



## Management and Performance Associates – October 2005

### Project Management: Technique or Leadership?

People end up in charge of a project whether they have experience in project management or not. There is a variety of reasons for this, as unpredictable as forecasting the weather. Rain or shine—most of the time, people in charge of projects lack the skills to carry them out. Worse, these skills are acquired on the go, at a high cost: self and others' frustration.

**But, what are these tools?** This is a simple question with a complex answer. If we think of the skills needed to obtain success in project management as tools, then the tools needed for success are:

- Understanding how and why it originates
- Obtaining a sponsor
- Understanding its limiting factors
- Setting up the work team
- Defining roles and responsibilities,
- Designing the product to be delivered
- Setting up the execution plan
- Reviewing the accomplished objective, its execution and the expected benefits.

**Wow... is it that simple?** If you have ever been in charge of a Project you know the answer to this question is "absolutely not."

Technical skills will not guarantee the success of a project. More than 50 percent of the success of a Project Manager is a consequence of leadership skills. The following hints expand on this topic:

- 1) **A project is a miracle carried over by people. Therefore, interpersonal relationships are key to its success, including:**
  - **Open Attitude**, in order to understand others' needs and to prevent a monologue
  - **Forward Behaviors**, to clearly express ideas, their rationale, and to negotiate
  - **Strategy**, so that you know when and with whom to use these behaviors
- 2) **Projects move ahead or get stuck because of good or bad communication between all**

**involved, both verbal and written. It is important to reflect upon the following:**

- **Who** needs the information?
- **What** information is required?
- **When** is the information required?
- **How** should the information be communicated?

- 3) **A key function of the project leader is to influence—top, down and sideways. Effective influencing is made of the key elements of communication, such as:**

- **Ask**, to establish relationships
- **Listen**, to generate trust
- **Empathize**, to improve relationships.

- 4) **A "never ending series of meetings" is a very unorthodox way of defining a Project. Therefore, answering the four following questions before any meeting is fundamental to its success:**

- What is the **purpose** of this meeting?
- What **type of meeting** do I need?
- **Who** should attend?
- Which is the most appropriate **process** to conduct it?

Never underestimate the importance of leadership skills when carrying out a project. **We need both technical and leadership skills but leadership skills are those which determine success in Project Management.**

**See you next time. We welcome your feedback.**

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