

10

Managing the People Dynamics

*If we don't worry about who gets the credit,
just think how much we can accomplish.*

—Ronald Reagan

The Heart and Soul of Projects

We sometimes equate project management with the visible planning artifacts—timelines, budgets, and reports. But the heart and soul of every project concerns people—their relationships, skills, and ability to work as a team. Shrewd project managers focus their attention from day one on understanding the human dynamics of every step, and even anticipate probable human interactions as the project unfolds.

Putting people first boosts your probability of success. Consider this key premise: *How you develop a project plan and who you involve is as important as the actual plan itself.* People who perceive themselves as co-creators of a vision are more positively involved and committed. The challenge lies in getting that critical buy-in and maintaining stay-in.

Engaging Your Key Stakeholders

Paul Newman, playing an aging pool hustler in the movie *The Color of Money*, revealed his secret of success to his protégé, played by Tom Cruise: “I’m a student of human moves.” Becoming a master student of human moves by applying psychology is critical for any successful project leader. Understanding people’s interests, nurturing relationships, and building a supportive coalition is as crucial as managing tasks, budget, and schedule.

Do your initial stakeholder analysis early and update it often as the project evolves with emphasis on two often overlapping groups: Stakeholders and team members. Begin by identifying the spectrum of possible stakeholders whom the project affects, involves, or concerns. Probe with the following questions:

1. Who are we doing this for? (customers or end-users)
2. Who really wants to see this happen? (champions)
3. Who might be opposed? (blockers)
4. Who else is affected? (indirect beneficiaries and/or victims)
5. Whose support or assistance do we need to execute the project? (implementers)
6. What resources do we need, and who controls them? (gatekeepers and enablers)
7. Who is paying for this? (sponsors)

Analyze Stakeholder Interests

Stakeholder analysis yields the most accurate insights when done by the core team, with input from project sponsors and champions. Using a large whiteboard, sketch a simple matrix and list the major players vertically. Then identify, as best you can, their major interests and issues concerning the effort. (See Figure 10.1)

Next, identify the degree of support you *need* from each stakeholder, and the degree of support you *predict* you will have. Then you can decide how best to involve them in the initial planning and in subsequent stages.

Look for gaps between the support you need and the support you predict you’ll have. If a stakeholder’s support is crucial, or

Stakeholder	Interests & Issues	Degree of Support Needed			Degree of Support Predicted		
		Crucial	Somewhat	Not Needed	Strong	Neutral	Opposed

FIGURE 10.1 Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

somewhat important, and you predict neutral support or outright opposition, figure out what you might do to get their backing. Some options include:

- *Enroll them*—Get them enthused about the vision.
- *Convince them*—Use reasoned discourse.
- *Accommodate them*—Incorporate their interests in your solution.
- *Trade them*—Commit to owing them one in the future.
- *Pressure them*—Use legitimate power to reduce resistance.
- *Love them*—Use your personality to smother them in good will.

If these approaches don't work, your remaining options are to:

- *Moot them*—Make them irrelevant by insulating the project from their non-support.
- *Ignore them*—Acknowledge their concerns, but press ahead anyway.

A stakeholder analysis for small projects can be handled with tools as simple as a pencil, some paper, and a few moments of time. Big projects may need many days of intense, thought-provoking sessions, during which several people are phoning, e-mailing, meeting, and listening to all those who hold a stake (one way or another) in the project.

