

# Leadership Skills for Project Managers

Presented by



**NETCBT**

**Global Provider**



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## Introduction

Leadership is a broad term that describes the skill of leading or directing individuals, teams, or a business organization. The project manager serves a critical leadership role for programs and projects. Leadership is a skill that must be practiced by project managers during the manage project team process. This course will describe the various skills required to perform the leadership role for a project.

## Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the leadership roles of the project manager.
- Recognize the skills to be an effective leader.
- Identify the importance of being an effective communicator.
- Identify the importance of recognizing culture and power in an organization.
- Recognize the techniques to resolve conflicts.

## Course Alignment

This course is aligned with *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)* – Sixth Edition.

This course has been registered with the Project Management Institute (PMI) and provides 8 Leadership PDUs

## Project Resource Management

Leadership is a skill that is identified in the *PMBOK® Guide*. Leadership is identified in the project resource management process group.

Project resource management deals with creating a plan for project resources, building a project team, organizing the project team members, and then managing the project team during the project. All projects, large

and small, will require a team to complete project deliverables. In order to efficiently complete project deliverables, each member of the project team will be assigned one or more roles and associated responsibilities. Project team members are typically not fixed throughout the duration of the project. The number of team members will increase and decrease depending on where the project is at any point. Project resource management is a process that primarily occurs during the executing phase of the project. However, the plan for human resources occurs during the planning phase of the project and becomes part of the project management plan.

The plan for resources must take into consideration many factors, including:

- Existing organizational resources, when are they available for the project, when they are needed during the project and are they available at that time for the project,
- Market conditions, which might dictate the availability of resources to be hired, and then the costs or rates for those resources,
- How the organization obtains personnel, permanent hires versus temporary hires, and their policies related to each,
- Contractual issues and obligations, such as union contracts, or collective-bargaining agreements that are in place, which are binding to the organization,
- The location and logistics of human resources, such that it would dictate where these resources are located, and can they perform their work remotely if they are not local,
- Can our budget afford travel related expenses, such as hotel, airfare, and per diem if resources are required from out of the area,
- Interpersonal factors, which would include experience level, skills, attitudes, how they work on a team, and demeanor under pressure. These are some of the various factors that might be considered. Then, there are technical factors. This might include any specialized skills that are required for the project. For example, if I was going to do a project that required programming, do they have experience and skills to perform and code in a specific programming language,
- There are certifications and licenses, such that we might require that the person running the project is a PMP, or that the person going to install electrical is a licensed electrician in this state,
- Out of country projects may have political factors that also need to be considered.

Project resource management will also include influencing the project team in areas, such as communication style, work ethic, work hours, submitting reports, documenting project progress, attending project meetings, as well as professional and ethical behavior.

## **Project Resource Management Processes**

The processes in the project resource management knowledge area are:

- Plan Resource Management
- Estimate Activity Resources
- Acquire Resources
- Develop Team
- Manage Team
- Control Resources

*Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide) – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017, Page 25.*

Plan resource management is the process of identifying and documenting the roles and responsibilities for each project team member. This plan should include required skills and any required credentials.

Estimate activity resources is the process of estimating the proper amount of resources that are required to complete each project task. Resources include material, people, equipment or supplies.

Acquire resources is the process of obtaining the project team members so the activities of the project can be completed on schedule. Acquiring the project team deals with identifying human resources, verifying their availability to work on the project, and attaining human resources either by assigning them to the project, hiring them, or contracting them.

Develop team is the process of improving the skills and competencies of project team members. This may also include enhancing team interaction, teamwork, and team communications.

Manage team is the process of tracking the performance of individual project team members and providing feedback on their performance.

Control resources is the process that ensures that all physical resources planned for the project are available when needed.

## **Manage Team**

Leadership is a skill defined in the manage team process. Manage team is the process of monitoring team performance and documenting the results. The performance information should be analyzed and reported to project stakeholders. This process includes managing team interactions, managing and resolving conflict between project team members, or between team members and project stakeholders. Finally, the analysis may require modification of the execution process in order to optimize team output.

## **Manage Team Description**

Manage team is the process of tracking the performance of individual project team members and providing feedback on their performance. This process requires that the project manager resolves any issues that arise, and proactively manage changes to the project plan in order to optimize project performance. The project manager is responsible for observing the behavior of project team members, managing any conflicts that arise, resolving issues in a fair and impartial manner, and evaluating team member performance.

Team management involves a variety of skills, with an emphasis on:

- Communication skills,
- Conflict avoidance and conflict management,
- Negotiation, and
- Leadership skills

Excellent team performance can be achieved through the use of open communication between project team members and the project manager. It

is imperative that all project team members understand the project goals and objectives. All project team members should understand the direction the team is headed and contribute toward the team objective. After all, this is the reason the team was put together in the first place, which is to accomplish the objectives and deliverables of the project.

Since individuals filter information differently, the message that you are sending may be interpreted differently by each project team member. It is the project manager's job to make certain that the team members understand the project goals and their own assignments to accomplish those goals. Good communication is a way to make this happen. Open communication will also help to develop trust among team members and to reduce conflict. Finally, open communication should encourage a more collaborative problem-solving and decision-making dynamic among members of the project team. Ideally, project team members should work together throughout the project lifecycle as a team, yet continue to work independently in a climate of mutual trust. This should result in improved feelings of trust and agreement, which should raise morale, lower conflict between project team members, and create a dynamic and cohesive culture.

The following are benefits of an effective team:

- Commitment to the project,
- Commitment to a project manager and the project team members,
- A sense of belonging to the team,
- A sense of purpose for their energy and effort,
- Enhanced communication among project team members,
- Enhanced conflict resolution among project team members, and
- High job satisfaction

Effective teams are typically energetic and enthusiastic. Dysfunctional teams are the exact opposite, and they typically produce the opposite results.

Bad attitudes and poor communication among project team members will lead to:

- Lack of commitment to the project,
- Lack of motivation or an "I don't care" attitude,
- Poor communication,
- Excessive complaining,

- Meetings that turn into whining sessions, and
- Lack of respect and trust for the project manager and the other project team members

If you see these traits in a project team, act quickly, because those attitudes are just as contagious as enthusiastic, good attitudes. Fast and decisive action is necessary to save the project team.

## **Roles of the Project Manager**

- Leader
- Manager
- Facilitator
- Mentor

As a leader, the project manager must define and provide the project vision. This will serve to motivate the project team toward achieving this vision. The leader must also provide motivation for the project team that is required to achieve the project vision. The project manager must also be the liaison and represent the team to stakeholders.

The project manager must provide management duties as well. As a manager, the project manager must create a project administrative structure for the project. The project manager must track performance, costs, and time. The project manager must also report the project status to project stakeholders.

The project manager must also serve as a facilitator. As a facilitator, the project manager must provide effective communication throughout the project. The project manager must also resolve any conflicts that arise throughout the project duration.

The project manager may serve as a mentor to the project team. As a mentor, the project manager can help the project team understand the organizational structure and power positions. A mentor will help team members with career path development.

## Leadership

Leadership is a skill that is identified in the *PMBOK® Guide*. Leadership is a broad term that describes the skill of leading or directing individuals, teams, or a business organization. The project manager serves a critical leadership role for programs and projects. Leadership is a skill that must be practiced by project managers during the manage project team process.

Leadership is defined as an interpersonal skill in the *PMBOK® Guide*. The *PMBOK® Guide* defines Interpersonal Skills as:

“Skills used to establish and maintain relationships with other people.”

This definition was taken from the Glossary of Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (*PMBOK® Guide*) – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017.

