



Creating the **WORLD CLASS** Project Manager

Project management success

is traditionally defined as one in which a project is delivered within time, agreed budget and according to requirements. In today's complex delivery environments however, this definition is insufficient. Not only must we consider the technical factors associated with delivery, but one would add more importantly the behavioural elements and dynamics of the project manager and team to function and deliver effectively.

PROJECT MANAGER EFFECTIVENESS

The PMO Executive Council conducted an extensive survey (*PM Effectiveness Diagnostic – PMO Executive Council Research, 2007*) of more than 2,000 people, and identified the drivers of effectiveness for project managers. The top ten Project Manager Effectiveness Importance Factors were:

Process Based

- Ability to meet internal deadlines
- Mitigates project specific risks
- Aligns project with organisational strategy
- Connects project to broader organisational goals
- Assigning the right people to the right tasks
- Understands project interdependencies
- Evaluates team competencies

People Based

- Logically solves problems
- Is passionate to succeed
- Brokers consensus among stakeholders

More project managers are certified, but many organisations still report little movement in project management maturity and improved delivery. **Silvia de Ridder** investigates the role of emotional intelligence in project delivery

The identified factors have a high focus on project management process. The challenge is one that states that an average project manager can possess the process attributes and still not be successful in delivery. What is missing is effective leadership capability founded on the development of behavioural skills and the use of emotions to support the successful delivery of projects.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Consider Figure 1, which shows a relationship between the skill sets of 'Task, Process and Outcomes' and 'People, Relationships and Emotional Management'.

Where the task or process skill set is low and the people, relationships and emotional skill set is low, the resulting behaviours is that of avoidance of either task or leadership towards delivery. An avoidant leader can also be aversive, engaging in intimidation, and dispensing reprimands.

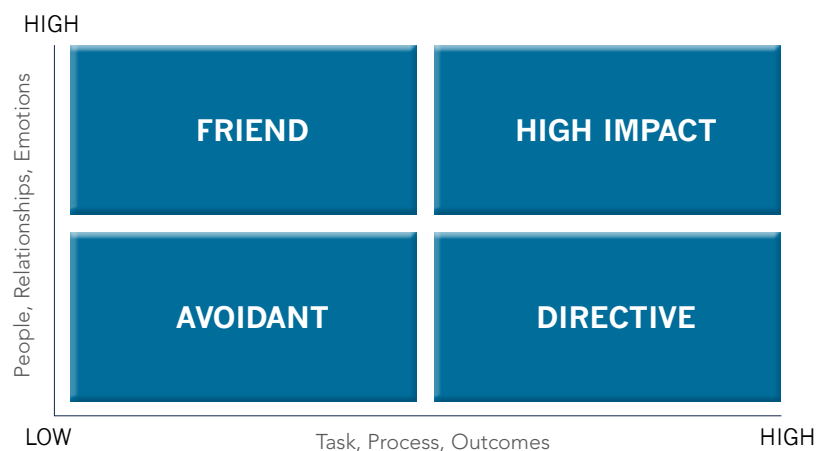


Figure 1: Relational Model of Process vs Behaviour

BOUNDARIES OPEN TO CLEAR COMMUNICATION RESULT IN EFFECTIVE WORK WHEREAS NOISY INFORMATION RESULTS IN LOSS OF PRODUCTIVITY

Where the task or process skill set is low yet the people, relationships and emotional skill set is high, the resulting behaviour is delivery is achieved through friendship rather than leadership. Tasks are not typically done in a timely or quality manner impacting on cost.

On the other end of the scale, where the task or process skill set is high yet the people, relationships and emotional skill set is low, we encounter delivery via directive leadership. This is often the case with technical project managers; this type of leader tends to issue instructions and commands and assigns goals.

In the top right is High Impact leadership, those that inspire, engage and motivate. It represents project managers with task capability as well as people, relationships and emotional skill set. A High Impact Leader is one who demonstrates both technical competency as well as behavioural competency.

Leaders must create climates that foster not only performance but also pride and purpose. They must have emotional intelligence: a heightened sense of self awareness, the ability to manage their emotions as well as those of others, to build rapport and relationships with a diverse group of people ranging from the sponsor, project team and a myriad of stakeholders; to motivate others, create a believable vision for the project, and negotiate a broad range of situations impacting on the project or program.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) contributes to a number of important workplace performance indicators including: leadership style and effectiveness; creativity; problem solving; capability;

workplace innovation; interpersonal skills; the capacity to foster positive relationships with work colleagues; motivation and enthusiasm; and team productivity.

The importance of emotional intelligence to the effectiveness of a project manager can best be understood through a systems hierarchy as presented by Gantt and Agazarian in *Systems Centred Emotional Intelligence*, 2004.

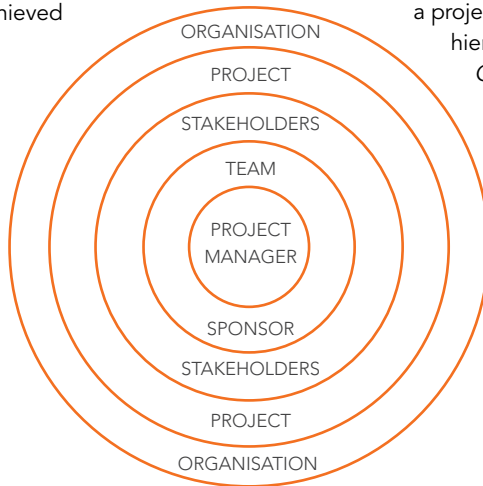


Figure 2: The Project Manager in the Organisational Context

Considering Figure 2, mapping the project management function within an organisation provides a schema for recognising the potential impact that each system level will have on other systems. The behaviours of the project manager impact on the project sponsor and team at the first level through day-to-day interaction, decisions and communications. At the next level, this behaviour impacts on the wider stakeholders—the PMO, business representatives etc—directly and indirectly via the sponsor and team. For example, inconsistent or poor communication at a team level affects motivation, which in turn impacts at a stakeholder, project and organisational level. The outer levels reflect the cascading effect of these impacted parties on the project and organisation, often what we view as culture.

