

Leveraging Executive Skills in Project Management: A Blueprint for Developing Your Strategic Influence

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In the realm of project management, the ability to influence is paramount.

Gone are the days when success relied solely on technical proficiency and hands-on work. Today's project leaders must cultivate a strategic mindset and executive presence to inspire and drive their teams towards extraordinary outcomes.

Why Cultivating Influence is Important

Influence is the cornerstone of effective leadership. It transcends mere authority, allowing leaders to galvanize their teams, align stakeholders, and steer projects to success. When you influence, you don't just direct actions; you inspire belief and commitment. This intrinsic motivation is crucial for achieving sustainable and impactful results. Your ability to cultivate, nurture, and develop increasing levels of influence will provide you with a powerful tool that impacts far beyond your current sphere of activities.

Transition from Hands-On Work to Strategic Leadership

As you transition from a hands-on role to a leadership position, the focus shifts from managing tasks to managing people and ideas. This mental pivot is essential. Leveraging your cognitive resources to foresee challenges, strategize solutions, and inspire your team is where true leadership lies. This shift not only enhances project outcomes but also fosters a culture of innovation and excellence. To achieve this transition, delegate routine tasks to trusted team members, empowering them to take ownership and

develop their skills. Simultaneously, focus on higher-level strategic planning, risk management, and fostering innovative solutions. By investing your time in guiding and mentoring your team, you create a foundation for long-term success and position yourself as a visionary leader.

Build Strategic Influence as a Leader

To build strategic influence, high-level individual contributors (ICs) must develop a holistic understanding of their organization's goals and the broader industry landscape. By aligning project objectives with organizational strategy, you position yourself as a visionary leader. This alignment enables you to articulate a compelling narrative that resonates with both your team and stakeholders, driving collective effort toward common goals.

As a project manager, utilize the approach of an internal entrepreneur (intrapreneur) by proactively identifying and seizing new opportunities within your project, program, or wider business portfolio. Champion innovative solutions that align with the project's strategic goals, and leverage your entrepreneurial mindset to drive progress and create value. By demonstrating initiative and a forward-thinking approach, you build credibility and influence as a visionary leader who can navigate and shape the success of your project or program.

****Enhance Your Executive Presence and Impact****

Executive presence is a blend of confidence, decisiveness, and empathy. It's about how you carry yourself, how you communicate, and how you make others feel. To enhance your presence:

- Communicate Clearly: Use concise and impactful language.
- Listen Actively: Show genuine interest in others' perspectives.
- Demonstrate Confidence: Make decisions decisively and stand by them.

These attributes not only boost your credibility but also foster trust and respect, thus further amplifying your influence.

****Executing Through Inspirational Leadership****

Inspirational leadership is about more than setting a vision; it's about energizing and empowering your team to achieve it. By embodying the values and enthusiasm you wish to see, you create a ripple effect of motivation. Share success stories, celebrate milestones, and provide constructive feedback. When your team sees your passion and commitment, they are more likely to emulate these qualities, driving collective success.

Navigate the Path to Greater Leadership Influence

The journey to greater leadership influence involves continuous learning and adaptation. Embrace feedback, seek mentorship, and invest in professional development. Build networks both within and

outside your immediate organization to gain diverse perspectives. This proactive approach not only broadens your understanding but also increases your visibility and influence.

Actionable Tips to Implement on Projects Now

Start by practicing active listening in every interaction. Pay full attention, acknowledge contributions, and ask insightful questions. This simple yet powerful practice will enhance your relationships, foster a collaborative environment, and significantly boost your influence.

Here are some further invaluable ways you can immediately implement executive-level skills in your day-to-day interactions:

- 1. Delegate Effectively:** Identify routine tasks that can be delegated to trusted team members. Empower them with clear instructions and the authority to make decisions. This not only develops their skills but also frees you to focus on strategic planning and problem-solving.
- 2. Align Project Goals with Organizational Strategy:** Regularly review your project's objectives to ensure they align with the broader goals of the organization. Communicate this alignment to your team and stakeholders to demonstrate the strategic importance of your work, enhancing your influence and securing their support.
- 3. Cultivate a Visionary Mindset:** Start each day by identifying potential challenges and opportunities that could impact your project. Develop and share innovative solutions and proactive strategies with your team. Set out clearly your 'mission-critical' activities. This forward-thinking approach will position you as a strategic leader and enhance your team's confidence in your leadership.
- 4. Enhance Your Executive Presence:** Practice concise and impactful communication in your meetings. Prepare key points in advance and deliver them with confidence. Listen actively and respond thoughtfully to questions and feedback, demonstrating empathy and decisiveness.
- 5. Foster a Culture of Innovation:** Encourage your team to think creatively and propose new ideas. Allocate time in team meetings for brainstorming sessions and recognize innovative contributions. This will not only drive project success but also build a motivated and engaged team.
- 6. Celebrate Milestones and Successes:** Regularly acknowledge and celebrate project milestones and individual contributions. This practice boosts team morale, reinforces positive behavior, and fosters a culture of appreciation and high performance.
- 7. Seek and Act on Feedback:** Regularly ask for feedback from your team and stakeholders on your leadership and project management practices. Use this feedback to make continuous improvements, demonstrating your commitment to personal and professional growth.

Leveraging executive skills in project management is about transitioning from doing to thinking, from directing to inspiring. By cultivating strategic influence, enhancing executive presence, and leading with inspiration, you can effectively navigate the complexities of project management with confidence and

achieve extraordinary results that will impact your career far beyond your immediate project mandate.

Embrace these principles and watch your leadership influence soar.

For more great insights on developing the core skills to help your PM career reach to new heights, check out our [resources page](#) and free in-house project coaching.