The *PMBOK® Guide* also defines Interpersonal Skills as “soft skills”. Interpersonal skills are those skills that allow information to be shared efficiently and smoothly between project stakeholders and project team members. Examples of interpersonal skills include:

- Communication skills,
- Emotional intelligence,
- Conflict resolution,
- Negotiation,
- Influence,
- Team building, and
- Group facilitation.

Project managers can use any combination of interpersonal skills to exploit the strengths of individual project team members.

Leadership is the primary interpersonal skill that will be used by project managers because all projects require strong leadership. Leadership can also be defined as using influence to enlist the support of others to accomplish a common goal. This common goal can be the deliverables for a project.

Leadership is a vital skill for project managers because leadership is required in all phases of a project.

## **Leadership of the Project Manager**

All project managers must assume the leadership role in their projects. One of the first responsibilities is to establish a vision for the project. The vision is the “why” of the project.

Why design a new product?  
Why update an existing project?  
Why create a new call center?

The project vision must identify the value that the project will bring to the organization. It is also important for the vision to identify how the new project fits into the organization’s strategy. In this case, the vision identifies why resources are being spent and the benefits that should be received. Finally, the vision must identify the benefits to the customer.

Once the perspectives of the project stakeholders, project team members, and customers are identified and aligned, all project stakeholders will have a complete understanding of the project. This will also allow the project manager to understand the complete project scope and the specific deliverable required to successfully deliver.

In some cases, the project manager must sell the project’s vision to project team members and project stakeholders.

## **Leadership vs. Management Skills**

Leadership and management are often considered the same skill but, in fact, they are very different skills. Project managers must demonstrate the characteristics of both leaders and managers when performing their duties during a project. Since the skills are different, project managers must learn how to switch between these two skills during a project.

Project leaders are responsible for providing a vision for the project, gaining consensus among project stakeholders and project team members for project goals, and providing direction for project team members. Project leaders are also responsible for inspiring and motivating project team members.

Managers focus on results and achieving project deliverables according to the defined project requirements. The management functions that must be performed by a project manager include the following:

- Planning
- Organizing
- Staffing
- Controlling
- Directing

## **Skills to be an Effective Leader**

The skills that are required to be an effective leader include:

- Empathy
- Effective listening
- Organizational awareness
- Stakeholder relationship
- Effective communications
- Conflict management
- Influencing
- Relationship building

## **Empathy**

Empathy is a critical skill for being able to understand the emotions of others. Empathy is the ability to relate to the emotions of others. Empathy is a key skill for project managers because managing a project requires working with many different individuals.

Empathy is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as:

1. "the ability to share someone else's feelings"
- or
2. "The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner."

Empathy can be a difficult skill for project managers because we work in a results-oriented environment. However, empathy can be learned and practiced. Project managers can implement empathetic listening when communicating with project stakeholders and project team members. Think of empathetic listening as listening without judgment. Before we discuss empathetic listening, let's take a moment to understand the word listen.

## **Listening Definition**

The word listen is a verb, with the following definitions:

- To pay attention to sound
- To hear something with thoughtful attention
- To give consideration
- To be alert to catch an expected sound

We will be focusing on the second definition, which is to hear something with thoughtful attention when communicating with project team members or project stakeholders.

## **The Importance of Listening**

Listening is the key to "understanding" when communicating with others. The act of listening is required to understand what is being said by others in order to achieve effective communication. Many project managers forget that they need to listen as well as talk in order to effectively communicate with project stakeholders. It can be argued that a project manager may need to listen more than talk when managing projects. I believe that all

project managers strive to be effective communicators, and effective communication requires effective listening in order to understand what is actually being said.

Here's an important question that I want you to take a few seconds to think about. Are you a good listener?

Think about all the communicating that you do with your friends, with your family, with your neighbors, with your coworkers, and truly answer this question. Are you a good listener?

## **Listening for Agreement**

Research indicates that most individuals are not particularly good listeners, especially in situations that are either complicated or high-pressure like during the project. A major reason for this is that people mainly listen to either agree or disagree with each other. They don't truly make an effort to understand or empathize with each other. Instead of trying to understand, we are internally evaluating what is being said by thinking either "that's right", or "that's wrong". When they disagree, the speaker usually counters with their own point to reinforce why their point is right. This process feeds conflict and can easily escalate differences into stressful and unresolved impasses.

## **Effective Listening**

Effective listening is a means to prevent impasses and resolve differences when they occur. This is particularly helpful in complicated or stressful situations.

Effective listening is a technique where you will strive for "understanding", as opposed to simply listening for agreement. This will allow you to gain more useful and significant information.

Agreement is very important and often a necessary outcome if two or more individuals are involved in a decision. However, a big difference exists between forcing agreements and building agreements. Forcing agreements

breeds its own resistance, limitations, and failures. Listening to build agreements develops mutual buy-in and more pleasing outcomes for all parties involved. Therefore, effective listening skills are required for building agreements and discovering important information.

## Listening Behaviors

We've established that most individuals are not very good listeners. I guess the question you should be asking now is, why? On the graphic below, I have listed listening behaviors. The column on the left is labeled as natural behaviors and the column on the right is labeled as learned behaviors.



## Listening Behaviors

- Natural behaviors
  - Ignore
  - Interrupt
  - Talk or question
  - Assume
  - Tell
- Learned behaviors
  - Engage
  - Acknowledge
  - Encourage
  - Summarize
  - Ask

If you want to know why most individuals are not very good listeners, take a look at the column labeled as natural behaviors. These include the general tendencies of most individuals, which are:

- To ignore what is being said,
- To interrupt what is being said,
- To talk or to question what is being said, instead of being quiet and simply listening in order to understand what is being said, and
- Assume they already know what is being said and why it is being said.

Most individuals assume they know what is going to be said so they don't really listen. Most individuals prefer to be in control, so they tend to "tell", instead of listening to what is being said. Some individuals fear that the process of listening for understanding will be interpreted by the speaker as agreement with what they are saying. In fact, the listener may or may not be in agreement. Therefore, good listening is a learned behavior.

The column on the right is labeled as learned behaviors. When you listen for understanding, you are going to:

- Engage the speaker without telling them anything,
- Acknowledge what is being said by summarizing,
- Encourage them to keep speaking so you can learn more, and
- Ask questions for clarity and to get a better understanding.

When you are a good listener, you are going to engage, meaning you are actually going to stop what you are doing and listen. You are going to acknowledge what is being said, you are going to encourage talking to make sure that you have enough information in order to understand, you are going to summarize what is said in order to confirm understanding, and finally, you are going to ask any necessary questions in order to understand or to fill in the gaps to achieve understanding.

## Empathetic Listening

Empathetic listening is listening without judgment. Empathetic listening requires the following:

- Passively listening without judgment
- Focusing on the behavior of the person speaking
- Listening for emotional words being used by the speaker
- Periodically summarizing their emotions that they have expressed

Empathetic listening can have the following benefits:

- Makes the speaker feel important and valued
- Improves the depth of the conversation
- Allows the listener to hear any emotional words that are used by the speaker
- Builds trust between the listener and speaker

The keys to empathetic listening include:

- Give the speaker your full attention
- Maintain eye contact
- Let the other person speak freely
- Occasionally summarize what emotions were expressed by the speaker
- Try to place yourself in their position as you are listening

## Listening Exercise 1

Here's the first exercise, please rate yourself. Take a few minutes and review each of the statements, then rate yourself using a scale from 5 to 1, where five means that you would do this often, and one would mean that you would seldom do this. This is an informal exercise, but it is best if you write down your responses and review them.

