

Key Leadership Behaviors Necessary to Advance in Project Management

Project / Program Management Research

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Specific behaviors need to be developed in order to advance a career in project or program management. This research provides global data on key leadership behaviors that answers the following questions: What are the right behaviors for success? How do we accelerate the learning?

Table of Contents

Survey Purpose	1
What are the Right Leadership Behaviors for Project and Program Management Success?	1
Details about Project Manager Key Leadership Behaviors	2
Details about Program Manager Key Leadership Behaviors	3
How do we Accelerate the Learning?	3
Three Step Acceleration Process	4
Background: The Survey Approach	5
Survey Development	5
Pilot / First Survey	5
Survey Distribution	5
Survey Participants	5
Geographic Area of Primary Work	5
Project Management Experience	6
Business and Industry Demographics	6
Summary	7
About the Authors	7
Appendix	8
Competency Index	8
Competency Index Sub-Categories and Behaviors Assessed	8
Competency Survey Results	8
Leadership Index	9
Leadership Index Sub-Categories and Behaviors Assessed	9
Leadership Survey Results	9
Emotional Intelligence Index	10
Emotional Intelligence Index Sub-Categories and Behaviors Assessed	10
Emotional Intelligence Survey Results	10

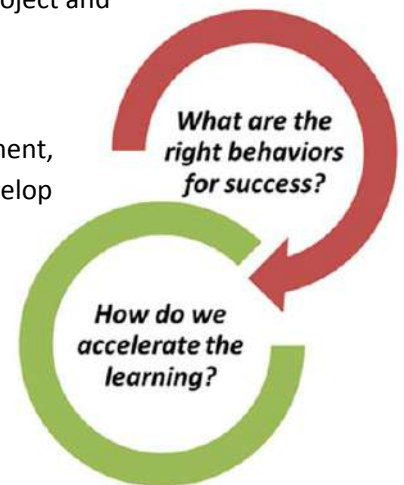
Survey Purpose

There are many training courses, books and companies that provide information on how to be a better leader. As Project or Program Managers, we look to these resources to build our skills and accelerate our capabilities. We read communication texts, attend leadership seminars and participate in webinars to gain PDUs (Professional Development Units required for project management certification through the Project Management Institute) to improve our ability to lead.

As project management practitioners the challenges we reflect on are: What are the right leadership behaviors necessary for project management success? What differentiates good from great? How do we accelerate the learning that comes through time and experience to be better Project and Program Managers faster?

These questions were being pondered in collaboration with Baldwin-Wallace University, a university recognized as a center of excellence in Project Management, and PRADCO, an organization established in 1955 to help companies select, develop and retain people who fit their culture. These two organizations provided the perfect fit to answer the questions:

- What are the right leadership behaviors for project and program management success?
- How do we accelerate the learning?



What are the Right Leadership Behaviors for Project and Program Management Success?

Baldwin Wallace University teamed up with PRADCO and PMI's Leadership Community of Practice to survey over 650 project management practitioners. These practitioners shared their experiences and opinions on the right behaviors for project and program management success.

The survey focused on two roles:

- Project Manager: an individual who delivers a unique product or service from a single project
- Program Manager: an individual who delivers a business strategy that requires multiple coordinated projects



Survey results were consistent regardless of the survey participant's project role, level of experience, industry, business, organizational size or geography. The key behaviors necessary for great project and program management appear to be universal.

The survey confirmed what most of us assume, that Project Managers tend to have strong communication skills, are results oriented, focus on hitting goals, are flexible in their approach and provide strong team leadership. They need to be flexible to adapt to changing priorities and timelines, yet able to communicate and keep people updated on progress and the ability (or inability) to meet budgets and deadlines. Project Managers also need to motivate and manage people successfully, making sure to follow up on commitments and hold people accountable for delivering results. Finally, it is important for Project Managers to build trusting relationships and to work collaboratively with others. Much of the influencing that is done is of people who are not direct reports, so inspiring and encouraging people to work proactively and as a team is very important.

The survey found that Program Managers emphasize many of the same traits as Project Managers – they too are results oriented and goal driven. What makes the Program Manager job unique is a greater focus on understanding organizational dynamics.

