



does leadership success mean? Therefore, it is a holistic view at a project to the understanding that it takes more than just one person but the whole team –the heart and core of a project. With respect to the typical challenges I see or have been seeing in achieving leadership success, well, there are quite a few challenges. I think one of the elements people are missing in projects way too often, is that they do not see the overall picture, or they talk or they think of features that they're trying to implement and they wreck their head about how to achieve it, but sometimes, or often, they're not able to answer the very simple question and that is: Why do they start a project in the first place? So they lack the understanding of what the motivation of the project is, and they lack the understanding of what is the overall vision of a project. If you do not know where are you coming from and why you start a project in the first place, and you don't know what the overall vision of a project is –now, I'm not talking about the objectives but the vision, which goes way beyond to the bigger picture. I think this is one of the greatest challenges people have in projects; and if they're seriously interested in leadership success, if you don't have this understanding of the motivation or the vision of your project or of your project team, I don't think it's appropriate to talk about leadership. So that's one of the main challenges I see. Then sometimes people just don't take the time to find out more about the project; why it started in the first place or what the overall vision is. They just jump in and get active and say 'Ok, we have to schedule this meeting, that meeting. We have to come up or develop a project plan, and there are so many meetings', etc; and well, setting up a project for failure, not for success. It doesn't come from not, you have to invest your time, the energy to set a very good foundation for success and for leadership.

*Thomas, if many of our listeners probably say 'Ok. That all sounds very good in theory, but when we are pushed by our stakeholders to do more with less, and more and more with less, especially today's still a relatively uncertain economic times; where to actually*

*find the time and resources to actively involve the team, communicate the vision?' And based on your experience, have you seen in teams where this was done effectively that it increased project completion, project success ratio?*

Yes, I have. Just last year I was working on a project where there was not really a lot of time, the temperature was really intense. And I was still pushing my colleagues and saying 'We have to find the time to talk about the motivation, about the vision, about collaboration rules, etc'. Well, we never did find the time, and the result was the overall atmosphere was really bad, there were time delays, people were just really, really frustrated. And while I was not managing the project, I was just a consultant, it ended up with me that it didn't make sense. I had to leave that situation, but it was not really possible to make this change, which was really unfortunate and this really showed me that if you do not invest or if you do not find the time or take the time to talk about the motivation, the vision, about collaboration rules, it's very tough. It's like another project that could easily become a 'Death March' project, which in that case it was, and I was not willing to die on that project, so I was actually very happy that I could leave that project environment and start something new elsewhere.

*So those who are actually running multiple projects and take on more and more responsibilities, either because their client or their sponsor is pushing them, where do you find the actual resources to effectively communicate the vision to set the project up for success?*

It's not so much –sometimes it's just where you just have to communicate the vision, if there is a vision, because sometimes I find out that quite a few stakeholders just think of the objectives, they don't see the overall picture, which is a challenge by itself. If you're the project manager of a team, you meet with your team and you really talk about the project, which is something you do anyway, and you ask this very simple question: Why

this project? Why is this project relevant? Why is it important? What issues are we trying to resolve? And you try to capture these. Don't just talk about it, capture it, document it somewhere, on a flipchart or somewhere and try to get to the essence of that project; and you do this with your team. If the stakeholders, if your sponsor doesn't give you this time that should not be an excuse. I mean, if you meet with your team for lunch or for coffee or in the evening you have dinner with them, you can do it there in an informal conversation. There is no excuse for not doing it.

