What are the habits of successful project managers?

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Abstract. Good project managers possess people-oriented skills and develop effective professional relationships with colleagues. Project leaders need to embrace interacting with people via effective communication. That means they should welcome interruptions positively and reschedule their work strategically. Successful project leaders also have certain leadership, interpersonal, and professional qualities.

Keywords: Project management, people-oriented, time management, ethical qualities, leadership, interpersonal skills.

1 Introduction

In contemporary society, the global economy has become project-oriented more than ever due to the expansion of project management within less project-focused industries, such as healthcare, publishing, and professional services [1]. As a result, the project manager has a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the projects. However, while there is a shortage of project management workers in various industries [1], it is unavoidable that not every project manager possesses the necessary mix of competencies to succeed. This paper, based on the scope of the course SOEN 6841 Software Project Management, will attempt to synthesize and analyze the given reading article to expand the topic of successful project leaders on two items: people-oriented leadership and necessary qualities for successful leadership. The work aims to give practitioners in project management a holistic understanding of different types of leadership and habits that a successful project leader should have.

The paper is structured as follows: (1) introduction; (2) theoretical background about people-oriented leadership and different habits of successful project leaders; (3) research methodology; (4) data analysis; (5) discussion; and (6) conclusion.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Working Styles of Project Managers

To be an effective leader, the project manager must have not only one but many different styles that are applicable to different situations. Mastering them will allow project managers to increase efficiency. There are many ways to define leadership styles.

Margules (2011) provides that the available leadership styles are visionary, affiliate, participative, coaching, and pace-setting [2]. Blaskovics, B. (2016) identified the following leadership styles based on different criteria: trait, behavior or style, contingency, charisma or vision, emotional intelligence, and competency [3]. Bass (1998) categorized leadership styles into transformational leadership and transactional leadership [4].

The aforementioned examples showcased that different factors can group leadership styles. However, academia has a consensus: there are two dimensions linked to leadership. They are people-orientation and task-orientation [5]. People-orientation leadership emphasizes the team members such as paying attention to their well-being, developing their skills, and cultivating a positive professional relationship with them via supportive and cooperative actions. On the other hand, task orientation style focuses on the tasks to do and setting up a framework to get them done. This can range from enforcing compliance via rules and procedures to using power to achieve organizational order.

2.2 Project Managers and Time Fragmentation

Time is one of the big constraints and sacred resources in professional work. It cannot be stored away and also cannot be extended. This is particularly true for managerial personnel such as project managers. Assuming a project manager will manage multiple projects, their day-to-day work will involve dealing with projects or issues that are the most pressing problems. In addition, they will also need to take care of short-term goals and long-term targets. They are overburdened with work but tend not to have much uninterrupted time due to distractions such as urgent emails, phone calls, frequent meetings, and so on. While interruptions are not always bad, such as in the case of making decisions on simple tasks, they can lead to subpar performance for complex decision tasks [6].

An individual operates at full capacity when they are in the flow state [draft1]. However, a project manager gets interrupted frequently daily [6]. Interruptions are costly for project managers because, similar to the flow state, they will need some time to go back to the thinking process of the interrupted task. Therefore, to be able to get important things done, it is advisable for the project manager to schedule important work to be done outside of the normal working hours. To deal with multiple tasks and goals within the day, they need to develop a prioritization scheme so that the most urgent matters can be resolved first.

2.3 Successful Project Managers

Successful Project Manager is a complex term that has different interpretations among people. A naïve definition would be that a successful project manager can repeatedly lead different projects to completion within the budget constraint and achieve the full scope as planned. However, various literature sources suggest that the definition of a successful project manager goes beyond the traditional measures of time, cost, and scope. Turner, J.R. (2022) places a big emphasis on achieving strategic goals and

aligning project outcomes with organizational goals [7]. In this context, success also encompasses a broad range of strategic perspectives. D.I. Cleland and L.R. Ireland (2002) define a successful project manager as someone capable of handling the project dynamics, coping with changes, and managing resources effectively to achieve the goal within specific constraints [8]. Their definition of success focuses on pragmatic skills. Schwalbe, K. (2015) considers a successful project manager can balance technical skills with effective communication and stakeholder management [9]. He focuses on the importance of meeting stakeholder expectations, delivering quality outcomes, and managing project constraints. It is evident that the role of project managers now encompasses a large set of skills that can only be mastered over time.