### Rate Yourself

When discussing an important issue with another project team member, do you:

	Often	Seldom
Fake listening when pre-occupied	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Listen briefly, then take over the discussion, giving information or solutions	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
React defensively	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Not take the time to listen to the other person's full information	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Direct the conversation with questions	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Attend to the talker's non-verbal cues	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Acknowledge the talker's experience	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Invite the other to continue talking	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Summarize the talker's message to ensure accuracy and demonstrate understanding	5- 4-	3- 2- 1
Ask questions to fill in the gaps or get more information	5- 4-	3- 2- 1

## Listening Exercise 2

Listening is about allowing others to talk freely. However, many project managers don't allow project team members the opportunity to talk before taking over.

Here's the second exercise. Again, I want you to think about each statement, and rate yourself related to allowing others to talk or share information. For each statement, I would like you to rate yourself, either with an E, A, or an I. An 'E' would mean that you encourage another to share their information, an 'A' would mean that you allow others to share their information, but you don't necessarily encourage it. And finally, an 'I' would mean that you tend to inhibit others from sharing information.

### Rate Yourself

To what extent do you inhibit, allow or encourage others to share information when:

	Encourage-Allow-Inhibit
An issue exists where you both have a stake	E - A - I
Another wants to share their thoughts or experience related to an important idea or event	E - A - I
Another person seeks advice	E - A - I
During a conflict event	E - A - I

## Listening Exercise 3

Listening is also about allowing another to share freely without controlling the conversation. Controlling the conversation is a method of restricting what is shared.

Here is the third exercise. Again, I want you to think about each statement, and rate yourself related to controlling conversations or connecting with the other person. Connecting would “encourage” the other person to freely share information. For each statement, I would like you to rate yourself by selecting either control or connect, where “control” would mean that you tend to control the conversation, or “connect” would mean you tend to encourage the individual to share their information.

### Rate Yourself

Is your intent to control the conversation or connect with the other person when:

An issue exists where you both have a stake	Control or Connect
Another wants to share their thoughts or experience related to an important idea or event	Control or Connect
Another person seeks advice	Control or Connect
During a conflict event	Control or Connect

## Listening Exercise 4

Finally listening is about understanding, including what is happening, the circumstances, what has led up to what's happening, and the individual's feelings about what is happening.

Here is a fourth exercise on listening for agreement. Again, I want you to think about each statement, and rate yourself as either listening for agreement or pursuing understanding. For each statement, I would like you to rate yourself by selecting either an 'A' which means that you tend to listen for agreement or with the 'U', which means that you tend to pursue understanding of what is being said.

### Rate Yourself

Do you listen for agreement or do you pursue an understanding when:

	Agreement	Understanding
An issue exists where you both have a stake	A	U
Another wants to share their thoughts or experience related to an important idea or event	A	U
Another person seeks advice	A	U
During a conflict event	A	U

### Exercise Summary

After completing the four listening exercises, you should now have a better understanding of your own personal listening style or listening tendencies.

## Organizational Awareness

Leadership also requires organizational awareness. Organizational awareness is being aware of the organizational structure, organizational culture, organizational goals, and organizational power and politics. The keys to being organizationally aware are to understand the culture and key power relationships that exist in the organization.

## Organizational Structures

Companies are structured with a defined organizational structure. Each organizational structure has its own style and organizational culture that will have a direct impact on how project work is performed. One of the primary differences between the various types of organizational structures is how much authority senior management and functional managers will have on project work and their relationship to project managers.

The Business Dictionary defines organizations as:

“A social unit of people that is structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals.”

*This definition was taken from the Business Dictionary.*

Companies are structured with a defined organizational structure. Each organizational structure has its own style and organizational culture that will have a direct impact on how project work is performed. One of the primary differences between the various types of organizational structures is how much authority senior management and functional managers will have on project work and their relationship to project managers.

The primary organizational structures are:

- Functional Organizations
- Output Organizations
- Hybrid Organizations
- Projectized Organizations
- Matrix Organizations
- Virtual Organizations

Project managers should be aware of the organizational structure and the corresponding culture that exists in each type of organizational structure. This will provide an indication of how project stakeholders may act when project resources are requested for project work. The organizational culture will also dictate the risk tolerance of the managers in the organization. Companies with aggressive cultures are more comfortable implementing new technologies or taking a leading-edge position within their industry. They are also more likely to agree to risky projects. In these organizations, project managers will usually have more latitude to suggest new ideas and projects that have never been attempted before. Conversely, organizations that are highly structured and hierarchically oriented are more likely to be risk adverse and prefer to implement a follow the leader approach within their industry and avoid risky projects. Project managers that are risk takers are likely to have a more difficult time in these types of organizations when working with functional managers.

The level of autonomy and authority given to the project manager will be directly related to the organizational structure of the business entity.

## **Culture**

Culture plays an extensive role in nearly every aspect of an organization.

Merriam-Webster defines organizational culture as:

“The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.”

This definition was taken from Merriam-Webster.

Organization culture is composed of the informal and unwritten values, norms, and behavior patterns that are commonly accepted and observed by members of an organization. Organizations can have strong or weak cultures. Organizations with strong cultures include organizations such as Apple, Google, Facebook, and IBM. The culture of these organizations is

strongly enforced through numerous informal rules. Weak culture organizations have hard-to-identify, loose cultures that are not strongly enforced. Strong cultures are a means to achieve integration because people buy into a common set of shared values and operate from a common frame of reference.

## **Organizational Culture Characteristics**

Organizational culture is made up of two characteristics:

- Observable characteristics, and
- Unobservable characteristics

At the observable level, culture includes many aspects of the organization such as architecture, dress, behavior patterns, rules, language, and ceremonies. At the unobservable level, culture is composed of the shared values, norms, beliefs, and assumptions of organizational members. Organizational culture is the combination of these two levels of characteristics that orients or directs organizational members to manage problems and their surroundings. In addition, many companies have codes of beliefs that similarly reflect their organizational culture. These documents are at least one indicator of the organization's culture.

## **Analyzing the Organizational Culture**

Just as companies conduct financial and managerial audits, it is a good idea for a project manager to conduct their own culture audit. The purpose of such investigations is to understand the environment and to understand how the organization's culture will impact the various aspects of delivering a project.

Culture seems to creep into assumptions that organization members make every day about all manner of organizational issues. These assumptions will also impact their thinking and expectations of projects.

Over time, the culture becomes almost second nature. Only when changes occur do members of the organization become conscious of the values, assumptions, and norms that form the foundation of the culture.

Organizational roles and role changes are prime causes for project managers paying attention to an organization's culture. When entering a new environment, it is important to learn about the accepted ways of doing things in the new environment. As a result, you would want to examine things like dress codes and language used by the organization members. It is also important to discern the pecking order in order to understand where the power and influence exists.

Finally, it is important to identify any conflict that exists among the different subcultures within an organization. Culture conflicts are common across functional or product groupings. For example, it is not unusual to see somewhat different values and norms among a company's engineering and operations groups compared with those in marketing or human resources. Value and norm differences may affect such seemingly trivial things as dress or such important issues as organizational priorities.

A culture audit, then, is a look at values, beliefs, norms, behaviors, and other aspects of culture. It consists of monitoring and evaluating the various components of culture. Audits show the extent to which both the formal and informal rules of the organization operate.

Culture audits can be conducted by asking questions aimed at finding out how members feel and think about the organization and their places in it. As an exercise, you can do this on your next project that must be delivered to another organization. You can ask the following questions:

- What are the key organizational values?
- What do organizational resource believe?
- How do employees behave?
- How does management behave?

These and other questions can be quite revealing in showing the underlying culture of the organization.

## Organizational Goals

Goals are statements that identify criteria that an organization wishes to achieve. In general, an organization's goals or objectives serve three main purposes:

1. They establish the desired objective that the organization is trying to achieve
2. They provide a reason for the organization's existence, and
3. They provide specific criteria to measure the organization's performance

The PMI *Business Analysis for Practitioners Guide* defines organizational goals as:

“Broad based translations of corporate goals into expressions that are actionable and measurable. Goals are typically longer in scope than objectives.”

