

## The Top Five Project Management Traits to Master

By Joli Mosier

In project management, we tend to focus on the method. And there is no shortage of methods (Six Sigma, Scrum, Waterfall). The method is the what of project management and is often at the core of an effectively run project. But the method can only take your project so far.

Really, it is the approach, or the how, that separates great projects from the merely good. And lets great project managers rise above the rest. The good news is that there is an effective approach to complement any method.

The how permeates every aspect of a project. It is the way you communicate, the way you solve problems, the way you lead. You may have a full tool kit of project templates with orderly steps to follow, but if you can't effectively solve a problem with efficiency, competence, and finesse, your tool kit isn't going to be worth as much. After many years of real world experience, our team has learned that the how is what creates client satisfaction.

Here are the top five traits you need to master the how of project management:

1. A collaborative management style. A collaborative management style engages the project team and key stakeholders in problem solving and decision making. Words like "trust", "buy-in", "ownership", are used a lot.
2. Adaptability. An effective project manager is one that can quickly assess a new situation and adapt to the existing situation. If structure is needed, then add structure. If the project pace is fast, adopt a fluid approach. And so on.
3. Figure-it-out resourcefulness. As a project manager, you are often not the subject matter expert (SME) on any given project. You probably rely on others to bring important knowledge and know-how to the table. A good project manager is creative, tenacious, and knows how to use SMEs and other resources effectively. They also know that the best results often emerge from out-of-the-box thinking and the will to try, and try again.
4. Highly developed communication skills. Communication is king for project managers. To succeed, you've got to excel in all aspects of communication. For example, knowing when it's appropriate to pick up the phone, send an email or request a face-to-face discussion. Or knowing how to engage with an executive or motivate a team member. Every team and every project is different, so you must be able to customise your style to their needs.
5. Flexibility. You've heard it a million times: the only constant is change. But how you handle change can make or break any experience, and any project. Flexibility engenders creative thinking, which no project could succeed without. When you stay open, people and their ideas feel welcome. But if you become too rigid, the flow stops flowing. The whole project dynamic can percolate with enthusiasm or fizzle with frustration depending on your flexibility as a leader.

So now you know some of our secrets. Now let's hear about some of yours.

Original article posted on [www.projectsmart.co.uk](http://www.projectsmart.co.uk)

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