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Expected Leadership Qualities for a Project Manager to Manage Construction Projects

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Abstract:

The construction industry is multidimensional by nature of structure, operating within many boundaries and collaborating closely with many Stakeholders, including field engineers, Architects, designers, contractors, owners, and Government agencies. Project and organization success depends on project manager and employees with well-developed skills, people orientation and leadership qualities who will be working at different hierarchy levels to meet varying leadership qualities and performance demanded.

As we know the construction industry was one among the largest industries in the world and holding 18% of GDP. Particularly in India every five year plan focus more on the infrastructure development in India. It is found that there is a wide scope for construction in the world. The project leader plays a crucial role in monitoring the quantity and quality output of the employees. The main objective of writing this article is to describe the best leadership qualities required for a project leader to lead the team successfully to reach the targets.

Leadership styles can be represented with differing combinations of four main decision-making styles: 1) Autocratic 2) Democratic 3) Participatory and 4) Free-rein. This study hypothesizes varying managerial positions that require in different combinations of leadership styles to achieve high levels of performance and success. This concept based study was made on executives and managers in URC Construction (P) Ltd., Erode with identification of their preferred leadership style for construction managerial positions. Based on the interaction among the various project managers the study highlighted the various style of leadership followed in the organization. The main objective of this article is to suggest mix of various leadership qualities that can be followed to extract the best productivity among the engineers, workforce and other workers of the project.

Keywords: Stakeholder, Leadership, Construction Professional, Decision-Making, Construction Management

1. Introduction

Effective leadership is essential for a company to achieve progressive levels of performance in multi-disciplinary aspects and to implement a culture of productivity improvement with skill development. The construction industry, especially construction project management, is multidisciplinary by nature and successful project completion requires the contributions of many players, including designers, contractors, owners, and Government agencies, all of whom initiate requirements and collaborate closely with each other. Construction professionals and subsequently construction organizations benefit from employing individuals with well-developed interpersonal skills that smoothen the way when dealing with the many different stakeholders at different levels within the company hierarchy. The use or misuse of these skills during project execution impacts project performance outcomes either positively or negatively. Consequently, a successful executive is generally pictured as possessing intelligence, imagination, initiative, the capacity to make rapid decisions and the ability to inspire subordinates. Leader leads the team in effective and efficient way to achieve the project goals and organizations goals continuously.

Construction firm has various individual domain that are based on the project nature. The main classification of construction projects Building project, Industrial project, Railway project, Metro rail project, Airport project, Road and Bridge project and Water resources and Sanitation project. The economy in project execution is based on the quality of a leader and leadership styles. The term "Project manager" who is responsible for project management describes project process and the person who leads the project. In general, construction industry's managerial and/or supervisory positions can be classified hierarchically into specific job categories: 1) Regional head 2) Project manager 3) Block In charges 4) Senior Engineers and 5) Supervisors. In 1939 Kurt Lewin led a group of

researchers to identify different styles of leadership and this study has been very influential and established four major leadership styles: 1) Autocratic 2) Democratic 3) Participatory and 4) Free-rein

The two extremes of this spectrum are the autocratic pattern type, which is a manager- or boss-centric leadership style, and the free-rein pattern type, which is a subordinate-centric leadership style. Among these extremes the participatory pattern type incorporates both these leadership patterns, allowing subordinates to be involved in decision making while also benefiting from the manager's input. The optimum degree or combination of leadership styles vary for each managerial position. The different levels of managerial positions have unique and dominant leadership patterns beyond the traditional contributory responsibility for efficient and effective project management. Often overlooked outside the industry is the modern construction management processes which involve complex financial matters, the demand for interpersonal skills where the project managers are engaged in activities such as bidding, cost control, workforce and contract negotiations, project planning, and so on. Unlike a managerial position in the manufacturing industry, construction professionals must deal with a wide range of tasks and processes for each construction project. Managerial personnel in the construction industry not only supervise subordinates in their own organizational hierarchy but also provide purpose, direction, and motivation to contracted crafts employee working for sub-contractors.

The need for improved leadership skills in the Construction industry is gaining attention. In January 2001 ASCE began a new quarterly publication titled Leadership and Management in Engineering. At the June 2003 Top Contractors in the industry discussed on the leaders stressed the need to "push responsibility down" and "develop leadership teams". Like other efforts, the objective of leadership development is not solely focused on the ability to satisfy conflicting requirements in support of organizational success, but also the ability to successfully grow to professional ladders.