\* *Business Analysis for Practitioners: A Practice Guide*, Project Management Institute, Inc., 2015

Overall organizational goals are stated in an official mission statement. The organization's mission statement is a broad or general statement about the organization's guiding principles. A mission statement is often so broad that it does little more than set a general tone for the organization, but that tone may be critically important to establishing a culture. Operative goals, derived from the mission statement, are more specific statements about what the organization, division, department, or business unit intends to do. Finally, operational goals are the most specific and narrowly stated goals of the organization. Operational goals contained in documents such as job descriptions, state what specific individuals in the organization should be doing. It is important for a project manager to have an understanding of each of these when working with a new client organization.

## **Organizational Power and Politics**

Power and politics are two other dimensions of an organization that are important for the project manager to understand. It is important to discern the pecking order in order to understand where the power and influence that exists in an organization.

Organizations are intentionally structured and designed to accomplish specific, organizationally determined goals and objectives. It is assumed that rational managers will act in ways to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. They would also do what is best for the collective good of the organization. However, this may not always be the case.

### **Authority**

Authority is defined as the rational basis of power. Authority is based on what individuals should be doing according to the official, formal dictates of the organization. However, we will see that not all power is associated with official organizational authority. Instead, individuals throughout the organization can derive power from many different sources that are unrelated to authority. Often this power allows individuals to pursue goals and objectives other than those that are officially documented. Understanding the divergent nature of power in organizations leads us to the concept of political power. Rather than discussing what organizations should do, the political perspective addresses what organizations actually do.

Every organization has a political dimension. In fact, some organizations have a greater degree of politics than others. Understanding the distribution of power and the political nature of organizations is critical to understanding the actions of organizations. This, in turn, will have a direct impact on project work and obtaining resources required to complete a project.

## Organizational Power

Authority provides the formal, official, and rational basis for the distribution of power in organizations. One problem with the concept of authority is that in many organizations, especially those that are decentralized and where lower-level employees are empowered, the hierarchical lines of authority are blurred. Different divisions may end up engaging in strategies that conflict with each other either through internal competition for scarce resources or through competition in the marketplace.

### Power

Power is the ability to affect the behavior of someone else in a desired way. This ability can be based on a number of factors at the organizational level. Some of these factors include knowledge, authority, information, personality, and resource control.

Authority and power are not the same. Authority is simply the power that the organization formally sanctions or recognizes. Power, on the other hand, is the influence that does not necessarily depend on formal organizational recognition. Power may exist within or outside the bounds of formal organizational relationships. In other words, power is a larger concept than authority. Consider the situation in which a supervisor issues directions to subordinates that require them to carry out a normal work task. These directions are considered by both supervisor and subordinate to be legitimate. The supervisor in this instance can be said to be using power in the form of position authority, which is derived from his or her role as a manager and which was delegated to him or her by superiors in order to accomplish certain organizational goals.

Consider the situation where the supervisor directs a subordinate to do a personal errand for him or her. This errand is clearly outside the official job description for the subordinate and the relationship between the supervisor and subordinate. This command is not based on the official authority vested in the supervisor. If the subordinate performs the errand, the influence attempt is successful. In this example, the subordinate may feel compelled to carry out the requested errand because he or she depends on the

supervisor for various rewards. Formal relationships often have a kind of carryover effect into informal relationships. The extent to which an individual can exercise power can be viewed as a function of the dependency relationship that exists between parties.

As you can see, power may not necessarily be consistent with the organizational hierarchy. It is clear that power may be independent of position and level in the organization. Power can also be influenced over individuals, groups, or departments to follow their lead or vote a particular way. There are various types of power that project stakeholders may have that will allow them to influence other stakeholders.

- Reward Power
- Coercive Power
- Referent Power
- Charismatic Power
- Expert Power
- Power Through Control of Resources

Reward Power is the power that comes from one's ability to control and dispense benefits to others. The controller of benefits has the ability to shape the behavior of others by the simple act of dispensing or withholding these benefits. The strength of reward power is primarily determined by the size of the reward and the belief that it will be delivered. A supervisor who has control over subordinate pay raises or bonuses gains not only the legitimate power of his or her position but also has power over subordinates because of his or her ability to grant or withhold raises or bonuses. The larger the pay raise or bonus, the more power the supervisor has to get subordinates to perform tasks that they otherwise might not perform. This can be a problem when a manager provides resources for a project. The resource's manager may have more power over their performance than the project manager.

Coercive Power is the ability to coerce or punish another person and is a strong foundation of power or influence. This base of power often provides strong motivation and can be viewed as the reverse of reward power. Where reward power relies on the dispensing of rewards for its strength, coercive power depends on the meting out of punishment for its effectiveness. In

some organizations, coercive power may result in resources losing a privilege or a specific benefit. Continued poor performance may result in demotion. Of course, the ultimate in coercive power is the threat of firing.

Coercive power tends not to be effective over the long run. First, the targeted person may shift goals and behavior to doing as little as possible while avoiding punishment. Thus, the undesirable behavior may be eliminated, but the resource may end up become a marginal contributor to the organization. Second, the person on the receiving end of coercive power is likely to feel resentment towards the person using that power. The resentment may be manifested in feelings of victimization and possibly the desire to retaliate. This sense of resentment can have serious dysfunctional consequences in a relationship, especially if it is unresolved over a period of time.

Referent Power is the type of power when one employee identifies with and follows the actions of that employee. It can be a manager on the rise in the organization. The belief is that following this employee will also benefit them. Because most people at one time or another have known this feeling of identification with success, this is a common and powerful foundation of influence.

Charismatic Power is the power to influence others. This type of power is held by those who have an indefinable magnetic quality about their personalities that attracts others to follow them. As a result, those who possess charisma find it relatively easy to influence their followers. By following such a leader, the followers can realize their own objectives even though they are serving the leader's purposes. No special effort is required to exercise charismatic power. Followers of charismatic leaders follow because of the compelling nature of the leader's personality.

Expert Power is exerted power because of their knowledge or special skills. They are respected for this knowledge or skill, irrespective of their position in the organization. Those who admire this expertise or who need it to solve problems are willing to subordinate themselves in return for the expert's assistance. For example, an information systems specialist, or a technician may exert power beyond that typically associated with their position because of the expertise they possess.

## How to Assess Power

Because power permeates the organization and all its members, it is important for project managers to find some means to measure or assess the power of important project stakeholders.

To assess the power of project stakeholders, project managers must make a judgment about how much of a particular type or basis of power a person or department possesses. Sources of power are indirect measures of power that a given person or department has at a particular time.

You must also be aware of employees that behave in a way that creates the impression that they have more power than they actually have. Only experience with a given employee can reveal whether that power is based on legitimate expert power or on some other basis.

Another means of assessing power is to identify the decisions made by various stakeholders. A look at who makes the significant organizational decisions gives a good indication of who has the most power in the organization. It is important, however, to distinguish between who makes the decisions and who announces them.

Stakeholders that have organizational power often like to display their power. This may include such things as larger offices, more luxurious office furnishings, more expensive company cars, reserved parking spaces, access to special dining or recreational facilities, or even their manner of dress.

Membership on influential committees and participation in critical teams or task forces can be indicative of an individual's organizational power. If a manager is the head of a special team or task force, this may be an indication of the individual's popularity with top management and may also be an indication of his or her ability to influence the organization. Every organization has key jobs or positions that are associated with possession of power. The title (executive vice president) or function (budget officer) of the organization are sometimes good indicators of power.

## Stakeholder Relationships

Project stakeholders are individuals, groups or organizations with a vested interest in the project. Some project stakeholders have a monetary interest or an interest in the product produced by the project. Other stakeholders are people who are actively involved in the work of the project. All project stakeholders have something to gain or lose as a result of the project.