Consider this stakeholder analysis example from the Asian Gypsy Moth project, which formed to combat a major pest invasion that

Stakeholder	Interests & Issues	Degree of Support Needed			Degree of Support Predicted		
		Crucial	Some-what	Not Needed	Strong	Neutral	Opposed
1. Governor's Office	Minimize active public opposition.	X			X		
2. Legislators	Represent constituent interests. Visible, active oversight.	X				X	
3. Dept. of Health	Ensure safety and health.		X			X	
4. Agriculture Industry	Minimize costs to farmers.	X			X		
5. WSDA Personnel Dept.	Hire necessary staff.	X				X	
6. Ecologists	Restore healthy interaction webs. Minimize "collateral" damage to non-target species.		X		X		
7. Butterfly collectors	Minimize "collateral" damage to non-target species.		X				X
8. General Public	Be safe.	X					X
9. Media	Inform the public.	X				X	
10. Moths	Survive!			X			X

FIGURE 10.2 Stakeholders Analysis of the Asian Gypsy Moth Project

threatened to destroy the forests of the Pacific Northwest, as described in Chapter 2 and shown in Figure 10.2.

The Governor was fully supportive, along with the timber and agriculture industry. Ecologists, eco-activists, and environmentalists, who could potentially have stopped the project, were generally united in their desire to rid the beautiful Northwest of a truly dangerous pest using proven natural predators rather than damaging insecticides.

But several troubling gaps appeared in the stakeholder chart. Note that legislator support (stakeholder #2) was crucial, but initially predicted as neutral because the lawmakers did not yet understand the project Objectives and the urgency. This pinpointed a need to brief

them personally and win their active support. Big gaps between needed and predicted support also showed up with the general public.

The general public's support (stakeholder #8) was vital since low-flying helicopters would soon be buzzing their neighborhoods and spraying a mysterious mist. Special efforts were required to educate the public. Media cooperation was essential to get a fair warning out to the citizens about the seriousness of the problem, while not triggering a panic. Butterfly collectors, a politically influential group, initially opposed the effort, but they lent support after the project team added funds to restock the butterfly population.

This analysis revealed that only one set of stakeholders was strongly opposed to the effort: The moths themselves. Fortunately, their support was not needed.

Building Your Own Dream Team

When the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey Team beat the Russians, the whole world was shocked. How could a bunch of amateur college players whip a seasoned professional Russian team? If you saw the movie *Miracle*, you'll remember that dramatic moment when the twenty U.S. hockey players gelled to become a team, not just a collection of individuals.

Harmonizing the efforts and energies of the team is so much more than courtesy or politically correct maneuvering. Hold in your mind the image of a six-cylinder engine firing on all cylinders but badly out of timing. Misaligned cylinders use their strength against each other, and the leftover energy is barely enough to move the car. Setting the timing, gapping the plugs, and ensuring a close fit on the valves is analogous to harmonizing a project team. With some conscious attention, the various components can be honed and fitted to work with each other to build forward momentum, instead of against each other or simply at random.

A valuable secondary benefit accrues when the LogFrame is used together as a team. The LogFrame quickly highlights issues and stimulates dialogue among all players, which helps members discover and eliminate ignorant spots and facilitates inter-player cooperation. The bottom line: Better projects and committed teams.

Start with Your Core Team

Core team members are your backbone of trusted team members needed to get the ball rolling and keep it rolling. They are usually not the high rollers or champions, but the prime doers. Who are they in your case? Are they committed? Do they bring the right resources—technical, interpersonal, and emotional—needed to help produce spectacular results? You don't need to identify every team member at once, but you'd better find a few sparkplugs early on. Here are some questions to ask, as you ponder the composition of your team:

1. What technical skills do we need to get the job done, and who has them?
2. What other skills or perspectives do we need, and who has them?
3. Who would it be smart to include for political reasons?
4. Whose involvement would give the project greater credibility and visibility?
5. Who gives us access to information and other resources?
6. For each potential person, what's their track record as a team player?

You may be assigned people or you may have to beat the bushes to recruit team members. Either way, make sure you understand the critical concept presented in the next section.

Yes, It's All About Me!

Let's face it: We all seek to fill our psychological needs. Everyone is extremely busy, and your target part-time team members may already be overextended. They may not be thrilled at being recruited, so you must appeal to individual human needs by answering the primary question swirling in each of their minds: *What's In It For Me? (WIIFM)*.

