Mighty Guides

WHAT IT EXECS WANT MOST FROM PROJECT MANAGERS

Eight C-Level Executives Reveal Their Preferred Best Practices

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Is it going too far to say that all our futures are in the hands of project managers? After all, the PMs of the world are the ones who turn ideas into reality. It may not be fair to blame everything on PMs, but certainly the practice of project management is critical. And, it is changing.

We see how globalization and technology are changing the way things get done, especially when it comes to IT implementations. Complexity grows with widely dispersed teams and stakeholders; there's a faster pace, with demands that require tighter integration between project management and business strategy. Technology has transformed visibility. Even so, projects still need to get done, decisions must be made, deadlines met, costs managed, and obstacles overcome. What skills do today's PMs need to be successful in this fluid, fast-paced business environment?

To find an answer, Workfront has generously sponsored our outreach to seven IT executives with the following question:

Please share two or three best practices you want/expect your project managers to follow to increase visibility, ensure timeliness, improve collaboration, manage resources, and cut costs.

We specifically sought executives who have a breadth of experience representing a range of industry sectors. In speaking with these IT executives, we found that although there are common threads, such as the growing importance of communicating well at all levels and the need to understand business drivers, there are also unique insights. These executives reveal what they expect from their PMs and what they look for when hiring based on their years of personal experience.

I found these essays both enjoyable and enlightening. I believe that anyone responsible for project delivery will gain by reading these essays.

Mighty Guides

Mighty Guides make you stronger.

These authoritative and diverse guides provide a full view of a topic. They help you explore, compare, and contrast a variety of viewpoints so that you can determine what will work best for you. Reading a Mighty Guide is kind of like having your own team of experts. Each heartfelt and sincere piece of advice in this guide sits right next to the contributor's name, biography, and links so that you can learn more about their work. This background information gives you the proper context for each expert's independent perspective.

Credible advice from top experts helps you make strong decisions. Strong decisions make you mighty.

All the best,
David Rogelberg
Editor

MATT DEDRICK

Chief Information Officer, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Matt Dedrick is an IT leader who focuses on business processes, data, and outcomes. He has 25 years of experience in engineering and IT, including operations engineering, app development, project management, consulting and various leadership roles in multiple industries. In Matt's current role as DHS CIO, he provides leadership for the enterprise PMO and all central technology functions, supporting more than 6,100 employees who provide services ranging from Medicaid coverage to mental health, long-term care to secure treatment institutions.

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When I consider what I expect from project managers (PMs) in my organization, I like to focus more on the practices that PMs learn through observation and mentoring than on what they learn by making mistakes. For PMs to use best practices effectively, they need a solid understanding of project management methodology, but experience is what enables them to internalize those principles and apply them to the different projects they manage.

A lot of what I tell PMs falls under the high-level principle of setting, managing, and meeting expectations. That's often easier said than done, but the following best practices will help PMs be successful:

- **Begin with the end in mind.** A PM must have a vision in mind for the outcome of a project, and everyone must agree on this vision. The PM's job is to get all the stakeholders and the project sponsor to agree, and this agreement must come at the beginning of the project. If the project begins without a vision, and then stalls, it's much more difficult to come back at that point and set expectations for what needs to be done, who will be involved, and the costs and benefits. »»

I like to focus more on the practices that PMs learn through observation and mentoring than on what they learn by making mistakes.

- **Build relationships.** I expect PMs to build good relationships with everyone involved in a project: This is critical to success. PMs need to know the team members and stakeholders. They must understand what their skills are, their motivations, their business needs, and whatever barriers and baggage they might bring with them. They also need to know their sponsors and any key decision makers and understand their internal drivers. I expect PMs to have the courage to engage in difficult conversations with a sponsor about the health of the project or the validity of the strategy, and I expect PMs to build credibility with their team and stakeholders.

- **Apply the appropriate level of governance to the project.** PMs need to understand all the components of project governance well enough that they can implement them but also how to apply them without overkill. Too much administrative overhead can be just as detrimental to a project as not having enough. Transparency and accountability are the key components of governance. The governance structure should empower the PM and the project team but must also provide an escalation path so that essential information gets to the appropriate decision makers. 〉〉〉

> " *None of the other components I've described can be successful without effective communication.* "

- **Adapt the project management methodology to the project's needs.** A project management methodology is a big bucket of tools, most of which are not necessary for every project. I expect a PM to have conversations early in a project to ensure understanding of and agreement on sponsor and stakeholder expectations. Then, the PM can decide which artifacts, processes, and forms of communication are needed. PMs must be able to do at least—and only—what's necessary.

