Influential and Inspirational Powers – Project Manager's New Self Evaluation Tool for Building Productive Teams

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1.1 Abstract:

Results achieved by a project team are highly dependent on the level of motivation as well as the inspiration of the team, a Project Manager has this critical responsibility of bringing up and maintaining these levels so that the team achieves its goals., In order to fulfill this responsibility the project manager himself needs to be aware of the required skills and then model the required changes in the team.

This paper presents a model for identifying the skills to be adopted and changes to be done in the way of working for both the Project Manager and the team itself. It's based on a survey of variety of team stakeholders (Project Managers, team members, Line Managers etc). This model called as **Influential and Inspirational powers model** (IIP) proposes a new way of self evaluation for Project Managers and consists of four quadrants each representing the level of Influential and Inspirational powers. A Project Manager adopting this model does a self evaluation and determines his position on these quadrants. Later the team does its evaluation and provides their view of the said Project Managers position on the quadrants. These two evaluations will help the Project Manager to understand his as well as teams attitude and then decide on the changes required to create a highly inspirational and motivated environment/team, thus raising team achievement and personal performance.

1.2 Keywords:

Influential power, inspirational power, self analysis tool

1.3 Introduction:

Project Managers are usually made up with different professional and management skills, a different set of ideas and a unique way of building relationships among the stakeholders. Similarly team members are also differ in various ways, thus the direct use of power is seldom a good option to drive the projects. Irrespective of the background, project manager will have to influence team members to agree on goals, milestones, scope, communication channel, conflicts and resolve them, share resources and take on responsibilities, also implement ideas and suggest new proposals. Project Manager should also inspire the team with good values and team culture; this will enhance the flow of innovative ideas and excellent thoughts at work.

On an overview one might feel influential and inspirational powers are similar, but a closer look will show them as the faces of the same coin and they both go hand in hand.

Influential power is a cognitive factor that tends to have an effect on what you do; the effect of one person on another by words or actions. It's often a suggestion, at a low cost and short-lived. Influence can be positive or negative. The drive to perform comes from external personal.

Inspirational power[1] is an on-going journey, in which one continually seeks to heighten his or her awareness of team and project in many shapes and forms, as well as his or her understanding of the interplay between design and the cultural, social, and economic facets of society. Inspiration is not always immediate, and it has to be earned. Its utility is nurtured and harvested over time months and even years through personal experiences. It's the catalyst of true creativity and gives you an abstract way of thinking. The drive in inspiration is purely internal, but the source could be from anywhere.

Project manager to obtain best results in the team, should combine the influential and inspirational powers. While a creative team requires inspiration to succeed, influence works best while driving a team towards a predefined goal. It is important for the project manager to know his nature; the nature of work involved in projects and team members so that appropriate power can be used to get the best results.

IIP Model maps the levels of influence and inspiration on a grid with four quadrants. Two Situations are considered to assess the manager.

Situation 1: Extent to which team members get influenced and inspired by project manager

Situation 2: Extent to which project manager get influenced and inspired by team

Inputs from the project manager and the team are marked over these four quadrants, depending on the position with respect to both situation analysis are made. A project manager with great influential skills will eventually become a great leader, while a project manager with inspirational values creates perfect working environment for creativity and innovation. Project manager will need to use this combo powers wisely.

1.4 Description of the IIP Model:

IIP model has four quadrants marked with levels of influential and inspirational powers. Two situations consider mark the levels of these two powers in two different viewpoints, project manager's view, and team's view.

1.5 Levels in Inspirational Power:

When the values and thoughts of the project manager is followed by majority of the team members to a great extent then the manager is high inspiration level. At the same time if the team doesn't incorporates the values from the manager then it's an indication of low inspiration level.