What can serving on your project offer each participant? Figure out people's hot buttons and communicate how your project can fulfill their desire to:

- Work on challenging problems
- Be recognized and visible
- Learn, grow, and gain new skills

- Apply their core expertise
- Experience variety and stimulation
- Accomplish something important
- Get tangible rewards (e.g., bonuses)
- Work with new people in different parts of the organization
- Have fun

While we're on the subject, be sure to figure out your own personal WIIFM. Motivating yourself is even more essential than motivating others, especially when your project runs for a long while. No one stays energized and focused all the time, so occasionally remind yourself of the many payoffs in it for you and recognize that projects are marathons more often than sprints.

Size Matters

How large should the core team be? That all depends on the project's size and complexity. Avoid making it so large that it becomes cumbersome, or so small that it fails to include diverse perspectives. My experience suggests that the ideal size is between five to seven persons (plus or minus two). This group size is optimum for active and balanced give-and-take discussions.

When a core team has between 9 and 15 people, it becomes more of a committee than a team, and the expression "nothing ever gets done in a committee" often proves true. If you are forced to include a large number of people, take extra care that the group is extremely well-structured, or it can become a well-meaning but unruly and unproductive mob. The larger the number, the more important it is to engage a neutral external facilitator to conduct the initial meetings so you start on solid footing.

Team dynamics must gel. You are not just recruiting good individuals, but good individuals who will function well as a team. Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant were both exceptional basketball players individually, but they fouled up and fouled out when playing together for The Lakers. Good team play beats gifted individual stars every time.

Seven people with key operational roles made up the core Asian Gypsy Moth team. Over the project's first two months, the project team grew to nearly 300 people as field teams were deployed. But like

a human pyramid of cheerleaders stacked five persons high, the stability of the project structure depended on the core team providing a strong and solid base.

Your best efforts may produce a team, but not the team you really want to work with. You can't always get the right people. In the final analysis, if you've exhausted all other selection and recruiting tactics, and you've done as much persuasive enrolling as possible, then accept the people on your team and realize that there's plenty of opportunity to make it a success. Accept them for who they are and who they are not and then busy yourself equipping them with the necessary tools and common language to execute the project.

You can complain about the availability or non-availability of "the right people" until your window of opportunity has long since slammed shut, or you can turn your people into the right people. Put your faith in those you have. Transform the people you have into the people you need.

When You Serve on the Core Team

When you are asked to be part of a project team, you owe it to yourself to take a few moments and think through your own role in the grand scheme of the project. Questions that can help you sort out your commitment include:

- Why do they want me?
- What role would I like to have?
- What might this role develop into?
- What's in it for me?
- What do I have to give up to be involved in this?

Be sure your conscience is clear so you can commit with all you've got. A halting, on-again/off-again approach—being neither slow nor fast—usually ends up half-fast and does everyone involved a disservice. Be able to commit completely to bring all of your talents to the table, to bear down on the project, as if you personally owned it. You *do* own it!

When you and other team members move with swift certitude, conviction, and clarity of Purpose, your project will become an unstoppable force.

Creating Shared Norms for High Performance

The need for shared norms and guiding principles (or rules of the game) may be obvious to you. But other team members, support staff, or secondary enablers may not think it's that necessary. Therefore, take steps to discuss this early in the process. Team chemistry can make or break a project; so it's worth your time and effort to build the right expectations from day one.

The OSRP sealed-source team developed norms that promoted operational efficiency. These included:

- When we disagree, we attack the issue and not the person.
- We respect, honor, and support each other.
- We acknowledge good ideas and creative contributions from all.
- We all do our job and deliver products on time.
- We begin each meeting by defining expectations and Outcomes, and by reviewing decisions and action items.
- We self-monitor to make sure we are all contributing value.

Norms must be deliberately shaped. If left to chance, inefficient practices and dysfunctional behavior can quickly become acceptable standards.