3   Methods & Methodology

The methodology employed for this paper involves a systematic and comprehensive approach. Firstly, the main topics in the reading material are chosen to be explored, as seen in the literature review. Next, a search strategy was employed using the selected topics to locate the relevant literature. The main query database was from Google Scholar, but data from professional organizations was also collected. After the literature selection process to screen the suitable work, pertinent information such as key findings and methodologies were extracted and used for identifying patterns, trends, and compared to the original reading material. This paper also provides an analysis of the reading material itself to give an objective overview of the quality of the material.

4   Discussing the Reading Materials

4.1   Working Style for Project Manager

Time Fragmentation.

The impact of interruptions on project managers and project outcomes.

Strategies to manage time and interruptions effectively.

4.2   People and Communication Aspects for Project Managers

People Orientation

The importance of creating effective communication and relationships with team members.

How paying attention to team members can improve project leadership.

4.3   Attributes of Successful Project Managers

Trustworthy
   Content

Loyal
   Content

Helpful
   Content

Friendly
   Content

Courteous
   Content

Kind
   Content

Obedient
   Content

Cheerful
   Content

Thrifty
   Content

Brave
   Content

Clean
   Content

Reverent
   Content

5   Discussion

The article mentions two important themes for project managers: working style and important qualities for leadership.

Regarding the working style, the given text automatically assumes that effective project managers should adopt a people-oriented management style. In reality, they might not be true. For instance, in the military context, it is of the utmost importance that the goals are achieved no matter what for security-related reasons. A task-oriented approach may be more suitable. Another problematic point is that successful project leaders establish professional relationships quickly and enjoy interactions with team members. This may give managers who are more on the introverted spectrum a disadvantage, even though they can still maintain effective communication while excelling in different aspects such as detailing or planning. As established in the literature review, effective leadership is diverse, so a more extensive evaluation of different leadership styles based on the nature of the project and team dynamics would provide a more balanced view.

The text also explores a difference between project managers and individual contributors, which is time fragmentation. While it is an important aspect, other complex aspects of project management, such as communication and planning, were not addressed in the given passage. The author only gave one suggestion regarding time fragmentation: accepting interruptions and rearranging the work outside of office hours. Other techniques for managing tasks within working hours, such as task prioritization, were not touched upon.

Regarding crucial qualities for a good project leader, the article presents an extensive list of leadership, interpersonal, and professional qualities. While the list contains key ideas for building a successful project manager, it is not completed due to the abstract and complex nature of leadership, where human interaction may have different impacts based on various demographic criteria such as age, gender, culture, and so on. The list of qualities for good project managers mentioned in the article is not perfect, mainly due to the flaws in the research methodology.

Firstly, the author gets the list of successful project manager qualities from only one workshop. The sample size is not representative of all demographics because we do not know the number of participants in the workshop, their genders, current professions, and so on. This greatly reduces the effectiveness of the result because a representative sample ensures the study is inclusive and reflects the community of interest [draft4]. In the study context, if all participants in the workshop were non-managers, then the list would just reflect the wishes that team members want the managers to have and would omit necessary skill sets. While traits like being cheerful, clean, and obedient are valuable, other diverse and inclusive perspectives could be explored.

Secondly, the author mentioned that the workshop happened "a long time ago." This brings uncertainties because the results may be out-of-date. The project management landscape is changing quickly with the evolution of digitization and customer demands [1]. This shift demands new skills from project managers and may render

the old list obsolete. Therefore, it is necessary to validate the results before making the claims.

Thirdly, the author draws a connection between the list of items and the Scout Law and considers it as the single source of truth. While it is important to realize the relationship between them, using an unrelated framework to draw all the necessary qualities for project management means that the list may include redundant facts while missing other important factors. The analogy oversimplifies the complexity of professional project management. Project management requires a balance of leadership, technical skills, and adaptability, which may not align with the principles of youth leadership.

We also have to be aware of the issues when trying to apply behaviors. [reference] mentioned that just possessing the skills is not enough; practitioners need to also apply the skills in the correct behavior for them to be effective.

It is also important to know that the relationship between good leaders and the behavior list provided is unidirectional. Good project managers would be more likely to have the mentioned behaviors, but possessing those behaviors does not make one to be a good leader automatically. For example, … [example here] If a project manager seeks to improve their leadership skills, they must look beyond the aforementioned behaviors.