2. Study Objectives and Overview

The main objective of this study was, based on using the experiential perspectives of the project manager and project executive, to identify preferred leadership quality of those individuals holding managerial and supervisory positions in construction management. The companies were categorized into four areas: 1) General contractor, 2) Design/Build contractors, 3) Engineering contractor, and 4) Specialty contractor. The study explores the appropriate and preferred Leadership skills for different construction managerial positions. This recognition of the fact that leadership quality that contributes to the knowledge of professional managerial achievement is a key indicator for the identification, development, and enhancement of leadership in the construction industry.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of Project Manager

The Reflection of Leadership by Positional Duties to emphasize the distinctive characteristics among the project managerial positions: This section summarizes the typical job duties of each position the comparison of job functions for each managerial position will provide a clear understanding of details that are needed to fulfill different leadership styles.

3.1. General

- Understand the Terms & Conditions of Contract Agreement.
- Be clear and adhere to all Manuals, in particular, MPCS Manual.
- Understand the scope of work in line with BOQ, Drawings and specifications and PWD specifications.
- Ensure Quality and Safety at the project site.
- Attend meetings with Client's Engineer, Architects / Consultants and Functional Heads.
- Ensure Cordial relationship with Clients.
- Be Accountable for estimated Turnover and Profit.
- Report to Regional Head / Business Sector Head.

3.2. Scheduling & Budgeting

- Approval of Accepted Cost Estimate (ACE) and monitoring the actual execution with ACE every month.
- Conduct Project Meetings at 7 pm every day for analyzing the productivity of the day, program for the next day and arrangements made to fulfill the requirements of Execution Engineer's requirements for next day.
- Ensure resource of Labour, Material, and Plant & Equipment's for the execution of work.
- Ensure the progress of works in line with Master Construction Program and updated Monthly Construction Program.
- Ensure remedial action on deviations from construction programmes and ACE.
- Ensure actions on seeking Extension of Time (EOT) from clients.

3.3. Execution & Billing

- Ensure availability of resources like Labour, Material, Plant & Equipment for execution in line with Construction Program.
- Ensure timely submission & certification of Running Account Bills (RAB), Pre-final and Final bills and miscellaneous work bills with clients and architects.
- Ensure and monitor timely collection from customers.
- Ensure actions on Price Escalation Claims and Extra claims for Non-tendered items with clients.
- Ensure all items of work so far executed are billed with correct Quantity and Rate.

3.4. Review, Monitor & Reporting

- Attend and review meetings with Regional Head / Sector Head and Regional Planning Manager.
- Approve Job Cost Ledger (JCL) prepared by Accounts Dept and Job Cost Report (JCR) prepared by planning dept.
- Ensure that the sub-contractors and special agencies item rates are aligned with their actual productivity.
- Ensure the value of Work-In-Progress and Closing stock of materials at any point of time.
- Ensure the flow of Reports at different levels of Project Functionary.
- Review and monitor overall monthly project progress and milestones achieved.

In general, a project manager deals with department managers, project personnel, and clients to achieve the organization's goals.

3.5. Some common duties are

- Procure construction opportunities for the company by managing the company's relationships with existing clients
- Provide overall leadership and direction on construction projects with different departments within the company
- Establish, promote and maintain a mentoring relationship with all members of the company
- Ensure the quality, profitability and success of projects by making sure that all deliverables are completed on time and within budget
- Maintain pro-active and communicative relationships with clients and key project personnel

4. Leadership Qualities

As a Project manager one should fulfill the below mentioned qualities to be a capable individual to handle a team. A leader should be perfect so as to handle the team in effective manner. The following aspects describe the quality requirements of an individual to become a leader.