- **Communicate effectively.** None of the other principles I've described can be successful without effective communication. I expect PMs to understand all their audiences, all their communication channels, communication styles, and business needs. They need to use language that is meaningful to the audience they are speaking to, whether they are talking to technical people, business managers, or financial managers.

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 The PM's job is to get all the stakeholders and the project sponsor to agree on a vision for the project outcome at the beginning of the project.

2 PMs must build good relationships with everyone involved in a project. They need to understand everyone's needs and what they bring to the table. PMs must also establish their own credibility.

3 PMs must understand all the components of project governance well enough that they can implement them without overkill.

4 PMs should do at least—and only— what's necessary.

5 PMs must communicate effectively to all audiences using appropriate communication channels and communication styles. They should understand the business needs of their audiences.

JAY HEMMADY

Chief Information Officer, OIA Global

Jay Hemmady is a business-minded technology executive who has significantly improved revenue, market share, and competitive standing by introducing new products, reducing cycle times, and driving down costs. Jay is VP/CIO at OIA Global, a distribution, logistics, and packaging company based in Portland, Oregon. Prior to this, Jay served as VP/CTO/CIO at various organizations in the transportation/logistics, discount securities brokerage, and credit card sectors. Jay holds an MBA in finance and a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

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Over the years, I have found that several best practices make project managers (PMs) more effective in their jobs, which in turn helps enable successful project completion. It's important to keep in mind that success isn't measured by how well a PM conducts a project; it's measured by project completion. Here are the best practices I recommend:

- **Be flexible about your project management methodology.** Often, PMs come to the table with a fixed methodology. They are extremely excited by that methodology, and they have a tendency to become almost ideologically biased toward it over any other, whether its Waterfall or Agile or a particular approach to Agile. However, after years of experience with multitudes of projects, I believe that it's best for a PM to approach each project with an open mind about which methodology is appropriate for that project. Rather than force a methodology, I expect PMs to decide what would be best given the project, the company, the people, and the culture, and then be flexible in crafting a unique methodology that will result in a successful project.

- **Focus on the people.** One of the most important best practices for PMs is communicating effectively with the people involved in a project, which means being clear and direct in getting what they need from team members and project stakeholders. I also expect PMs to have a deep appreciation for what's not said and how people feel. Often, silent behaviors give a PM great insight into whether things are going well and what things are not going well. It's important to be able to "work the room." ≫

> " *I expect PMs to decide what would be best given the project, the company, the people, and the culture.* "

- **Have diversified domain knowledge.** I like to see PMs who have experience working with a variety of project types and methodologies because such breadth of experience helps a good PM appreciate the nuances of a complex project and recognize that he or she will never have all the answers. This is important, because projects often hit snags, and a broadly experienced PM who has experience in a variety of domains is in a better positon to find creative paths around obstacles.

- **Work out loud.** *Working out loud* means that people use tools to broadcast their progress regularly—what they're working on and the impact they're having as they work toward a goal. I expect PMs to create and encourage an environment of continuous communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. As a team member, I want to be able to scroll up a few pages and bingo, something that happened yesterday is available to me. In this way, I'm learning from my peers and continually increasing my knowledge. As a PM, I can see what's happening in my project, but I also become more of an expert in my field. Or, I can see and learn about things happening outside my immediate domain, which gives me a broader perspective. As an executive, I can use the same tool to see project status updates.

> *I expect PMs to create and encourage an environment of continuous communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.*

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1. Avoid a rigid project methodology mindset. Be flexible about crafting the methodology that will be most likely result in a successful project.

2. Communicate clearly and directly with team members and project stakeholders, but also pay attention to what's not said.

3. PMs should diversify their domain experience and specialties to develop the creative skills they need to manage more challenging projects.

4. PMs must create and encourage an environment of working out loud in which there is continuous communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

TRISH TORIZZO

Divisional Chief Information Officer, Charles River Laboratories

Trish Torizzo has more than 20 years of IT experience. Her technical background combined with a strong business background makes her a strong leader. Trish has experience with emerging markets and international business expansion programs, large-scale system integrations, business transformations, data analytics strategy development, and more. Trish is the divisional CIO at Boston-based Charles River Laboratories.

