Project Leadership:
The game changer in large scale complex projects

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ICCPM International Roundtable Series
The Importance of Projects
US$99 million for every US$1 billion invested

US$20.2 trillion in 20 years

9.9%

US$2 trillion every year Pulse of the Profession 2018.

Source: [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/pulse-of-the-profession-2018
“Every case study ranked leadership as the most important factor in developing collaborative relationships. The research has showed that leaders can act, or fail to act, in areas that make an enormous difference to the success of the relationship and hence project performance.”

The game changer in large scale complex projects is the leaders’ ability to see projects not just as assets or systems but also as conversations and act from a Strategist logic. This report draws on insights from Roundtable participants to describe what this means across key areas of project leadership.
Reframing Stakeholder Interactions

- External Stakeholders
- Trust Deficit Environment
- Stakeholder Management expanded to Genuine Stakeholder Engagement
- Social Media – Leaders will have to adapt!
- Complex Dynamics of Stakeholder Networks
- Building stakeholder-centric mindsets, culture and processes

Project-as-conversation and strategist action logic provide a strong foundation for reframing stakeholder interactions.
• Digital Disruption - both a source of complexity and opportunity to lead complex projects more effectively
• Accelerated Digital Transformation is required to deal with Digital Disruption - Industry 4.0
• Design Principles:
  • Interconnectivity,
  • Information Transparency,
  • Technical Assistance,
  • Decentralised Decisions
• It’s not about the technology! Project leaders have to understand and adapt
• TQ – obviously important for Industry 4.0 but less obvious are the top 10 skills needed to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
• Human Factor should not be underestimated - IQ, PQ, EQ and TQ
• Different action logic responses - Resistance - Pragmatic Adoption - Reconceptualisation

1. Complex problem solving
2. Systems thinking
3. Entrepreneurial
4. Project management
5. Coordination with others
6. Strategic intelligence
7. Judgement and decision making
8. Value proposition
9. Agility
10. Cognitive flexibility

Considering the Human Side of Projects

Human-to-human aspects of projects - the toughest challenges of complex project leadership.

Suggests project leaders should be able to:
- be agile,
- working with resistance,
- inspiring others,
- adapt to context,
- be self-aware, and
- understanding how we are authors of our own reality.

A project-as-conversation perspective adds a layer of awareness of relational dynamics.
Building High Performance Project Teams

• Importance of getting the team off to a good start
• Brutal project cultures and Mental Health
• Collaborative relationships and contracting models
• Creating an inclusive and motivating project team narrative

A project-as-conversation perspective foregrounds the subtle dynamics at play, for example in balancing a culture where the team goes the extra mile without creating a brutal and unsustainable, non-inclusive culture. Similarly, it shows how a team makes sense of a project’s journey.
Avoid the pretence that higher certainty can be imposed on a project in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) context than is actually possible.

- Governing in environments requiring adaptability
- Moving beyond governance as compliance
- The need for close ties between governance and project teams
- Developing governance capability
Negotiating Project Success

- Reaching beyond the Iron Triangle
- Success depends on perspective
- Dealing with multiple notions of success

A Strategist would expect a fair amount of reshaping or re-baselining of a project along broader success measures and orchestrate a conversation with stakeholders to ensure they come along on that journey.
Table 1: Overview of Leadership of Complex Projects

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<tr>
<th>Vision of project</th>
<th>Project as system</th>
<th>Project as conversation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obvious and (often) tangible characteristics of the deliverable.</td>
<td>Focus on understanding existing system elements and the interactions between the elements.</td>
<td>Focus on how meaning is created within the system, and able to refine &amp; reconstruct the system in its context.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Action logics (based on Itohke &amp; Torbert, 2006)</th>
<th>Project as system</th>
<th>Project as conversation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Expert: Ruts by logic and expertise. Seeks rational efficiency.</td>
<td>Achiever: Meets strategic goals. Effectively achieves goals through teams, juggling demands of multiple key stakeholders.</td>
<td>Strategist: Creates unique structures to resolve gaps between strategy and project success, and generates organizational and personal transformations. Uses mutual inquiry, vigilance, and vulnerability to shape stakeholder demands.</td>
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<th>Cognitive and emotional capacity</th>
<th>Project as system</th>
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<td>The project can be objectively understood and described with sufficient time &amp; effort. Able to figure out domain-specific challenges.</td>
<td>Everyone has their own subjective perspective on the real underlying project. Able to resolve multi-disciplinary challenges using a blend of technical and social skills.</td>
<td>Emphasis is on whatever meaning we make of the project through our social interactions. Able to inspire and influence others to make changes that help progress adaptive challenges using highly accomplished social and political skills.</td>
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<th>Dominant identity</th>
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<td>&quot;Project Contributor&quot;: being right about the project; superior knowledge &amp; ability in professional domain.</td>
<td>&quot;Project Manager/Leader&quot;: getting the project done; achieving the agreed changes to the system.</td>
<td>&quot;Strategic Leader&quot;: contributing through the project to a bigger strategic purpose beyond the project itself, able to believable that broader purpose.</td>
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Q & A

Download a free copy of the report [https://iccpm.com/project-leadership/](https://iccpm.com/project-leadership/)

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