The *PMBOK® Guide* provides the following definition for a stakeholder.

“An individual, group, or organization that may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project, program, or portfolio.”

This definition was taken from the Glossary of Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide) – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017.

As you can see from the definition, a stakeholder has multiple facets. A project stakeholder can be a person, group or an organization. Stakeholders are also actively involved in projects because they have an interest in the outcome of the project. Most importantly, a stakeholder may exert influence on a project.

The following is a list of possible stakeholders on a project:

- Project manager
- The project team members
- Customer/client and their staff
- Project sponsor
- Department managers in the client’s company
- Outside vendors or suppliers involved in the project
- Project management office (if used for the project)
- Program managers (if the project is part of a program)
- Portfolio managers (if the project is part of a portfolio)

Note – this list includes the most likely stakeholders that you will find on a project. There may be other stakeholders involved on a project.

One of the responsibilities of a project manager is to identify all of the individuals, groups or organizations that are impacted by the project. This

process is done during the initiating process and it is a very important step in the success of the project. The process of identifying project stakeholders will also include discovering and documenting each stakeholder's interest in the project and their potential or likely involvement. Once this is done then each stakeholder's impact on project success can be assessed.

All projects large and small require planning. Stakeholders play an important role in the planning process because it is the stakeholders that will validate that the work and deliverables that are being planned and actually what is being requested. It is the project stakeholders that will provide the assurance that the deliverables of the project meet the stakeholder's needs. This is important because a successful project achieves its objectives and meets or exceeds the expectations of the project stakeholders.

Another very important responsibility of a project manager is to manage the expectations of the project stakeholders. This is the process of communicating with project stakeholders throughout the different phases of the project. This allows the project manager to continually work with the project stakeholders in order to meet their needs and to address any issues that arise during the project.

In some cases, project stakeholders may have conflicting interests related to the project. It is the project manager's responsibility to understand these conflicts and try to resolve them without compromising the objectives of the project. Politics and rivalries within an organization often times can lead to these conflicts. It is also very important to understand the political environment of the organization that is requesting the project work. An effective project manager will meet with key project stakeholders early and often when starting a project. Then, continue to meet with project stakeholders during the project and continually communicate project status updates.

## **Stakeholder Identification and Analysis**

Part of the process of identifying stakeholders is to determine what each stakeholder has to gain or lose from the successful completion of the project. This is known as stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis will

typically follow the stakeholder identification process, which occurs early in the project and continues throughout the life of the project. Stakeholders that are identified during the identify stakeholders process should be documented in the stakeholder register. The documentation should include their interests and the potential positive or negative impact on the project. When identifying project stakeholders, pay particular attention to the company culture, organizational structure, and any applicable industry standards. This will help you to understand who has influence and power based on their position and where they reside in the organization.

Once project stakeholders have been identified, the next step is to perform an analysis of each project stakeholder to determine the influence they will have regarding the project. According to the PMBOK® Guide, there are three steps involved in stakeholder analysis.

1. Document information about all potential project stakeholders to include their name, department, job function, interest level in the project, knowledge about the project, expectations from the project and probable influence on the project.
2. Analyze the support or opposition likely to be generated from each project stakeholder regarding the project. Then, a strategy should be created for each project stakeholder to realize their support or minimize their opposition.
3. Create an assessment of how each project stakeholder will likely respond to various situations. This step should include an action plan for enhancing support or minimizing opposition.

Stakeholder identification information includes items like: contact information, department, role in the project, stages they are likely to participate in the project, etc.

Identifying the potential impact for each stakeholder includes elements such as their expectations regarding the project, whether they will be positively or negatively impacted by the project, key requirements for the stakeholder and their influence in the organization. You may also consider classifying stakeholders according to the impact that they can have on the project. This is most accurately done by understanding each stakeholder's role in the organization as well as their anticipated role in the project. Understanding

the organizational structure and where any particular stakeholder fits in that structure is an excellent first step in determining the level of influence they are likely to have on the project.

Assessing how stakeholders are likely to react to various situations is the most difficult area to document because you may not know each stakeholder personally. Nonetheless, knowing and understanding all stakeholders is critical to the success of most projects. In some cases, it is important to identify the relationship among various stakeholders involved in the project. Learning a little bit about their business concerns and needs will make it easier to negotiate and motivate stakeholders when necessary during the project. Knowing which stakeholders work well together and which have personal conflicts can also help the project run smoothly. Knowing the stakeholders that have authority or influence can be very helpful when obtaining resources for the project. In addition, this information can help to minimize negative impacts or influences that stakeholders may have throughout the life of the project.

The following are models that can be used for classifying stakeholders for analysis:

- Power / interest grid
- Power / influence grid
- Influence / impact grid
- Salience model

The power / interest grid is a technique that groups project stakeholders based on their authority level (known as power) and concern or interest regarding project outcomes.

The power / influence grid is a technique that groups project stakeholders based on their authority level (known as power) and their active involvement or influence regarding the project.

The influence / impact grid is a technique that groups project stakeholders based on their activity involvement or influence in the project and their ability to effect changes to project planning or project execution (impact).

The salience model is a technique that defines classes of project stakeholders based on their power or authority level, urgency, and legitimacy.

Once this information is collected, it can be used to build a stakeholder register. The stakeholder register is a document that contains information about each stakeholder, their expectations regarding the project and level of influence in the organization. The following is an example of a stakeholder register.

### Stakeholder Register Example

Name	Dept	Classification	Knowledge Level	Expectations	Influence	Phone	Email
John Able	Facilities	Internal	High	High involvement	Low	213-555-1245	<a href="mailto:johna@abc.com">johna@abc.com</a>
Rich Decker	Corporate	Internal	High	High involvement	High	213-555-1230	<a href="mailto:richd@abc.com">richd@abc.com</a>
Mary Reed	Marketing	Internal	Low	Low involvement	Medium	213-555-1249	<a href="mailto:maryr@abc.com">maryr@abc.com</a>
Fred Yu	IT	Internal	Medium	Medium involvement	Medium	213-555-1233	<a href="mailto:fredy@abc.com">fredy@abc.com</a>
Ryan Wild	Finance	Internal	High	Low involvement	High	213-555-1211	<a href="mailto:ryanw@abc.com">ryanw@abc.com</a>
Daryl Herr	Vendor	External	High	Low involvement	Low	714-987-4192	<a href="mailto:rherr@vendor.com">rherr@vendor.com</a>

Note – This is just a sample. Additional information can be added to suit the needs of your project.

Stakeholders can be internal or external to the organization. A simple strategy for identifying obscure stakeholders would be to ask the stakeholders who have been identified if they know of anyone else who might be impacted by this project. This can be done at one of the initial project stakeholder meetings.

## Effective Communications

Relationship management requires effective communication. It is commonly said that project managers must possess good communication skills. A project manager can communicate, but it may not be effective and achieve the desired results on the project.

Effective communication is a communication style that creates a bridge between diverse stakeholders involved in a project, connecting various cultural and organizational backgrounds, different levels of expertise, and various perspectives and interests to achieve the desired outcome.

Effective communication skills include the following:

- Listening actively and effectively,
- Questioning, probing ideas and situations to ensure better understanding, which means not just listening but asking questions in order to understand what you are hearing,
- Fact-finding to identify or confirm information, which involves not just listening to secondhand reports, but seeking firsthand information,
- Setting and managing expectations,
- Persuading a person or organization to perform an action,
- Negotiating to achieve mutually acceptable agreements between parties,
- Resolving conflict to prevent disruptive impacts, and
- Summarizing, recapping, and identifying the next steps.

