

# Leading Teams



*Leading teams is the process of guiding team members through the highs and lows of delivering a project. Effective leaders facilitate conversation, resolve conflicts, build trust among team members, build cohesion, guide teams to solutions and results, motivate team members, and create a sense of urgency.*

## Why Important

Project Managers are the leaders of project teams; as such, they are the primary point of contact for all stakeholders and team members. Effective leaders are essential to ensuring everyone is working towards the same goal.

*Impact when Project Managers provide lead teams effectively:*

### **Team Functions as One Unified Team**

Motivated team members have a sense of purpose – what they are providing is valued. Thus, are more committed to working together to achieve a common goal and delivering higher quality products on time.

### **Increased Innovation & Creative Solutions**

Constant communication and collaboration across team members increases innovation and creative solutions to challenging obstacles.

### **Communication & Coordination Occur Easily**

Clear roles and responsibilities make it easy to know who to coordinate with and what to coordinate with them on.

### **Projects are Delivered On-Time and On Budget**

Everyone is aware of the next steps, action items, critical path, and the intermediate and final milestones mapped out in the schedule.

### **Risks and Issues are Promptly Resolved**

Issues & risks are anticipated and discussed before they occur. Team is proactive about mitigating risks and issues before they become a bigger problem.

### **Conflicts are Effectively Resolved**

*Impact when Project Managers struggle to lead teams:*

**Lack of commitment** -Team not committed to deliver on project on time – low team morale.

### **Lack of Progress/Schedule Slipping**

Team members don't know what they are working towards – goal(s) are vague.

### **Unclear Expectations**

Team members trying to figure what needs to be done now and what is coming up. Everyone feels busy but important tasks are not getting done - next steps, critical path, and milestones are unclear.

### **Working in a vacuum**

Team members working towards their own interests or goals, creating potential for redundancy, unnecessary work being completed, and conflicts within deliverables.

### **Small problems turn into big problems**

**Unresolved conflicts** - Hinder progress and drive team morale down.

**Opportunities and innovative solutions are overlooked** - Due to lack of communication and collaboration.

## Key PM Responsibilities

	<p><b>Communicate Expectations</b> Clarify roles and responsibilities - who is doing what. Ensure all team members are informed.</p>		<p><b>Build Team Cohesion</b> Give each team member a sense of purpose by engaging them and providing productive feedback.</p>
	<p><b>Guide Team to Delivery</b> Focus the team on what matters &amp; guide teams towards solutions and desired outcomes.</p>		<p><b>Conflict Resolution</b> Manage conflict between disciplines. Promptly address issues and underperformance.</p>
	<p><b>Stakeholder Communication</b> Proactively communicate to understand, inform, &amp; reinforce expected outcomes &amp; progress.</p>		<p><b>Team Collaboration</b> Foster a culture of communication across disciplines to support each other.</p>

## Key Things to Consider

### Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

- Are all team members know the critical path and the role they play in achieving progress?
- Do team members understand their role and the PM's role on the project?
- Are expectations of tasks and timelines clearly communicated with team members?

### General Team Communication & Collaboration

- Do team members know who the main point of contact (Project Manager) is?
- Is relevant information being communicated to the right team members?
- Are the right team members involved in making decisions?
- Is the form of communication with the team members working? Different team members may communicate in different ways.
- Do team members understand expectations regarding when to elevate concerns and who to communicate with on what?
- Are decisions known by all team members (no surprises)?



### Facilitating Meetings

- Is the purpose and desired outcome(s) of the meeting clearly defined so all attendees know what is expected to be accomplished before and during the meeting?
- What items need to be followed up on during and after the meeting to ensure progress and execution occurs within the desired timeframe?
- Are the appropriate disciplines invited?
  - o Is their role in the meeting clear? (If they are a participant, do they understand how they are contributing?)

- What questions do you need to ask during the meeting to encourage team engagement, achieve meeting objectives, and foster collaboration to resolve any issues?
- At the end of the meeting, are action items and next steps identified and assigned?

Stakeholder Coordination

- Are stakeholders informed of the purpose and the associated improvements of the project?
- Do external stakeholders and DOT have a shared understanding of project outcomes?

**Best Practices & Common Pitfalls**

Best Practices	Common Pitfalls
<p><u>Team Cohesion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Team members are involved in decisions that impact their work.</li> <li>✓ Conflicts are worked through and resolved before becoming personal.</li> <li>✓ Roles and responsibilities are clear and known by all team members.</li> <li>✓ Constructive and positive feedback is provided to team members.</li> <li>✓ Team members feel empowered to share information, ask questions, and take ownership in the project.</li> </ul> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Communication on decision and progress is distributed and documented.</li> <li>✓ Follow up via phone or in person.</li> <li>✓ Multiple methods of communication used.</li> </ul> <p><u>Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Purpose and desired outcomes of meeting is communicated to prior to starting meeting.</li> <li>✓ Meeting facilitator is identified prior to meeting.</li> <li>✓ Action items and next steps are summarized at the end of the meeting and documented in the minutes.</li> </ul> <p><u>Project Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Project objectives are clear.</li> <li>✓ Timely guidance and direction are provided.</li> <li>✓ Use project schedule to set team expectations on project delivery timeframes.</li> <li>✓ Proactively follow up on action items and next steps before due to ensure execution.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Team Cohesion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Team members are not engaged or committed to the success of the project.</li> <li>✗ Team members don't trust each other.</li> <li>✗ Fear of conflict or not addressing conflict when it turns personal.</li> <li>✗ Unclear roles and responsibility</li> <li>✗ Not providing feedback</li> </ul> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Infrequent and poor communication</li> <li>✗ Overlooking unresponsiveness</li> <li>✗ Rely only on email to communicate.</li> </ul> <p><u>Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Holding meetings with no clear purpose or desired outcome and unclear facilitator.</li> <li>✗ Action items are not identified or summarized.</li> <li>✗ The right people are not at the meeting.</li> </ul> <p><u>Project Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Unclear project objectives</li> <li>✗ Being too hands off when guidance and direction is needed.</li> <li>✗ Inattentive to results.</li> <li>✗ Not following up on action items and upcoming or past due tasks or activities.</li> </ul>