

Project Management and Leadership: Equal Partners for Project Success

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Part I

The Four Project Management Processes of Leadership and Management

*"Leaders are people oriented, whereas managers are task oriented.
Leaders inspire, whereas managers organize."*

*"The Realities of Management: A view from the Trenches"
Royce L. Callaway*

Abstract

We as project management professionals are all aware of the management aspects of our profession. These include the tasks, processes and sequences of steps that we all know by heart. But client feedback and our own self evaluations or "lessons learned" tell us that we should be addressing an often neglected though equally important demand of our profession. That demand is **Leadership**.

Why the sudden emphasis on project managers as leaders? Why isn't management enough?

Well, let's look at project management in today's world. I believe we can all agree that the profession of Project Management is continuing to increase in complexity. We regularly are called upon to supervise projects that are global in nature. They involve different cultures, nations and industries. These increasingly complex projects require budgets totaling millions of dollars. So it seems as the world continues to get smaller, projects will continue to get larger. Our inventory of skills needs to increase as well.

One skill that has always been overshadowed by our emphasis on management is Leadership. Oh sure, we all say we practice both and some of us even say that we are good at both. But are we really as good as we may think? Let's compare the two and find out while we evaluate ourselves in the process.

Leadership vs. Management

What are the primary objectives of Management and Leadership?

Simply put, Management is charged with *Producing and maintaining a degree of Predictability & Order*. Leadership on the other hand is charged with *Producing Change*.

Let's examine what's necessary to accomplish these objectives.

A summary of our Project Management and Leadership responsibilities can be condensed into what I call the four processes of Management and Leadership. They are:

- 1) Creating an Agenda
- 2) Developing a Team
- 3) Execution of the Agenda
- 4) Evaluation of the Outcome

First of all, we will address each process by determining the individual responsibilities of Management and Leadership for each.

We will then consider the primary functions and activities of each responsibility.

1) Creating an Agenda

Management Responsibilities: Planning & Budgeting.

These responsibilities involve establishing detailed steps and timetables for achieving needed results and then allocating the resources necessary to make that happen.

Management Functions and Activities

Our primary function here is to help produce predictable results on important dimensions (e.g. being on time and within budget) by planning for those results.

Activities involve a deductive process. We develop a detailed map of how to achieve the results expected by stakeholders (clients, users, customers) along with timetables consisting of what, when, who and the costs involved.

Leadership Responsibilities: Establishing Direction

Our responsibility here is to develop a vision of the future and strategies for producing the change needed to achieve that vision.

Leadership Functions and Activities

At this point our objective is to establish the *direction for change* needed to cope with our changing business environment.

This is an inductive process. The objective of the activities involved here is to develop a vision which describes key aspects of an organization in the future along with a strategy for achieving that future state.

2) Developing a Team

Management Responsibilities: Organizing & Staffing

Here we are establishing some structure for:

- a) accomplishing our plan
- b) staffing the project
- c) responsibility/authority

- d) policies/procedures
- e) monitoring the process.

Management Functions and Activities

Our focus here is to create an organization that can implement our plan and thus can produce predictable results on important dimensions.

Our activities are directed toward developing a process of organizational design involving judgment about “fit”. We want to determine the best compatibility option for matching:

- a) our organizational/staffing structure to our plan
- b) parts of our plan to individual team members
- c) compensation to our plan and the people involved
- d) project tasks to individual skill sets.

Leadership Responsibilities: Aligning People

As leaders we are communicating the project direction by words and deeds. We want to influence the team-building process of the project. Our goal here is to ensure the teams' understanding and acceptance of the project direction , vision and strategies.

Leadership Functions and Activities

The function here is to get people lined up behind a vision and set of strategies. This will help produce the change needed to address a changing business environment.

In as clear and credible way as possible, we must get people to understand and believe the vision/strategies by communicating with the individuals needed to make that project direction a reality.

3) Execution of the Agenda

Management Responsibilities: Controlling & Problem-Solving

Under this heading we are monitoring results vs. our plan in some detail, identifying deviations and then planning & organizing to solve any problems.

Management Functions and Activities

Our function here is to minimize deviation from the plan and thus produce predictable results on important decisions.

Activities here are concerned with monitoring results vs. the plan. This is done in some detail by means of control mechanisms (reports, meetings). Using these we identify deviations from our plan and then re-plan and organize to resolve those deviations.

Leadership Responsibilities: Motivating & Inspiring

Our accountability here is to energize people to overcome major political, bureaucratic and resource barriers to change. This is done by satisfying very basic but unfulfilled human needs.

Leadership Functions and Activities

The function here is to energize people to overcome major obstacles toward achieving a vision. Success here will help produce the awareness and any attitude adjustments needed to cope with environmental changes.

To accomplish this we need to satisfy very basic human needs. These involve the need for achievement, recognition and living up to one's ideals. The goal here is to create an unusually high level of energy and enthusiasm in people.

4) Evaluation of the Outcome

We evaluate the success of our management approach by comparing our results to our management agenda. The goal of that agenda is to produce and maintain a degree of predictability and order that has the potential of consistently producing key results expected by various stakeholders.

How successful have you been as a manager on a project?

Determine how effectively you handled any deviations from the project plan. In addition, analyze what affect these deviations had on the overall outcome of the project with relation to cost, time and scope.

As with management, the success of our leadership approach is determined by comparing our results to our leadership agenda. The goal of our leadership agenda is to produce change. The change produced is often to a dramatic degree and has the potential of being extremely useful in the future.

How successful have you been as a leader on a project?

Determine how much dramatic, positive, long-lasting change has taken place for the organization. Then do the same for yourself and your team members.

Well, how do you rate yourself as a leader? Need more input? In Part II of this article entitled, "Leadership and the Project Management Professional", I'll be providing some insights and ideas on the subject of leadership. We'll investigate the 8 characteristics of successful leaders. We'll also address the appropriate use of different leadership styles.

End of Part I

About the Author

Ruffin Veal III has been an Information Technology professional for over 30 years. He has had increasing levels of responsibility throughout that time in such private sector industries as manufacturing, retailing, banking, medical and others. During that time he has also been employed both full time and as a consultant with such public sector employers as the State of Minnesota and Ramsey County, Minnesota.

“During that 30 year period I have been what I call an “in the trenches” professional. That is, one who has relied on resolving problems encountered by all IS/IT professionals with practical “non-perfect world” means. There are a lot of theories out there but I've found that nothing beats knowledge based on experience.” says, Veal. “Most advice given by many consultants and speakers is either too costly, too time consuming or just downright impractical. The presentations are great but the listener has little to take back to the office and implement in a quick, affordable manner. He/She has even a smaller chance of seeing any short-term return on investment.” “Emphasis on real world information technology solutions is what you will see in my presentations”.

Ruffin Veal III is an author, speaker and President of Ruffin Veal & Associates, Inc. an information technology consulting firm specializing in organizational leadership & management, project management and client relations.