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The core purpose of a project manager (PM) is to ensure successful project completion (and by *successful*, I mean projects that meet their operational, budgetary, and schedule expectations). Several practices and attitudes can tell me whether a PM will manage his her or projects successfully. The most important of these are:

- PM's need to see themselves as business owners, and their business is the project they're managing. This means that they have to design the operating model, the structure, and the team for the project. They are responsible for recruiting talent and maintaining the right competencies on the team. They have to work with stakeholders and sponsors to create the right mission statement and strategy, and they have to keep that strategy alive for the team all the time, every day, reminding them why they're there. That's their responsibility. So, the overarching best practice is more like a PM's attitude toward the work. The PM has to recognize that he or she is like a business owner in charge of and ultimately responsible for everything.

- People need to develop a breadth of project experience before taking on the role of PM. To do this, they must live through multiple project life cycles, serving in a variety of roles. The practical skills they develop in this way enable them to see what's not on the page and what's missing from a process when they become PMs themselves. This is an essential skill for a good PM. 〉〉〉

> "PM's need to see themselves as business owners, and their business is the project they're managing.

- I've found that one of the most important best practices PMs can adopt is using a common artifact to communicate project health up and down the hierarchy of sponsors, stakeholders, and team members. This practice is extremely important. So many projects bog down when executive sponsors and high-level decision makers are unable to see the whole project through lists of issues and details presented in reports. People sometimes think that they need different kinds of reports for every audience, and they end up maintaining way too many reports and losing sight of the bigger vision or the most important issues. I solve this problem by requiring every PM to use a standard, simple, five-slide deck for every status report and presentation. That same deck is used by the change manager, the data person, the solution person, the technology person, and every other leader on the team. Those leaders provide their readouts to the PM, who then knows where everything stands without having to pursue each person on the team for status information. The PM then uses that deck to consolidate the information into a deck that he or she uses to report to the program director. The program director uses that deck to further consolidate essential information for a higher-level executive. In this way, each report contains issues relevant to the level or person who needs them, and those issues appear in the context of the overall project. Everyone involved in the project sees the same dashboard view. ⟫

> " *PMs should be using a common artifact to communicate project health up and down the hierarchy of sponsors, stakeholders, and team members.* "

One of the first things I do before even starting a project is to build these artifacts so that right out of the gate, PMs see the questions and issues they need to resolve. At first, the number of outstanding issues is high. As the project progresses, the number of unresolved issues declines, and this decline becomes clear in the reports people see at every level of the project. PMs must be disciplined about sticking with the standard communication artifacts. ■

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 PMs are ultimately responsible for everything that happens in their project.

2 PMs should live through multiple project life cycles in a variety of roles before they become a PM so that they can see what's not on the page and what's missing from a process when they do become a PM.

3 PMs must be disciplined about creating and sticking with one standard artifact for communicating project health up and down the hierarchy of sponsors, stakeholders, and team members.

DENISE HATZIDAKIS

Chief Technology Officer, ChenTech, a ChenMed Company

Denise Hatzidakis is a respected IT executive whose background combines entrepreneurial instinct, in-depth technical skills, and enterprise experience (IBM, Deutsche Bank, Premier Healthcare). She has a strong reputation for developing, leading, and motivating cross-functional teams at all levels. With more than 20 years in technology as a developer, architect, and leader, Denise is a proven senior technology leader recognized for establishing technical vision and leading cross-functional teams. She has a solid record of delivering complex, high-risk, innovative projects.

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Being agile, both in the methodologies you use to manage a process and the mindset you need to make Agile happen, is changing the role of the traditional Project Management Office (PMO). With self-organizing teams, scrum boards anyone in the organization can see at any time, and regular stand-ups where people share information and set priorities, the idea of a PMO running around collecting everyone's status, and then reporting it makes little sense. Visibility is becoming an innate part of the process.

