



CREATING THE WORLD CLASS PROJECT MANAGER – PART 2

Abstract

While more project managers are gaining certification and more organisational dollars are being expended on technical training programs, many organisations still report little movement by way of project management maturity and improved project delivery. Success in project delivery is no longer contained to “within time, agreed budget and according to requirements”. The definition must be revised to consider the emotional maturity and behavioural competency of the project manager as a key factor in successful delivery. This is Part 2 of a paper which discusses the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in a project management environment and presents a model for the development of project managers moving forward.

Bio Data

Silvia de Ridder is a qualified executive coach and project management specialist. Silvia has an extensive background in corporate environments developing and leading cross functional teams on a broad range of business change management programs within the Telecommunications, Airline and Construction industries for over 10 years. In addition to her qualifications as an executive and team coach Silvia also holds qualifications in Business, Project Management and Engineering. Silvia is a specialist in the development of emotional intelligence using Genos EI. The author can be contacted at silvia@unconsciouspotential.com.au.

Introduction

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 (time, cost and budget) but one would add more importantly the behavioural elements and dynamics of the project manager and team to function and deliver effectively.

This paper discusses a solution focused approach associated with developing the behavioral skills of project managers in order to address project manager effectiveness and maturity. Improved effectiveness ultimately resulting in improved stakeholder management and satisfaction; motivated team environments; better delivery and an impact on the organisation’s bottom line.

This paper is presented in two parts. Part 1 discusses the subject of project manager effectiveness presenting a case for emotional intelligence within project management environments. Part 2



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presents a framework for the development of project managers incorporating both technical competency and the development of effective leadership capability.

Developing the High Impact Project Leader

Based on the material covered in Part 1 of this paper, we can define a “world class” project manager as one who possesses both technical capability as well as behavioural skills demonstrated of a High Impact Leader.

Unfortunately, there are no standard formulae for the creation of the High Impact leader we define. Each organisation is unique as is each individual within that organisation. There are however, processes that have been used successfully by numerous organisations to improve leadership and with it, performance¹. The common steps found 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.

Understanding this definition allows us to put forward a model for the development of project management capability as shown in Figure 1 and described in the detail following.

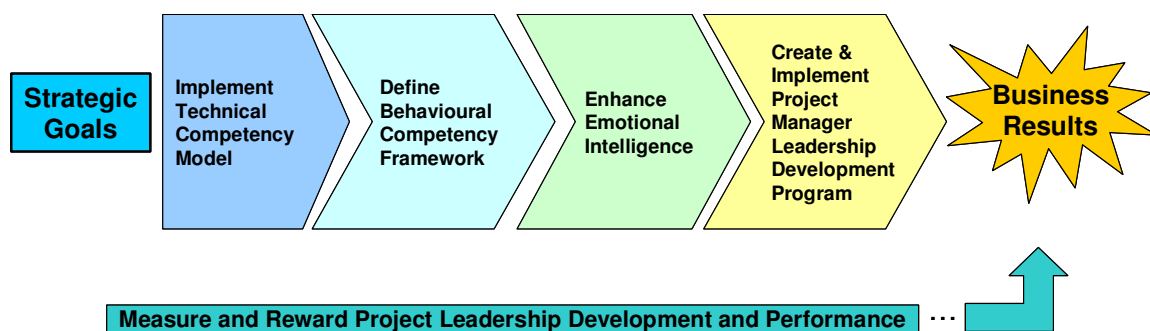


Figure 1: The Route to Creating the High Impact Project Leader

Implement Technical Competency Model

The Project Management Body of Knowledge provides a strong basis for the development of project management technical competency. This is well documented and the basis of the majority of project management technical training.

¹ Hay Group (2000). “What Makes Great Leaders”, A Hay Executive Briefing



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While traditional training programs provide a foundation for knowledge, in increasingly complex business environments they could be considered too inflexible or generic – adopting a one size fits all philosophy to the development of project managers. What is called for is a technical competency framework incorporating one-to-one skills mentoring, allowing for a more flexible, adaptive ‘just-in-time’ approach to technical skills development.

