CAI

POWER TOOLS OR POWER SKILLS?

Integrating Power Skills in Project Management

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INTEGRATING POWER SKILLS IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Power skills are essential for project managers. These skills go beyond technical expertise and enable managers to communicate, collaborate, and lead their teams effectively. Communication skills allow project managers to clearly convey expectations, goals, and deadlines to their team members, ensuring everyone is on the same page. Collaboration skills enable managers to work with cross-functional teams, fostering creativity and innovation. Leadership skills empower project managers to motivate and inspire their team members, driving them toward success. In today's fast-paced and complex business environment, power skills are crucial for project managers to navigate challenges, build strong relationships, and deliver successful projects.

INTRODUCTION

Power skills? Is this just a new term? Well, one may think so. This may be the most powerful tool in the vast toolbox of the forward-learning project manager! Communication, creativity, adaptability, and collaboration. Once called "soft skills," these have been renamed power skills.

The pandemic and the subsequent shift to a remote working world threw everyone into a state of uncertainty, changing the criteria for what makes someone successful at work. When working remotely, communication and people skills become more critical. Many agree that the human demands of simply existing in the world are more complex than before.

It takes an emotionally intelligent project manager to understand when their team or stakeholders are starting to hit a wall and communication skills to help them figure out what to do about it.

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BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT

Power skills are transferable competencies that a project manager can use to be successful in today's ever-changing work environment. Often called "soft skills" or "21st-century skills," they include:

- Communication
- Critical and strategic thinking
- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Conflict resolution and negotiation
- Personal effectiveness

- Creative problem solving
- Team building
- Influencing and selling skills
- Adaptability
- Leadership skills
- Digital literacy

These skills are increasingly important in the modern workplace as technology continues to change the nature of work. More job activities (not unlike the discipline of project management) are becoming automated, and tools provided through the application of artificial intelligence promise to automate even more of a project manager's job. However, machines and computers cannot replicate power skills, which will always be in high demand when managing people and projects. As a result, individuals with diverse skill sets and innovative solutions are in high demand.

SOLUTION

Of the Power Skills, which should I use?

Dozens of power skills fall into three main categories. These three are proven to be beneficial and exceptionally valuable for project managers.

- Communication skills help keep teams running smoothly.
- Critical-thinking skills drive informed and reasoned decisions. All project managers should strive to be leaders.
- Leadership skills - leaders plan, communicate and initiate action. These abilities are essential for project managers.

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Communication Skills

Communication skills involve listening, speaking, and observing. Applications for effective communication skills include:

- Active/Empathic listening or active information seeking concentrates the receiver of a message on what is being said. It involves giving one's full attention to the speaker. This engages the speaker even more since the speaker must acknowledge the listener's full attention.

- Confidence is the tendency to rely on oneself. It helps employees make decisions and control their emotions while conveying conviction in what is being communicated.

- Conflict management/resolution helps employees manage disputes and discords in the workplace. These skills can also fall into the teamwork category.

- Friendliness is the ability to be sociable. Individuals are more willing to receive information from those they consider friendly.

- Negotiation is a back-and-forth discussion to reach an agreement on conflicting issues. Strong negotiators more often achieve their ideal outcome and bring a sense of power to the bargaining table.

- Public speaking is the talent of addressing an audience. Good public speakers can enhance their (and their company's) reputation.

It is imperative that project managers be proficient in a variety of communication strategies, including face-to-face conversation, videoconferencing, and documentation, to be effective in today's working environment.

Problem-Solving & Critical-Thinking Skills

Critical thinking helps project managers identify a problem and their root causes. In addition, these skills provide individuals with an understanding of information. Some of the attributes of critical thinking are:

- Analytical – the ability to make conclusions from deconstructed information. Analytical thinkers transform data into an actionable plan.

- Innovative –the ability to introduce new and creative ideas.

- Investigative – examine systematically. Investigative individuals often uncover missed problems and solutions.

- Questioning – finding out more information to develop an answer or insight. Instinctively curious individuals foster other power skills and positively challenge standard practices.

These skills help project managers challenge perceptions and conventional wisdom to create the best path forward.