On this project, Frank was a technically superb but long-winded task force member who frequently talked about experiences and situations totally outside the team meetings' agendas. But the other team players deferred to and respected his seniority and expertise, so they were reluctant to interrupt his meandering monologues.

The team leader approached Frank privately and acknowledged his valuable input while pointing out that the extraneous conversation was annoying and counterproductive. "Could you help me break this habit?" Frank asked, and the team leader assured him of his help.

At the next project meeting, the team leader explained that, as a team leader, he sometimes talked too long. So if he (or others on team) were getting too talkative, they had permission to set "these" into action. He then handed out a set of wind-up mechanical chattering teeth to each team member! With help from the clattering of incessant incisors, Frank quickly learned to cut short his off-topic spoken strolls, and did so with a chuckle.

Grow Your Own Norms

No single list of best-practice norms works in every context. Take the list above as a starting point and add to it. Better yet, start from scratch and grow your own, based on an open discussion of principles that have made past projects successful.

When Hewlett-Packard project leader Joe Cronin kicks off new project teams, he shares some of the flub-ups from his early career days, and thus develops rapport with the group. He also asks each person to describe their most successful and satisfying projects, and then has the group distill an agreed upon set of best-practice principles to apply to the project at hand.

Getting all team members focused on what makes for good teamwork leads to the definition of good teamwork, the practice of good teamwork, and the benefits of good teamwork. Norm-setting is a great way to enhance professional respect, and promote *esprit de corps* among what would otherwise be polite strangers.

People thrive on challenges, overcoming obstacles, winning against the odds, and doing an exceptionally good job. Call your team to the harmony of excellence, and enjoy the tabernacle choir sounds of their harmonized efforts.

Making Meetings March in Formation

Meetings can become a time-sucking swamp for all because it's so easy to get sidetracked or spend excess time on minor issues. One team burdened by excessively long discussions of technical issues adopted the following protocols to close an issue and move on. They agreed that when things got bogged down, the project manager could end discussion on a topic with any one of these statements:

- “*I’ve got it.*” Enough! We understand the issues; now let’s move on to the next item.
- “*We’ll revisit it later.*” Table it for now, but decide when to revisit it.
- “*We need more information.*” Assign someone to write up the issue or do research.
- “*Let’s summarize.*” Summarize the agreement or decision we made and proceed.
- “*Our next steps are . . .*” Agree on an action and by-when date for someone on the team.

The most important protocol to keep meetings on track is to clarify expected meeting Objectives at the start. Apply our Question #1 to the meeting itself to affirm what's most important to accomplish and why during the meeting. Another productive protocol to build accountability is by having all persons recap their action responsibilities and due dates at the meeting's end and review these at future meetings.

Sharpening Your Emotional Intelligence

Bring to mind the most outstanding project managers you have ever known. Chances are that they have strong Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills, in addition to their technical and project management skills. EI simply means being strategic and intentional in using your emotions—and those of others—to achieve project objectives.

EI matters because project management requires that you achieve results through others. This means being able to build trust, handle conflict, give and take criticism constructively, deal with people who don't deliver, generate team commitment, and keep yourself and others motivated over the long haul. Skillfully handling situations like this means tapping into an innate capacity that we all have—our Emotional Intelligence—but few fully develop.

EI is not about suppressing or denying your emotions, it's about recognizing the signals they give you, learning from them, and then being willing to manage and control them. When you are disappointed, for example, it does no good to deny that feeling. It is valuable to understand the message behind the disappointment, which is the sense of being let down.