Mentoring is associated with the passing on of knowledge, *‘the long term acquisition of skills in a developing career by a form of advising and counseling’*². In this context, Project Management mentoring is about assisting project managers to develop their core skills and technical competency in project management as a one on one or group relationship.

Rather than taking people away from the job into a ‘classroom’ where it is less easy to simulate the job environment, it is possible to apply skills mentoring in ‘live’ environments. Research also supports skills mentoring following training as an effective means of retention and application of learned knowledge.

Skills mentoring programs are tailored specifically to the individual - their knowledge, experience, maturity and ambitions - and are generally focused on achieving a number of objectives for both the individual and the company. These objectives often include the individual being able to achieve the organisation’s desired outcomes (adding value) by identifying and performing (or leading others to perform) the required tasks, whilst taking into account the personal and career development needs of the individual. The benefits of skills mentoring in the context of project and program management include:

To the Organisation:

- Improved project management capability
- Positive and direct impact on delivery
- Increased external / internal customer satisfaction
- Reduction in the costs of projects and deliverables
- Earlier realisation of financial and qualitative benefits
- Employee motivation and retention

² Parsloe, E & Wray, M., “Coaching and Mentoring” 2002



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To the Employee:

- Focus on identified areas of improvement - rather than a one size fits all training course
- Recognition of development needs being addressed
- Improved motivation and career satisfaction
- Personal and career development

In summary, a technical competency framework is one based on appropriate technical training working hand in hand with a skills mentoring program. Once this is in place and project managers are effective from a technical perspective, developing their capability as leaders via a behavioural framework can be addressed.

Define Behavioural Competency Framework

As every organisation is different, the development of a High Impact Leadership framework for project managers needs to leverage the underpinning organisational leadership model, its values and culture. If a framework does exist, one must ask:

- Does it leverage emotional intelligence?
- How is it measured?
- How do you know it is working?
- Does it align with the technical competencies required of your project managers?

Where a framework exists and is being executed effectively across the project management community, organisations will see such benefits as effective stakeholder management and communications, effective decision making as well as engaged and empowered project teams. Where no framework has been applied to the project management community (but may still exist), organisations will tend to experience such behaviours as ineffective project leadership styles, poor stakeholder management, and poorly aligned project teams.

Taking into account the components of a well executed behavioural competency framework, an effective model needs to consider the following aspects that underpin emotional intelligence:

- intra personal skills
- inter personal skills
- decision making skills
- conceptual thinking
- ability to work across groups and teams



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- ability to leverage culture and internal political relationships
- ability to be a change catalyst
- customer perspective and service orientation

In addition to the emotional intelligence skill sets identified, other suggested behavioural competency areas may include;

- Leadership
- Customer Relations
- Communication
- Team Management, Building and Development
- Organisational Effectiveness
- Perspective
- Negotiating
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making

The above noted competencies are important to the high performing project manager because each aforementioned competency represents the positive manifestation of emotional intelligence. Technical skills are only pre-requisites – not the defining factor in a project's success. Interpersonal skills however allow a project manager to deliver more consistently and take on larger and more complex projects. Well developed interpersonal skills support a good project manager in effectively developing, motivating and managing a project team. These factors effectively can also be seen as a function of emotional intelligence

Enhance Emotional Intelligence

A number of models exist for the assessment of emotional intelligence. The instruments will differ by the underlying framework, the mechanism for measurement, and the person participation in the assessment.³

Frameworks of Emotional Intelligence can be categorised into three main theoretical approaches.⁴

These include:

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 typically relate to an internal appraisal of performance and can be likened to personality measures. They relate to a person's preferences and styles in relation to emotions.

³ Mersino, A., "Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers" 2007

⁴ Palmer, B. R., Stough, C., Harmer, R., & Gignac, G. E. (in press). Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory. In C. Stough, D. Saklofske, & J. Parker (Ed.), *Advances in the measurement of emotional intelligence*. New York: Springer



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3. Behavioural Measures of EI – These measures relate to emotionally intelligent behaviours which are displayed externally. Authors of such assessments put forward a case that a person's actual emotional intelligence is indicated by the relative frequency with which that individual displays emotionally intelligent behaviours to others. It could be argued that behaviour based approaches to the conceptualization and measurement of EI provide the most practical representation of a person's emotional intelligence skill.