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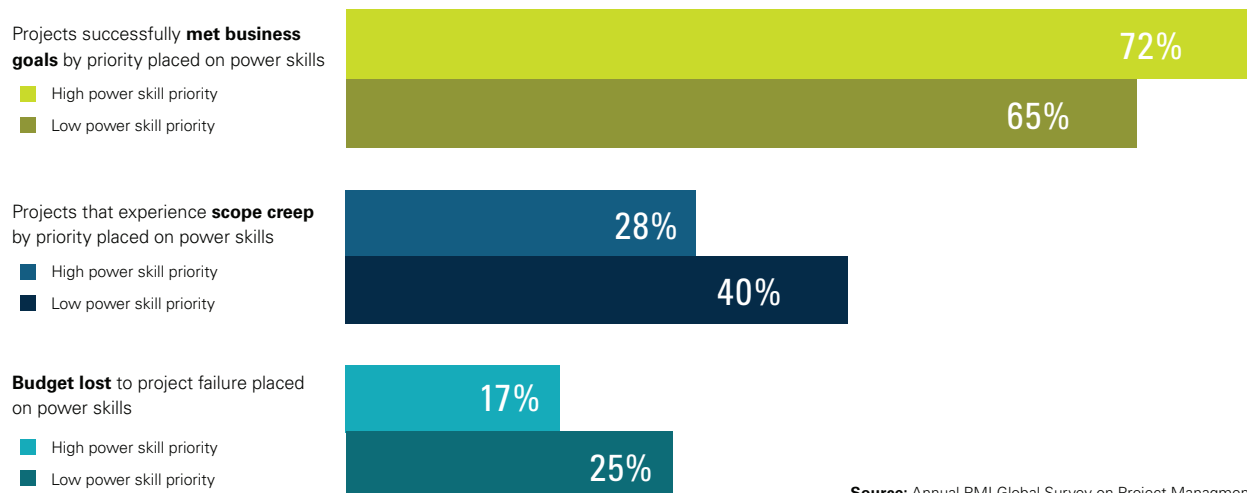
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Leadership Skills

A good leader motivates their team to work together for the best results. Therefore, leadership skills are essential to keep projects on track and the workplace harmonious. Leadership attributes needed for effective project management include:

- Adaptability – the ability to adjust to change. Therefore, leaders must be flexible since change is constant and inevitable.

- Decisive decision-making – the act of assessing information and making thoughtful choices at the proper time. Strong leaders rely on experience, data, and critical-thinking skills to make timely decisions.

- Intercultural fluency – the demonstration of respecting and valuing other cultures. Open, sensitive, and inclusive leaders maximize their team's potential and abilities.

- Reliability – the quality of being trustworthy and dependable. As a result, workers are more inclined to follow and listen to a dependable leader.

- Team building/collaboration – the action of getting people to work together effectively. It is a vital responsibility of a manager to keep groups functioning.

All project managers should strive to be leaders. Project managers can also be role models, inspire, and build morale in their team or assignment.

But.. does it work?

Power Skills and Project Success: Organizations That Prioritize Power Skills Versus Those That Do Not

Projects successfully **met business goals** by priority placed on power skills
- High power skill priority
- Low power skill priority

72%
65%

Projects that experience **scope creep** by priority placed on power skills
- High power skill priority
- Low power skill priority

28%
40%

Budget lost to project failure placed on power skills
- High power skill priority
- Low power skill priority

17%
25%

Source: Annual PMI Global Survey on Project Managment

Based on PMI's research, organizations prioritizing power skills are significantly better at completing projects that meet business goals. They also experience significantly less scope creep, and even though they do not fare better at avoiding outright project failures, these organizations experience significantly less budget loss if the project fails.