Still, scrum masters or project managers (PMs) have a role to play, and with that role comes certain expectations. As a chief technology officer, my expectations coincide with what I need to see to know that we are successfully serving business objectives because at the end of the day, the IT organization is a service organization that exists for the benefit of the business. Here are the things I expect from my organization:

- I need total enterprise visibility. To achieve that, I rely on the PM to be my single source of truth for what's really going on in his or her portfolio. That means that I need someone who can say, 'They're saying they're ready, but I'm not seeing it. They don't want to do this or that or the other thing." I expect that person to have an objective view, to be someone who's totally in the weeds on details but who can step back and take a holistic view.

- I expect PMs to have excellent people skills because they are likely involved in cross-team or cross-group collaboration. They need to provide leadership by influence. Everything IT does affects broader business operations, which means that our work is highly collaborative. PMs are not command and control—they don't own their collaborative resources—but they need to support these resources to get done whatever the team needs to get done. 〉〉

> *I need total enterprise visibility. To achieve that, I rely on the PM to be my single source of truth for what's really going on in his or her portfolio.*

- I need PMs with enough skills to understand what we're trying to accomplish, who can see how business priorities relate to the project portfolio and work with teams, stakeholders, and resources to align the work to business priorities. They need to have a deep understanding of what the project is about. They don't have to know, for example, how to write code, but they need to be able to sniff out something that doesn't smell right. This skill comes from logical, objective thinking—being able to look at the scrum boards and see that things aren't adding up. If a PM lacks that skill, all he or she can do is fall back on a checklist of things that have or have not been done, which is closer to the way the traditional PMO operates. That does not help me. That doesn't give me the visibility I need.

- I expect my PMs to inspect and adapt. I need them not just to manage projects but to help facilitate the organization's growth, maturity, and ability to adapt so that the project work we do becomes totally integrated with the business.

An agile process that adopts skill sets and practices appropriate for the work and the organization's culture can deliver this kind of visibility and accountability. That's why the traditional role of the PMO is changing. What I really need from a PMO is to not have one.

> " I need PMs with enough skills to understand what we're trying to accomplish, who can see how business priorities relate to the project portfolio and work with teams, stakeholders, and resources to align the work to business priorities. "

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 Select a PM who has an objective view, someone who can get totally in the weeds on details but who can step back and take a holistic view.

2 Select PMs who have excellent people skills, who can build cross-team or cross-group collaboration, and who can provide leadership by influence.

3 Select PMs who can develop a deep understanding of what the project is about and who can sniff out something that doesn't smell right.

4 Select PMs not just to manage projects but to facilitate the organization's growth and ability to adapt so that the project work becomes totally integrated with the business.

ELY GARCIA

Chief Technology Officer, Cisneros

Ely Garcia is an IT executive with significant experience in IT strategy, governance, business continuity, infrastructure, and operations. She is a strategic problem solver practiced in discovering solutions to tough challenges, bridging gaps between disparate groups, and helping organizations sustain and extend their corporate objectives. Ely is a passionate team manager with an ability to attract, retain, and strengthen top talent. She is an adaptable professional willing to take on new challenges and lead mission-critical initiatives.

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In my role as chief information officer, I oversee IT operations for our corporate office and the different business divisions. Our three main areas of business focus are media, real estate, and interactive divisions, but we also have a strong social responsibility component that extends across all divisions and is fundamental to the company. We are a global company, as well, so we have geographically dispersed project managers (PMs), teams, and stakeholders. With so many different activities happening in so many places, we rely on several cloud-based tools to gain the project oversight and visibility we need. In fact, we depend on these technologies for status reporting through dashboards, meetings, and project communications. For us, the most important thing is transparency, and everyone uses the same set of tools to share information and see where everything is at any given time. I don't have to go to my PMs to ask questions: If they're doing their jobs correctly, I can get everything I need online, any time.

This highly dispersed, electronically connected project environment is one in which PMs need to be able to do certain things well:

- The PM's primary function is to assemble the resources for a project and clearly define everybody's role so that every unit working on a project knows what information it must feed into the tools we use. There's often a ramp-up period during which PMs should follow up with everyone to make sure they're providing their information. Pretty quickly, however, it becomes second nature because they all rely on the information they're seeing in the dashboards to find out about different aspects of the project and what's coming that will affect them. The system itself becomes a mechanism for sustaining status reporting because it's visible to everyone and people don't want to look like they're not doing their part. 〉〉〉

> *I don't have to go to my PMs to ask questions: If they're doing their jobs correctly, I can get everything I need online, any time.*

PMs NEED TO USE TOOLS AS EXTENSIONS OF THEMSELVES

- PMs must have a hands-on, day to day relationship with the project. They are not there simply to observe project activity. They must actively facilitate the work by supporting everyone involved.