It isn't enough to have a good work ethic and management skills – this role has a greater emphasis on making good decisions, demonstrating sound judgment and thinking long term. Projects are more effectively juggled and priorities defined when a Program Manager can balance the short term needs of an individual project with the longer term needs of a project portfolio.



Details about Project Manager Key Leadership Behaviors

Survey findings identified these behaviors necessary for success as a Project Manager:

Strong communication skills:

- Promoting two-way communication
- Keeping people informed on a regular basis
- Listening respectfully and attentively to others

Delivering results independently:

- Results – meeting personal commitments and achieving goals
- Proactive – taking appropriate action without being told
- Flexibility – adjusting to change and adapting to different circumstances

Delivering results through others:

- Influencing people – persuading others to agree or take action
- Goal-driven - setting and achieving short and long term challenging goals

- Follow-up – monitoring activities and keeping track of the team’s progress

Providing team leadership:

- Building trust – inspiring trust and credibility with others; maintaining confidences and keeping commitments
- Promoting teamwork – encouraging people to work together collaboratively
- Motivating – stimulating people to higher levels of performance; understanding the rewards people want to get the job done
- Integrity – being forthright, honest and demonstrating ethical standards

Details about Program Manager Key Leadership Behaviors

Survey findings identified these behaviors necessary for success as a Program Manager:

Seeing the organization strategically:

- Strategic thinking – planning and anticipating future implications, thinking broadly and understanding the long term impacts of decisions
- Organizational awareness – identifying interpersonal and group dynamics; being in tune with and adapting to the organizational culture
- Leading change – instigating innovation and constructive change; helping others work through change

Understanding how to navigate the organization toward the future:

- Judgment – analyzing situations effectively and making sound decisions confidently
- Goal driven – setting and achieving short and long term objectives
- Driving results from two perspectives –
 - delivering results personally by meeting commitments and achieving goals
 - achieving business objectives through others by holding people accountable

Working well with others:

- Communicative – expressing ideas clearly and listening attentively to others
- Building trust – inspiring trust and credibility with others, maintaining confidences and keeping commitments
- Integrity – being forthright, honest and demonstrating ethical standards

How do we Accelerate the Learning?

It is the age old leadership challenge we find in making the turn from project manager to program manager – the same skills and behaviors that make someone a successful project manager do not necessarily translate to a successful program manager. As a program manager, the role shifts outward toward an organizational focus. It takes time and experience to gain this shift in skills, but in today’s world we just don’t have that much time. Therefore, “How do we accelerate the learning that comes through time and experience to be better Project and Program Managers faster?” A focused three step process can be used to accelerate learning and move from good to great.

Three Step Acceleration Process

1. Understand the research data – review the findings of this research. Look at project and program managers that are in your organization. How do they match up? Are these the behaviors that are rewarded in your organization?

2. Raise your self-awareness through assessment and reflection – compare your current behaviors to those identified in the research findings.

- a. You can create a quick scale to evaluate your behaviors. If you selected, for example, Communication, you could ask:

How well do I:

Express ideas clearly and listen attentively to others?

1 – Always 2 – Sometimes 3 – Occasionally 4 – Rarely 5 – Never

- b. Take an assessment of your behaviors offered by PRADCO. It will provide you with a detailed analysis targeting your strengths and opportunities for improvement in the key areas required for success.

3. Create opportunities to leverage your strengths and minimize your behavioral gaps:
 - a. Identify mentors whose behaviors align closely with the research and emulate their behaviors.
 - b. Select projects and programs to lead that provide opportunities for you to build targeted skills.
 - c. Attend targeted training that will enhance the desired behaviors.
 - d. Create an action plan to do better in your weaker areas and to facilitate improvements on the job.



Three Step Acceleration Process For Key Leadership Behaviors Necessary to Advance in Project Management

Background: The Survey Approach

Survey Development

PRADCO selected three of their behavioral indexes to provide the foundation for the survey:

Competency - Behavioral qualities that individuals bring to a role in the areas of Motivation, Work Approach, Interpersonal Style and Decision-Making

Leadership – Behaviors necessary to lead and manage people and projects both directly and indirectly

Emotional Intelligence – Having good awareness plus the ability to leverage emotions to influence and develop good relationships with others

Pilot / First Survey

The first survey was completed by 169 Information Technology professionals in the Midwest (see the article [Critical Project Management Behavior](#), PRADCO, March 2011 for details and results of the first survey). While the results provided valuable information, more data were needed to get input from a wider geographic and demographic population.

