

Leadership

Leadership is a choice we make, not a place we sit. It is a decision we make to influence the thinking, behaviour and development of others. To accomplish this we need to develop a sincere interest in people, a commitment to delivering outcomes, and a mindset of continual renewal of our own thinking and knowledge. Force and directive behaviour will not lead to long-term commitment from your followers, sustainable change or optimal solutions.

Everyone in a leadership role has to be open, honest and transparent, and be able to communicate with confidence, style and passion to inspire people; because if you don't, you are not going to be leading for very long. However, excellent communication skills¹ are not sufficient in themselves; unlike celebrities, successful leaders need substance and content as well as style.

Greek philosopher Aristotle saw leadership as the merging of three key elements²:

- **Ethos:** our moral character and credibility, which instils in people a sense of trust and confidence in the message we are delivering³.
- **Pathos:** our ability to put the listeners in the right frame of mind, so that they are capable of hearing us.
- **Logos:** the reasoning or logic we develop and the action-oriented words we use in convincing others.

Good leaders combine these elements and enable the free flow of relevant information to build a pool of shared meaning and mutual purpose and respect. They use their skills to create a common purpose within the team or organisation that transforms 'me' into 'we'.

Paradoxically, great leaders in business are not focused on beating their competition. What they focus on is how to make their own organisation better at achieving their goals and be more responsive to stakeholder requirements, particularly clients and customers.

Leadership is not without risk. It means being willing to get out in front; being 'ahead of the curve'. It means defining the issues on your terms and setting your own agenda, not having it set by others. There are many different aspects and styles of leadership, some are discussed below.

The Servant Leader

Project managers are in the perfect position to act as servant leaders. The servant leader is someone who recognises that they are a servant first and focuses on the development of their team members and building a sense of community among the team. The emphasis is on the leader as someone who is there primarily to help the team overcome obstacles (and there are always obstacles that the team will require assistance in overcoming).

The servant leader uses skills such as trust, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight and empathy; they lead their team not through a command-and-control approach, but through activities like coaching and listening to empower each of the team's members to contribute fully to the team's success.

The concept is very old, there are passages that relate to servant leadership in the Tao Te Ching, a document attributed to Lao-Tzu, who is believed to have lived in China in the 4th century B.C., but has modern application in a wide range of project management areas and is particularly relevant in many Agile

¹ For **Communication** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PMP_Sup/PMP_Mod10_Communication.html

² For more see **Heart of Influence** by Jürgen Oschadleus: <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Books.html#influence>

³ For more on **ethics** see WP1001: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1001_Ethics.pdf

methodologies where a key function of the project manager is to ‘clear roadblocks’ to allow the team to perform.

Conversational Leadership⁴

Conversations with others in the organisation, up, down and across the hierarchy can advance or impede progress towards our objective. As a leader, the conversations you have (or refuse to have) define the quality of your thinking and are central to the building of effective relationships that ultimately affect the outcomes you deliver.

Effective leaders create a safe environment in which all participants can contribute to a shared meaning rather than needing to constrain their thoughts to protect themselves. Within this safe environment people can confront reality and challenge both your thinking and their thinking which in turn encourages curiosity, leading to understanding and the discovery of optimal solutions to problems.

The Trusted Advisor

Project managers should strive to become Trusted Advisors to their customer (and senior management), but this is a difficult position to reach. Trusted Advisors are involved in all stages of the client's decision making processes to help them create value. Achieving this requires high levels of ethics, credibility, and the ability to ‘speak the customer’s language’⁵.

Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Leaders

1. **Be Proactive:** Principles of Personal Choice
2. **Begin with the End in Mind:** Principles of Personal Vision
3. **Put First Things First:** Principles of Integrity & Execution
4. **Think Win/Win:** Principles of Mutual Benefit
5. **Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood:** Principles of Mutual Understanding
6. **Synergize:** Principles of Creative Cooperation
7. **Sharpen the Saw:** Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal of body

Key leadership traits:

Effective communication⁶: including providing clear direction, open feedback and active listening⁷.

Effective time management: focus on the important issues⁸, delegate others.

Trust: leaders are both trusted and trusting⁹.

Relinquish the ‘doing’ role: focus on directing and leading the team so they can do great things.

Effective delegation: effective delegation is a skill that needs to be learned. Team members appreciate the authority and opportunities created by effective delegation and help their leader be successful.

Powerful motivator: praise and encouragement motivate; as does authenticity and honesty.

⁴ Jürgen Oschadleus: PMI Global Congress – Asia Pacific 2009.

⁵ For more on **Advising Upwards** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_077.html

⁶ For more on communication see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PMP_Sup/PMP_Mod10_Communication.html

⁷ For more on Active Listening see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1012_Active_Listening.pdf

⁸ For more on problem solving see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1013_Problem_Solving.pdf

⁹ For more on the Value of Trust see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1030_The_Value_of_Trust.pdf

Receptive to change: change is a fact of life, effective leaders are receptive to change and help their team understand the need for the change.

Good EQ and SQ¹⁰: leadership is about leading people, good leaders manage their emotions effectively and relate effectively with the individuals in their team and the social structures both in and around the team.

Leadership and Management:

Leadership cannot replace management. Organisations and teams are created to achieve goals larger than those an individual can pursue on his/her own, but it is still the individuals working within the organisation that actually do the work that achieves the goals. The basic purpose of management is to ensure the appropriate resources are available to allow the unit being managed (ie, the project or program) to achieve its basic purpose. The manager gets things done through other people by coaching, motivating, building teams and directing focus; ie, by leading, so the people working within the unit take the correct actions to deliver the required outputs as effectively as possible.

The art of management is a practice that has to be learned; it uses scientific processes to determine facts and elicit information but this raw data needs interpretation and communication to the right people to engender appropriate action. Within the team, the manager moves intentions from conceptual ideas to concrete results by communicating information, to people to engender actions. The manager frames ideas to create context for everyone else working in the team and then schedules and coordinates appropriate actions. The manager also acts as the primary link between the team and the rest of the organisation and the larger stakeholder community¹¹.

Michael Maccoby has identified three types of leader:

- Strategic Leaders: focus on the future and how to get there. They set the course for the organisation.
- Operational Leaders: focus on keeping the organisation working efficiently and effectively; the traditional management areas of logistics, processes, quality and resources.
- Bridge-building Leaders: connect people together. The newer management areas of knowledge transfer, networking, communities of practice and aligning aims and expectations.

All three traits are important within an organisation to ensure the right goals are set, everything is done that needs to be done to achieve the goal and that everyone is working together to achieve the common aim.

Summary

The most effective project and program managers are skilled in both managing and leading; they work with and support their teams to achieve the outputs expected by their primary stakeholders.

The concept of the *Hero PM*¹² who as a highly skilled practitioner could create project success almost singlehandedly is rapidly fading. In the second decade of the 21st century successful PMs will display '5th Level Leadership', attuned to the needs of the team as well as the power structures of the organisation. Successful PMs will combine the traits of effective leadership described in the first part of this White Paper with competent project management defined in documents such as the *PMBOK® Guide*.

¹⁰ For more on Social and Emotional intelligence see:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1008_Emotional%20Intellegence.pdf

¹¹ For more on stakeholder management see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1007_Stakeholder_Cycle.pdf

¹² See: *The future of the PM Hero* http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_105.html