Mechanisms for measurement include⁵:

A best practice approach to assessing emotional intelligence should be viewed within the context of a multi- method approach. For example:

- psychometric assessment – self and rater
- role play simulation
- on the job review
- reference checking, and
- behavioural interviewing

Participants in the Assessment:

Participation can range from the individual completing the assessment him or herself only (i.e., a self-assessment only) to multi rater instruments providing a 360 degree view of a person's EI. Although both approaches have been shown to be valid, a multi-rater approach to assessing an individual's EI is often considered to be more objective and comprehensive.

Based on the above three criteria, it could be stated that a wide variety of measures assessing a person's emotional intelligence do exist. In selecting the most appropriate measure, what is important to consider is:

1. does the measure seek to minimise self and/or rater response bias;
2. is the model and associated measure of EI aligned to a company's defined behavioural competency model
3. does the measure consider EI to be a developable skill and assesses a person's EI accordingly, and

⁵ Palmer, B. and Harmer, R. (2006). Best practice approaches to using Emotional Intelligence (EI) in recruitment and selection. Australian Human Resource Institute National Conference.



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4. is the measure one that can be used consistently in order to assess an individual's change in EI demonstration as a result of targeted feedback based upon an individual's target areas for EI skill development?

Create and Implement Project Leadership Development

A defined behavioural competency framework and measure of emotional intelligence do add value when utilised and applied effectively. Development of interpersonal skills and emotional maturity can again be addressed via generic leadership programs. In a similar context to mentoring however, such an approach is not enough and a person's EI capability is more effectively enhanced through one-on-one development via a suitably designed coaching program.

Coaching is the facilitation of growth and change and is solution focused. In contrast to mentoring coaching is about helping people to learn rather than teaching them. It is a structured process that supports people in learning how to lead and manage themselves more effectively in relation to their issues, their resources, their contexts and their potential. Coaching is not the two or four hour workshop but rather a program that takes place over a defined period including individual assessment, coaching, feedback and encouragement whilst working towards defined goals.

Coaching provides a framework for assessment, identification of development areas and a structured approach to making behavioural changes. While it is understood that we cannot operate at a High Impact status all the time, coaching works to get us back into this more effective state more readily through enhanced self awareness and behavioural change.

Closely correlating the bottom line impacts associated with emotional intelligence (defined in Part 1), improved leadership ability has emerged as the most important benefit gained from coaching.

As one of the first of its kind in Australia, a survey undertaken by Gladstone⁶ looked at the impact of coaching on a manager's leadership, job performance and productivity and found improvement in more than 71 % of cases in all three areas. It also found that teamwork and staff morale, within the subject's business unit, had improved in more than 57 % of cases in both areas.

A key factor of emotional intelligence – 'self awareness' in addition to confidence were gained by the participants through coaching, contributing to improvements in leadership, teamwork, staff morale and productivity.

⁶ Gladstone, C (2004). "Measuring the Impact of Executive Coaching – Research Report"



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The study noted the following key statistics⁷:

- 100 % of coachees had become more proficient at their job
- 71 % were more personally productive
- 76 % said coaching worked to improve the service or product their organisation delivered
- 66 % said coaching helped to save them time; and
- 33 % said coaching helped, indirectly, to reduce costs.

“Coaching translates into Doing. Doing translates into impact on the business. The impact can be then quantified and maximized.”⁸

In summary coaching provides the following benefits;

To the Business:

- Improved leadership
- Improved communication skills for the individual as well as more open communication channels
- A focus on solutions not problems
- A greater level of strategic thinking
- Better results delivered with less effort including goal setting and time management
- Focus on soft skills development
- Improving business productivity
- Improved business results
- An employee’s EI ‘skill’ can be assessed and subsequently enhanced through structured coaching.

