

All for one, one for all

Improving teamwork and learning to work with others helps projects succeed and therefore boosts your own career, say

MANDY FLINT and **ELISABET VINBERG HEARN**

The busyness of a project manager's day-to-day business means problems are often brushed aside with the hope that they will just disappear – which they rarely do.

Be proactive instead. Address any issues and create a successful project team. Here we list some of the most common problems that project teams face. By confronting these – and therefore improving project outcomes – you can boost your own career, while working better together benefits everyone on the team.

EFFECTIVE PROJECT TEAMS FEARLESSLY SHARE REGULARLY AND GENEROUSLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF EVERYONE, AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS

1 Lack of trust

Trust is crucial to teamwork, and it starts with people knowing each other. Team members absolutely need to be acquainted, both professionally and personally, particularly in projects where tensions will run high at some point. Otherwise members won't understand each other, they won't want to engage because they haven't made that human connection and they won't fully trust each other.

2 Conflict and tension

Conflict or a difference of opinion can be healthy and, if carefully managed, can trigger useful debates. It can make people think differently, expanding knowledge and insight; innovation can happen and results flourish. Different opinions are not a bad thing. It's how we handle the conflict that makes a difference.

3 Not sharing information

Knowledge is not power – unless it's shared. Project team members all bring a unique set of skills, knowledge, experience and wisdom to the table. Effective project teams fearlessly share regularly and generously for the benefit of everyone and for the benefit of the project's success. This makes the capability of the whole team grow and gives the team more power.

4 Low engagement

Team engagement is crucial to business success. If engaged, team members on a given project will be interested in what they do, committed to the project mission and willing to go the extra mile. They are there in body as well as mentally and emotionally. The key to engagement is involvement – by involving others you make it impossible to stay detached.

5 Lack of transparency

Without transparency, trust will suffer – both within the project team and with the end client. Transparency is becoming the presumed norm in project and programme management and expectations are growing. It starts at the top: the more senior you are, the more responsibility you have to be a role model for this. Employees will follow the leader's behaviours, good or bad. When this is done well it can have a positive cascade effect throughout the organisation.