Survey Distribution

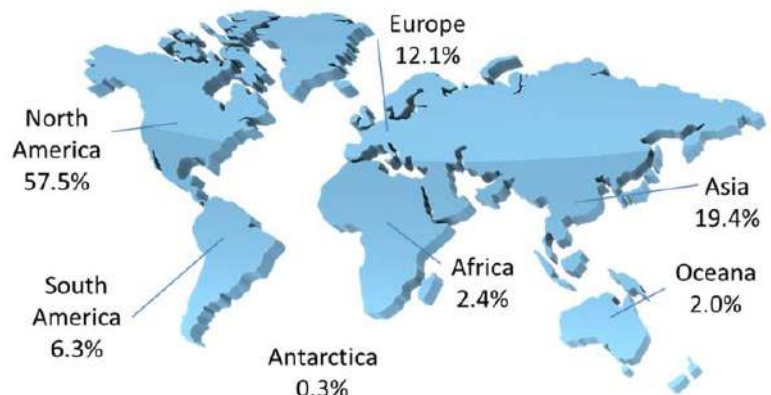
A broad spectrum of participants, who work all over the world in different disciplines, and have documented knowledge of Project Management, was needed. The PMI Leadership in Project Management Communities of Practice was happy to help. Under the coordination of David Davis former Community Manager of the PMI Leadership in PM Community of Practice, the survey was distributed worldwide in the summer of 2012.

Survey Participants

The survey provided the diversity of participants desired. 680 individuals completed the survey, providing an understanding of what behaviors are most important for Project and Program Management in different disciplines, industries and parts of the world. Here are some of the demographics:

Geographic Area of Primary Work

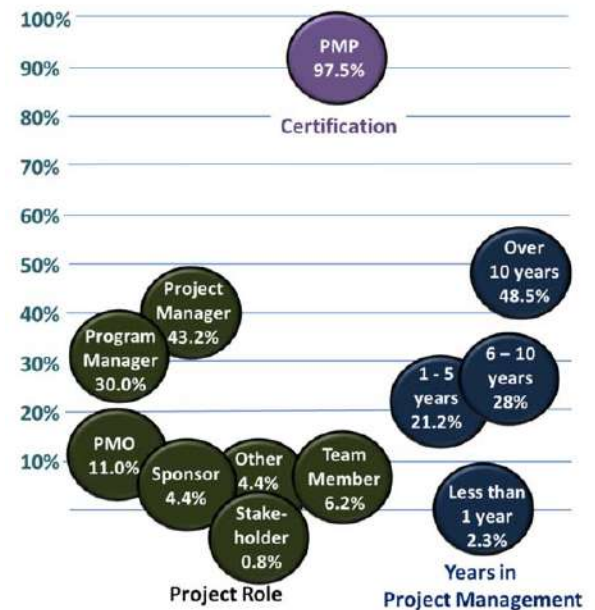
The majority of survey participants are from North America (Canada and the United States). There was also significant representation from both Asia and Europe.



Project Management Experience

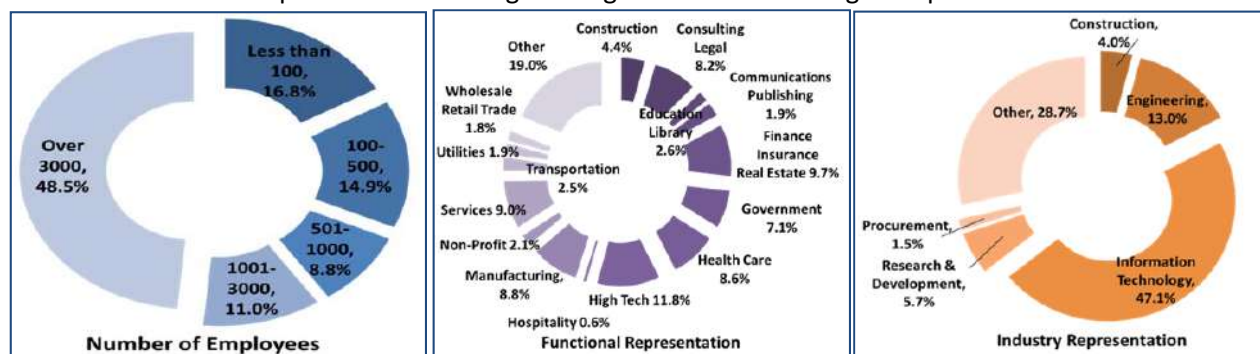
The level of project management experience was captured from multiple perspectives:

