



# Be a better project manager

*Lead like a championship winning coach*

By: Scott Grzesiak, Regional Operations Manager  
Integrated Project Management Company, Inc.

At the heart of every championship sports team is a supremely focused leader who maximizes team members' talent. There are numerous examples of high performing athletes who fail to realize their potential until they get in touch with the right leadership – think Michael Jordan and Phil Jackson, or John Elway and Mike Shanahan. These sportsmen had the talent all along – they just needed someone to push them (and their teams) to new levels. The same holds true for manufacturing project teams. Team members not only need the capability to execute their assignments but a leader to drive the project and help them achieve the stated goal.

If you're an engineer or manufacturing manager by trade and you find yourself playing the role of a project manager at your manufacturing site, you're not alone. You were most likely put in charge of the project because of your deep technical knowledge of the project's scope and have a project team consisting of individuals from a variety of departments with varying skills. If this is the case, first ask yourself if it's possible to utilize a dedicated project manager with general knowledge of manufacturing to lead the cross-functional team. If the answer is no, you must take it upon yourself to lead your team like a coach seeking a championship. Here are a few tips for managing your stakeholders:

## Set the Foundation

This is your chance – right from the start – to provide leadership. To prep for your first meeting, think about how you would like to manage the team by outlining your expectations and addressing concerns.

Answer these questions before they're even asked:

- Why do we have a vested interest in the project?
- What are the team's objectives?
- What is the scope of our project?
- What is my specific role within the team?
- How much of my time will be needed?
- How do I raise a concern I have?
- How will decisions be made?

“ Team members need a **leader** to drive the project and help them achieve the stated goal ”

Capitalize on the first few meetings to ensure the team is “on the same page.” It might seem trite, but there is definite value in engendering mutual understanding, and you can’t “be on the same page” if there isn’t a page to read.

### Effective Project Management Tools

- Project charter
- Role and responsibility charts
- Project plans
- Project budget
- Risk management plan
- Issue/decision logs

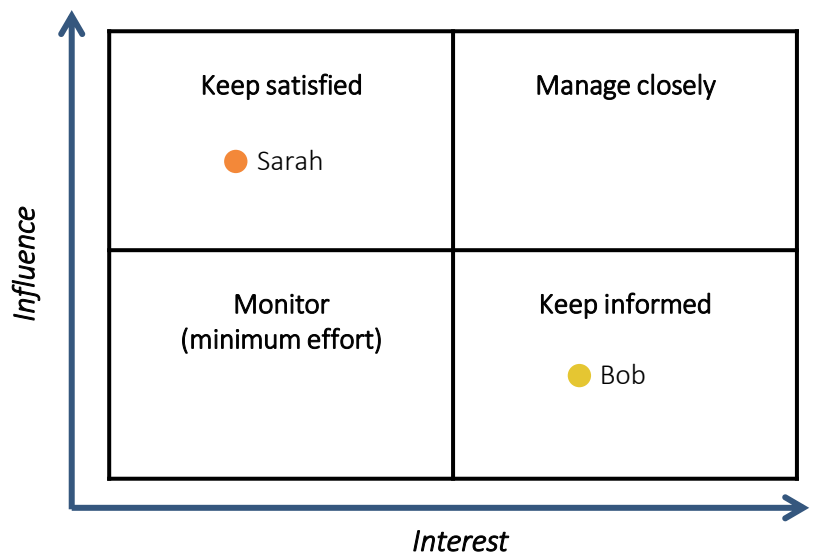


### Exercise Situational Leadership

Because no two individuals are the same nor are two assignments exactly alike, it’s best to address your stakeholders and their situations uniquely. A communication matrix will help you characterize how you should modify your approach depending on the needs of individual team members. Consider stakeholders’ influence and interest in the project and react accordingly. Here’s an example.

