

Analyzing emotion in Project Management

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Abstract

This article analyzes different ways emotions have been studied and applied to promote better communication and working conditions, leading to more successful projects and helping build stronger relationships between members. Project management relies on emotions because it depends on human communication and interactions, which can help reduce or escalate conflict. Emotional closeness is essential in interpersonal interactions and relationships. It is also essential to motivate members. Special attention is given to communication inside project teams since it is essential in building trust and developing strong relationships. When emotions are handled adequately, trust and strong bonds develop. In project management, members are bound together by a sense of common identity, sharing professional values and interests. The stronger the connections between members, the higher the productivity and support. Specific ways to connect in project management emerge due to the very nature of projects and the closeness of the members.

Keywords: project management; emotions; positive; negative; communication; engagement.

Analizando las emociones en la Gestión de Proyectos

Resumen

Este artículo analiza las diferentes formas en que se han estudiado y aplicado las emociones para promover una mejor comunicación y condiciones de trabajo, lo que conduce a proyectos más exitosos y ayuda a construir relaciones más sólidas entre los miembros. La gestión de proyectos se basa en las emociones porque depende de la comunicación e interacciones humanas, lo que puede contribuir a reducir o aumentar los conflictos. La cercanía emocional es un aspecto importante de las interacciones interpersonales y las relaciones. También es esencial para motivar a los miembros. Se presta especial atención a la comunicación dentro de los equipos, ya que es esencial para construir confianza y desarrollar relaciones sólidas. Cuando las emociones se manejan adecuadamente, se desarrolla la confianza y también se fortalecen los vínculos. En la gestión de proyectos, los miembros están unidos por un sentido de identidad común, compartiendo valores e intereses profesionales. Cuanto más fuertes sean las conexiones entre los miembros, mayor será la productividad y el apoyo. En la gestión de proyectos, surgen formas específicas de conexión debido a la naturaleza misma de los proyectos y la cercanía de los miembros.

Palabras clave: gestión de proyectos; emociones; positivas; negativas; comunicación; compromiso.

1 Introduction

Project management has become one of the leading ways of working in organizations, and numerous businesses perform most of their work through projects. Projects have important restrictions, particularly triple constraints, which involve cost, time, and scope [1], positively or negatively affecting the resulting quality. One of the most valuable elements of working on projects is what develops inside a small group in terms of collaboration because individual contributions are visible, which does not happen when the

organization is too large. The smaller the group, the more likely project members will participate in discussions, focus on issues, show initiative, and be more interested in offering solutions [2]. This also reduces perceived conflict due to others' points of view.

The relationships between emotional intelligence and project success have been explored [3] under the assumption that managers with higher emotional intelligence manage their responsibilities differently, inspiring members. The importance of emotional management, especially in adverse conditions, has also been reported, highlighting ways in

which it helps build reliable, healthy, and productive relationships, social connections, and better ways of communication [4].

Emotions are required to communicate effectively [5]. Adequate management of emotions when communicating with others can lead to positive and joyful encounters, while the opposite can lead to hostile environments that hinder interactions and collective efforts [6]. Due to their importance, emotions are increasingly analyzed in the workplace and project management, including emotional intelligence and awareness in project management [7]. Positive and negative emotions, such as anxiety, excitement, passion, and nervousness, which occur in different stages of the project lifecycle, can help or harm projects since they can influence team performance [6,8]. Due to their time frame being shorter than other activities, project work can become stressful, and stress is one of the significant factors that destroy effective communication. Therefore, emotional intelligence becomes essential in project management [5,6,8] as a preventive strategy to manage the negative influences of conflict [9].

Tolerance and compassion are among the soft skills most required to develop successful projects. They are the essence of peacemaking, and peacemaking is at the heart of life [10]. Emotional closeness has been described as the degree to which individuals perceive others to have caring feelings for them and be emotionally supportive [11]. Essentially, it brings people together, related to the idea of community and group flow, which refers to interactions [12].

The idea of a united and loving family that brings advantages to business helps explain moments of high performance, synchrony, and a sense of being "in the zone"; it is a state of unselfconscious awareness in which every individual action seems to be right, and the work appears to work in synchronicity [12,13].