If the values from the team members are adopted by the project manager into his activities to a great extent shows high inspiration level, if none are adopted then it's an indication for low inspiration level

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[1] Description will be refer to as **values** in this paper

1.6 Levels in Influential Power:

When the project manager is capable of influencing most of the activities carried out by the team and the team agrees to do it as per the project manager's guidance, this shows very high influence level. While if the project manager has little/no effect of his influence over the activities done by the team indicates low influential level.

On the other hand if the project manager gets influenced by the team for most of the project activities, then it's an indication of highly influenced level. If there is very little/no influence by team over the project manager and his activities this indicates low influence level.

1.7 Two Situations:

IIP model uses two situations in order to assess the nature of project manager and his team, their openness to change and the kind of projects handled. Situation 1 will bring out the nature of project manager, style of working and openness of the team, while situation 2 will give an understanding on nature of team and openness of the project manager.

1.7.1 Four Quadrants:

These quadrants mark various levels of influential and inspirational powers under the two situations stated in section 3.

 IIP situation 1: Extent to which team members get influenced and inspired by project manager. Following section will describe the quadrants and the nature of the project manager's falling into them.
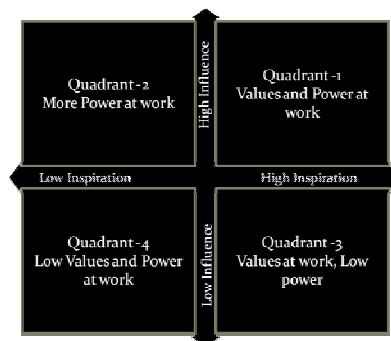

Figure 1: Quadrants showing the level of powers for situation 1.

Quadrant 1: Quadrant for highly influential and high inspirational powers. Project manager placed in this quadrant have high values and power at work. They can drive the team both in innovation and predefined goals. Team respects the values and incorporates in their work environment. Higher management roles in an organization require these two powers to a great extent for the success of the projects.

Quadrant 2: Quadrant for highly influential and low inspirational powers. Project managers with high power and drive at work. Project manager placed in this quadrant can drive the team with lots of guidance and support to achieve the predefined goals. These managers may not encourage innovation at work, they are more result oriented. Team with less experience would love to work under project managers of this quadrant as the continuous support is ensured by the manager. Creative team member might feel difficult in pushing his innovation. These project managers are suitable for projects where innovation is not a key for success.

Quadrant 3: Quadrant for low influential and high inspirational powers. Project manager placed in this quadrant can drive the team with lots of innovation and creativity. These managers may not worry about the short term goals and leave it to the team members to drive individually, and looks for a long term achievement, encourage innovation at work. These project managers are suitable for projects where innovation is a key for success and team is self driving.

Quadrant 4: Quadrant for low influential and low inspirational powers. Project manager placed in this quadrant will have to analyze their existence in the specific project, without any of these powers in play. A few situations could be team works individually on an innovation without any short term goals and commitments. It might also be a new project manager and would require some time to get in action.

IIP situation 2: Extent to which project manager get influenced and inspired by team. Following section will describe the quadrants and the nature of the project manager's falling into them as seen by the team.
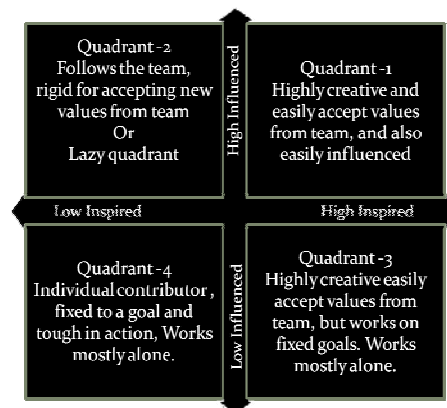

Figure 2: Quadrants showing the level of powers for situation 2.

Quadrant 1: Highly influenced and highly inspired quadrant. Project manager placed in this quadrant are easily influenced by the team and are also creative in implementing the team's values into their work. These project managers can adjust to any new team working on innovation and long term goals. They are open for new ideas and follow up the values of the team very closely. Team will find it easy to work with such a project manager. This quadrant project manager is suitable for projects where innovation is a key for success. A manager newly added to the team may also fall into this quadrant.

