



Leading Projects Effectively

*Strengthening Your Project Team's Authority,
Credibility, and Transparency*



Helping build and sustain great organizations!

Jeffrey L. Russell



Jeff Russell, co-owner of **Russell Consulting, Inc. (RCI)** with his business and life partner Linda, specializes in helping leaders build productive, supportive, and motivating work environments. RCI helps companies develop their leadership and strengthen team performance to achieve their great performance goals and outcomes. By guiding the exploration of shared values,

developing strategies and actions to express these values-in-action, and building strategic thinking skills, RCI helps organizations achieve their strategic vision.

Through processes that include "visioning" sessions, Future Search conferences, strengthening collaborative decision making, leveraging the values and behaviors of RCI's Collaborative Mindset, and providing skill-building seminars to leaders and employees, RCI helps enhance long-term organizational effectiveness and performance.

Consulting Expertise

Jeff consults with companies in the areas of:

- Visioning and strategic planning
- Leadership development
- Leading and implementing change
- Performance management systems
- Employee engagement assessment
- Customer and employee focus groups
- Team assessment and intervention
- Training needs assessment
- Organizational design
- Self-managed teams
- Problem solving and decision making

Training Expertise

Jeff conducts an array of leadership and team development seminars on such topics as:

- Leadership in an Age of Permanent Whitewater
- Surviving difficult conversations
- Fearless performance reviews
- Leadership and strategic thinking/planning
- Leading fearless change
- Communication skills
- Dealing with difficult people
- DISC Behavioral Profiles

- 360 leadership assessment and development
- Effective meeting management
- Decision making and problem solving
- Managing conflict and win/win negotiations
- Performance management and coaching skills
- Team building fundamentals
- Team leadership and facilitation skills
- Customer service
- Systems Thinking the Art of Seeing the Wholes

Professional Background

Jeff serves as an adjunct faculty member at University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW-Milwaukee. He also teaches for the UW-Madison and UW-La Crosse Small Business Development Centers.

Jeff has a bachelor's in Humanism and Cultural Change and a Masters of Science degree in Industrial Relations from UW-Madison.

Before forming RCI, Jeff served as human resource coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). At DOA, Jeff developed and coordinated their employee assistance, leadership and employee development, and equal employment opportunity/affirmative action programs.

Jeff is a past president of the Board of Directors for the Greater Madison Area Society for Human Resource Management serving over 800 HR professionals in the Greater Madison area.

Conference Presenter and Author

Jeff is a sought-after speaker at state, national and international conferences. Recent presentations include:

- ♦ ASTD International Conferences — 2001 through 2011
- ♦ Jamaica Employer's Federation Conference, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009
- ♦ Minnesota Project Management Institute, PDD 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017
- ♦ Wisconsin SHRM Annual Conference, 2004 through 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019
- ♦ *Leading Change*, Shanghai, China, 2010
- ♦ *Emotional Intelligence in Action*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2012
- ♦ *Performance Management Summit*, Talent Management Alliance, Atlanta, GA, 2018

Jeff and his wife Linda have co-authored nine management books including ***Leading Change Training, Strategic Planning Training, Change Basics, Strategic Planning 101, Ultimate Performance Management***, and ***Fearless Performance Reviews*** (McGraw-Hill, 2014).

Helping Create and Sustain GREAT Organizations!

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The Challenges of Project Management and Stakeholder Engagement

What Goes Wrong in the Relationship Between Your Project Teams and Its Stakeholders?

What might cause your project not to be in sync with one or more of your stakeholders, including your project team members?

What Actions Can We Take to Strengthen Stakeholder Relationships?

What actions might project leaders take to strengthen stakeholder relationships to achieve greater authority and credibility?

What Actions Can We Take to Enhance Team Member Morale?

A project only becomes successful if team members are engaged and willing to do the work that the project requires of them.

What actions can we take to enhance team member engagement with and motivation for the project?