6   Conclusions

The given text gave more insight into the following question: what habits are demonstrated by successful project managers? It provides insights into the habits and attributes of successful project managers, drawing parallels between effective project leadership and the qualities found in the Scout Law. The synthesis and analysis show that project managers should consider adopting various working styles suitable to different situations. The people-oriented approach is one popular way for project leaders to boost the team's productivity. Project managers also need a good time management strategy to avoid the negative consequences of interruptions. The reading material also made some good points about the attributes of successful project managers regarding leadership, interpersonal, and professional qualities. However, the 2-page limitation of the reading material and a flaw in the research methodology show that the arguments are not as strong as they should be. This prompts practitioners in the project management field to look outside the scope of the given material to master the necessary skills to become a successful project manger.

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Missing: technical skills

Project teams are no longer made up of nationals from just one country. It is quite common that global project teams have nationals from several countries as serving project team members. It is therefore essential that project managers have a better and deeper understanding of the values and beliefs people from other countries hold if they wish to deliver their projects successfully in these working environments. Effective people project managers show an open optimism about cultural differences and show views, through their behaviours, that they see cultural diversity as an enhancement to their own values and beliefs. They adapt their own home country behaviours when managing people from diverse cultures. Cultural awareness skills and behaviours are an important part of the repertoire of skills and behaviours that make an effective people project manager. Not all people skills will necessarily be applicable and effective in all projects anywhere in the world. Different cultures place different values on, for example, what is important to them. This necessitates the need to adapt some of the suggested behaviours to fit the local cultural environment, relating to both people and companies. The adoption and application of people skills are not a panacea for success. Technical competences and knowledge of the application of tools and techniques are as important. To be effective, project managers need both technical and people skills to deliver their projects successfully.

The findings of this paper are surprising. Existing theoretical and practical project management frameworks such as APM Body of Knowledge (2006) and PMI (2004) consider what makes an effective people project manager in their respective sections on the people side of project management. They suggest a number of skills project managers should have or adopt if they wish to manage the people in their projects well (the what). Associated behaviours (the how) are not discussed and yet practitioners from this research placed a very high level of importance on these based on the strength of evidence from their own extensive practical work experiences. This suggests that people skills without associated behaviours are perhaps not as effective as previously thought and that there is a need, for example, to improve existing Bodies of Knowledge, as a starting point, to reflect this new knowledge and to strengthen these for the benefit of practitioners and academics. Knowing about and acquiring competences, in itself, is no guarantee for success. Project managers need to apply these, observe the outcomes and likely changes the application has on people and then consider whether to modify them to make them work even better. This is a continuous process that the focus group recognised as being as important as the competences themselves. Without the focus group meeting, the validity of the suggested outputs form the face to face interviews could have been doubted by opponents of the phenomenological research approach. New insights and results data would not

5. Conclusions

Considering all the challenges project managers are facing it is evident that one area where project managers need to make big improvements, is in the area of people management. Skills on their own, including their applications, do not make an effective people project manager. Behaviours drive outcomes. Specific behaviours for each skill need to be applied by project managers to make these skills truly effective. It is the application of these that is of paramount importance and is the catalyst to being an effective people project manager. This paper contributes to a better understanding of what practitioners consider makes an effective people project manager. In a practical sense and as a direct result of this paper, a set of six specific managing people skills and associated behaviours have been presented (Table 2). Theory played a major role to identify what was already known about effective managing people skills such as managing emotions, influencing others and effective communications. It was also possible to compare the contributions from this paper against well-respected project management frameworks such as the APM Body of Knowledge (2006) and PMI (2004). This was crucial in two respects. First, it confirmed that the contributions from this paper can be used in future editions of these Bodies of Knowledge as their current editions do not discuss what the associated behaviours are that underpin the people skills. Secondly, it confirmed that the main research questions were answered. The impact changes in attitude have on behaviours was not considered here. This topic might be covered by future research based on the existing work of Fisher (2006).

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All versions of this report is accessible via GitHub at https://github.com/thanhpd/soen6841

Compare with:
- PMI Code of Ethics
  - APM Body of Knowledge: David Cleland, Roland Gareis - Global Project Management Handbook_ Planning, Organizing and Controlling International Projects, Second Edition_ Plannin
  -

Personality Characteristics, Attitudes, and Behaviors

Although there is strong guidance on what project managers need to know and to do in order to be considered competent, there is far less guidance available in terms of personality characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors. There are a number of reasons for this. One reason is that different people with different personality characteristics can use knowledge and practices differently but still achieve satisfactory results. Another is that it is ethically questionable to establish standards for personality characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors. Competency models are designed specifically for identifying the personality characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that are found to be causally related to superior performance in particular organizations, but there is no expectation that there is one competency model that will be applicable to all organizations. Further, studies of personality characteristics of project managers have found only weak correlations between personality characteristics and successful performance. This can be explained in part by the difficulties surrounding judgments concerning success. However, although inconclusive and in most cases based on assumptions rather than research, there is some information available concerning the personality characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that are expected to be associated with competent performance as a project manager.