In dancing, playing music, and sports, togetherness involves listening, awareness of self and others, and relatedness as it is experienced, or better yet, how bonding the relationship feels. Togetherness can be connected to Bauman's idea of being-for [14]. "Being-for is a leap from isolation to unity; yet not towards a fusion, that mystics' dream of shedding the burden of identity... being-for is entered for the sake of safeguarding and defending the uniqueness of the Other; and that guardianship undertaken by the self as its task and responsibility makes the self truly unique, in the sense of being irreplaceable" [14].

In projects, every decision made in the team is collaborative and shared [15], which leads to a sense of community. It has been demonstrated that creating a sense of community in the workplace and in project management makes most work more satisfying, creative, productive, profitable, and cost-effective [16] because relationships precede obligations, and reciprocal obligations flow from personal relationships, helping create both one's identity and that of the group [17].

This results in increased support and a unified common purpose. When people participate in everyday practices, they become dependent on each other, making collective decisions and committing themselves to their well-being and that of others and the group [18].

Organizing through projects is essential since it warrants that the means are prioritized in service of the project's objectives. Project work is an example of subsidiarity because the project manager and the team are entrusted with huge responsibilities [19].

Collective ownership develops; each member feels that they have a duty to act to protect and care for something that is theirs. There must be specific rules of management, monitoring, and compliance with the rules. There is pro-organizational and collectivistic behavior, such as collective production, in which the members deliver services in reciprocal relationships, which helps strengthen the capabilities of all members.

2 Materials and methods

The methodology used to develop the research was the literature review. Information was collected from various sources, especially Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost databases, business publications and information from the Project Management Institute and mainstream media. The key words used were emotions, emotion management, emotional intelligence and project management. The sources were evaluated, the information was synthesized, and the most relevant ideas about emotions in project management were set forward to identify existing gaps on the topic, which can be further explored in research.

3 Results

3.1 The emotional economy and emotions at work

Goleman has stated that every interaction has an emotional subtext, which can lead us to make people feel better or worse. The moods we perceive and feel will last longer than the interaction or the encounter, resulting in an emotional afterglow [20]. Every interaction has gains and losses, which leads to the emotional economy.

There is a common belief that emotions interfere with work, but studies have found that the opposite is true. Emotions have been considered the way to achieve better working experiences [21]. Emotions are influenced by events that happen at work [22]. People who experience positive emotional states are more proactive, flexible, and goal-oriented [23].

Showing emotions at work is considered to boost productivity. According to different studies, two-thirds of workers suggest that showing their emotions at work makes them more productive, and nearly half are more comfortable doing so now than they were pre-pandemic [24].

Working on projects elicits many emotions, and sometimes, such emotions start with the fear of the unknown for those who have never worked on projects before. Also, since people from different areas and levels will be working together, there is a fear of misunderstanding others.

Projects sometimes produce extreme environments, amplified by urgency [25], creating spaces for extreme emotions. Interpersonal emotion regulation is essential for an adequate organizational life, although people tend to suppress emotions most of the time.

Emotional training has been used to promote positive feelings at work. It includes cultivating confidence, autonomous initiatives, responsibility, and productivity [26]. Emotional training also helps avoid burnout and understand how to deal with others' emotional outbursts, as well as antipathies, envy, resentment, and even anger.

3.2 *Communication: the essence of understanding other's emotions*

Nothing is worse than talking to someone and feeling that one is not being listened to. The effectiveness of good communication relies heavily on the ability to empathize with and listen to people at all levels [27]. Language, or at least a common vocabulary, is of the essence in communicating. The importance of sharing a language lies in reinforcing a similar way of life and in understanding or appreciating the other's different interpretations or points of view. Still, it is important to understand that having a common vocabulary does not necessarily presuppose a common meaning to the concepts shared [17].

In order to increase trust, communication needs to go two ways: be fair and dependable and show competence. When employees need to tell their leaders bad news about the project not going as expected or about needed changes in the scope, time, or cost, they might not be eager to speak. By contrast, when the project is right on track or when unexpected positive things happen, such as reducing costs, it is easy to get and provide information to others. In good times, everyone wants to share the good news. Natural obstacles to trust and candor include fear, pride, politics, and dislikes.