- I look for PMs who have experienced many different types of situations. They must be good generalists but also have experience working with specialists.

- PMs must be flexible. Sometimes, rigidity gets in the way and causes friction. PMs need to recognize that certain situations are out of their control, and they must figure out how to work around those things.

We work using agile methodologies in which we depend heavily on technology to track projects and share information. Whatever tool we need to use to communicate, we use it.

> " *The PM's primary function is to assemble the resources for a project and clearly define everybody's role so that every unit working on a project knows what information it must feed into the tools we use.* "

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 PMs should be able to see how collaboration and project management tools become extensions of themselves.

2 PMs need to be project facilitators.

3 PMs need to recognize that certain situations are out of their control. They must be adept at figuring out how to work around those situations.

AARON GETTE

Chief Information Officer, The Bay Club Company

A proven thought leader and influential IT professional with more than 19 years of experience, Aaron Gette has worked with start-ups and Fortune 500 companies in the California Bay Area, delivering CIO- and CTO-level leadership. Aaron's ability to build and manage high-functioning teams has led to the successful growth of companies, converting traditional IT infrastructure into revenue-generating powerhouses. Aaron is effectively redefining the culture of IT and delivering a business-minded IT team to drive The Bay Club's growth into new, affluent markets.

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I have managed distributed workforces and teams located all over the world. To achieve the ideal goals of delivering what's expected on time and maybe even beating expectations, I have come to look for certain characteristics and methodologies from the project managers (PMs) I hire. These characteristics fall into three areas:

- **Agile methodology.** I believe it's incredibly important that PMs have a good understanding of Agile methodology, which works well for software development but can also be applied to many other processes. In today's world, PMs need be able to effectively bring those pieces together. They need to understand the true scope of the work and what it will take to manage the project effectively. I don't believe in forcing PMs into any specific tool set, but I absolutely expect them to bring a set of skills to the table and be sensitive to the project environment so that they can apply a level of management engagement that is right for the project and the culture of the organization. This adaptability can mean different things in a larger organization, where layers of bureaucracy make it difficult to get stakeholder attention, compared with smaller organizations that can be overwhelmed by management overhead. PMs must be able to apply different pieces of the methodologies they know and understand to adequately support the project within that project's business context. »

> " *I don't believe in forcing PMs into any specific tool set, but I absolutely expect them to bring a set of skills to the table.* "

- **Absolute communication.** PMs must be excellent communicators, whether they're communicating face-to-face or in writing. The must make sense to establish credibility within the team and with stakeholders. They can't be afraid to step on people's toes to get to the heart of a blocking issue. I expect PMs to show that they're in charge, that they're here to get stuff done, that ultimately their goal is to make everyone's life easier. If they get the level of access and insight they need to get things done, everybody wins. To be successful, it's important for a PM to get all the stakeholders to that same mind set.

- **Transparency throughout the process.** An essential part of communicating effectively and establishing credibility is being totally open and honest. PMs have to keep all the pieces in front of them and understand how things come together. When there's an obstacle, I expect PMs to be clear about saying that something isn't working and a change needs to be made. They need to build trust quickly. People can deal with adversity, but they certainly can't deal with failure because a PM is not willing to be open and transparent about what's happening in a project. ⟫

> "*I believe that we can learn much more from failing than from success and that ultimately that knowledge creates better PMs.*"

One other point to keep in mind: If PMs are going to fail, they should fail quickly and learn from the experience. I expect PMs to take the time to conduct root cause analysis, to really understand what led to a failure and how to prevent it from happening again. They need to dig into it to see what flags or signals they should have been looking for so they can make the right corrections and avoid being in the same place in the future. I believe that we can learn much more from failing than from success and that ultimately that knowledge creates better PMs. ■

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 PMs must have a good understanding of the Agile methodology how to apply different pieces of that methodology to adequately support a project within its business context.

2 PMs must be clear communicators to be credible within the team and with stakeholders. They can't be afraid to step on people's toes to get to the heart of a blocking issue.

3 PMs have to keep all the pieces in front of them and understand how things come together, and they must be totally open and honest.

4 Good PMs will take the time to conduct root cause analysis, to really understand what led to a failure and how to prevent it from happening again.