Quadrant 2: Highly influenced and low inspired quadrant. Project manager placed in this quadrant are easily influenced by the team and they might be rigid to accept new culture and values of working from team. These project managers usually go with the team decision or open for changes most of the times. Team will find it easy to work with such a project manager, but the project manager might find it difficult to adjust to a new team. This quadrant might have less experienced project managers, this quadrant indicates a self drive to improve on the openness within the team and also focus on the commitments and goals. In rare cases lazy project managers2 might fall into this quadrant.

Quadrant 3: Low influenced and highly inspired quadrant. Project managers placed in this quadrant are again easily influenced by the team and implement the team's values into their work. Unlike quadrant 1 project manager, he/she will have a fixed goal to achieve and will not get so easily influenced by the team. A project manager in this quadrant has good experience and can drive the project mostly alone; they can focus on the commitments, keeping the values of the team high. They are matured and balanced in their activities and thoughts. A new team will find it easy to work with such these project managers.

Quadrant 4: Low influenced and low inspired quadrant. Project manager placed in this quadrant will mostly be an individual contributor focus on the goal and are tough in actions. They mostly work alone hence doesn't worry much about the team values. These project managers are suitable for projects that run with a fixed short term goal and they might find it difficult to get along with a new team.

1.8 Analysis Methodology:

Step 1: Mark the quadrant with respect to situation 1 on figure 1.

Step 2: Mark the quadrant with respect to situation 2 on figure 2.

Step 3: List the nature of team, project and the project manager's personality.

Step 4: compare with the quadrants in situation 1 and situation 2.

Step 5: identify the blind spots and strengths and take corrective actions to improve the team work culture and productivity.

When the right match is obtained for the nature of project manager and team, the productivity and values in project execution show up brightly.

If there is any mismatch then try to understand. For example, if the work requires more influencing skills to drive the project but the team is not getting influenced then take necessary steps 3to bridge this gap. Similarly if the team needs less influence from the project manager and but a highly influential natured project manager is assigned

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[2] Project manager who doesn't care about the values of the team nor for the goals.

then he/she will influence the team on every aspect, instead he/she should give some room for the team to voice out their thoughts.

Success factor: The success of IIP model will depend on the true analysis of the nature of the team and project manager and their mapping with respect to the two powers. If rightly mapped, IIP model will immediately point the blind spots for improving the team productivity and innovation.

Survey Results: A survey was conducted with a sample of about 100 participants from various roles (project managers, line managers, engineers, architects and so on)

1.8.1 The summary of the survey is

- Most of the participants were influenced and inspired by their family and friends more compared to colleagues.

- Most of the participants thought they influence and inspire their colleagues more than their family.

- Most of the participants thought they have high influencing and inspiring power than getting influenced and inspired by colleagues

The survey showed that there is some mismatch which needs to be address by individual analyzing the influencing and inspiring powers.

Conclusion: Project managers are always advised to have good influencing and motivating skills but this paper address a rare combination of influential and inspirational powers to assess the nature of work. It's important to know the balance between the two powers and when to use these powers, this paper aims to clearly show that both powers are equally important for the productivity of the team and project manager. Most inspirational person might not be the most influential; IIP model gives a quick analysis of the gap in the nature of project manager and his team/project. IIP model is still under study and is continuously evolving with new challenges and case studies.

References: Most of the material is self prepared and based on the discussion with my peers and friends.

1.9 Author Profile:

Naveen Nanjundappa PMP, is project manager at Nokia India, Bangalore. He has worked in various stages of SDLC. His work is in the area of Symbian OS hardware platform and System Test. He has mastered over agile methodologies and act as agile mentor and coach within the organisation. He is vice president since 4 years for Bangalore Astronomical Society, he has organized and participated in various astronomy workshops, popularizing astronomy and teaching are his passion.

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