- **Certification:** Most of the survey respondents maintained their PMI Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification. In addition, a small percentage of the respondents held other PMI certifications as well as certifications in Prince (project management standard produced by the UK government) and IIBA (International Institute of Business Analysis).
- **Years in Project Management:** The majority of participants have been involved in Project Management for over 10 years, followed by 6-10 years, 1 – 5 years and a few respondents with less than one year of experience.
- **Project Role:** The greatest percentage of respondents identified themselves as a Project Manager, followed by Program Manager and staff in a Project Management Office. There were some responses from stakeholders, sponsors and steering committee members / gate keepers and project team members.



Business and Industry Demographics

- **Number of Employees:** The majority of the organizations (48.5%) providing representation in the survey were from companies with over 3,000 employees. There were also survey respondents from organizations that employed less than 100, from 100-500 employees, 501-1,000 employees and 1,001 – 3,000 employees.
- **Functional Representation:** More than 15 different types of industries participated in the survey. 50% of the respondents came from one of the following industry groups: Consulting / Legal, Finance / Insurance / Real-estate, Government, Health Care, High Tech Manufacturing, and Services.
- **Industry Representation:** Although there were many different types of industries represented in the survey, Information Technology continued to be the highest represented functional work area with a response of 47.1%. Engineering was the second largest representation with 13.0%.



Summary

Two questions were answered from the research:

1. What are the right leadership behaviors for Project and Program Management success?

As a Project Manager the answers are: strong communication skills, delivering results independently and through others, plus providing team leadership.

As a Program Manager the answers are: seeing the organization strategically, navigating to get things done to move the organization toward the future, and working well with others.

2. How do we accelerate the learning to maximize your success now and in the future? The answer to this question can be found by following the three step process:
 1. Understand the research data
 2. Raise your self-awareness through assessment and reflection
 3. Create opportunities to leverage your strengths and minimize your behavioral gaps

