

# Developing a New Generation of Alpha Project Managers

*Emergent Research Forum (ERF)*

**Amy J. Connolly**

James Madison University  
ajconnol@gmail.com

**Daniel Rush**

Boise State University  
daniel.rush@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

Alpha project managers (the top 2%) lead more successful projects, because they plan and communicate significantly more than the other 98%. How can we train more project managers to be like them? Managing a project team requires good communication and a certain level of emotional intelligence. But are these skills innate? If not, how can they be taught? This paper describes a study to measure students' emotional intelligence before and after completing an undergraduate course in IT project management. The course incorporated active learning exercises focused on interpersonal communication and building students' emotional intelligence. This study is the second in an emerging and multi-stage research effort that started with new curriculum development at one university last year. In this study, we deployed the curriculum intervention in a second university and with a second group of students at the first university. Additionally, a formal measure of soft skills was adopted from the literature for validation in this context before we launch a broader study. Data collection is in progress. This study is intended to provide empirical and theoretical evidence to support pedagogical interventions to help train the next generation of emotionally intelligent alpha project managers.

## **Keywords**

IT project management, alpha project managers, emotional intelligence, active learning, TEIQue-SF