In hierarchical organizations, people in lower positions tend to be more cautious about disclosing problems, weaknesses, mistakes, and failings and resort to self-protection, sometimes hiding valuable information. For instance, people sometimes keep quiet about a developing problem because they think that they might be able to solve it or that it would eventually solve itself. They hide the information to protect a client instead of losing him.

Trust takes time to build, yet it can be destroyed quickly. Betraying confidence, breaking a promise, humiliating, lying, withholding information, excluding someone—the list is endless—can destroy trust. Project leaders can also destroy trust by not giving credit to other members when they deserve it.

The most important signs of trust being broken are when the information flow deteriorates, and valuable information does not reach the adequate stakeholders. The group's morale is low, there is a lack of enthusiasm and engagement, reduced cooperation, and complaints emerge regarding the workload, the overall working conditions, and events about other members, further eroding personal relationships. Members will start to avoid dealing with problems, which will end up being dumped onto other members or the leader.

As trust evaporates, employees will be unwilling to speak the whole truth, withholding important information, and their messages will become ambiguous. It will be possible to identify certain non-verbal signs, such as increasing physical distance between members, and there will be changes in

routines, such as having coffee or walking to the water cooler and chatting, as well as closed doors, even with an open-door policy. Finally, evidence will come from outside the organization in the form of customer complaints, lost customers, decreased productivity, and, ultimately, deteriorating quality.

In order for people to be able to work together, they must first be able to be together so that they can communicate with each other and listen. The act of listening implies interiorizing the words of others, valuing them, and sending a sign of recognition and acknowledgment that will allow openness to new horizons and new ideas [28]. Leaders need to create conditions so that members feel secure enough to speak their minds. When speaking, it is important to be attentive to the reactions of others and how they respond.

There are multiple moments in which authentic listening can be used in business settings, such as during meetings, recruitment interviews, planning sessions, and every activity at work. Leaders need to be aware of all possibilities of communication contacts and to listen to what all members have to say. Listening is, in essence, the recognition of the other as a human person. In the same way, the leader needs to be able to listen to the silences because they convey important meanings.

Leaders need to be aware that numerous factors can negatively impact their ability to fully listen and acknowledge the other person; these include prejudices, tiredness, and the belief that we know what the other person is thinking or meaning. Therefore, leaders should avoid precipitation.

Listening is an important part of human relations. In order to develop trust, one needs to listen. Listening abilities have become of great value in today's business as they lead to understanding. When people in business fail to understand each other, the results can be costly as they may result in inefficiencies, such as errors in names, dates, and places and forgetting previous agreements [29,30]. The listener needs to refrain from firing his thoughts back to the person talking and avoid judging because it leads to a sense of rejection, which negatively affects people. Approval, on the other hand, creates a positive climate as it recognizes the value of others.

It is important to become good listeners so that people can talk freely, communication can have an adequate flow, and the message will not be distorted. Presence listening needs to be done with an openness of will, heart, and spirit, becoming unconditional witnesses with unconditional love for others while being authentic. This will result in cultivating listening abilities that are essential to function in the space of the collective.

3.3 *Connecting through emotions: Esprit de corps; brotherhood, sisterhood, and fraternity; communityship and teamship*

Every member needs to feel connected. Regarding the leader, employees perceive an environment in which the leader makes an effort to form an interpersonal relationship with them. In terms of peers, employees perceive an environment in which they trust their colleagues and where their colleagues make an effort to form an interpersonal connection with them [31].

Internal connectedness happens in organizations with strong values-driven cultures. Common identity strives to achieve a shared vision; they work together for the common good. This results in a sense of fulfillment for making a difference in their communities to serve humanity and, ultimately, the planet. This cultural glue makes the difference between a good company and a great *one*.

The idea of a collective soul or a mental or moral contagion stems from common ideas, attitudes, emotions, and sentiments communicated from one individual to another and propagate and multiply. In certain circumstances, and only under certain circumstances, an agglomeration of individuals possess novel and strong characters different from each individual who is part of it. Conscient personality vanishes, sentiments and ideas become oriented in the same direction, and a collective soul is formed [32].