RODRIGO GONZALEZ HERMOSILLO

Chief Information Officer, Softtek

Born in Mexico with a passion for science and mathematics, Rodrigo Gonzalez Hermosillo worked for General Electric as enterprise architect. Since 2003, Rodrigo has been leading multiple Softtek areas, from enterprise architecture to global operations of Fortune 500 accounts, and has successfully helped Softtek customers improve their IT operations and services. For the past five years, Rodrigo served as SVP for U.S. and Canada Operations. In 2016, Rodrigo was appointed CIO and leads Softtek's internal digital transformation.

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To better understand the qualities I look for in a project manager (PM), I must first describe my perspective on what makes projects successful. Success is based on three fundamental principles: (1) You can't improve what you can't measure; (2) metrics drive behavior; and (3) bad news on time is good news. Here's how these governing principles relate to good PMs:

- **You can't improve what you can't measure.** As a chief information officer (CIO), I have to deliver on many projects at the same time. Each business area has tons of requirements, all of them categorized as "urgent" or "important." The first thing I do with my managers and directors is establish clear, measurable goals for the projects we deliver. In working with the business to set those goals, many times "urgent" and "important" disappear. Once measurable goals are set, we need to ensure that we measure all work we do in a tool. My team needs to review metrics that tell something about the project. For example, a business unit may have too many people in its system, or it may have applications that nobody uses but it continues to support, or there are other solutions the business could use that would reduce requests to the IT team. Our work is based on metrics. For that reason, I would rather have a PM who's a great metrics analyst than a technology guru. Metrics can show the business how much its projects really cost so that it can decide whether those requests are really worth it.

- **Metrics drive behavior.** Now that we're measuring, we have to be sure the team acts on the metrics, which involves setting expectations based on those metrics. I remember a case with a client where the metric was set to "reduce tickets for IT." That was a good goal, but it created two behaviors: Users didn't create a ticket but rather made "informal" job requests and users crammed as much work onto a single ticket as possible.

> " *I would rather have a PM who's a great metrics analyst than a technology guru.* "

The result was that work was hidden, not reduced. We helped the CIO at that company change the metric to "Improvements in productivity." We motivated the team to propose processes or tools that improved productivity and reduced nonvalue-added activities. That change reduced the number of tickets without hiding work. Defining the right metrics isn't a simple task. My PMs understand that to achieve certain behaviors, they need to understand the behavior they want to generate, and then define the metrics that will enable it.

- **Bad news on time is good news.** As a service provider, IT must deliver under tight timelines, minimal budgets, and demanding users. Many times, things may not go as planned. My PMs are rewarded for their openness when things go wrong. By raising an issue with me, we can adjust things to provide additional support and open a conversation with the user or client to discuss possible options in the timeline. We have to work in partnership with business users, being open about what we're doing, the risks involved, and what to do in case something needs to change.

When I'm hiring PMs, I'm most interested in their business understanding. Then, I look at their background in statistics and probability. It's easier to teach technology to somebody with a business background than to teach business to a tech person, so for a PM position, I always focus more on the applicant's business background than his or her tech experience.

> "
> *It's easier to teach technology to somebody with a business background than to teach business to a tech person.*
> "

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 Select PMs who can work with stakeholders to establish metrics and measurable goals that have a real impact on the business.

2 Select PMs who understand that to achieve certain behaviors, they need to understand the behavior they want to generate, and then define the metrics that will enable it.

3 Reward PMs for openness and escalating problems early, and work in partnership with business users, being open about what you're doing, the risks involved, and what to do in case something needs to change.

STEVE ZOBELL

Chief Product & Technology Officer, Workfront

As Chief Product & Technology Officer for Workfront, Steve leads the Workfront engineering and platform hosting and operations organizations as they develop the company's purpose-built solutions for IT and marketing teams. He also works closely with the Workfront product and services teams to ensure that the technology platform is evolving to meet customer and market needs. Prior to Workfront, Steve was the Chief Product and Technology Officer at ADP AdvancedMD where his contributions included the launch of the AdvancedMD iPad and iPhone mobile solutions, and the development of the AdvancedInsight business intelligence tools. During the course of his career, Steve has also been involved in the development of more than 25 critically acclaimed, award-winning, commercial software products.