Each subsystem introduces a different context; different contexts have different goals and different perspectives. High Impact Leadership shifts the team from being team-centred to systems-centred so decisions can be made or implemented with broader perspectives. Boundaries open to clear communication result in effective work whereas noisy information—contradictions, redundant communications, ambiguity—results in loss of productivity.

ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The development of emotional intelligence has been shown to provide true bottom line results for organisations. Research by Hay Group and that of Daniel Goleman notes that emotional intelligence is twice as important as cognitive abilities in predicting outstanding employee performance and accounts for more than 85 percent of star performance in top leaders.

Those relevant to the application of project management include:

- **Distinguishing star performers:** Six emotional competencies distinguished stars from the average: influence, team leadership, organisational awareness, self-confidence, achievement drive, and leadership.
- **As job complexity increases so does need for EI:** In jobs of medium complexity, a top performer is 85 percent more productive than an average performer; in the most complex jobs, a top performer is 127 percent more productive than average.
- **Two-thirds of employee competency is related to EI:** Competency research suggests one-third of difference is due to technical and cognitive ability, while two-thirds is due to emotional competence. In top leadership positions, over four-fifths of the difference is due to emotional competence.
- **Primary cause of executive derailment is related to deficits in EI:** Research finds the primary causes of derailment in executives involve deficits in emotional competence, including difficulty in handling change, not being able to work well in a team, and poor interpersonal relations.



- > • **El impacts on productivity, lost time and grievances:** After supervisors in a manufacturing plant received training in emotional competencies, lost-time accidents were reduced by 50 percent, formal grievances were reduced from 15 per year to three per year, and the plant exceeded productivity goals by \$250,000. There was no increase in production for a group of matched supervisors who were not trained.
- **The impact of self-assessment:** One foundation of emotional competence, accurate self-assessment, was associated with superior performance.
- **Success directly related to levels of EI:** Of 515 senior executives analysed by search firm Egon Zehnder International, those strong in emotional intelligence were more likely to succeed than those strongest in relevant previous experience or IQ. EI was a better predictor of success than either experience or high IQ.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT

There are no standard formulae for the creation of the High Impact leader, however, there are processes used successfully by numerous organisations to improve leadership and performance. Common steps include the creation of a competency-driven leadership model that supports strategic goals, development of emotional intelligence and a commitment to leadership development through coaching.

A model for the development of project management capability is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: The Route to Creating the High Impact Project Leader

Implement technical competency model: Traditional training programs provide a foundation for knowledge, but a technical competency framework incorporates one-to-one skills mentoring, allowing for a more flexible, adaptive approach to technical skills development. The benefits of skills mentoring include improved project management capability, positive and direct impact on delivery, and earlier realisation of financial and qualitative benefits for the organisation, and focus on identified areas of improvement, recognition of development needs being addressed and personal and career development for the project manager.

Once project managers are effective from a technical perspective, developing their capability as leaders via a behavioural framework can be addressed.

Define behavioural competency framework: The development of a leadership framework needs to leverage the underpinning organisational leadership model, its values and culture. An effective model needs to consider: intrapersonal skills; interpersonal skills; decision-making skills; conceptual thinking; ability to work across groups and teams; ability to leverage culture and internal political relationships; ability to be a change catalyst; and customer perspective and service orientation.

Technical skills are prerequisites, not the defining factor in a project's success. Interpersonal skills, however, allow a project manager to deliver more consistently and take on more complex projects. Well-developed interpersonal skills support a good project manager in effectively developing, motivating and managing a project team.

Enhance emotional intelligence: EI frameworks can be categorised thus:

1. *Performance-based measures of EI.* These relate to an external appraisal of performance and aim to index individual differences in people's actual emotional abilities or emotional knowledge.
2. *Self-report trait measures of EI.* These relate to an internal appraisal of performance, a person's preferences and styles in relation to emotions.

3. *Behavioural measures of EI.* These relate to emotionally intelligent behaviours displayed externally. Authors of such assessments say a person's actual emotional intelligence is indicated by the frequency with which that individual displays emotionally intelligent behaviours to others. Arguably, behaviour-based approaches to the conceptualisation and measurement of EI provide the most practical representation of a person's emotional intelligence skill.

Create and implement project leadership development: A defined behavioural competency framework and measure of emotional intelligence adds value when used and applied effectively. A person's EI capability is more effectively enhanced through one-on-one development via a suitably designed coaching program. Coaching is a structured process that supports people in learning how to lead and manage themselves more effectively, relative to their context and their potential.

Coaching provides a framework for assessment, identification of development areas. While we cannot operate at a High Impact status all the time, coaching works to get us back into this state more readily through enhanced self-awareness and behavioural change, which contributes to improvements in leadership, teamwork, staff morale and productivity.

Development of project manager effectiveness by way of mentoring and coaching can provide an organisation with a more effective return on investment, and attract and retain suitable candidates.

Effective mentoring and coaching produces effective project managers. People produce better work for a longer period, and contribute to the organisation in many more ways. In addition, coaching and mentoring can enhance morale, motivation and productivity and reduce staff turnover as individuals feel valued and connected, all of which impacts on project delivery and the bottom line. ✦

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