Even when there are social and cultural differences, none of these differences oppose the psychological law of mental unity [32].

3.3.1 *The spirit of the body: esprit de corps*

Spirituality has always been an inherent part of project management. Some of the best examples are temples, pyramids, churches, and large monuments built at different times, in which spirituality can be equated to meaning and purpose. Modern-day project managers want to create a sense of the *esprit de corps* in their teams, which means understanding and honoring the team's collective spirit [33].

In French, the phrase *esprit de corps* reflects a connection with the community, and it is visible, especially in the military, where people's lives are at risk and when it is the collective that keeps them safe. A familiar spirit exists among members, bringing inspiration and enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the group [34,35]. It also signifies common interest, responsibility, and action "and a sentiment of harmony existing among employees in smoothly functioning organizations" [36]. It is about staying strong and thriving by regularly being tested with adversity and becoming smarter and tougher [37]. Unity was the single most important element, as a "unifying set of values and beliefs" [38].

High sociability has some benefits [37], as it helps morale and *esprit de corps*. Community life can be fun and exciting, generous and contagious, and where individuals can share a good life together.

Blumer circular reaction [38] is a collective process in which each individual will produce stimulation to which other individuals will respond, and so will the others. Interaction processes become essential to establishing engagement. In the circular reaction, a contagion effect will happen, being passed from certain members of the collective to others as an epidemic, and the leaders will be responsible for activating the required processes to help develop the *esprit de corps*, which will become the foundation to ensure group cohesion [32].

When considering leadership, although followers might have an interest of their own, the leader needs to develop close relationships and create an *esprit de corps* so that individuals will set competing private interests aside.

3.3.2 *Brotherhood, sisterhood, fraternity*

The familial interdependence and responsibility for the other are founded upon a deepened and expanded conception of self-interest or the common good. The common good is based on respecting human dignity and creating a fraternal community, searching for a better life for the brotherhood of man and his community [39]. Brotherhood is a type of solidarity and fraternity and the moral cohesion of society [40] and reflects a desire for greater mutuality and reciprocity in social relations [41].

Brotherhood is achieved through strong ethics in project management, which also increases loyalty and promotes harmony and trust [42].

3.3.3 *Communityship*

A form of organizing characterized by collective leadership, it is reflected in personal commitment and collective engagement, as well as an energetic workforce [43]. Developed from the need for more humane and respectful organizations, it illustrates collective influence, which is the social capital in organizations [43].

Social initiatives require a leadership that is deeply embedded in communityship. The term was coined by Henry Mintzberg. It is basically about how managers are responsible for their own institutions, i.e. municipalities, as a community driven by engagements and strong ethical beliefs and standards, it is a matter of sustainability of public services and organization, rather than short-sighted beliefs in profit [44].

3.3.4 *Membership*

The attraction of group membership is not just the need to belong but the desire to achieve something by means of membership [45]. Associations exist to fulfill the purposes that a group has in common [46]. In clubs, membership is voluntary; individuals decide to belong because they consider that the membership creates benefits and are willing to pay a fee.

Club goods are a private alternative to the provision of public or collective goods, such as recreation facilities, theaters, military alliances, golf courses, swimming pools, and health clinics. The club can be inclusive and should involve everyone who wants to join. Each member reduces everyone's cost through sharing, as the cost spreads over a larger number of payers. In this sense, adding members creates the benefits of reduced costs. If the club is exclusive, membership size has to be limited. An exclusive club shares a good; the benefits decrease as the group size increases.

3.3.5 *Teamship and teaming*

Projects require teamwork. Teamship can be explained as the collective ability to work in a team to achieve common goals in an environment facilitated by strong communication [47]. Teaming is a new way of working, which implies collaboration to fulfill interdependent tasks. Edmondson has declared that it is teamwork on the fly, and an engine of

organizational learning [48]. It includes relating to others, attentive listening to different perspectives and points of view, coordinating actions, and making shared decisions. The most important aspect of teaming is that every member needs to be vigilant and aware of others' needs, roles, and perspectives [48].