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As IT business processes have become more complex in today's rapid-paced workplace, it turns out that business executives have less visibility than ever before. It's harder to have broad insight into the work that is being completed by the employees. I've been fortunate enough to oversee a lot successful projects, but I've also seen my fair share of unsuccessful ones, and the common denominator for the latter was always a lack of end-to-end visibility into what was going on with those projects in real-time. I know that's a tall order for most IT organizations as business processes now span any number of applications, databases and systems. And let me tell you, it's a big challenge to cobble together data from multiple tools in order to make critical decisions and have time for thoughtful strategy. This, in turn, leads to missed deadlines and ballooning budgets. So how to get all of this under control without walking blind?

When it comes to working with project managers, there is one thing I always ask of them: **begin with the end in mind**. This means mapping out the end point (project goals, results) and working backwards by defining ways that will successfully take them to that end point. A big part of that is by focusing on the outcomes of the project and not just the the outputs. Far too often the focus is on the deliveries or outputs rather than the measurable outcomes for the customer or stakeholder of the project. By focusing on the end goal right from the start they will be able to see the big picture, and recognize priorities and requirements needed to ensure project success.

> *When it comes to working with project managers, there is one thing I always ask of them:* **begin with the end in mind.**

Here are best practices I'd like my project managers to follow while going through this process:

- **Define the scope of the project**
Creating a completely detailed project scope approved by all stakeholders is a necessity. The scope should include interim milestones, with deliverable dates and an approved budget that represents all time involved. If the initial project outline has enough detail, everyone's expectations are set upfront and it's much easier for me to make far-reaching decisions that affect the project and the business overall.

- **Identify and use one system**
Disconnected tools can easily lead to chaos in project management. For example, one person can use Excel spreadsheets to input project details, then some other vital information may be exchanged via email. It becomes almost impossible to piece together information about projects. If I am to make informed decisions about the strategy which will push business forward, then I need to have easy access to all the data, critical path progress, and any project risks. For that reason, I like to see all this information stored in one central location and this is what I ask project managers to do. Using a single platform, such as work management software, I don't lose time searching for what I need.

- **Provide meaningful reports**
Having access to correct reports is especially important for me because they give me a bird's-eye or a granular view on how my department is doing. Without access to the right data points, it's much harder for me to see what the current resource demand is, to justify additional headcount or forecast when the demand is going to change. Lack of this knowledge can easily result in project delays or increased costs. The best way to avoid this is to generate real-time reports from the central system used for project management. No more guess work—just factual data available anytime. ⟫

> "
> *If I want to share my feedback or any other project related information, I want to do it in the context of that project, and not use separate channels for it. And I want my project managers to do the same.*
> "

- **Communicate openly**
  Communication is the foundation of any relationship, and it's no different in a professional environment. Whether you work on a smaller ad hoc task or a complicated project, keeping all related communication within this task or project is vital. If I want to share my feedback or any other project related information, I want to do it in the context of that project, and not use separate channels for it. And I want my project managers to do the same. This way communication is kept consistent, there is no guessing who said or approved what, and everyone has additional layer of visibility across the whole project or task.

- **Close the loop**
  While it is important to regularly communicate the desired outcomes throughout the project, you must realize that the project is not done once the deliverables are complete. You must be reporting on if the ending actions, outputs, deliverables are actually yielding the outcomes that are expected upon completion. Depending on the size and scope of the project, you could be reporting on the progress of the outcomes for several months after the completion of the deliverables.

Project management is by no means a straightforward task. But when you envision what you would like to see at the end, it makes it so much easier to plan it and ultimately achieve it. If IT project managers can communicate effectively with their teams and executives, use accurate reporting to track progress, and encourage everyone to equally adopt the same software solutions, I am sure everyone will enjoy greater visibility into workflows and ensure higher on-time delivery rates for their projects.

KEY ACTION ITEMS

1 Project managers should map out the end point (project goals, results) and work backwards by defining ways that will successfully take them to that end point.

2 Project managers should define project scope upfront to avoid any future confusion among stakeholders.

3 Project managers need to communicate effectively with their teams and executives in order to ensure better visibility into their projects.

4 Project managers need to close the loop by reporting to the stakeholders on the success of achieving the outcomes once the outputs have been delivered.
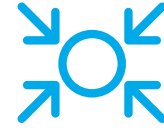
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