About the Authors



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Appendix

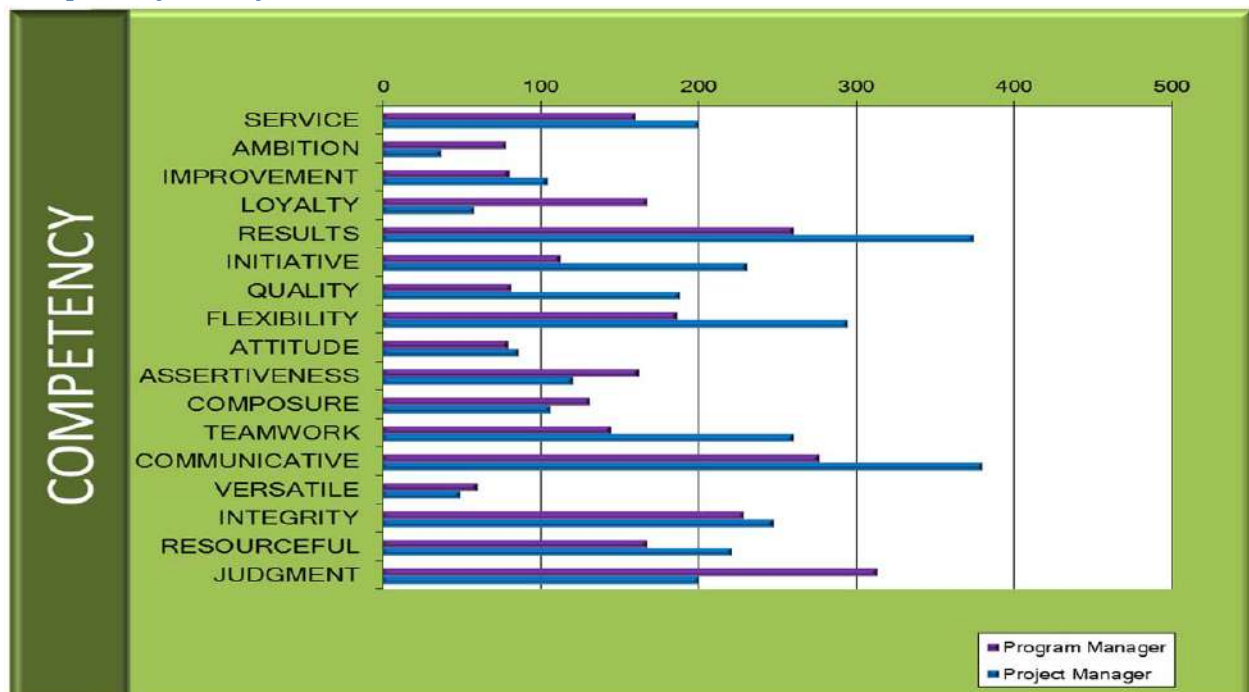
Competency Index

Behavioral qualities that individuals bring to a role in the areas of Motivation, Work Approach, Interpersonal Style and Decision-Making

Competency Index Sub-Categories and Behaviors Assessed

COMPETENCY	
Sub-Category	Behaviors Assessed in Category
Motivation	SERVICE - Listening to people and responding to their needs. AMBITION - Wanting more responsibility and seeking advancement. IMPROVEMENT - Seeking training and taking steps to develop new skills. LOYALTY - Being committed to and supporting the company.
Work Approach	RESULTS - Meeting commitments and achieving goals. INITIATIVE - Being a self-starter and taking action without having to be told. QUALITY - Working with precision and accuracy. FLEXIBILITY - Adjusting to change and adapting to different circumstances.
Interpersonal Style	ATTITUDE - Having a positive disposition toward superiors. ASSERTIVENESS - Speaking up and sharing opinions with others. COMPOSURE - Maintaining self-control in all situations. TEAMWORK - Being cooperative and supportive when others need help. COMMUNICATIVE - Expressing ideas clearly and listening attentively. VERSATILE - Adapting to and going along with other people.
Decision Making	INTEGRITY - Being forthright, honest and demonstrating ethical standards. RESOURCEFUL - Finding solutions and new ways to handle problems. JUDGMENT - Analyzing situations effectively and making sound decisions.