Emotional Intelligence gives you the edge in projects and in life. Sharpening your EI means developing yourself in four major domains:

1. *High self-awareness.* This is the ability to tune into yourself, self-monitor in real time, see the impact of your behavior, and fine-tune your approach to get the results you want. High self-awareness begins with listening to how you talk to yourself. By becoming more mindful about how your inner dialogues shape your feelings, actions, and reactions, you can work to change any self-defeating thought patterns.
2. *Mood Management.* Learn to manage your moods and choose the most productive ones to be effective now. Recognize that it's

not the event that causes you to feel good or bad; rather, it's how you appraise the event that determines your emotional reaction. When emotions such as anger and anxiety come up, what counts is how skillfully and swiftly you can move out of those debilitating states to more productive ones. Practice paying attention to the specific statements you make to yourself when you are emotionally aggravated or distressed. Remind yourself to talk to yourself in ways that help you manage your emotions instead of letting your emotions manage you.

3. *Self-motivation.* The best leaders can jump-start themselves into action, and stay focused on what's most important now. Self-motivation keeps you energized, minimizes emotional swings, and help you bounce back quickly from setbacks. Spark your motivation by constructing instructional self-statements to remind you that you have the knowledge, skills, and drive to get a particular task done. Create positive pep-talks to give to yourself, such as, "I can do this marketing plan. I've fully researched all the issues. No one understands the marketplace as I do. No matter what, I will prepare an absolutely outstanding plan."

Inoculate yourself against future difficulties by writing instructional self-statements in advance. What are some potentially difficult situations you might face when dealing with customers, clients, and team members? What instructional self-statements could you create now that would help you sail smoothly through future storms?

4. *Interpersonal expertise.* This is the ability to handle the inevitable conflicts, disagreements, and criticisms that crop up in all projects. Strong interpersonal expertise lets you respond effectively to team members and stakeholders, no matter how negative their emotional states might be. Strong interpersonal expertise equips you to help other people deal with their emotions, resolve their conflicts, and stay productive.

Techniques for Increasing Your Emotional Intelligence

Successful project managers are able to attract people and create a positive atmosphere. In our forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers*, Dr. Hendrie Weisinger (author of

Emotional Intelligence at Work) and I identify ten techniques to do so. One of the simplest and most fun is to generate humor.

From a scientific point of view, laughing releases endorphins—hormones and enzymes that make you feel good—as well as help you relax, and even heal.

Using humor effectively requires being able to sense when humor is appropriate, because the intent of humor is not to embarrass or humiliate people but to make them laugh and dispel tension. Ask yourself if the joke you plan to tell could offend somebody. If the answer is yes, or maybe, you had better choose another joke.

To work more humor into your projects, start the ritual of beginning team meetings with a joke or two. Open the next meeting with jokes of your own. Then ask for volunteers to come to the next meeting with their own. There are still plenty of jokes around that will generate hearty laughter without offending others. The World Wide Web is a rich source. Do a Google search for terms like “project management humor” or “management jokes.” The very best form of humor is self-deprecating humor, where you make yourself the butt of the joke.

Can you see how Emotional Intelligence and the Logical Framework mesh? The linkage shows up as Assumptions regarding team chemistry.

When coaching a team in crafting their project LogFrame, I’ll sometimes suggest adding the following Assumption: “The project team will perform in an emotionally intelligent manner.” This catalyzes the team conversation about what EI means in their context, and the behaviors it will take to make that Assumption valid.

Projects function best when the manager and team are emotionally intelligent. The emotionally *un*intelligent manager who, for example, criticizes team members so harshly that he damages their spirits, will have a tough time getting them to go the extra mile when it’s needed. Set the bar high by increasing your EI and everyone will feel the difference, which allows the team to perform at their peak.

