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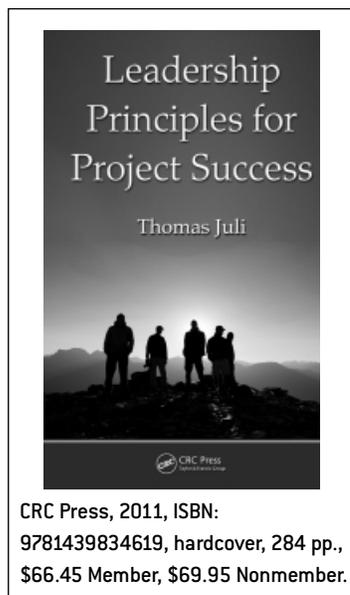
Leadership Principles for Project Success

by Thomas Juli

There are many facets to project success. Although not unique to projects, leadership is clearly one of these facets that can impact our projects. Thomas Juli delves deeply into the subject of leadership in his book *Leadership Principles for Project Success.* Juli's premise is that project success is more than just applying project management techniques; it requires effective project leadership to ensure the likelihood of success.

The book introduces us to five leadership principles of project success: "Build Vision," "Nurture Collaboration," "Promote Performance," "Cultivate Learning," and "Ensure Results." Each is delivered to us in detail and supported by examples, stories, and templates to help us progress from understanding the principles to fully applying them to our projects.

Build Vision: When it comes to vision, the book differentiates project managers from project leaders. You could argue that the project manager role encompasses the project leader role, but the salient point is that we as project managers should take on this broader role to ensure we can reap project success. Building a vision for a project goes beyond the project objectives; it touches the human spirit of the team and stakeholders to inspire them on the mission and direction of the project. Project objectives tell us about the destination where the vision inspires us about the journey. The book sums this up perfectly, "It is not about integrating a new call center software application; it is about providing good customer service and setting a new standard in service excellence." Juli provides a personal story about starting a preschool to meet the child care/education needs of his family and other friends with children. There was a clear vision of meeting parents' needs as opposed to just starting another business.

Nurture Collaboration: Effective communications is critical to projects. Just read most project lessons learned summaries; communications is frequently listed as an improvement area. This book offers us a broader perspective of the subject of project communications, expanding on how to engage the team and stakeholders. It builds on the project vision to ultimately ensure everyone is working optimally for project success.

Promote Performance: The book provides solid steps for a project manager to take in order for the team to perform at their highest level. The steps include being a role model and creating the right environment. It also includes steps on empowering your team and developing a solutions and results orientation toward problems and risks.

Cultivate Learning: The book emphasizes the importance of continuous learning by using classic approaches such as training classes and project reviews. Other types of learning approaches are offered, which we may not have thought of, such as innovation time and periodic feedback sessions. The periodic feedback sessions draw the team together to assist any team member that faces a current problem. This helps prevent problems from resting solely on the individual and expedites solutions.

Ensure Results: Topping the list is ensuring results. The book asks the question, "How do you know this is the end of the journey?" It answers by tying the question back to the beginning where the vision was created to ensure all results are realized. The book goes on to take a holistic view of "results" and delivering results by including the team's well-being at the end of the project.

The adage in Thomas Juli's book *Leadership Principles for Project Success* is a good one: "Leaders act, managers react." The five leadership principles provide solid advice to act on, to build onto your project management skills by sharpening your leadership skills. This is a good book to read and to start applying immediately to your current project.

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