	Sarah	Steve
Title	Senior Design Engineer	Quality Technician
Influence/ Experience	High; 15 years at the plant	Low: New to the organization
Interest	Low	High

### Communication Matrix



“Address people & situations uniquely”

“Communication is **more** than what you **say**”

Because Sarah knows the organization well and has earned respect across the company, your leadership approach will be to keep her satisfied. Tell her what to accomplish instead of how to accomplish it.

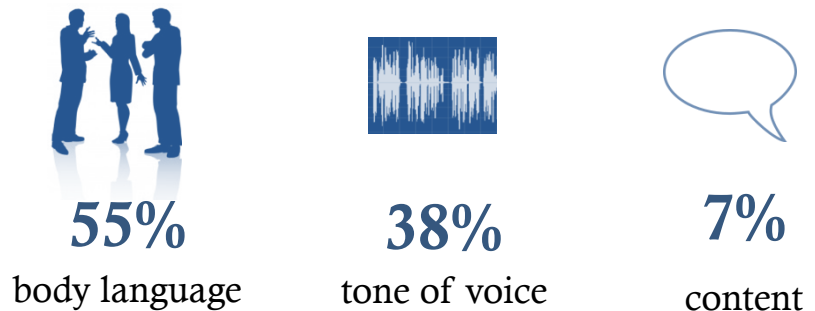
Bob, however, is really excited about the project and realizes his participation on the team is a good learning opportunity for him. You will need to keep him informed and invest time in his development. Show him step-by-step what to do in a compassionate manner and at a pace that isn't overwhelming.

If you're having trouble deciding the best way to lead someone, why not ask him or her? You may be surprised how receptive that person will be, and you'll be a better leader because of it.



## Tailor your Communication

Communication plays an important part in leading any team, but keep in mind that communication is more than just what you say. Research has shown that actual words spoken account for only 7% of what the average person takes in.



From Mehrabian & Wiener, 1967 and Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967 studies that combined resulted in the 55/38/7 formula

To improve your communication, remember the 3 C's:

### Context:

includes the environment, the history between the people, and other factors such as each person's role.

### Clusters:

prevent us from allowing a single gesture or comment to color our opinion about an individual's state of mind.

### Congruence:

is about words matching the tone and body language.



From a more practical perspective, just as you've accounted for the individuality of team members, you'll need to consider with whom you are communicating. Create a list of all your project stakeholders to make sure you haven't forgotten anyone. For example, shop floor personnel are almost always the individuals most impacted by manufacturing projects, but often receive the least amount of communication.

Because manufacturing environments can be filled with problems and emergencies, those team members likely handle dozens of issues at any given time. Make their lives easier by making project communications relevant and easy to consume.

“ Set your priorities, communicate the vision, and do what you can to **maximize the talent** of each one of your team members ”

### Tips:



Use one-page **dashboards** with clear visual indicators to communicate schedule and budget status and alert stakeholders to critical risks.



Distribute **customized project schedules and task lists** to individual team members focused on his/her specific responsibilities.



Include specific **calls to action** at the top of email messages and any supporting information below for easy reference. Limit the distribution to only those stakeholders that are directly involved with the task, issue, or decision.

Serving the role project manager in addition to your day job is a difficult burden to bear. Following these guidelines will help, but the one thing they can't do for you is give you time. Despite your best intentions, one thing or another will likely suffer because you just can't get to everything as quickly as you'd like, or can't spend as much time on something as you know you should. It's reality. Set your priorities, communicate the vision, and do what you can to maximize the talent of each one of your stakeholders.



### About the author

Scott Grzesiak is a Regional Operations Manager at Integrated Project Management Company, Inc., a consulting firm that advises on and executes companies' complex initiatives. IPM applies the discipline of PM to manufacturing initiatives like quality systems deployment, capacity rationalization, product mix rationalization, and IT systems and applications implementation. Through careful planning and rigorous execution, IPM helps clients meet their goals and sustain them—efficiently, cost-effectively, and often ahead of schedule.