Project Stakeholders

These are the key people who have a “stake” in the project. They support the project team, lead the project team, do the work, are impacted by it, or benefit directly from the project's success:

- ❑ **Customer** — The person or group who has requested the project and receives the final project deliverable. The customer's needs and requirements define the project scope, timeline, and cost.
- ❑ **End User** — The individual or group (e.g., frontline employees, customers, suppliers, etc.) who ends up “using” or applying the deliverable requested by the customer. The end user's needs/requirements can sometimes be different from the project's customer — the project team should consider both needs.
- ❑ **Project Sponsor** — The person from an executive leadership level who approves the project scope, runs interference to clear the project for approval, acquires backing for allocating sufficient resources, ensures alignment between the project and the organization's strategic objectives, and acts as liaison between the project team and the leadership.
- ❑ **Project Leader** — The project manager or leader plays the central role of coordinating and integrating the work of the project team.
- ❑ **Team Members** — These individuals are the technical experts and specialists responsible for executing specific tasks and duties on the project. They work with the project leader to manage/coordinate the project and help produce the project deliverables.
- ❑ **Resource Managers** — The resource managers are the functional managers who agree to provide human (team members), information, or financial resources to the project team. Resource managers give some limited authority or control over the resource to the project leader.
- ❑ **Subject Matter Experts** — Individuals, typically not members of the project team, with whom the project team consults over the life of the project. SMEs bring unique experience and/or expertise in the area that is the target of the project team's work.

Strengthening Stakeholder Partnerships

Stakeholder partnerships require ongoing development and investment. Here are some suggestions for building and sustaining strong stakeholder partnerships:

1. **Map Project Stakeholders and Their Needs, _____ Points, and Concerns** —

Create a list of your project stakeholders, identifying their roles within the project, preferred forms and frequencies of communication, levels of influence and ownership over the project, and specific needs, pain points, and concerns that the project should be aware of.

Name	Dept/Area	Project Role	Preferred Communication Method	Level of Influence	Needs/Pain Points/Concerns
John	Marketing	Member	Email; weekly updates	High	Regular updates. Being out of the loop. Limited time for the project.
Julie	CFO	Sponsor	Email updates and face-to-face check-ins	High	Transparency. Hates being surprised. Wants frequent updates.
LaShanna	Program Support	End User	Email; monthly updates	Low	Simple solutions. Minimal work disruptions. Honoring her experience/knowledge.

2. **Actively _____ Stakeholders** — Involve them in decision-making processes, provide regular project updates, and offer frequent opportunities for feedback.
3. **Foster _____, Transparent, and Frequent Communication** — Provide frequent project updates, honest reporting of challenges the project faces, and a clear rationale for project decisions.
4. **Build _____ Through Empathy and Respect** — Actively listen, acknowledge their issues and concerns, and make personal connections that demonstrate a genuine concern for their interests and desired outcomes.
5. **Align on _____ Goals and Vision** — Ensure that project objectives reflect stakeholder interests to foster a shared commitment to project deliverables and outcomes.
6. **Promote a _____ Environment** — Actively collaborate with stakeholders on problem-solving and decision-making when their interests are at stake and utilize shared project platforms to enable them to track the project's progress.
7. **Recognize and _____ Contributions** — Celebrate project milestones and accomplishments, and acknowledge the contributions of stakeholders that facilitate the project's success.
8. **Invest in Long-Term _____** — Foster a relationship that involves ongoing dialogue and support that extends beyond the project's lifespan.