The Project Manager is looked upon by all the employees as the overall leader and benevolent autocrat. What he preaches has to be practiced by him

- **Punctuality:** The most vital commitment of the Project Manager is to be punctual in all aspects. He should not be late even by a minute and he has to make his employees to realize the importance of time.
- **Perfect Clothing / Uniform:** Wear neat and fine clothing / Uniform as prescribed by organizations policy with safety and protective equipment.
- **Perfectionist:** There are many examples to show that even a little task that project manager takes up, is always completed perfectly. Even if he wanted to deliver a speech, he should think in advance, write and rehearse it number of times.
- **Fitness:** Project manager should not depend on comforts; he should only walk by himself, but take full participation in all proceedings. He should be fit in both physical and mental to lead the team.
- **Dedication to work:** Nothing should deter project manager, he should be a live example from his commitment to good work; he should think that his work is worship.
- **Courageous:** Project manager should have personal courage on the work and the people courageous. He should be an accepted captain of the team he should be fearless, who can face any type of challenges. He should be a role model to the team to handle the task with fullest confident.
- **Behavioral Science:** Understand behavioral aspects of the individual as well as the team. He should reflect adult way of transaction while speaking.

4.1. Leadership Qualities on Team building

As a Project manager he can have individual personality traits as highlighted in the above but to handle a team with his personality traits he needs the following additional skills.

- **Call people by name:** The Project manager should call his sub ordinates by using their name. This creates a perfect gelling between the team.
- **Smile** – The project manager should speak through eyes and attentive mind to their sub ordinates. He should face the employees with a smile always.
- **Listen to the employee's words:** The project manager should listen the words of employees till they communicate their views. On completion; he can discuss with the sub-ordinate or team to conclude the discussion. By way of listening, the employees will feel that they are also important.
- **Discuss their personal affairs:** The project manager should always spend some time with the team to understand the employee's personal matters that affects them or make them happy. He should act as a counselor to mitigate their personnel issues as much as he can.
- **Give a feel that all are important:** The project manager should always interact with the team before taking any decision. The way he communicates should feel that all are together as a team. The team members are to be convinced of the decisions taken and actively involved in the tasks.
- **Treat your subordinates as the way you need to be treated:** As a final quality the project managers mind set should be in such a way that he should treat his sub ordinate as the way he needs to be treated by his superior.

4.2. Qualities of Team Members

All the above ideas say on how an individual can become a good leader to handle the team. Team members are also expected to behave in the same way. So the second most required aspect is that a good leader should select his team in such a way that they contribute the maximum to the project. The project manager can follow the following measures to identify the correct subordinate.

- **Spirit in work (Marshal like a warrior):** The sub-ordinates should have his highest sort in his task handling. He should contribute the maximum output in way of performance to the given task.
- **Skilled arms (Expert in handling the task):** The Project manager should verify the skill set of sub-ordinates by way of measuring their output regularly. For succeeding a task skilled persons are most important.
- **Loyalty to the lord:** The project manager should verify the mindset of the sub-ordinates that they are loyal to the organization and project manager. The objective is to ensure their loyalty; they should think the project manager and organization as equivalent to lord.
- **Taking and owning responsibility:** The team member should own the responsibility and produce the results as expected. The best team functions without any follow ups. The success or failure can be seen based on the task completion as planned. So to make a task success the team should own the responsibility.

5. Conclusion

This article suggests the issue of appropriate leadership quality for diverse managerial positions from the perspective of construction professionals currently working as project manager in the construction industry. Leaders are often only slightly elevated above their peers in terms of legitimate authority, particularly in the construction industry. As a consequence, much of their leadership style relies on influence and persuasion, rather than on authority and commands. This article support and reflect the different duties, responsibilities, and relationships of the project manager positions in the construction industry. The traditional view of leaders who set goals, make decisions, and direct troops reflects an individualistic view. Professionals, especially those in managerial positions in the construction industry, often need to deploy different leadership quality that reflect appropriate hierarchical perspectives depend on the management position they hold within the company. Construction is a heavily pre-planned activity that aims to minimize resource cost and time.

The understanding of desired leadership styles of project manager in the construction industry can achieve high levels of performance in general duties, responsibilities, and relationships of higher managerial positions, including executive, manager, and superintendent. This study suggests that there are a number of alternative combinations in which a construction professional can consciously conduct him or herself to accomplish both project objectives and personal success qualities by analyzing their own current leadership and decision-making. In addition this article suggests, about what are the leadership qualities required to prepare and guide qualified professionals to contribute effectively.

We conclude that "Employees Development leads to Organization Development ". By following the above individuals can become effective and efficient project manager. As a project manager he should always think on Individual, Group, and Organization and Society development.

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