These are a few examples of the skills that are required to be an effective communicator. Effective communication will lead to an effective team. The following are benefits of an effective team:

- Commitment to the project
- Commitment to a project manager and the project team members
- A sense of belonging to the team and a sense of purpose for their energy and effort
- Enhanced communication among project team members
- Enhanced conflict resolution among project team members
- High job satisfaction

Effective teams are typically energetic and enthusiastic. Dysfunctional teams are the exact opposite, and they typically produce the opposite results. Bad attitudes and poor communication among project team members will lead to:

- Lack of commitment to the project
- Lack of motivation or a “don’t care” attitude
- Poor communication
- Excessive complaining
- Meetings that turn into whining sessions
- Lack of respect and trust for the project manager and the other project team members

If you see these traits in a project team, act quickly because those attitudes are just as contagious as enthusiastic good attitudes. Fast and decisive action is necessary to save the project team.

## **Stakeholder Register Exercise**

It is time to stop and apply some of the information from this course in an exercise. This exercise will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

This exercise requires creating a stakeholder register. You can either create a stakeholder register for a current project or from a past project.

### Assignment

Create a stakeholder register for at least 10 project stakeholders. For each project stakeholder, record the following information:

Name

Department

Phone number

Email address

Knowledge level regarding the project

Anticipated level of involvement in the project

Phase or phases of the project where they will be involved

Next, use one of the following models to define each stakeholder's influence in the project and classify each stakeholder's influence as either: Low, Medium or High.

- Power / interest grid
- Power / influence grid
- Influence / impact grid
- Salience model

Complete the stakeholder register template below with the information to complete this exercise

### Stakeholder Register

Name	Dept	Phone	Email	Knowledge Level	Expected Involvement	Project Phase(s)	Influence

You may also use your own template to complete this exercise.

In the space below, indicate which influence model you decided to use to classify stakeholder influence on this project?

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Describe why you decided to use this particular model to classify stakeholder influence on this project?

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## Conflict Management

Conflict is inevitable on projects due to the nature of the projects themselves and the fact that projects usually include many individuals working together. As a result, conflicts often arise during the project due to trying to meet schedule deadlines, controlling costs, personal work styles, and different communication styles. In most cases, the success of the project manager managing the team hinges on his or her ability to manage and resolve conflict successfully. Each project manager will use their own conflict resolution style that suits their personality, and that has worked for them the best in the past.

### Conflict

Conflict is defined by the Business Dictionary as:

“Friction or opposition resulting from actual or perceived differences or incompatibilities..”

*This definition was taken from the Business Dictionary.*

### Sources of Conflict

There are many sources of conflict within a project team or organization and can show up during a project. The sources of conflict are varied and are

usually related to conflicting loyalties and alliances. The most common types of conflicts involve:

- Manpower resources
- Equipment and facilities
- Capital expenditures
- Costs
- Technical opinions and trade-offs
- Priorities
- Administrative procedures
- Scheduling
- Responsibilities
- Personality clashes

Each of these conflicts can vary in relative intensity and can occur at different points in the lifecycle of a project. Many project managers believe that the most frequently occurring conflicts are related to project schedules, but the most disruptive and damaging conflicts typically occur as a result of personality clashes.

Ideally, the project manager should report high enough in the organization so that conflicts can get resolved quickly. Therefore, project managers must plan for conflict resolution. Studies on sources of conflicts have shown the following:

- The lower the project manager's degree of authority, the greater the potential for conflicts to develop.
- The less project objectives are understood by the project team members, the more likely that conflict between project team members will develop.
- The less specific and defined project roles and responsibilities are between project team members, the more likely that conflict will develop.

## Conflict During the Project Life Cycle

Conflict can occur during different phases of the project lifecycle. The prime contributors to a conflict environment are the people, tasks, and challenges associated with the different phases of the project lifecycle. The project manager should be aware of the potential sources of conflict found in each phase of the project life cycle.

### Initiating Phase

The initiating phase occurs at the beginning of the project and may also occur at the beginning of each project phase for larger projects. The initiating process acknowledges that the project, or the next project phase should begin. The initiating phase of the project will document the business need for the project and validate this need through the duration of the project. During the initiating process, the initial scope of the project is defined. The project charter gets created and project stakeholders are identified at this phase of the project. The initiating process group grants the approval to commit the organization's resources to working on the project or phase and it also authorizes the project manager to begin working on the project.

The initiating phase must consider the following:

- Develop project charter
- Identify stakeholders

*Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide) – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017, Page 25.*

During the initial phase of the project, the project manager must focus on all aspects of the project that are required to begin the project or the next phase of an existing project. Important tasks include identifying key resources or required personnel, determining project success criteria, specifying required technology, and clarifying roles and responsibilities as well as policies and procedures.

During this phase of the project, it is crucial for the project manager to encourage everyone to address conflict openly. Team members should take their cues from the project leader at this early stage. If the project manager is sending the message that conflict should be avoided, then team members will respond accordingly. This is particularly true when the team members are more junior or when they have limited experience.

During the initiation phase, the project manager can establish a good precedent for handling conflict by serving as a conflict resolver and to encourage the behavior in all project team members.

## **Planning Phase**

The planning phase is where the creation and refinement of project goals and objectives occur. This process group starts off by identifying the goals and objectives for the project and then starts the planning to achieve the project goals and objectives. It is in the planning process group that the project requirements are identified and documented. During the planning process group, the project requirements are identified and verified with the project stakeholders. When planning on how to achieve project objectives, it is important to consider alternative courses of action as well. Only after all courses of action are considered can the best course of action be selected for the project.

Planning must be done properly because the executing, monitoring and controlling and closing phases all rely on the documents that are created during the planning phase. The planning documents serve as the baselines for the project in order to verify if the project is proceeding as planned. The planning process group has the most processes of any of the other five project management process groups. Project managers will perform frequent iterations of the planning process group prior to project completion and acceptance.

The planning phase must consider the following:

- Develop project management plan
- Plan scope management

- Collect requirements
- Define scope
- Create WBS
- Plan schedule management
- Define activities
- Sequence activities
- Estimate activity durations
- Develop schedule
- Plan cost management
- Estimate costs
- Determine budget
- Plan quality management
- Plan resource management
- Estimate activity resources
- Plan communications management
- Plan risk management
- Identify risks
- Perform qualitative risk analysis
- Perform quantitative risk analysis
- Plan risk responses
- Plan procurement management
- Plan stakeholder engagement

*Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide) – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017, Page 25.*

One of the main challenges for the project manager during the planning phase of the project is to develop relationships with key project stakeholders that will be supplying project resources, such as functional managers. Many project managers know that working with functional managers can be difficult as the project manager attempts to gain needed personnel for the project.

Interacting with the functional manager presents many opportunities for conflict. The project manager must clearly think about the needs and priorities of the project first. It is also important to realize that the motivations of the functional manager will be very different from those of the project manager and the project.

The functional manager may attempt to resolve a conflict by claiming to be the expert related to project staffing and resources. Functional managers will typically label the project manager as a generalist in this area. For the project manager, it is best not to confront such an approach directly, since the functional manager will likely react defensively. The best approach is for the project manager to let those comments pass and to stay focused on needs of the project. The project manager would be wise to simply acknowledge the functional manager's competency in the area of project staffing and keep the discussion moving forward. The project manager needs to remember that the functional manager very likely has different needs and a different agenda. The best approach to avoid conflicts is to try to understand those needs and address them as directly as possible.

## **Executing Phase**

The executing phase involves putting the project management plan into action. This process group includes the project management processes that are required to perform and complete the work of the project. It is at this stage that the project manager will coordinate and direct project resources in order to meet the objectives defined in the project plan. The executing process keeps the project plan on track and ensures that activities, which will be executed in the future, will also continue to follow the project plan. It is during this process group where approved changes are typically implemented. The executing process group will utilize the most project resources and time in order to complete the project activities, which includes both human resources and materials. As a result, costs are usually the highest during this process group.

