

Global Project Management

Prepared by Dr. Asma Abuanzeh
PMG 661

Lecture 1



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Global Project Leadership

Project leadership can be defined as the creation of a vision about the project objectives that directs all team members to work towards it. Good project leaders are able to influence the task prioritization and the availability of the project team members towards achieving the project goals and strategies.



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Global Project Leadership

Project managers that already have a good notion of leadership skills in traditional projects can use these recommendations to evaluate their current practices, complete their preferred leadership models and theories and effectively lead a project team composed of people located in different countries.



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Project management and leadership

Project managers make use of proven practices to plan project activities and monitor important elements such as cost, scope, time, quality and risks. Examples of these management practices are presented by bodies of knowledge such as the PMBOK® Guide, ICB and PRINCE2®. Project management is the application of these practices by using 'hard skills' such as planning, estimating and controlling.



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Global leadership

Each dimension of global projects adds a series of leadership challenges. Some of these challenges are listed below, together with strategies that can help you to surmount the global barriers:

* **Number of distant locations** - the geographical distances can be barriers to relationship building, as there will be fewer opportunities for informal discussions and team events. Leaders will need to structure the project vision in creative ways to communicate it equally across all the locations.



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Global leadership

* **Number of different organizations** - team members working for different organizations can have competing interests and hidden agendas. Good leaders keep their eyes and minds open for the different perspectives, aiming to identify and reconcile the various factors of motivation.



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* **Country cultures** - people coming from different countries can have various sources of motivation, diverse priorities and dissimilar values and ethics. Good leaders must consider all these factors and the cultural dimensions to align, motivate and inspire the global team members.



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Global leadership

* **Different languages** - team members with different native languages may not understand or may have imprecise interpretations of sentences in foreign languages. Good global leaders may find local allies that translate the project vision and constantly communicate it and reinforce it to the local teams, using local languages and expressions.



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Global leadership

- **Time zones** - the development of motivation and relationship building without a 'shared time' can be extremely difficult and frustrating for project managers. The team members may tend to ignore the asynchronous communication or keep it as low priority. Few people will feel motivated or inspired by someone they rarely meet. Global leaders must plan for shared time, organize co-located team events, travel to meet the team members during key activities and coach key team members to function as local leaders during all project phases.

The next sections review the leadership activities in more detail, providing recommendations to global project managers.



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Commitment

How can you obtain commitment from global team members? How can you develop followers in the different locations that can disseminate the project vision and make sure that all team members across the globe are aligned on the project objectives and strategies?



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Commitment

The strategies and practices depend on the organizational and country cultures, the project type, size and duration, and even on the different personalities involved. However, there are some broad recommendations for leadership competencies and activities, to win these challenges and increase the commitment from the team members located in other countries. The suggestions below must be evaluated according to the situations and projects you are involved in, and can be a starting point when you acquire and develop your project team:



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Commitment

- Set clear goals and directions at the project outset, with participation from key team members in different locations. Online brainstorming techniques can be very effective to collect feedback and obtain buy-in from people across locations.



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Commitment

- Build a vision that serves the interests of the main stakeholders and that can be translated into the achievement of the project objectives. Consider the cultural dimensions of the stakeholders involved in the project, and adapt the description of the vision to their trends on long-term orientation and human-nature relationships.



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Commitment

- Together with the key team members, develop a strategy to achieve the project objectives, and make sure that all or most team members agree on its feasibility. This is a good opportunity to gather representatives from every country in the same location for a few days and develop a good team spirit.



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Commitment

- Communicate the vision, goals and directions equally to all local and distant project team members. Obtain buy-in by asking for their feedback and suggestions on how to improve the project strategy, and how to achieve the objectives. Organize online sessions using the synchronous tools, and take this opportunity to launch the project website, publishing the vision, goals and directions, and organizing polls to gather opinions and ideas.



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Commitment

- Provide appropriate and timely feedback to all suggestions and remarks. This will show your team members that you are open to their ideas, and align them to the project objectives. To the same extent, answer all questions within an acceptable time, using an appropriate media.



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Commitment

- Empower the team; by delegating the control of important work packages, by nominating coordinators for complex knowledge domains and by developing leaders at distant locations. Distribute work packages to these coordinators and suggest the organization of meetings to build a detailed plan. Attend the first meetings and provide coaching on leadership to the local coordinators.



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Commitment

- Build an informal network among all project coordinators, and make sure their behavior remains consistent to the project vision and strategies during the whole project. This will facilitate the negotiations and conflict management processes, and foster cooperation and innovation.



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Motivation

The study of motivation concerns those processes that give behavior its energy and direction. Energy implies that behavior has strength - that it is relatively strong, intense and persistent.

Direction implies that behavior has purpose - that is aimed toward achieving a particular goal'



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Motivation

Motivation can be defined as an individual process that provides energy and direction to adopt a specific behavior or perform a determined task. In project management, the energy must ensure the team members will complete their tasks on time, and the direction needs to lead the tasks performed toward the project vision, mission and goals, following pre-determined strategies.