To the Individual:

- A greater level of self awareness increasing individual flexibility and adaptability
- Improved communication skills
- Gaining clarity in thinking
- Challenging and changing beliefs which no longer serve a useful purpose
- Improving personal productivity
- Improved personal results

⁷ Gladstone, C (2004). “Measuring the Impact of Executive Coaching – Research Report”

⁸ McGovern, J (2001). “Maximising the Impact of Executive Coaching”. The Manchester Review, Volume 6, Number 1



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- Frees one from thinking that they need to have it all figured out and know the answers to everything
- Provides a set of tools to find out what is really important

Case Study

In the context of project management and the application of such an approach, it is worth noting the case study undertaken by Harmer and Lutton.⁹ The study explored how the development of a project team leader's emotional intelligence impacted on increased self and subordinate ratings of team effectiveness and productivity. The case study was a practical application of emotional intelligence measurement and structured coaching of project managers operating within an information technology and software integration environment. The change resulting from the program had a positive flow on effect regarding project delivery and organisational outcomes.

The study set out to assess whether developing a project team leader's emotional intelligence resulted in improvements in project manager effectiveness. The study took place within a large Australian organisation involving 37 project team leaders responsible for the IT and software integration of two multi million dollar projects. They operated in a matrix managed environment and were responsible for coordinating over 300 project focused staff.

Typical of many projects, the project managers who participated in the programme operated within an environment that involved juggling multiple and competing priorities; adhering to time, human resource and budgetary pressures; whilst managing competing expectations from each project's internal stakeholders, external suppliers and software vendors.

In the months leading up to the emotional intelligence enhancement coaching program, the two projects had experienced significant milestone slippage, increased employee turnover and absenteeism as well as sub standard work output. In addition, an employee satisfaction survey providing feedback indicated that project managers were indecisive with poor lateral thinking skills, ineffective as role models, inconsistent when communicating current and pending work demands and demonstrated disharmony as a senior leadership team.

⁹ Harmer, R & Lutton, C (2007). "Enhancing Team Performance Through Emotional Intelligence Coaching", *Organisations and People*, Vol 14, No 2



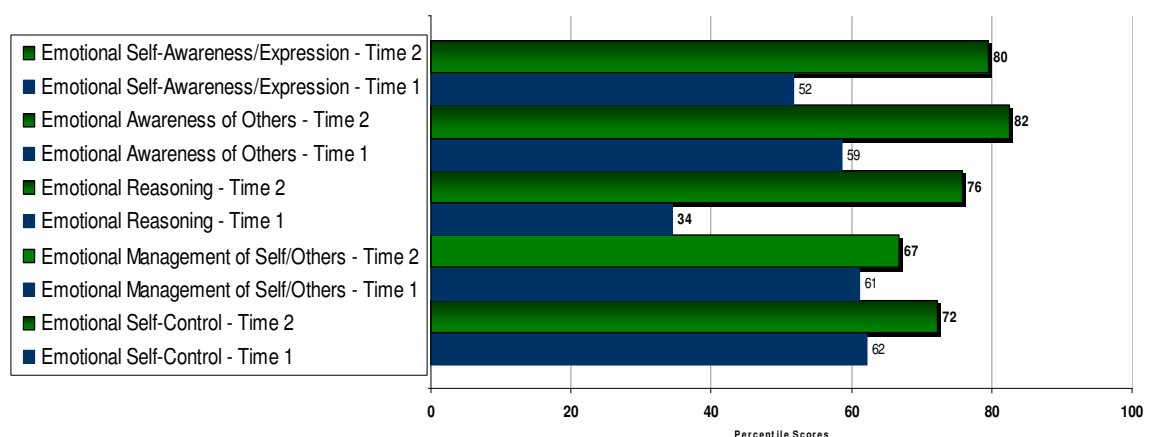
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The model of emotional intelligence in this case was measured using the Genos model of Emotional Intelligence¹⁰. The Genos model is a behavioural measure founded on a ‘competency’ based framework. The Genos model defines Emotional Intelligence as “a set of seven skills that define how effectively we perceive, understand, reason with and manage our own and others’ feelings.”¹¹

The seven core skills underpinning how people consider emotions and process emotional information are:

- Emotional self-awareness
- Emotional expression
- Emotional awareness of others
- Emotional reasoning
- Emotional self-management
- Emotional management of others
- Emotional self-control

The results against each of the seven EI skills pre and post the structured coaching program are shown in Graph 1. In terms of Return on Investment, the ratings from 300 staff members’ pre and post the program (Graph 2) show leadership enhancement led to improved employee satisfaction, output and quality effectiveness. Both graphs clearly showing the effective result from both measurement and structured coaching in each of the seven core skill areas.