The executing phase must consider the following:

- Monitor and control project work
- Perform integrated change control
- Validate scope
- Control scope
- Control schedule
- Control costs
- Control quality
- Control resources
- Monitor communications

- Monitor risks
- Control procurements
- Monitor stakeholder engagement

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During the executing phase, the primary tasks of the project are underway and the project work on each task is underway. The key issues that can cause conflicts during this stage are unexpected problems, delays, technical problems, risks, and/or issues related to stakeholder expectations.

Because project execution requires project resources working together, it is typical to see conflict related to issues of personal interactions, time management, performance management and stress of the individual project team members.

## **Monitoring and Controlling Phase**

The monitoring and controlling phase is where project performance measurements are taken and analyzed in order to determine whether the project is staying on track with the project plan. The primary objective of this process group is to identify problems as soon as possible and to apply corrective action in order to ensure a successful outcome. For example, if it is discovered that a variance exists then corrective action must be planned to fix the variance. This might require revisiting the planning process in order to adjust project schedules, activities, resources, and budgets. Once the corrective action is approved, then the correction will be made in the executing process group because that is where approved changes are typically implemented.

The monitoring and controlling phase must consider the following:

- Monitor and control project work
- Perform integrated change control
- Validate scope
- Control scope

- Control schedule
- Control costs
- Control quality
- Control communications
- Control risks
- Control procurements
- Control stakeholder engagement

*Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, (PMBOK® Guide) – Sixth Edition, Project Management Institute Inc., 2017, Page 25.*

Conflict can occur during the monitoring and controlling phase due to problems that are identified during this phase. If it is discovered that a variance exists then corrective action must be planned, conflict can result from identifying those responsible for the identified variance.

## **Closing Phase**

The closing phase is where all of the project activities are finalized and brought to a formal close. Projects or project phases are closed because they are completed, or the project is being killed. In either case, the closing process is important because it brings a formal, orderly end to the project activities or the activities of a project phase. It is at this stage that project information is gathered and stored for future reference. All project information and documents will serve as organizational process assets, which can be viewed prior to the start of future projects. Hopefully, this information will help to avert potential problems on future projects. If procurements were part of the project, contracts are also closed out at this stage. Finally, formal acceptance and approvals are obtained from project stakeholders during this process group.

The closing phase must consider the following:

- Close project or phase

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The closing phase of the project presents special challenges and opportunities for conflict for the project manager. Team members are often emotionally fatigued at the end of the project. The pressure to complete tasks against time and resource limits has diminished personal resiliency. In addition, project team members may be experiencing uncertainty about their next assignments. These factors can create conflict situations for project team members. Therefore, the project manager should be aware of all the potential sources of conflict when moving toward the project completion and closure.

## Conflict Not Addressed

The natural tendency of most individuals is to avoid conflict. If the conflict in the project environment is not addressed, undesired outcomes will likely develop such as:

- Project team members will withdraw from each other and retreat into individual spheres of influence. This will adversely affect project performance and it will also allow the unresolved issues to fester.
- Team motivation and team initiative will decrease, while cynicism will increase.
- Project roles will become rigid and team members will become territorial about their functions and withhold information or assistance.

## Negative Aspects of Conflict

There are many negative and undesired outcomes related to the unresolved conflict.

- When not addressed in a productive manner, conflict can de-motivate team members and increase interpersonal withdrawal.
- Conflict decreases interpersonal communication and increases cynicism between the parties involved in the conflict.
- Conflict adversely affects initiative and the team member's willingness to take risks.

It is very common for conflicts to start following reductions in project resources. This can occur when the remaining employees struggle to obtain resources and personnel. Conflicts can also crop up at the end of a project, especially in a "projectized" organization. When these team structures have been created, project team members do not have a functional "home" while they wait for a new assignment.

Individual sources of conflict during a project can result from many different factors such as:

- Two team members may irritate each other for no reason other than that their personalities clash.
- Poor communication skills between project workers can create worker conflict.
- Conflicts can evolve from employees that bring personal problems into the workplace.
- Conflicts can also start from different perspectives due to politics, culture or closely held beliefs held by team members.

Conflict is not always bad for a project. There are cases where conflict can influence the project team positively. Conflict can be positive when the project manager embraces and processes conflict in a constructive manner. It can positively impact the project in the following ways:

- It can create an intellectually stimulating environment, which encourages project team members to challenge paradigms and constraints.
- It can encourage project team members to challenge the status-quo approaches to solving problems.
- It can create opportunities to improve working relationships and to revitalize team energy.

## **Avoiding Conflict**

One method for dealing with conflict is to simply avoid conflict in the first place. Avoid conflicts can be achieved by establishing rules for behavior, ground rules and processes. The amount of conflict can greatly be reduced using various techniques, such as:

- Establishing team ground rules for working together, communicating together, and resolving conflicts,
- Establishing norms for the group, and communicating these norms to all project team members prior to the project starting, and
- Establishing a solid communication plan that defines the roles for all project team members, and defines the reporting within the team, and defines responsibilities for all project team members.

## Thomas-Kilman Model

The researchers Thomas and Kilmann created the "Thomas-Kilmann Model of Conflict Resolution". This is a self-assessment tool based on work in conflict resolution by Thomas and Kilmann (1974). This model helps conflict participants define their primary and secondary conflict resolution styles.

The styles defined by this model are:

- Competing
- Accommodating
- Avoiding
- Compromising
- Collaborating

Many project team members have found this instrument helpful in obtaining quick and easy feedback regarding their preferred conflict resolution approach. Usually, an individual develops comfort and competency in using one of these five conflict resolution approaches. However, be careful not to overuse the successful approach for all conflict situations. It is important to realize that one of the other four approaches may be more productive for different conflict situations. As a result, the Thomas and Kilmann's model encourages all project team members to:

- Develop skills in each of the five approaches
- Develop the ability to know when to use each approach.

Each of the five Thomas-Kilmann approaches to resolving conflict is valid under certain circumstances. The challenge for the project manager is to know when to use each approach.

### Competing

The first of the five Thomas-Kilmann approaches to resolving conflict is competing. The "competing" approach to resolving conflict is based on a combination of being both assertive and uncooperative. This approach is

often driven by a need for power. As a result, individual concerns and goals are pursued at the expense of others. This approach can be useful in situations where unpopular actions must be taken or when an individual is certain that his or her position is correct.

While competing may be effective in certain situations, it should be used judiciously and not as a primary tool for resolving conflicts. When competing is applied in the wrong situation, it can prolong the conflict if the other party does not agree or cooperate. This will have the result of alienating the other stakeholders and preventing the views of the other individual from being heard. This can cause the other project team members to lose sight of the overall goals and objectives of the project.

Before the competing approach is used to resolve a conflict situation, a project manager should:

- Attempt to use other less confrontational approaches first.
- Consider the long-term effects on ongoing working relationships with all stakeholders if this approach is used.

## **Avoiding**

The second of the five Thomas-Kilmann approaches to resolving conflict is avoiding. Avoiding works well in situations where the issue at hand is trivial, when there is little chance of winning, or when more information or data is needed to resolve the conflict. It can be an effective technique when the conflict is emotionally charged and some form of cooling off period is warranted.

Avoiding can be harmful if the act of avoiding results in unnecessary delays for the project or when it hinders communication between project team members. In addition, project team members that are using this approach run the risk of being perceived by others as passive.

Before applying the avoiding approach to a conflict, the project manager should:

- Determine whether the issues that lead to the conflict are crucial or trivial to the project.
- Assess the risk of possible delays to the project schedule.
- Consider the perception of others on the project team.