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Motivation

Each individual can initiate a self-motivation process by understanding how the task can satisfy personal or professional needs, suit expectations and beliefs and invoke positive emotions. The task of motivating other project team members can be harder, as you need to understand what their needs, expectations and beliefs are, and what 'makes them tick'. You need to pay special attention to their behavior and carefully evaluate their reactions and emotions through verbal and non-verbal cues.



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Motivation

- establish quick daily meetings, well coordinated, to track the progress of actions in the critical path;
- nominate project coordinators and empower them to manage and own the main work packages, coaching them when needed;
- increase trust from the main stakeholders, by organizing weekly information sessions and distributing daily summaries with the status of critical activities.



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Motivation

Table 2.1 Factors of motivation in different areas of the world (adapted from Hofstede, 2001)

Countries and regions	Motivators
USA, Great Britain and their former dominions and colonies	Individual success in form of wealth, recognition, and 'self-actualisation'
Japan, German-speaking countries, some Latin countries and Greece	Individual security and wealth obtained by hard work
France, Spain, Portugal, ex-Yugoslavia, Chile, and other Latin and Asian countries	Security, relationships and group solidarity
North European countries plus the Netherlands	Success, belonging, quality of human relationships and the living environment



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Becoming a good global leader

The main characteristics of a good leader are valid for most countries and cultures. When adapting common recommendations from the literature on leadership and motivation to global project management, the following suggestions appear:

- foster a positive and flexible culture, respecting the country differences and making the team members see the benefit of this diversity to the project;
- use the synchronous and asynchronous communication tools to coach, lead and support the team members, independently of their location, origin, gender and hierarchical position;



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Becoming a good global leader

- search for cohesive solutions, adapting your negotiation skills to the different cultures involved in the conflicts and discussions;
- behave as a partner, not a 'boss', mainly when working with people from smaller power distance countries;
- nurture creativity and innovation in team members from different locations, by deploying online and asynchronous brainstorming tools.



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Brainstorming on global leadership

As well as using the recommendations above and from other books, you can understand what the people in your company think about leadership and motivation, and evaluate what practices would work in your situation. You can organize a brainstorming session, with a mix of project managers and team members from different countries, to understand their opinions on leadership.



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Alternatively, organize the session during your project kick-off meeting with your global project team members. You can keep the results on a mind map posted in the project website and in the project 'war room'. Below, you can find some examples of questions to be asked during the session:



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Introductory questions

Introductory brainstorming questions set the foundation and direction for your discussion. Use these brainstorming questions to establish your shared goals and align on what problem you aim to solve.

1. What are the goals we hope to achieve today?
2. What are the facts about this project/obstacle?
3. What insights do we have in terms of information, figures, or data that will be helpful?
4. What additional data or resources do we need to solve this challenge?
5. What about this project is exciting?
6. What are the areas of this project we perceive to present the biggest possible challenge?



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Information-gathering questions

These brainstorming questions help align the team on the scope and context of the problem you're addressing. Asking these questions early can help you avoid misunderstandings down the line and ensure your ideas are feasible.

7. How will our lines of communication function?
8. What will our methods of reporting be?
9. What skills are required to reach our goal?
10. What financial obstacles might we come across during this project?
11. How will we raise these funds?
12. How will we track our progress?
13. How and when will we ensure delivery of our finished product?



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Questions meant to encourage discussion

Open-ended brainstorming questions like these facilitate discussion and get people thinking creatively about the problem or goal you're focusing on.

14. What are your initial impressions of this project?
15. How would you briefly outline or pitch this project?
16. Can you explain these obstacles as simply as possible?
17. What makes our organization/team uniquely equipped to tackle this project?
18. What does our organization/team lack in order to see this project succeed?
19. How can we be prepared to account for our weaknesses?
20. How would a different organization approach this project?
21. What makes this product/project desirable to a customer?
22. What is the root of our problem here?
23. What is the best possible outcome for our project?



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Problem-solving questions

Solving problems is at the heart of brainstorming. Use these brainstorming questions to help your team tackle problems creatively and comprehensively.

- 24. Do we have ideas that we're able to combine?
- 25. How can we implement our ideas in a different way?
- 26. Are there solutions you've used in other projects that would be helpful here?
- 27. What are three other ways of looking at this challenge?
- 28. What are other examples of projects/products similar to ours that have been successful?
- 29. How have similar projects/products failed?
- 30. If there were no limitations, how would we approach this project?



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Reflection questions

Reflection is an important part of the creative and iterative brainstorming process. Use these brainstorming questions to help your team identify potential gaps in the discussion or proposed solutions, plan next steps, and identify opportunities for improvement.

31. What are our next steps?
32. What have we learned about our project?
33. Are there other team members or unique skill sets required for us to achieve these goals?
34. What might affect the timing of completing this project?
35. What factor or idea deserves the most focus at this time?



Resources:

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Communication, Collaboration and
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Thank You