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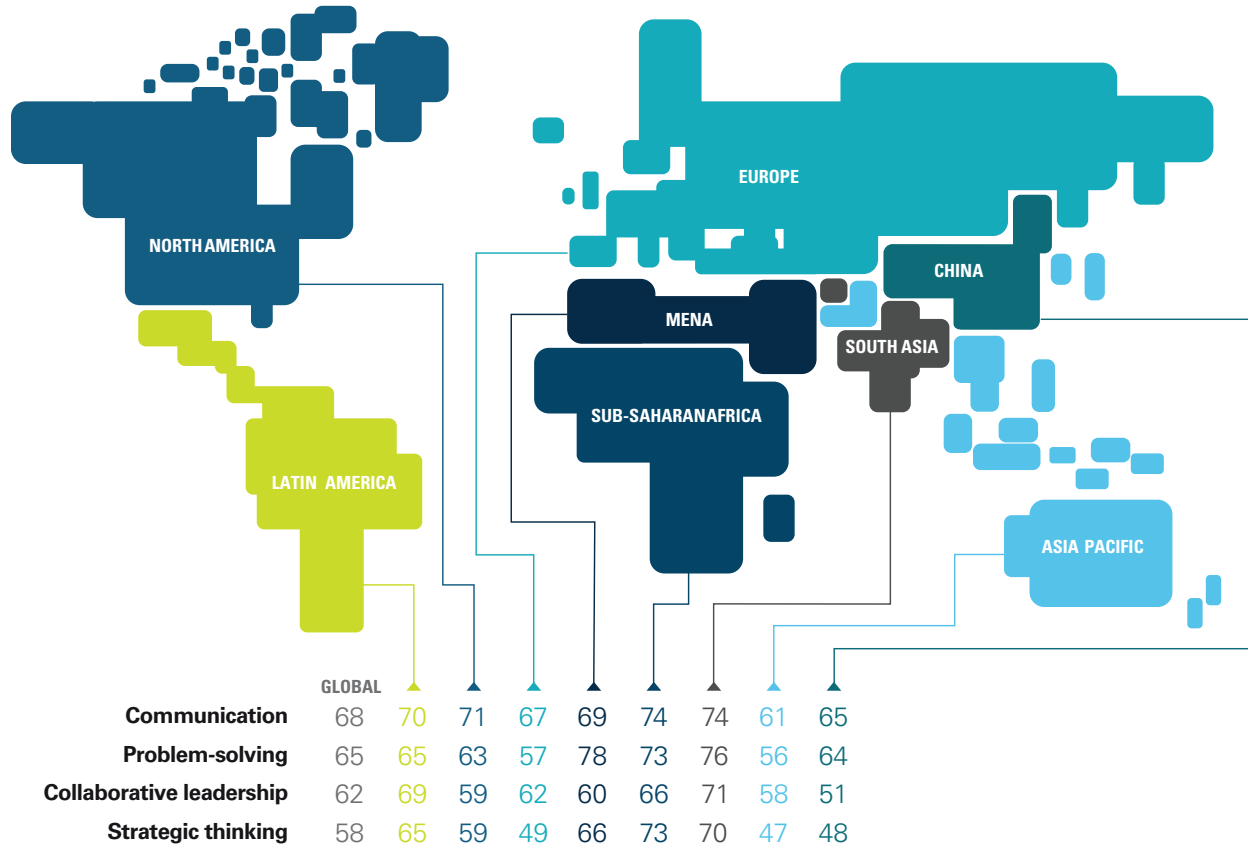## How can a Project Manager leverage Power Skills into their project?

Human-centered skills help individuals flourish in the workforce. For instance, clear communication facilitates practical problem-solving. Communication is critical to successful teamwork, especially with remote or hybrid workers. Traditionally, soft skills have been secondary to hard skills. Hard skills are technical abilities like designing prints or blueprints for engineering services. But power skills have become valuable since the hybrid work approach of many organizations in the workplace.

A project manager can leverage the power skills of their team members better by implementing the following strategies:

1. **Skills assessment:** Regularly evaluate team members' power skills to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

2. **Development:** Provide training and development opportunities that help team members build and refine their power skills, such as workshops, coaching, mentoring, and on-the-job experiences.

3. **Cross-functional collaboration:** Encourage cross-functional collaboration among team members to promote knowledge sharing, diversity of thought, and the development of skills such as communication, collaboration, and leadership.

4. **Technology integration:** Integrate technology into work processes and encourage team members to use technology to enhance their skills and productivity.

By leveraging the power skills of your team, an organization can create a more dynamic and adaptable workforce allowing project managers to adapt and react to evolving market trends and client needs, drive innovation, and achieve long-term success.

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Are others using Power Skills?

	GLOBAL								
Communication	68	70	71	67	69	74	74	61	65
Problem-solving	65	65	63	57	78	73	76	56	64
Collaborative leadership	62	69	59	62	60	66	71	58	51
Strategic thinking	58	65	59	49	66	73	70	47	48

Individual Power Skills Ranked per Region; Industry; Years in Project, Program and Portfolio Management (PPPM); and Project Management Professional (PMP)® Certification Percentage of respondents who indicate each power skill is critical to helping them fulfill organizational objectives.

CONCLUSION

A project manager's success can be increased with their ability to utilize their power skills effectively. The power skills discussed above are just a few that a project manager can utilize and develop their team to become more productive. The flexibility of power skills can be a powerful tool to identify teams' interests and invest in individual and team-based human development initiatives. By leveraging power skills, project managers can work smarter and faster, enabling them to create successful projects. Project managers play a fundamental role in the success of any project, and by leveraging their power skills, they can ensure their projects run smoothly and achieve their goals.

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Serving as an Associate Director of Program and Project Management at CAI, Patrick Hayes works with a team of experienced professionals in bringing integrated services to the client. A former Coast Guard Officer, Patrick specialized in human performance technology, focusing on international training and development to allied and developing countries. Patrick has over 22 years of experience planning and executing capital projects, with significant experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Patrick has a comprehensive understanding of the various workstreams and efforts necessary to achieve Operational Readiness in a manufacturing facility. Patrick has a BS in Business and Organizational Development, MBA in Organizational Operations Management, a Certified Six Sigma Black Belt, and multiple Project Management Certifications.