

# Article

## Six Attributes of Leadership

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Does leadership have an effect on project success? Is there a difference between management and leadership? Can leadership be learned? The answer to all these questions is yes. In this article, I will look at six attributes of project leadership. This is certainly not a complete list, just a start. One that I believe can help project managers achieve project success.



### 1. *Lateral thinking*

The first attribute, lateral thinking covers a variety of methods to get us out of the usual line of thought. It is this kind of thinking that cuts across the instilled and predetermined patterns we all too often employ when working on a problem. With this type of thinking we try different perceptions, different concepts, and different points of entry and consider multiple possibilities and approaches instead of a single approach. Many problems we face as project managers and leaders require different perspectives to solve them successfully.

### 2. *Empowerment*

Often, there is little or no recognition for people who spend time on elementary problems, it's the big problems that receive all the attention, yet, big problems start as minor problems. All too often, because of leadership attitudes, employees develop the habit of ignoring problems until they explode, at which time they become big problems, then, leaders want to go on record for being a problem solver. Empowered project teams correct this attitude. They focus on getting the job done while solving or preventing problems while the problems are still minor.

The ultimate paradox of project leadership power is that to be an effective leader, one must turn all team members into leaders. In this way, processes such as relationships and the issues of leadership and empowerment become important. Successful leaders are able to motivate, to energize and to empower others. When people are excited and empowered, it affects both their task initiation and task persistence. That is, empowered people get more involved, take on more difficult situations, and act more confidently. Empowered people expend more effort on a given task and are more persistent in their efforts.

### 3. *Are optimistic*

The third attribute is optimism. Leaders are optimistic. They think positively. Positive thinking is more than just avoiding negative emotions; there are actions and forethought involved. When negative events happen, excellent project leaders purposefully look for something positive. Instead of feeling that they can't do something, they look at the problem as an opportunity for themselves, the project team, team development, bonding and growth.

#### 4. *Demand better*

On-going self-assessment and self-evaluation are critical for ensuring that your project is meeting its objectives and having a positive impact. Demanding better is actually a simple idea, all one has to do is ask, "What can we do even better?" Essentially that's all there is to it. Asking the question over and over again focuses leaders on challenging themselves and project team members. Further, it sets into motion an on-going self-evaluation and a focus on the process of achievement. In return, this focus on the process brings results.

#### 5. *Encourage delegation*

Delegation is one of the most important roles of your job; as a leader your job isn't 'to do,' it is to gain or accomplish things through your project team members. Your time should be spent on such things as visioning, motivating, controlling and goal setting, and not on trivial jobs such as fighting fires or responding to interruptions and correcting errors.

Delegating relieves time-pressures from you. It provides your team members with an opportunity to expand their own skills in decision making and problem solving and encourages their creativity and initiative. While motivating them to become what they are capable of being.

It forces you to spend time with your team members, thus developing your interpersonal relationships. Your feedback and attention will encourage them on to greater things. It helps set performance standards based on member's accomplishments or results rather than purely on their activity and helps to increase results by releasing you from some of your activities. You will be able to step back and look at the bigger picture rather than being caught up in the internal activities of the project. You will be able to think outwards for the better of the organization and not lose sight of the real goals.

#### 6. *Reside in the future*

To meet future challenges, leaders must reside in the future. Only then can they set a vision with reasonable goals and promote the process of developing effective strategies to achieve them. Considering the future enables leaders to think constructively about it and do the things that contribute to achieving their visions. Proactive future oriented thinking can lead to greater project success. The future will happen, no matter what we do. If you want a successful future, you need to work at it.

A successful project has a successful project manager who is a successful

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