*Your book is about 'Leadership Principles for Project Success'; probably leadership is a topic which is the most popular among authors, I think every year I see at least twenty-five, thirty, even more –probably fifty titles coming out with new ideas on leadership. How leadership in project management, in your opinion, differs from leadership in general?*

Well I believe leadership, as I've mentioned before, it sees the bigger picture and takes the team to one direction, and also in this book where I'm saying 'Well there are five elements of five principles for leadership – for successful leadership, and it starts again with this vision I have mentioned before about collaboration. You have to understand: How can I empower the team –individuals and the group so you can really perform? And how can you learn? You have to build in learning –active learning, innovation, where you reflect on interim results. And talking about results, results are not just the end results. You want to deliver on a continuous basis, so you can look back to and correct your past if necessary. The difference between leadership and management is really like where you take an active role and paving the path to success, whereas success should not come at the end, but the sooner the better. It's the whole process, it's like an experience. Sometimes people talk about so-called "Wow Projects" –projects that make a difference; where people feel proud to be a part of, where it doesn't feel like work, and why? Because they have a

common denominator; they're really highly motivated to work on that particular project for a number of reasons. Maybe it's the project by itself, like the topic, maybe it's just working with certain people, maybe it's just the environment, maybe it's the way people interact; something that makes the "Wow", but leadership, really effective leadership understands what it takes to build or to develop this "Wow project", and I think this is one of the correct process of good leadership compared to project management which is like 'Oh, I just react. I do whatever people ask me to.' There is no such thing as happiness in their project, it's just work. And my experience is this is one of the main differences between management and leadership.

*Very often in a project environment the team is not permanently working together, but teams are changing and assemble and disassemble a new team as per the project is required, new members on board or getting rid of other members; so it can be a major challenge for the project leader compared to a traditional corporate leader which works with a constant set of people. What would you recommend? If I have a very fast changing or rapidly changing team environment, how can I effectively deal with this challenge as a project leader?*

Well, then you have to walk the talk, as I have mentioned before, where you have the motivation, vision and then the objectives in mind, then you have to be able to tell the story to whoever comes aboard the team. People leave, people come, that's the case, but there should be the same common story; people say 'Oh yes, I can relate to it'. You can provide them with all the facts of a project, but if you tell them the story either from 'This is what we have experienced on the project in the past' or 'This was really cool, this was a great experience, this is what we have learned, and this is how you personally can benefit from this project' or 'we as a team'. So it's more that you are trying to reach out to the other person coming on board to tell them something like 'We are all humans, we are having fun and being very professional

at the same time, and we want you to be a part of it'. It could be that the new individual is not very opportunist at all. This could be tricky. The question is if you have the chance to only pick those individuals who are open to this kind of environment. If that's the case, that's great; if that's not the case, you still have to see how you can reach that person. And here you want to find out: What is it that motivates that person to be –or to work– on that team and on that project? What is it that are the personal individual drivers? Find out if there are any overlaps. If there are no overlaps with the motivation and the vision of the individuals on the team, I think you are in trouble and you may have to find a way to get rid of that person. Because like if you have a spoiled apple in a whole basket, it's not good. You have to get rid of that person.

*So select for success is critical. Let's talk about the agile project management for a moment, shall we? Of course agile is gaining popularity, particularly of course, starting from software development now of course and the traditional, sort of formerly a traditional management teams are getting more and more agile, however the role of leader is dramatically changing in the agile environment compared to a traditional project environment. In your view, how project leadership works in a project environment without leaders, when as Scrum masters, for example, not a manager with authority in the traditional sense?*

In a non... Or rather, in a self-organizing team, you're right. There are no "leaders" and it is more appropriate to talk about "leadership". Leadership is not limited to just one person, and hopefully you have a team with an advanced leadership principles. So therefore it's kind of like an attitude has something to do with culture. In a self-organizing team, do I believe that you still need at least one person or more, but at least one individual, to tell the other persons what's really important? Yes, unless the team knows it by itself, which then would not be self-organizing, it would be self-governing which is slightly different. So my experience is that if you're interested in self-organizing