In teaming, a new way of learning is required, starting with a basic mindset about human beings. People who work in teams need to be responsible, accountable, respectful to others, understand conflict, and accept responsibility. In contrast, leaders must trust those they lead and create hospitable team-building and learning conditions. Learning together is the best way to get to know others through direct feedback and suggestions for improvement. It is about creating synergies through teamwork. Teaming is visible in orchestras that can create and maintain harmony. Teaming makes it possible to identify the skillsets of others and important aspects of their personality that can benefit the job.

Teaming has a positive effect on people's work experiences, making work more interesting, enriching, and meaningful. Employees learn from each other, and people can combine their knowledge, work together, and improve quality [48]. Teaming is about harnessing teams' energy, making everyone willing to engage and take responsibility in collective endeavors [49].

Teaming and leading require coordination and structure because it takes leadership to understand and solve conflicts and to promote conversations to improve. It is the leader who helps build shared understanding and coordinates actions. Leaders need to frame the situation for learning, make a psychologically safe space for the team, learn to learn from failure, and span occupational and cultural boundaries [48]. They must communicate a clear and compelling purpose and the need for collaboration, removing visible and invisible boundaries that create group divisions. If people do not feel safe and secure, they cannot express themselves freely. Framing is crucial for enrolling people in any substantial behavioral change, avoiding ambiguous signals, and facilitating understanding of personal and group expectations because not everyone understands work in the same way, and solving problems is unlikely to occur when people do not understand and care about a common purpose [48].

Teaming results in high-performance teams that achieve common objectives with a common orientation, the participation of all members, and a clear and stimulating objective in a favorable context.

3.3.6 Team spirit

Building a team is complex and lengthy work; it requires working intensely in the team's motion, which is related to long-term success. Team spirit includes the sense of community and the need to be recognized, respect for others, self-care, the drive for success, and the need to feel loved [50]. The team needs to be understood as a system. In a team, sound systems of relationships make suitable structures, not the other way around [50]. Team spirit includes speaking to each other simply and directly without leaving things unsaid. It is about understanding each other and mutual support. It is difficult to define it; it is lived and felt. The members are

happy to be together; there is pleasure in encounters, and rituals take place.

Exceptional projects are characterized by excellent team spirit. In project management, team spirit is called project spirit. When project spirit is achieved, members are dedicated to the team's mission, support each other, and are proud to be a part of the team. Project spirit is the driver that unleashes untapped power, leading to excitement about working together and high team morale [51].

4 Ten essential, actionable recommendations for project managers

1. Create a safe space so that everyone feels safe expressing their emotions.
2. Start every day by asking the team members how they feel. Share those emotions in the group. Find similarities and differences and talk about the main causes of those emotions so that empathy can develop.
3. Validate everyone's emotions, both positive and negative, about the project.
4. Identify positive emotions and have each member share them with others, creating a collective soul or a collective feel about the project.
5. Help develop a *spirit de corps* and brotherhood culture in which everyone is willing to help others. Promote pay-forward strategies
6. Provide training on emotional intelligence.
7. Offer emotional support when needed, professionally (therapy), or through active listening and support.
8. Incorporate emotional intelligence evaluations from the moment of talent selection and through their organizational life.
9. Use that information to create specific training programs and mutual support.
10. Develop spaces leading to better communication, empathy, a sense of community, respect, and social networks.

Conclusion

This article presents general considerations regarding emotion and work and shows positive group dynamics, which result when emotions are adequately managed inside project teams.

Engaging ways of integration and collaboration emerge when emotions are adequately managed inside the project. Strong connections are developed with a shared identity, empathy, and understanding. Connection enables the best of what the many bring for the benefit of the collective one [52]. A shared identity in project management can be connected to the nature of the project, why people are getting together to work, their mission, their values, and what makes them inspired and proud. Empathy also needs to be shared; this happens when people in the project get to know and care about each other. They are no longer strangers; they value others and are valued and are sensitive to the feelings of others [52].

In project management, shared understanding is essential.

It happens when everyone in the team is well-informed on important matters, and their opinions and ideas are valued. Conversation flows, resulting in a high degree of understanding.

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