

## Ten Top Tips for Managing Project Teams

Project management techniques and methodologies are important to ensure clarity and focus when establishing your project, but it's how well the people at the centre of the project work together that can have a dramatic impact on its overall success. Here are ten tips that will help you improve the effectiveness of the project team you are responsible for establishing and managing:

- 1. *Establish a balanced team:*** by identifying project team members with both the right technical expertise as well as a broad spectrum of communication and thinking styles. This balance can be identified through past questionnaires that potential project team members may have taken, e.g. Belbin's Team Roles or M.B.T.I. Myers Briggs Type Indicator or your own observations. See our [Belbin team building](#) or [MBTI team building](#) pages for further information.
- 2. *Ensure clarity and "buy in" to the project objectives.*** Regardless of the seniority or experience level of the project team members, each person needs to be totally clear and committed to achieving the project objectives. Providing the team with an opportunity to raise concerns or issues early on in the project either publicly or in private with you should avoid any negative effects associated with lack of commitment. Any "vibes" or negative behaviours should be explored immediately to ensure the issue can be resolved. Getting your team involved at the early stages of the project planning will assist greatly.
- 3. *Ensure line management support.*** When selecting project team members from different departments it is critical to gain their line managers support and commitment to the project and the time the project member will need to allocate to project meetings, research and agreed actions. Identify with the line manager any potential areas or times of conflict with the team member's job or personal commitment.
- 4. *Establish a team code.*** At the first project team meeting draw on the group to identify the behaviours that will help the project team. This can be done simply by capturing 'expectations of the project leader' and 'expectations of each team member' onto flipchart paper. These can then be typed up and circulated to the team and used as a reminder at the start of each meeting. Any variances of these behaviours can then be constructively challenged referring back to the team code. For further information see the Ground Rules section within our tips for using [group facilitation techniques](#).
- 5. *Recognise the stages of team development.*** Research shows that all teams go through different stages of development to reach peak performance, and however skilled and experienced each team member is, the group dynamics will vary for each new team. You will need to adapt your leadership style (from a directive to consultative approach) to each of these stages to ensure you get the team quickly and effectively through the first three stages (forming, storming and norming) to ensure they are at maximum performance in the quickest possible time. See Stages of Team Development in our [high performance teams guide](#) for further information.
- 6. *Use a facilitator for critical meetings.*** A neutral facilitator to help the project team get under way or progress at a critical stage such as idea generation or decision-

making can help the project team immensely. Alternatively, develop your own skills at facilitating groups, to ensure you are getting the best from the project team. See our [tips on facilitating groups](#) for further assistance.

7. **Use all internal and external networks.** With the project team, establish early on in the project who else could help you with your project objectives e.g. to conduct research, view best practice, seek opinions and learn from past experiences. Look across the whole of the organisation before looking outside, as there may be others who have faced similar issues or want to join forces, as they would like to address the project objective. Suddenly your resources may have increased!
8. **Communicate with key stakeholders.** At the same time as you identify who can help you, consider who are your key influencers for this project i.e. project sponsor, project owner, key stakeholders, and plan your communication strategy to ensure you have their full commitment and support throughout the project.
9. **Plan how to celebrate the project team success.** Helping the team visualise success at the offset of the project whilst the objectives are still being defined, clarified or conveyed, will increase your success rate and make the project team members feel valued from the beginning and therefore more likely to respond well to future challenges that may lay ahead. Consider how you will celebrate the project success at the end of the project involving all key contributors as well as ensuring the project sponsor is present to thank the team personally.
10. **Review the team learning on a regular basis.** Timely, regular reviews scheduled into your project plan will ensure that the project team work in the most effective manner and will help develop the team spirit and ultimately their commitment to the project. Selecting some of the simple questions below as part of the learning review could help you and the project team:
  - What success have we achieved so far?
  - How well have we worked together so far?
  - How could we work more effectively during the rest of the project?
  - How could we improve our team working during the rest of the project?
  - What further support is needed to ensure this project is successful?
  - What contributions have particularly helped/hindered the project move forward successfully?

You may also find our following tips helpful:

- [High performance teams guide](#)
- [Tips for facilitating groups](#)
- [Group working techniques](#)
- [Tips for chairing meetings](#)
- [Meeting preparation checklist](#)
- [Managing energy in meetings](#)
- [Developing creativity](#)
- [How to delegate work](#)

### **About the Author**

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