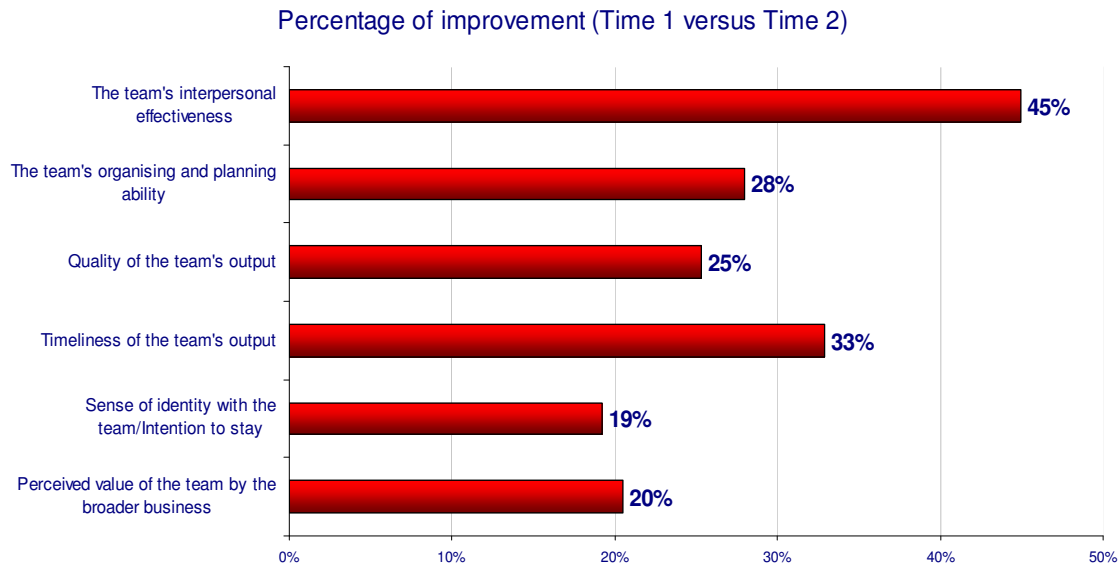
Graph 1: Results Pre and Post in Relation to the element of Emotional Intelligence

¹⁰ www.genos.com.au

¹¹ Palmer, B.R., Gignac, G., Ekermans, G., & Stough, C.. A comprehensive framework for emotional intelligence. In Robert Emmerling, Manas K. Mandal & Vinod K. Shanwal (Eds). *Emotional Intelligence: Theoretical & Cultural Perspectives*. (2008).



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Graph 2: Percentage Improvement in Key Performance Measures

Conclusion

Given the skills shortage being faced in terms of recruiting, developing and retaining resources, we need to take a different approach to developing the project management community. Organisations need to market what they can offer as equally as the candidate in order to attract and retain the right skills sets.

Certification which is competency based is but one aspect. Certification has been shown however to be a poor measure of effectiveness as it does not address nor develop the behavioural elements identified as being needed for a “world class” project manager.

Development of project manager effectiveness by way of mentoring and structured coaching programs including the development of emotional intelligence can serve to provide an organisation with a more effective return on investment as well as attracting and retaining suitable candidates.

In the workplace, effective mentoring and coaching produces significantly better results and effective project managers. People produce better work and for a longer period, and contribute to the organisation in many more ways. In addition, coaching and mentoring both of which focuses on the individual, can enhance morale, motivation and productivity and reduce staff turnover as individuals feel valued and connected – all of which impact on project delivery and ultimately the bottom line.