

## Fourteen Keys for PM Career Success

In project management, and in every other industry, there are a specific set of business competencies or skills that are necessary to guide projects to successful completion. And while organizations often complain about the lack of project leadership abilities, they are continually investing more in technical skills.

### What competencies do project managers need to be successful?

In an effort to determine the key to project management success, we conducted more than two years of research with executives from 30 Global Fortune 500 organizations, responsible for recruiting, developing, and retaining project staff. As a result, we identified 14 core business skills project managers need to be well-rounded, deliver success for their organizations and accelerate career success.

Based on our comprehensive research, the following 14 skills were identified:

- Influencing
- Stakeholder management
- Negotiation
- Communication
- Inspiring team
- Motivating others
- Issue management/Conflict resolution
- Facilitation
- Problem solving
- Active listening
- Empathizing
- Trust building
- Coaching for change
- Critical thinking

**The takeaway:** Shift your focus from only investing in technical training and master the fourteen core business skills that will take your career and your organization to the next level.

# INSIDER INSIGHTS

Albeit an interesting list, it didn't provide the context and perspective we needed to help project managers adopt them practically to their everyday lives. It was necessary to outline a clear framework on how to develop these business skills. Prior research had shown that only 40 percent of respondents reported that their companies were providing "leadership skills" training, compared to approximately 75 percent reporting training in "technical skills."<sup>1</sup>

While technical know-how is essential to successfully complete certain tasks, it is the fourteen core skills that are required to execute against larger projects. Like any other subject, certain skills must be mastered before others can be developed. Active listening, for example, is a required skill to successfully facilitate a workshop, manage issues, resolve conflict or inspire the team. These required skills can be categorized into three overarching areas: interacting with others, stakeholder management and leading others.

The figure below shows how the 14 skills relate to each of the three broad areas, and which skills should be mastered first in order to ensure PMs have the required foundations from which to build.

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## Integrating the Fourteen Skills



\*Terms with an asterisk are part of the 14 core business skills

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In collaboration with our network of global organizations, we determined that the fourteen skills are ultimately essential to excel as a project manager and should be the basis for any professional development training program.

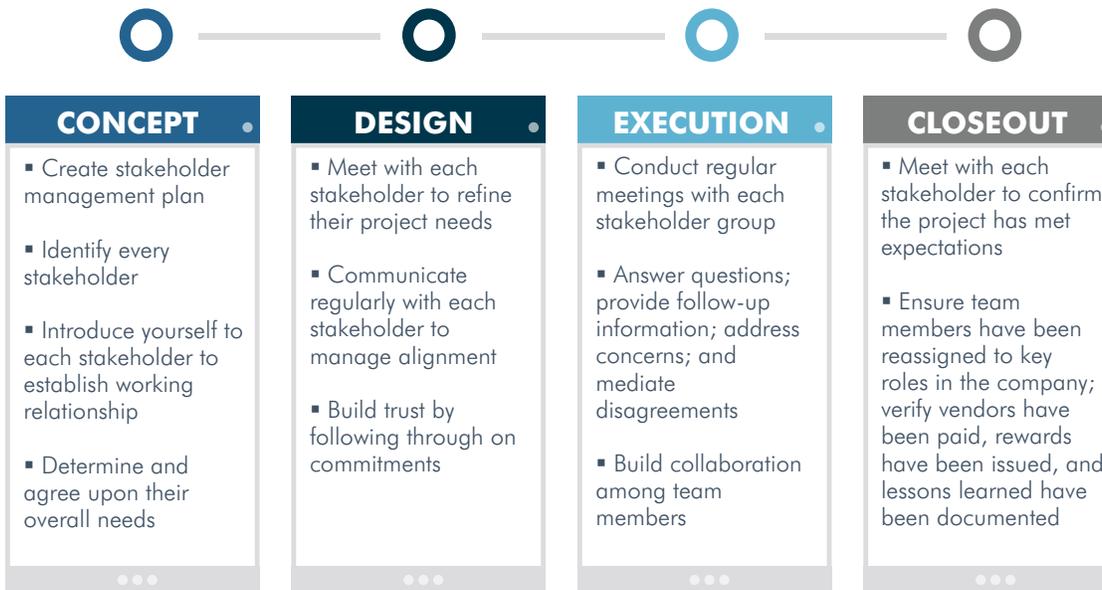
## Can These Skills Be Learned?

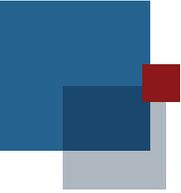
While many of these skills are often perceived as inherent, they can all be learned and improved. When providing coaching or mentoring—as well as formal training—it is important to include examples, exercises, role-plays and case studies that speak to the project environment in which project managers find themselves. The learning around each should be positioned within the context of the project lifecycle because applying a particular skill will manifest itself differently depending upon the phase of the lifecycle.

The project manager not only has different functions to perform, but also, those functions will require unique interactions with each stakeholder, and those interactions differ depending on the project lifecycle phase. The figure below shows the four phases of the project lifecycle, and how to best engage with stakeholders in each phase.

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## The Four Phases of the Project Life-Cycle





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## A Clear and Simple Message

Regardless of the industry, project managers need to adopt and master these fourteen core skills in order to excel in their roles and successfully execute projects. While hiring talent that already has these skills might sound like an obvious solution, finding the right talent can often prove to be a challenge. In its *Pulse of the Profession*<sup>®</sup> report titled “Talent Management,”<sup>2</sup> the Project Management Institute (PMI) draws attention to the “talent scarcity” issue plaguing organizations, and reports that “Despite the job growth in the project management profession, a gap still exists in the number of professionals fully prepared to lead and manage projects.”

It is ultimately more beneficial for companies to build and train talent internally—it increases retention, and the training can be more targeted and aligned to the organization’s specific needs and strategies. According to PMI, about 66 percent of organizations faced the “greatest difficulty in finding resources with adequate technical project management skills.” Conversely, “many organizations (over 90 percent) believe that technical project management skills and strategic and business management skills are teachable, and as such, are likely to search for talent with good leadership skills whose technical project management and strategic and business management skills can be honed through training.”

<sup>1</sup> ESI International. “On the Road to the Next Generation.” *The Global State of the PMO*. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Project Management Institute (PMI). “The Competitive Advantage of Effective Talent Management.” *Pulse of the Profession In Depth Study*. March, 2013.

To learn how to assess and enhance your organization’s PM leadership skills, contact a learning expert at +1 888.374.8884 or [info@strategyex.com](mailto:info@strategyex.com).

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