Introduction

- A 2017 study conducted by the Project Management Institute (PMI®) known as Pulse of the Profession®, revealed that possessing hard skills alone is no longer sufficient in today's increasingly competitive job market.

- Hard skills in project management include creating work breakdown structures, a project budget, earned value assessments and critical path diagrams. Hard skills are technical in nature and involve the use of knowledge and tools to complete high-level tasks.

- "**Soft skills** are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, career attributes, social intelligence and emotional intelligence quotients among others that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills.

- The Collins English Dictionary defines the term "soft skills" as "desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude."

- Soft skills are "personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people"

Source: PMI, Wikipedia, Google

Soft Skills – A Short Vignette

Soft Skills in a Project Manager role

- Soft skills, sometimes known as "people skills," apply to all jobs in all industries, particularly leadership positions. They include the ability to communicate well, build trust and resolve conflicts.

- In a data-driven world, these skills have been somewhat de-emphasized. That's a mistake when it comes to project management, where a combination of soft and hard skills is necessary.

- The issue is of such importance that PMI has developed the Talent Triangle, a model for the ideal project manager skill set that includes a mixture of both hard and soft skills.

Source: PMI

Talent Triangle

Source: PMI

7 Essential Soft Skills that a Project Manager should possess

- 1. Leadership
- 2. Motivation
- 3. Communications
- 4. Conflict Management
- 5. Trust Building
- 6. Decision Making
- 7. Organization

Source: PMI

Leadership

- According to PMI's Pulse of the Profession survey, 32% of project management professionals consider both technical and leadership skills to be a high priority.

- As a leader, it is important to understand how teams work, and what the characteristics of a good team are. Teams are a constantly changing dynamic force in which objectives are discussed, ideas are assessed and decisions are made in an effort to reach previously set goals.

- Before working on a particular project, tasks and goals should be clearly defined and understood by everyone on the team. This, along with assigning tasks based on each team member's capabilities, is the responsibility of a leader.

Source: PMI

Leadership In Action...

Motivation

- Being able to motivate others is a core function of leadership and has become an essential skill for Project Managers.

- Motivation is known as the "will to act." Everyone has motivational forces inside them, and as a Project Manager it is important to understand what those are for each team member so as to tap into that and influence their behavior in a positive way.

- It is important for leaders to keep in mind that listening to and advising team members will likely go further than issuing declarations and expecting them to work.

- It is critical that team members understand the value associated with the project, i.e. "why" the project was formed and why they were assigned to it.

Source: PMI & Jonathan's wisdom

Communications

- Project Management is **90%** communications

- Poor communication undermines a project's success. Communicating clearly and openly is a necessity, but it's important to remember that these exchanges go both ways. Open and honest communication from top-level leadership helps result in the same communication and trust from all other members of the team.

- Transparent Project Managers will typically have team members who feel more comfortable sharing their concerns, issues and constructive suggestions.

- Listening aligns directly with good communication. Good listening skills allow project managers to learn about and engage with clients and team members. Mastering this skill creates a mutual trust among all parties involved.

- Listen more than you speak. Practice Active Listening. You were given two ears and one mouth for a reason.

Source: PMI & Jonathan's wisdom

When communications break down...

Conflict Management

- Implementing conflict resolution strategies helps make effective leadership easier during difficult moments for the team.

- Conflicts are inevitable, especially when managing a large group of people.

- Disagreements typically stem from competition to get a scarce resource, system downtime, communication gaps, personnel policies and unclear requirements, to name a few.

- When managed well, a conflicting situation has the potential to bring team members together and make them more focused on achieving the overall objectives of the project.

Source: PMI

Trust Building

▶ Good leaders care about earning the trust of their team members. Sharing information with the team, being transparent about decisions, getting team members involved in the decision-making process and being genuinely interested in each team member's growth are all ways Project Managers can earn the trust of their team.

▶ Additionally, team members who have trust in each other thrive while those who don't often struggle to survive. Having faith that cohorts will fulfill their duties with skill and speed while providing honest feedback helps create a sense of trust between team members. That trust can inspire the sharing of truthful information and confidence across all levels of the organization.

▶ Customers prefer to conduct business with individuals they like and trust.

Source: PMI & Jonathan's wisdom

Decision Making

- Decisions can usually be categorized as routine, strategic, operational or emergency. Depending on the type of decision that needs to be made, Project Managers may have different sets of criteria that come into play when making a judgment, and how they analyze the individual options may vary.

- During the decision-making process, Project Managers should always consider how others will be affected, and when in doubt, consult their peers or colleagues.

- Generally, team members are more likely to trust a Project Manager who makes sound decisions by defining problems clearly, brainstorming solutions, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of the various options and bringing together the people needed to implement a solution.