The IPMA Competence Baseline includes a section on the expected personality characteristics for a certificated project manager. These are the same as appeared in the *APM Body of Knowledge* (version 3.0). They were developed in a series of practitioner workshops or meetings conducted by the APM. It is understood that they have no basis in research. These characteristics are

- Attitude
- Common sense
- Open-mindedness
- Adaptability
- Inventiveness
- Prudent risk taker
- Fairness
- Commitment

-

Can be counted on to follow through
MAINTAINING A TRUSTWORTHY LEADER IN THE ORGANIZATION

knowledge and does not have the necessary leadership and management skills. As a result, the behavior of leaders by top management is considered untrustworthy due to incompetence in business and leading people. This is reflected in the actions of the leader, which raises suspicion and mistrust among employees. Inability and unethical behavior by company leadership. This causes distrust in the organization. Over time, mistrust pervades the organization and results in decreased welfare and a low level of commitment to the organization.

An interesting finding in company X is that, despite the lack of trust, employees are still confident in their own competencies and skills, but feel that the organization is not feasible for them. They still have confidence in themselves and believe in the future outside the organization. It is also somewhat contradictory that people are very confident with the continuity of work and feel physically fit, even though their level of mental well-being is low. The general manager's trust and distrust are represented by his leadership style. In contrast to company X, the leadership style in company Y is very democratic and participatory, thus stimulating interaction and creation together with employees. Internal communication flows and often; this is supported by a flat organizational structure. This structure also allows open communication and high morality in the care of coworkers.

VI. Conclusion

In the case study, the behavior of the two leaders clearly shows the difference between the behavior of the leader that is trustworthy and cannot be trusted and their consequences for employees who then need to be maintained. In these cases, there are some important lessons to be learned. First, we can influence the workplace atmosphere by demonstrating trust through competence, integrity, virtue, and certainty. In the case of company Y, a climate of trust prevails, along with evidence of enthusiasm, a high level of commitment, effective communication, and knowledge sharing. In contrast, case X's company revealed an atmosphere of suspicion, fear, low levels of commitment, and lack of willingness to collaborate and share knowledge. Second, employees are socialized by the good or bad habits of a leader and the style of action of their leader who is trustworthy or untrustworthy.

g Take care of their teams

g Willingly assist and mentor others

g Are sociable and get along with nearly everyone

g Are respectful and polite

g Remain even tempered, understanding, and sympathetic
A PROJECT MANAGER'S OPTIMISM AND STRESS MANAGEMENT AND IT PROJECT SUCCESS

To create a realistic level of optimism and to manage stress effectively, the key themes extracted from the stories to assist the I.T. project manager can be summarised as:

- Establishing a project with adequate executive support, a committed sponsor and an appropriate project plan increases optimism in the project team. Using the project plan and establishing tactics to remain on schedule and reduce risk/uncertainty increases optimism and reduces stress.
- Ensuring that successes and accomplishments are realised and celebrated in a timely manner reinforces optimism.
- Building professional relationships and acting professionally increases team optimism.

- Motivating a stable team and understanding and managing individual needs reduces stress.
- Developing strong general management techniques and project management techniques assists in handling stress.
- Developing an ability to keep a "calm head" during difficult times is an important reducer of stress.
- Minimising external interferences to the project reduces stress.
- Finally, ensuring that there are specific stress outlets during project execution improves overall performance.

g Can follow instructions and processes
https://www.simplilearn.com/importance-of-ethics-in-project-management-article

g Stay positive and upbeat

g Understand and manage costs

g Are willing to "speak truth to power"

g Act and dress appropriately

A PROJECT MANAGER'S OPTIMISM AND STRESS MANAGEMENT AND IT PROJECT SUCCESS

easily foresee their ability realise success in an otherwise daunting undertaking.

The creation and management of positive perceptions was the technique that the project managers found to be most effective in establishing an optimistic project environment. Many of the managers, particularly those that were undertaking the project as an external consulting firm, believed that it was important to consistently portray the perception of competence and optimism to the client or sponsor. One manager created this perception through his attire and general appearance when meeting with clients:

"I really believe that dress makes a difference; it makes you have a powerful effect. When I go to a board meeting I always put on a tie. I may be the most overdressed person in a room, but I would rather be overdressed than under dressed, and I do believe that it gives me some power in delivering my message. Even if the message is sometimes a bad one." *OPM-1*