Competency Survey Results



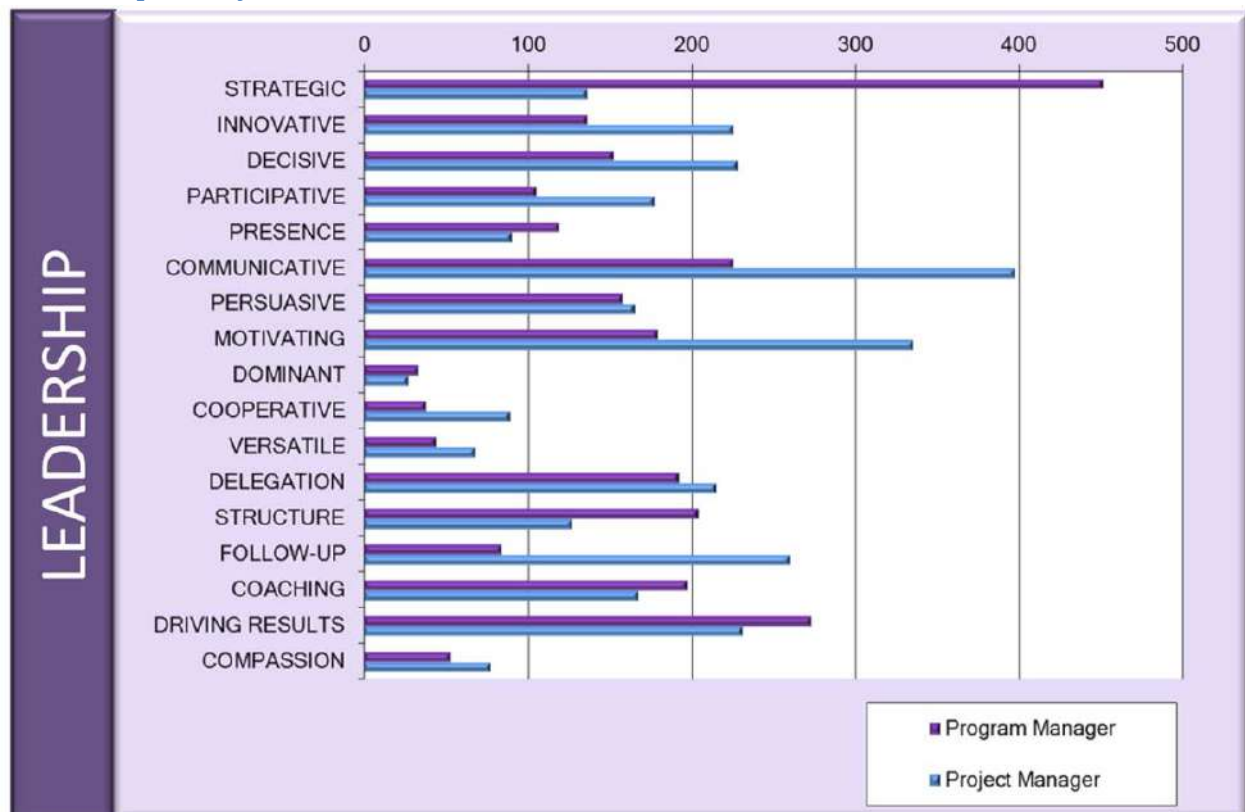
Leadership Index

Behaviors necessary to lead and manage people and projects both directly and indirectly

Leadership Index Sub-Categories and Behaviors Assessed

LEADERSHIP	
Sub-Category	Behaviors Assessed in Category
Decision Making	STRATEGIC - Planning and anticipating future implications, thinking broadly. INNOVATIVE - Being creative, taking calculated risks, brainstorming. DECISIVE - Thinking independently, being proactive and intuitive. PARTICIPATIVE - Being consultative and getting input to arrive at consensus.
Influence	PRESENCE - Having a dynamic style and a strong impact. COMMUNICATIVE - Expressing ideas clearly and listening attentively. PERSUASIVE - Influencing people and overcoming objections. MOTIVATING - Stimulating people to higher levels of performance. DOMINANT - Being forceful and assertive when interacting with others. COOPERATIVE - Being accommodating and helpful to others. VERSATILE - Adapting to and going along with other people.
Management	DELEGATION - Working through others and sharing responsibility. STRUCTURE - Providing guidelines and procedures to enhance consistency. FOLLOW-UP - Monitoring activities and keeping track of people's progress. COACHING - Giving feedback and helping people do their jobs better. DRIVING RESULTS - Achieving business objectives through people. COMPASSION - Being supportive and sensitive to the needs of people.

Leadership Survey Results



Emotional Intelligence Index

Having good awareness plus the ability to leverage emotions to influence and develop good relationships with others

Emotional Intelligence Index Sub-Categories and Behaviors Assessed

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	
Sub-Category	Behaviors Assessed in Category
Awareness Factors	EMOTIONAL - Recognizing and understanding one's own feelings. INTERPERSONAL - Perceiving needs and feelings of others. ORGANIZATIONAL - Identifying interpersonal and group dynamics.
Resilience Factors	OPTIMISM - Having an expectation that things will turn out well. CONFIDENCE - Believing one can master life's challenges.
Personal Factors	EVEN-TEMPERED - Maintaining emotions and composure in all situations. BUILDING TRUST - Inspiring trust and credibility with others. PROACTIVE - Taking appropriate action without being told. GOAL-DRIVEN - Setting and achieving challenging goals.
Relationship Factors	EMPATHY - Recognizing and responding to emotions in others. INSPIRING OTHERS - Demonstrating enthusiasm to improve performance. INFLUENCING PEOPLE - Persuading others to agree or take action. LEADING CHANGE - Instigating innovative and constructive change. PROMOTING TEAMWORK - Encouraging and supporting team efforts. DEVELOPING OTHERS - Spending time to help people develop their careers. RELATING TO OTHERS - Building and maintaining positive relationships.

Emotional Intelligence Survey Results