Develop a Start-Up LogFrame

Experienced project managers understand that team selection and team formation are crucial parts of any successful project. Whether team members have been recruited, selected, or appointed, the way that the initial team comes together and gels (or doesn’t) will

Objectives	Success Measures
<p>Goal: Successful Project</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project meets identified Objectives on-time and within budget. 2. Team enjoys the experience: learns, grows, and feels satisfied. 3. All key stakeholders are pleased.
<p>Purpose: Team gets smooth, quick start.</p>	<p>Within ____ days of formation, team develops and agrees on approach in Start-up LogFrame, then accepts their task responsibilities and is active in implementing them.</p>
<p>Outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project Team formed and functioning 2. Stakeholder analysis completed 3. Initial project LogFrame developed 4. Supporting tools and processes developed 5. Execution and monitoring system in place 6. (Other Outcomes as needed) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Key team members identified and recruited by _____. 1.2 Team formed and holds initial meeting by _____. 1.3 Team modifies and develops this or similar Pre-Project LogFrame by _____. 2.1 Key players and their interests identified by _____. 2.2 Decisions made about who to include in developing the project LogFrame and how to involve other stakeholders. 3.1 By _____, team constructs first cut LogFrame for the project. 3.2 LogFrame includes Objectives, Measures, Assumptions, and Tasks, and meets quality standards for a good LogFrame (see checklist in Appendix). 4. Team creates WBS, Gantt charts, and/or Responsibility Charts as needed by _____. 5. Team decides on how they will monitor progress, report to others, adjust plans, etc.

FIGURE 10.3 Sample Start-Up LogFrame

have a significant impact on their performance throughout the life of the project.

Once the team has come together and been adequately informed of the parameters of their mission (should they choose to accept it), one outstanding way to get them focused and moving ahead is to have them prepare a LogFrame of the larger project system. A start-up LogFrame is broader than your project-focused LogFrame (where the project-focused LogFrame appears as one of several Outcomes on the start-up matrix). This broader LogFrame typically addresses wider issues involved in early start-up.

Developing a start-up LogFrame will also familiarize the team with the LogFrame model, encouraging them to use it on the project in different ways. This action, best done soon after the team is formed, can transform the team into a high-caliber crew with all the requisite attitudes, skill sets, and knowledge to accomplish its most ambitious Goals.

Figure 10.3 shows a sample start-up LogFrame that includes typical start-up Outcomes. Adjust and adapt it to your project. Consider if there are better ways to express your own start-up Goal and Purpose? Review the Outcomes list. Identify what other Outcomes your project needs (e.g., benefit/cost or rate of returns analysis)? Note that Assumptions are not shown in this example, but your team should definitely include them in your start-up LogFrame as well.

Use this generic template to jump-start the process of building your team and your project plans together. You'll be delighted at the time it saves in getting a smooth and effective start — which carries over throughout the remainder of the project.

Key Points Review

1. The heart and soul of every project concerns people—their relationships, skills, and ability to work as a team. Remember the WIIFM principle, and create wins for all.
2. Powerful team-building occurs when teams use the LogFrame. The LogFrame process guides the conversation in a way that efficiently surfaces issues and helps create agreement (or, equally useful, it quickly pinpoints areas of disagreement). Developing a

start-up LogFrame helps the team avoid tunnel vision, sharpen success factors, and get things moving swiftly.

3. Size up your stakeholders, their interests, and the degree of support predicated and required. If there is a gap, you have work to do. To bring them on board, involve them in plan creation because people who perceive themselves as co-creators of a vision are more positively involved and committed.
4. The *process* of planning is more crucial than the planning documents that emerge at the other end. The collaborative use of the LogFrame helps you simultaneously build and shape a strong team while they work together to create an actionable plan.
5. Riding the project rollercoaster without getting queasy requires sharpening your Emotional Intelligence. Learn to use your emotions—and that of others—as a powerful and productive project resource. As your career evolves, sharpen your skills in four major domains: (1) High self-awareness, (2) Mood management, (3) Self-motivation, and (4) Interpersonal expertise.
6. Being emotionally intelligent matters because project management requires that you achieve results through others. Good EI skills help you to build trust, handle conflict, give and take criticism constructively, deal with people who don't deliver, generate team commitment, and keep yourself and others motivated over the long haul. Team chemistry can make or break a project. Work to create productive shared norms for how the team will perform together. It's funny how well humor works.