

# The Unseen Partner in Project Success: How a Great Spouse Elevates Your Leadership

May 20, 2025



**Senior project practitioners navigate a complex landscape of stakeholders, timelines, and high-stakes deliverables. While their technical prowess and leadership skills are paramount, a less visible yet equally influential factor can significantly impact their ability to perform, thrive, and lead effectively: their spouse.**

It is a somewhat controversial view. However, the parallels drawn from the corporate world, offer profound insights. And it would be somewhat remiss of us not to explore this issue further.

Consider Kevin Systrom, Instagram's co-founder, whose wife, Nicole, provided a user-centric suggestion that fundamentally shaped the platform's success. Similarly, Lowe's CEO Marvin Ellison values his wife's input on critical business decisions. These examples highlight a crucial truth for senior project leaders: **valuable perspectives and support often come from outside the immediate professional sphere, and our closest personal relationships are a rich source of both.**

Drawing inspiration from research on CEOs, which reveals the subtle yet significant influence of a spouse's characteristics on leadership decisions, we can extrapolate powerful takeaways for senior project practitioners:

**Actionable Insights for Senior Project Practitioners:**

1. **Cultivate a Strong “Home Base” for Sustained Performance:** Just as a stable home life provides a foundation for effective corporate leadership, a supportive spouse creates a crucial sanctuary for senior project practitioners. The intense pressures of managing complex projects demand periods of genuine rest and rejuvenation. A harmonious home environment, facilitated by a supportive partner, enables the sustained mental and emotional energy required for high-level performance and strategic thinking. *This mirrors the understanding that CEOs rely on a stable personal life to navigate the demands of their roles.*
2. **Seek “External Stakeholder” Perspectives from Your Spouse:** The anecdote of Nicole Systrom’s user-centric feedback resonates strongly with the need for project managers to consider diverse stakeholder viewpoints. A spouse, often removed from the project’s intricacies and internal dynamics, can offer a uniquely unbiased and user-like perspective on project goals, communication, and potential impacts. Senior project leaders can benefit from actively seeking their spouse’s “layman’s terms” understanding and feedback. *This echoes the value CEOs place on their spouses’ insights into real-world implications.*
3. **Utilize Your Spouse as a Strategic Sounding Board:** Senior project practitioners frequently engage in high-level strategic planning and problem-solving. A trusted spouse can serve as a confidential and objective sounding board, allowing leaders to articulate complex challenges and explore potential solutions without the constraints of professional hierarchies or project sensitivities. This mirrors how CEOs value their spouses’ input on significant business decisions.
4. **Build Resilience Through Unwavering Personal Support:** The inevitable challenges and setbacks in complex projects can test even the most seasoned leaders. A supportive spouse provides crucial emotional ballast, bolstering confidence and resilience in the face of adversity. Knowing they have strong personal support enables senior project practitioners to navigate crises more effectively and maintain a positive leadership stance. *This aligns with the understanding that a CEO’s personal support system influences their ability to handle corporate pressures.*
5. **Model and Foster Work-Life Integration within Your Teams:** Senior project leaders set the tone for their teams. By actively working with their spouses to achieve a healthy work-life integration in their own lives, they can model the importance of this balance for their team members. A supportive spouse who understands the demands of project management can be instrumental in achieving this. *This reflects the broader understanding that a leader’s personal values often permeate the organizational culture.*
6. **Recognize the Indirect Networking Benefits:** While not the primary focus, a spouse’s social connections can occasionally lead to unexpected professional opportunities or insights. Senior project practitioners should be open to these indirect networking benefits that can arise from their spouse’s interactions. *This is a subtle parallel to how a CEO’s broader network can be influenced by their spouse’s connections.*
7. **Leverage Practical Spousal Support to Enhance Efficiency:** Just as a CEO might rely on their spouse for managing personal affairs, senior project practitioners can benefit from a supportive partner who manages the home front effectively, freeing up valuable time and mental energy to focus on project demands. This practical support contributes directly to professional efficiency.

8. **Cultivate Emotional Intelligence Through Strong Personal Relationships:** The empathy, communication skills, and overall emotional intelligence honed in a strong spousal relationship are directly transferable to effective project leadership and stakeholder management. Senior practitioners who invest in their personal relationships often find themselves better equipped to navigate the human dynamics of complex projects.

For senior project practitioners, achieving consistent success goes beyond mastering methodologies and managing teams. By recognizing the profound influence of their closest personal relationship, particularly with their spouse, they can unlock a powerful source of support, perspective, and resilience. Just as CEOs benefit from the insights and stability provided by their partners, senior project leaders can leverage this crucial dynamic to elevate their leadership, enhance their performance, and ultimately drive greater project success. The lessons from the corporate world serve as a compelling reminder: the strength we draw from home can be a significant, albeit often unseen, driver of our professional achievements.

**This article was based on an original blog by *Constantinos Antoniou* an Associate Professor of Finance and Behavioural Science at Warwick Business School. He teaches Behavioural Finance: Psychology and Finance Decisions on the *Executive MBA* and the *Executive MBA (London)*. He also teaches Behavioural Finance on a range of Master's programmes.**

*You can read the original version [here](#) and view the great accompanying podcast. Exploring how understanding behavioral science can help us all to manage our careers, money and relationships better.*