team, you have to start somewhere, you have to give or make sure that there is a structure. People can get creative then. Understand or ensuring that everybody is on the same page. Again, do they know WHY we started this project, WHY are we working together? WHAT is the overall vision? Do we have –since we are talking about the elements– do we have the objective for the project or for the sprint? Is everybody on the same page? Can we commit us to achieving whatever we write down for a sprint? And this is very important. The purpose and vision, the people have to understand. In the self-organizing teams you want people to be passionate about the project. Passion comes from feeling that you are a part of something that you believe in, something bigger than yourself. But this requires that I know what the other person's motivation is to be the on the project, and I have to find again this common denominator. Where are there some overlaps? What is our common motivation with, or, what do we want to achieve as a team? If that's not the case, if that's not in place, again, it's not working. There is another thing, talking about self-organizing teams; what's the story? Two or three years ago I was working for an organization, there were some Scrum teams, and more and more people wanted to work in agile teams and luckily the CIO said 'Ok, I believe I strong teams and agile and so on', so that's when he said 'Ok, let's empower the teams, empower the individuals, make sure to build self-organizing teams.' That was good, people were excited –most of them were. Interestingly, quite a few teams have had a hard time with this freedom all of a sudden. They said 'Oh yeah, we want to have this freedom, but we don't want to be responsible or accountable for the results. Give us some structure.' Which means self-organizing teams have to be actually very disciplined; you have to understand that freedom comes with responsibility. If that's not understood it doesn't work out. If a team or as a group doesn't understand this they need to take at least one person who can explain to them why it is important and then cautiously build the structure, this orientation, so that the team can find itself.

So that's very important.

*I like this, "With freedom comes responsibility." I think it's very useful to anyone considering transition to agile to effectively communicating the notion of responsibility, because that's very often where people fall short. Now, many of our listeners are currently project managers, want to become project leaders, growing career and taking them bigger responsibility and more teams, more projects. What would you recommend for a new project manager in transition, how to become an effective project leader?*

I think: Don't ever forget where you're coming from. Never forget what the view is. You don't forget the human element, that's one thing; the individual, and again, looking at the bigger picture. If you just have had a project you managed and now often you have a program with several projects or maybe you are running a PMO, you have to understand: where do all these various projects come together? What's important? How do you set priorities? Basically the whole program or the projects now are just features and you have the project as the program and you try to organize it that way and you manage it that way. That's on the technical side. But again, I believe that you have to know:

Where are YOU coming from? What motivates YOU? And your team, your core team, is basically the other project managers and I think it's important that you meet with them and you make sure that they're on the same page, that they understand what the issue is all about; because if they embrace leadership principles in their projects, you can actually have synergy effects, and that is very important. So it's tough, but it's very well worth it. Again, never forget where you're coming from and see the overall picture.

*And Thomas of course you will be speaking at the upcoming Project Zone Congress in Frankfurt in April. What will be the main takeaway or the main message of your*

*sessions at the summit?*

I will be talking about leadership happiness and project success. First of all, whenever I say this title people say 'Well what do you mean by happiness and how does this fit in?' and I explain 'You know, there is an equation for project success and that is: LEADERSHIP + HAPPINESS = PROJECT SUCCESS'. And people look at me asking 'What do you mean? -Because happiness can be a result of project success' and I say 'No. It's the other way around.

For example, people say 'I want to be promoted to the head of PMO and then I will be happy', and then they achieve this stage. Are they happier? No, because life continues. Happiness is not linked with a career move or to anything. But if you're happy internally and the team is happy, you can really create a lot of things because team synergy is "Team Magic", what I call it. Leadership is, again with the various principles we had, we talked about taking the whole team to the same direction; so that's very important. So what I would explain to the audience, the elements or what's critical for a project's success is, first you have to find a clear focus of what you really want to achieve. Then second you have to create a strategy through principle centered leadership, and then last but not least you have to resolve conflicts and align your priorities. So these three things, the focus, the strategy, and the priorities alignment are some of the things that I'll talk about, again, in the context of "happy". How does happiness play in here? Why is happiness important in a Wow Project, or in igniting the spirit, and all for a Wow Project? This is what we'll talk about and this is what people will take with them. You may be technical project management and you may have all the skills, but again, if you forget what matters most in a project or in life... DON'T EXPECT TO BUILD A WOW PROJECT AND HAVE FUN AT THE SAME TIME.

*Fantastic Thomas, thank you very much for your time this morning. Those of you who wish to find out more about Thomas' work,*

