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.

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Key PM Responsibilities



Communicate Expectations

Clarify roles and responsibilities - who is doing what. Ensure all team members are informed.



Build Team Cohesion

Give each team member a sense of purpose by engaging them and providing productive feedback.



Guide Team to Delivery

Focus the team on what matters & guide teams towards solutions and desired outcomes.



Conflict Resolution

Manage conflict between disciplines. Promptly address issues and underperformance.



Stakeholder Communication

Proactively communicate to understand, inform, & reinforce expected outcomes & progress.



Team Collaboration

Foster a culture of communication across disciplines to support each other.

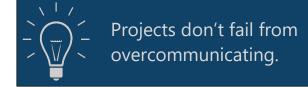
Key Things to Consider

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?)

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- 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 Team Cohesion Team Cohesion ✓ Team members are involved in decisions that × Team members are not engaged or impact their work. committed to the success of the project. ✓ Conflicts are worked through and resolved Team members don't trust each other. Fear of conflict or not addressing conflict before becoming personal. Roles and responsibilities are clear and when it turns personal. known by all team members. Unclear roles and responsibility

- Constructive and positive feedback is provided to team members.
- Team members feel empowered to share information, ask questions, and take ownership in the project.

Communication

- Communication on decision and progress is distributed and documented.
- Follow up via phone or in person.
- ✓ Multiple methods of communication used.

Meetings

- Purpose and desired outcomes of meeting is communicated to prior to starting meeting.
- Meeting facilitator is identified prior to meeting.
- Action items and next steps are summarized at the end of the meeting and documented in the minutes.

Project Progress

- ✓ Project objectives are clear.
- ✓ Timely guidance and direction are provided.
- Use project schedule to set team expectations on project delivery timeframes.
- Proactively follow up on action items and next steps before due to ensure execution.

Communication

- Infrequent and poor communication
- Overlooking unresponsiveness

Not providing feedback

Rely only on email to communicate.

Meetings

- Holding meetings with no clear purpose or desired outcome and unclear facilitator.
- Action items are not identified or summarized.
- The right people are not at the meeting.

Project Progress

- Unclear project objectives
- Being too hands off when guidance and direction is needed.
- Inattentive to results.
- Not following up on action items and upcoming or past due tasks or activities.

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