Improve Project Transparency

Transparency is key to the success of every project and a strong partnership with stakeholders. Here are some suggestions for ensuring project transparency:

1. **Define _____ Project Objectives and Deliverables** — Ensure that all project goals, expectations, and roles are well-documented and visible. There should be no surprises regarding project deliverables, timelines, accountabilities, and roles.
2. **Leverage Project Management _____** — Utilize platforms like Trello, Asana, or Jira to increase visibility into progress, tasks, and risks. These tools can keep all stakeholders informed about the project's status, deliverables, challenges, and more.
3. **_____ Key Decisions and Processes** — Maintain records of key decisions, workflows, and project changes, and make these records accessible to enhance accountability and clarity.
4. **Encourage _____ Dialogue and Feedback** — Establish accessible and structured communication channels to collect and share project improvement ideas from team members and stakeholders. Integrate the ideas generated into the project plan whenever possible and communicate to those who offered the ideas how their suggestions were incorporated.
5. **Be Honest About Challenges and _____** — Share potential project risks, roadblocks, and obstacles, and identify the actions the project team is taking to address these challenges. Proactively communicating the risks to the project and managing stakeholder perceptions of the project are key to maintaining project transparency.
6. **Ensure Information _____** — Make project documents, reports, and updates readily available to all relevant parties. When stakeholders are unaware of the project's status, they are likely to make assumptions about what is and is not going well with the project. These assumptions can erode stakeholder trust in your work and their partnership with you.

Enhance the Project Team's Credibility and Authority

When your project has credibility and authority, stakeholders are more likely to trust the work that you are doing and less likely to micro-manage or second-guess your decisions and actions. Strategies for building your credibility and authority include...

1. **Demonstrate _____ and Reliability** — Meet deadlines, deliver quality work, and swiftly address issues. Demonstrate through results that you are a trusted partner in their success.
2. **Showcase Your _____ and Experience** — Highlight past project successes, highlight your project management credentials (e.g., certificates earned, PMI membership, classes completed), and your knowledge of their work.
3. **Maintain a Strong Reputation Through _____** — Act ethically. When things go wrong with the project, be transparent about what happened, its causes, and the actions that the team is taking to address the problem. Hold the project team accountable for results, setbacks, and taking action to mitigate project mistakes.
4. **Be Proactive in _____ Management** — Identify risks early, communicate effective mitigation plans, and track them clearly and visibly.
5. **Deliver Consistent _____ and innovation** — Provide quality, cost-efficiency, and innovative improvements throughout the project.
6. **Provide Clear, _____ Documentation** — Ensure project plans, objectives, financials, and outcomes are transparent and easily reviewed.
7. **Commit to _____, Transparent Practices** — Uphold integrity and transparency in financial management, reporting, and decision-making processes. Tell the truth early to demonstrate that the project team is an honest partner.

Maintaining the Project Team's Morale

Maintaining engagement and morale in a project team is crucial for productivity and success. Here are some key strategies to keep your team motivated throughout the project lifecycle:

1. **Clear _____ and Goals:** Ensure that every team member understands the project's purpose, objectives, and their role in achieving success. When people see the bigger picture, they feel more invested.
2. **Effective _____:** Foster open and transparent communication. Regular check-ins, updates, and feedback loops help team members feel heard and valued. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing.
3. **Recognition and _____:** Acknowledge individual and team contributions, celebrate both big and small milestones, and provide positive reinforcement. A simple "thank you" or public recognition can go a long way.
4. **Empowerment and _____:** Give team members ownership over their tasks and decisions. Trusting them to take initiative boosts confidence and engagement.
5. **Professional _____ Opportunities:** Provide learning and development opportunities, such as mentorship, training, or challenging assignments. People stay engaged when they feel they are growing.
6. **Work-_____ Balance:** Encourage a healthy balance between work and personal life. Avoid burnout by setting realistic deadlines and promoting flexibility where possible.
7. **Strong Team _____:** Foster a positive and inclusive team environment by organizing team-building activities, promoting camaraderie, and encouraging collaboration.
8. **Address _____ Proactively:** Be attentive to concerns and roadblocks, addressing conflicts quickly and fairly, and provide support when needed.
9. **Regular Feedback and _____:** Solicit feedback from team members on the project's progress and make adjustments as needed. Continuous improvement keeps engagement high.
10. **Lead by _____:** A motivated leader inspires a motivated team. Show enthusiasm, commitment, and resilience to set the tone for the team.