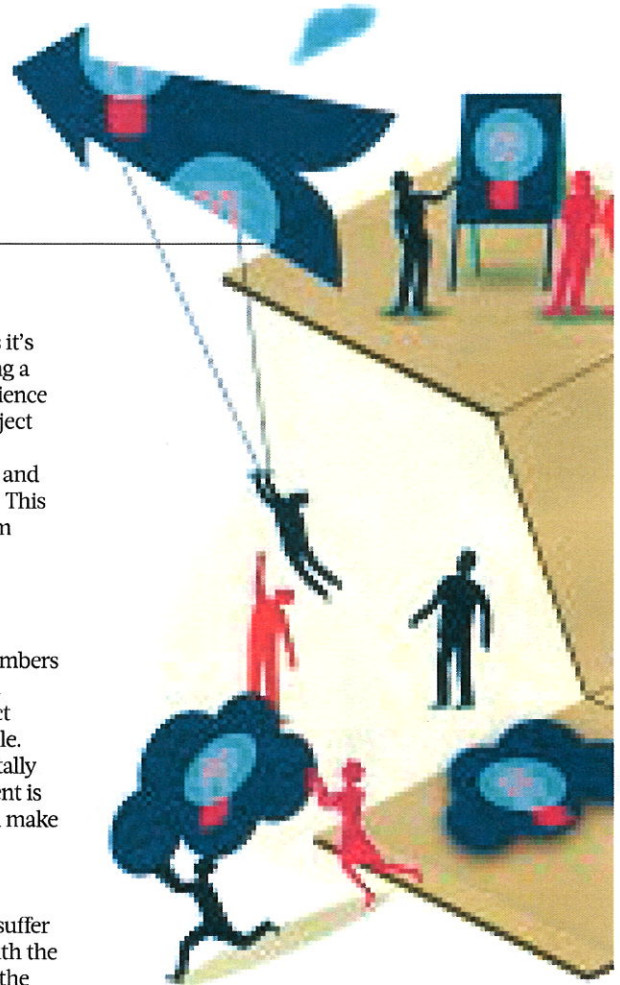
6 No long-term thinking

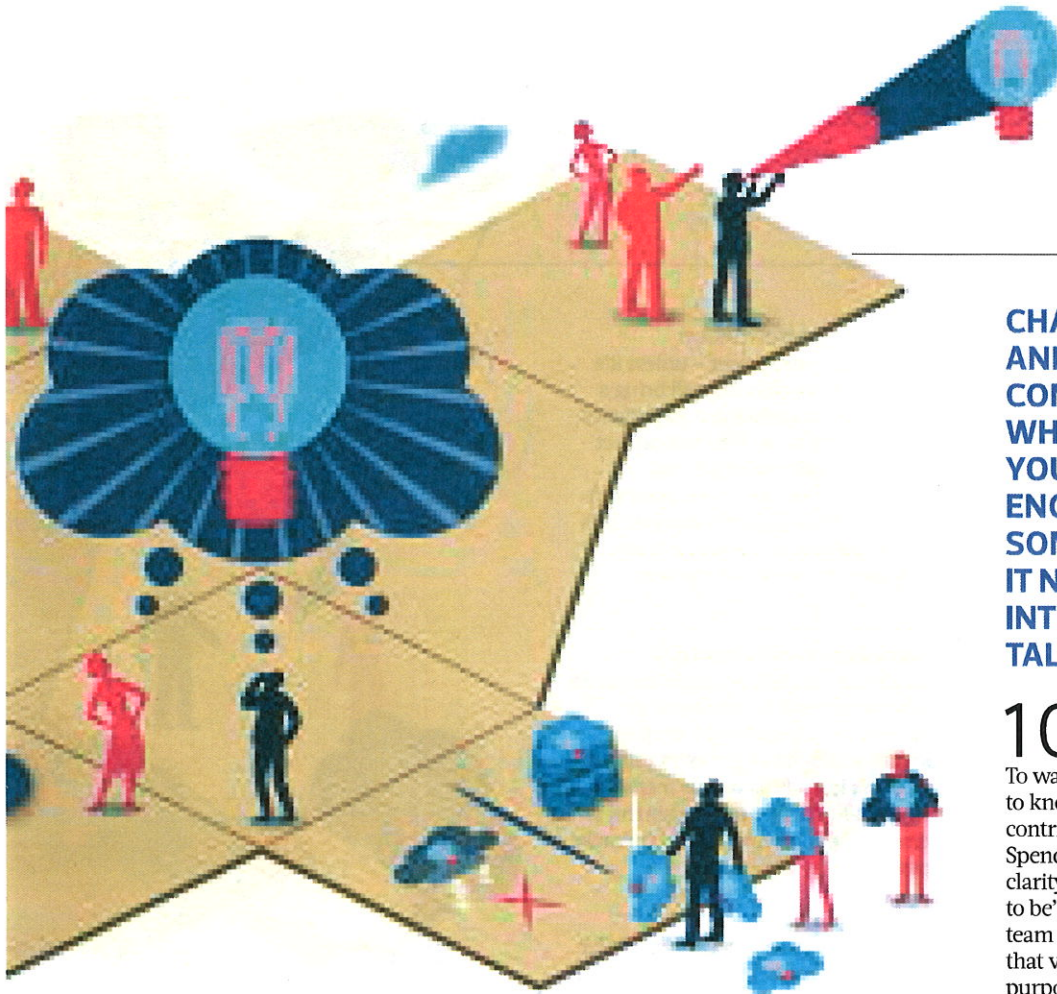
Project managers have to get beyond day-to-day urgencies, see the big picture and consider how all parts of the project fit together. For a project team, this means being able to think beyond your own area, about how you fit into the wider change programme or project and how you impact the end client's experience. This is about business sustainability and long-term success. Everyone is busy, but just being busy is not enough. Long-term project success requires long-term thinking.

IF ENGAGED, TEAM MEMBERS ON A GIVEN PROJECT WILL BE INTERESTED IN WHAT THEY DO, COMMITTED TO THE PROJECT MISSION AND WILLING TO GO THE EXTRA MILE

7 Badly perceived, not delivering

A project team has a brand, an image and a reputation created by the actions and behaviours of the team members. A large part of the perception is driven by how





CHANGE STARTS AND ENDS WITH COMMUNICATION. WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE COMMUNICATED ENOUGH, COMMUNICATE SOME MORE – AND IT NEEDS TO BE INTERACTIVE: LISTEN, TALK AND INVOLVE

10 **Not going in the same direction**

To walk in the same direction, a team needs to know where it is going or what it is contributing to (vision) and why (purpose). Spend time on this with your team. This clarity provides a framework and 'reason to be' that can rally any given project team to work together. Keep in mind that visions need to be compelling and purposes meaningful. People respond to the importance of both.

well the team delivers on expectations and promises made. As a project team, you need to make sure that everyone understands and takes responsibility for their roles in creating the perception of the team. This includes both what is delivered on the project and how it is delivered.

8 **Poor change management**

Change is constant and unless carefully managed, it can be detrimental to teamwork and results. Change starts and ends with communication. Whenever you think you've communicated enough, you need to communicate some more – and it needs to be interactive: listen, talk and involve. Be aware of the change curve, or the four predictable stages of change: denial/resistance, emotional, hopeful, commitment. Each stage is needed, but

how long someone stays at each stage can be managed and kept to a minimum.

9 **Working in silos**

Silo working is a reality for many project teams. Team members may sit side by side but not really work together. A great project team can be like the three musketeers – all for one and one for all. So if you are in a team, you may as well really be in it. Working together in earnest is about making the most of the fact that you are a team. Honour your time and efforts by seeing yourself as a full-time member of the team, not just an individual contributor. Imagine how great it would feel to be part of a team where everyone is thinking of the team and not just themselves – make that project a success by working together.

If you want to create a great project team, pay particular attention to behaviours. How we behave has an impact on others and affects how they behave. It's when we change our behaviours that we can achieve transformational change. **■**



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