## **Accommodating**

The third of the five Thomas-Kilmann approaches to resolving conflict is accommodating. The accommodating individual will typically display a high degree of cooperation and will also display a low degree of assertiveness. Often, the focus for the accommodating person is on meeting the needs of the other person, occasionally at the expense of his or her own need related to the conflict.

Using the accommodating approach for managing conflicts can be helpful in the early, formative stages of the project team. Preserving harmony is one of the primary reasons for using the accommodating approach. This approach is also useful for avoiding pointless competition over insignificant conflict issues.

Project managers should avoid using accommodating as a conflict resolution technique. This technique can severely undercut the project manager's authority in the eyes of the project team members and project stakeholders. The project manager who overuses the accommodation technique may be viewed as weak. It may also create anger from team members that believe their positions and needs are not being addressed.

When considering using accommodating as a conflict resolution approach, the following questions should be considered:

- Is accommodating a conflict resolution technique that I use too often?
- Will my team react negatively by using the accommodating technique?
- What are the long-term implications for my reputation in the organization if I use accommodating as a conflict resolution technique?

## **Collaborating**

The fourth of the five Thomas-Kilmann approaches to resolving conflict is collaborating. The collaborator is the team member who emphasizes both assertiveness and cooperation. A collaborating individual is willing to consider the merits of the other person's position in the conflict. The collaborating approach is based on an attempt to combine both individuals' positions in order to create an integrated solution.

Positive aspects of collaborating include situations where both positions are considered. Collaboration works particularly well in situations where perspectives from both individuals involved in the conflict are valid. Negative aspects of collaborating include situations where the collaboration results in work outcomes that are faulty. Other negative aspects of collaborating involve situations where the desire to collaborate creates delays to completing project activities.

The project manager should consider the following questions when considering using collaborating to resolve conflicts:

- Are both positions really important and accurate, warranting a collaborative approach?
- Will the final product or service warrant the extra time that a collaborative approach requires?

## **Compromising**

The fifth of the five Thomas-Kilmann approaches to resolving conflict is compromising. When using the compromising approach to resolve a conflict, both individuals involved in the conflict must give a little to find middle ground. Compromising sounds similar to collaborating but this technique differs because it is a more short-term oriented approach. This technique is typically used in situations when temporary agreements need to be reached quickly. As with both the collaboration and accommodation approaches, the project manager who uses compromising runs the risk of being perceived as too willing to give into the other side or too willing to give up on his or her original position.

When considering using the compromising technique, the following conditions should be required:

- A short-term action needs to be taken quickly.
- A need exists to demonstrate openness and flexibility.

## **Resolving Conflicts**

There are a number of good techniques that can be used by project managers to resolve conflicts. Once a conflict occurs, the project manager must:

- Study the problem that resulted in the conflict and collect all available information
- Develop a situational approach or methodology for resolving the conflict
- Set the appropriate atmosphere or climate to resolve the conflict

If a confrontation meeting is necessary between conflicting parties, then the project manager should prepare for the meeting by taking the following steps:

- Setting the climate: establish a willingness to participate in creating a solution.
- Be impartial: Your job is to get the participants to resolve the conflict.
- Collect relevant information: Encourage participants to get their feelings out in the open.
- Define the problem: define the problem and clarifying the positions for each participant.
- Sharing the information: making the information available to all
- Setting the appropriate priorities: developing working sessions for setting priorities and timetables.
- Problem-solving: obtaining cross-functional involvement, securing commitments, and setting the priorities and timetable.
- Developing the action plan: getting commitments from all participants
- Implementing the work: taking action on the plan.

- Following up: obtaining feedback on the implementation for the action plan.

The project manager should also understand conflict minimization procedures which include the following:

- Pausing and thinking before reacting.
- Building trust.
- Trying to understand the conflict motives for all participants.
- Keeping the confrontational meeting under control.
- Listening to all involved parties.
- Maintaining a neutral attitude.
- Listening with understanding rather than evaluation.
- Clarifies the nature of the conflict.
- Understands the feelings of others.
- Suggests the procedures for resolving differences.
- Maintains relationships with disputing parties.
- Facilitates the communications process.
- Seeks resolution to the conflict.

## Conflict Resolution - PMBOK® Guide

There are five recognized techniques defined in the *PMBOK® Guide* that can be used for resolving conflicts. Any can be used by project managers, depending on the conflict. The five techniques are:

- Withdraw/avoid.
- Smooth/accommodate.
- Compromise/reconcile.
- Force/direct.
- Collaborate/problem solve.

Withdraw/avoid: This technique is where both parties in the conflict retreat from the conflict or any potential conflict situations. Withdrawal or avoidance never results in a resolution to the conflict and can be described as a lose/lose technique, where both parties lose using this conflict resolution method.

Smooth/accommodate: This technique will place the focus of the conflict resolution on areas of agreement, instead of areas of disagreement. This is a temporary method for resolving conflict and typically does not lead to a permanent solution to the conflict because the real issues that led to the conflict are not addressed.

Compromise/reconcile: This technique requires each party involved in the conflict to give up something to resolve the conflict. This technique requires some give-and-take from both parties until a solution is reached. As a result, neither side wins or loses using this technique.

Force/direct: This technique forces a solution to the conflict on the parties involved in the conflict. Using this technique, both parties will go along with the solution only because they are forced to do so. It does not mean that they agree with the solution, and it only provides a win/lose solution to the conflict.

Collaborate/problem solve: This technique involves examining and discussing multiple viewpoints with project team members. This technique typically leads to true consensus where all team members will be committed to the solution for resolving the conflict.

## **Influence**

Influencing is another key attribute for project managers to employ when leading the project team and working with project stakeholders. Many times the project manager does not directly control project resources, so they must have the ability to influence key stakeholders. Influencing would include the ability to make a persuasive argument for obtaining project resources. As a result, project managers must use active listening in order to understand the key stakeholder's perspective regarding resources. Influencing may also require pulling together information in order to make a persuasive case supporting the project manager's position.

## **Building Relationships**

Relations must be created and then maintained. A complete relationship management strategy would include creating an individual strategy for each project stakeholder and project team member. A relationship strategy can be as simple as regular meetings or informal meetings. More involved strategies can include learning more about the individual's interests, family or outside activities.

Building relationships can be accomplished by any of the following activities:

- Regular meetings – these can be either formal or informal
- Customized communications – information just for their needs
- No business activities – sports events, hobbies, or coffee
- Touching base regularly – consistent communications (formal or informal)

## **Conflict Management Exercise**

It is time to stop and apply some of the information from this course in an exercise. This exercise will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

Assignment:

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1. Describe at least two types of conflicts that you have encountered when managing a past project.
2. Describe a conflict where withdrawing/avoiding was used to resolve the conflict.
3. Describe a conflict where smoothing/accommodating was used to resolve the conflict.
4. Describe a conflict where compromising/reconciling was used to resolve the conflict.
5. Describe a conflict where forcing/directing was used to resolve the conflict.
6. Describe a conflict where collaborating/problem solving was used to resolve the conflict.

Describe at least two types of conflicts that you have encountered when managing a past project.

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Describe a conflict where withdrawing/avoiding was used to resolve the conflict and indicate whether the conflict was resolved satisfactorily.

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Describe a conflict where smoothing/accommodating was used to resolve the conflict and indicate whether the conflict was resolved satisfactorily.

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Describe a conflict where compromising/reconciling was used to resolve the conflict and indicate whether the conflict was resolved satisfactorily.

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Describe a conflict where forcing/directing was used to resolve the conflict and indicate whether the conflict was resolved satisfactorily.

Describe a conflict where collaborating/problem solving was used to resolve the conflict and indicate whether the conflict was resolved satisfactorily.

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