Source: PMI

Organization

- Organization breeds the following:
    - Focus - strive to be a single-tasker vs. a multitasker
    - Productivity
    - Efficiency, i.e. time management
    - Goal Attainment
    - Deadline Accuracy
    - Freedom from Panic
    - Professionalism
    - Relief from Stress
    - Balance
    - Confidence – organized people control their work life; their work life does not control them

Source: www.yourbusiness.azcentral.com

Other Key Soft Skills

- Influencing
- Team Building
- Negotiation
- Coaching
- Integrity
- Attitude
- Emotional Intelligence

Influencing

▶ Influencing is about using your relationship with team members effectively to ensure they collaborate and cooperate well on making right decisions and achieving project goals.

▶ The first and easiest way to influence team members is to lead by example. If you expect the team to show up early for work, you need to show up early as well – be the first one to arrive.

  ▶ **"Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing."**
    — Albert Schweitzer

▶ Keep the team's interest in mind while making decisions and let them know you're doing so. When decisions do not go in their favor, they will respect you for your effort.

Source: www.pmexamsmartnotes.com

Team Building

▶ **"None of us is as smart as all of us." – Ken Blanchard**

▶ A project involves different people such as customer, sponsor, vendor, consultant, PMO, quality assurance team, and management. The core team that does project work interacts with most of these people, and more importantly with each other on the team day after day. It is important that team members feel safe, collaborate well and trust each other.

▶ Sharing information, involving people in decision making, keeping the team in the know-how of customer's business related news, keeping communication channels open both upward (with management) and downward (with subordinates), resolving conflicts in a timely and fair manner, protecting team members from external disturbances are some of the actions a Project Manager undertakes in this regard.

▶ A team that gels well will have its members helping each other during tough times in order to push forward.

▶ A great Project Manager makes certain that the team is recognized for a job well done which results in greater synergy amongst the team.

A team that gels well...

Negotiation

- Negotiation is a good conflict resolution skill. When issues arise on a project, you as a Project Manager should ensure that you listen to both parties involved and make decisions in a fair and just manner. And that both parties know about this.

- While negotiating, it may not be always possible to please both parties. Attempt for a win-win situation for both parties, where each one is able to compromise to a certain extent in order to come to a resolution.

- Listening, stating, and articulating problems might themselves present solutions, which neither party could have considered earlier. It is important to NOT take sides while negotiating and be fair and just in arriving at a resolution.

Coaching

- **"A coach is someone who can give correction without causing resentment."**
  — John Wooden

- Coaching is about helping team members discover their own potential and elevate themselves from their current position of skill level to the next position.

- Coaching includes counseling to help people change their mindset about a situation and help perform better.

- Coaching can be a great motivator for team members. Knowing that they are being helped by an expert makes them take those additional steps to achieve their goals.

- Coaching can produce amazing results and you would see that most of world-class sportspeople have coaches who help them achieve extraordinary results. While training is focused more on increasing a specific skill level, coaching deals with increasing skill level as well as overcoming one's own self-doubt to excel in their field.

Source: www.pmexamsmartnotes.com

Integrity

- Accountability for keeping and delivering commitments you made

- Keeping actions consistent with your principles

- Performing in an ethical manner

- Taking on tough issues directly and honestly, especially when things go wrong

- Establishing a proactive communication process that is fiercely transparent

- Consistently making decisions fairly, without favoritism or prejudice

- Taking ownership and responsibility of the end result without shifting blame

Source: www.officetimeline.com

Attitude

- What attitude did you bring to this meeting?

- Attitude is everything – it governs the way you perceive the world and the way the world perceives you

- Attitude is a way of life – the only difference between a good day and a bad day is your attitude

- Attitude determines outcome

- Attitude reflects behavior

- Your attitude determines your altitude

- Source: www.thoughtcatalog.com; www.success.com; www.quora.com

Emotional Intelligence

▶ This soft skill describes a Project Manager's self-awareness, their social awareness and their relationship awareness. Broadly speaking this means the ability they have to recognize their own emotions, as well as the emotions of the others contributing to the project. Developing this soft skill will enable Project Managers to:

   ▶ Find common ground and build trust more easily with the people and stakeholders involved with the project

   ▶ Read the emotions of team members and empathize better

   ▶ Anticipate team dynamics by seeing how team members are interacting verbally and non-verbally

   ▶ Be open and adaptable to internal and external changes by staying focused on the big picture

   ▶ Be aware of personal stress and team stress and mindful of how this impacts productivity

Source: www.officetimeline.com

A Few Cascading Thoughts…

- Lead by example

- Project Management is 90% Communications

- Attitude is everything

- Your experience and hard skills might get you initially noticed by employers, but it's your soft skills that will advance your career

- Exceptional soft skills are the key to your personal and professional success – develop and continuously nurture those skills

Q&A

Thank you!