues related to scope, cost, and time, as well as to lead the team to successful completion of these goals and the project as a whole.

CREATION OF A TEAM AND INTRODUCTION OF THE PROJECT

Step one of a project is to identify the project; step two is the essential step of forming the project team. This team should not include just anyone; rather, it is critical to have the “right people” on the team. Although members may be added, removed, or replaced throughout the course of the project, the core members should be selected; then, it is time to move forward with developing a team contract. The team contract will improve team relations, enhance communication, provide a clear direction, and increase the commitment of the team members (Schwalbe, 2006).

With the initial pieces in place, the project manager needs to introduce the project to the team of people who will be working together. In doing so, the manager should deliver the information clearly and with genuine enthusiasm. If the project manager has not displayed excitement toward this project previously, now is the time to start. Upon going forward with the project, the project manager must realize his or her role as a leader. As a matter of fact, this person should not think of himself or herself as the project manager, but rather as the project leader.

From this point forward, the terms “project manager” and “leader” will be used interchangeably. The leader must motivate his or her team and provide continued direction, information, goals, adjustments, and helpful feedback throughout the project. The presence of motivation does not promise great success, but the absence of motivation has great potential to damage the team in the long run (Levin and Rad, 2006). The leader
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