

11-6-2020

Analyzing Critical Factors: Motivating Project Managers

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Scholarly Commons Citation

Henkel, T. G., & Haley, G. R. (2020). Analyzing Critical Factors: Motivating Project Managers. *The Journal of Modern Project Management*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.19255/JMPM02409>

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ANALYZING THE CRITICAL FACTORS MOTIVATING PROJECT MANAGERS

AMIDST THE CHALLENGES OF AN
EVER-CHANGING MODERN
GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

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KEYWORDS: PROJECT MANAGER; MOTIVATION;
ENGAGEMENT; MULTIGENERATIONAL

Abstract: The concept of project management has evolved tremendously over the years. In addition to the technostucture changes that have taken place, the recent pandemic and sociocultural events and subsequent reflection that has occurred have impacted how people live and work. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the factors that create a culture of modern-day multigenerational project managers to be fully emotionally engaged when managing and leading organization projects. One hundred twenty practicing project managers working in a variety of industries representing different countries were interviewed. The findings identify the top six most frequently cited factors. The paper then explores ways to assist organizational leaders in design work environments that support modern-day multigenerational project managers to be fully emotionally engaged when managing and leading organization projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project management has become essential in all industries. Very little in an organization can be more taxing for a project manager than leading project team members to accomplish a project's critical components of time, scope, cost, quality, resources, and risk to achieve an organization's objectives in today's twenty-first-century global marketplace (Pullan, & Prokopi, 2016; Stobierski, 2019; Westland, 2018). Different from operations management, where the focus is ongoing processes of production of goods and services, project managers lead teams that focus on temporary endeavors that create unique products or services with a starting point and end date. Therefore, project managers must have an understanding of knowledge, leadership, and the interpersonal communications skills needed to bring all of a project's parts together to realize a successful outcome (Wen & Qiang, 2019).

Historically, project management has been viewed as a set of tools and concepts (Li, Lu, Cui, & Han, 2019). Li et al. also note that projects have come to be viewed as temporary organizations. Project management is now seen as a profession that is always changing and facing new challenges in a global environment (Cote, 2019). As a result, classical organizational behavior (OB) theory has been integrated into the fabric of project management. OB has several core themes: attitude development, motivation, and engagement. Each one holds the key to project success and stakeholder satisfaction. The project manager and his or her team members are among the constituents (Claizen, (2017).

The very success of a project relies on an organizational culture that motivates and engages project managers. This, in turn, favorably impacts the achievement of performance and bottom-line profits (Anderson, 2017; Ebnglund & Bucero, 2019). Liselore, Van der Heijden, Savelsbergh, and Storm (2019) stated that the number of people who assume project manager responsibilities is increasing every year. Assigning a project manager who has the right personality and leadership skills can be a challenge for any organization or business (Meng & Boyd, 2017). Exploring what motivates project managers can help us achieve a good person-job fit and better understand how project-based work can be managed more effectively. Research has shown that salary and bonuses are important, but so is the organization's culture (Lubin, 2020).

Dean and East (2019) point out that companies are searching for workers who are self-motivated and who can work

independently. They note that lean workforces have resulted in individuals taking on more work with less time for training. Cote (2019) notes that organizations are now faced with a diverse multi-generational workforce, with four and five generations of people working together. Cote goes on to say that these individuals' needs may be similar to their generation while being unique and different due to their characteristics, values, and behaviors. This will require different strategies for motivating employees to be engaged in their job. Ultimately, for organizations to be successful in motivating a multigenerational workforce, strategies will need to be designed, developed, and implemented to accommodate the specific intrinsic and extrinsic needs of each employee.

It should be noted that motivation is typically associated with both energy and directedness (Patanakul, Pinto & Pinto, 2016). Goal interdependence among projects within a program can motivate project managers to engage in cooperative interactions, which allows them to accomplish individual project goals as well as overall program goals (Chang, 2017). When project managers understand the benefits of knowledge management, see how the knowledge transferred is used, and experience the business organization's reaction to it, they are more likely to put forth the energy needed to see a project through to successful completion (Bell, van Waveren & Steyn, 2016). Additionally, Patanakul et al. have noted that there are six factors that can impact project managers' motivation: (1) interpersonal interaction, (2) tasks, (3) general working conditions, (4) empowerment, (5) personal development, and (6) compensation. Given the challenging nature of project management and the need to retain the services of outstanding project managers, it is essential that a business' leadership understands the factors which account for project managers being fully engaged with their work. Understanding what generates full engagement in star performers remains ambiguous (Mann & Adkins, 2018).

The objective of this qualitative research study is to discover what project managers identify as the factors that motivate them to be fully engaged for project success. It is with this thought that understanding what motivation factors engage project managers with their work is valuable to a business' leadership. Expectantly, the findings of our research reveal the factors that contribute to motivating project managers who achieve project success.

The article is structured as follows: the next section provides literature and theoretical background. The third section provides

an overview of the study's research methodology. The fourth section provides the research findings. The fifth section provides a discussion of the research findings. Finally, the sixth section provides the study's theoretical contributions, and managerial implications are summarized, and an outlook for future research.

2. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section includes a review of definitions and antecedents of motivation that apply to employee engagement. This section also provides support for the value of the current study as it relates to project managers. The subject of employee engagement was introduced by Kahn (1990), who proposed that engaged employees immerse themselves cognitively, emotionally, and physically in their work.

The Gallup Organization defines engaged employees as those "who are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace" (2017, p.1). Statistics show that companies with engaged employees have a 10 percent higher customer satisfaction rate and have a 22 percent higher profitability than those businesses with low employee engagement rates. Engaged employees are 87 percent less likely to leave an organization than the disengaged employees, and companies with engaged workers experience 48 percent fewer safety incidents and 41 percent fewer quality defects (Team My Hub, 2016). The State of the Global Workplace reports that having employees who are not engaged or are actively disengaged at work results in approximately \$7 trillion in lost productivity (Harter, 2017). Subsequently, employee engagement affects the business bottom line (Braun, Aydin, Frey, & Peus, 2018).

Thus, it is easy to see why most business leaders agree that thoroughly engaging employees with their work is critical to the organization's growth and achieving profitability (Brook, 2019; Wiles, 2018). Furthermore, Brook holds that organizations with engaged employees are 38 percent more likely to have above-average productivity. She goes on to say that organizations that increase their investment in employee engagement initiatives by 10 percent can increase profits by \$2,400 per employee annually. Consequently, a fully engaged workforce can mean the difference between a company that outperforms its competitors and one that fails to grow (Gallup, 2016).

In the design of a theoretical viewpoint for understanding employee engagement, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) serves as a framework to explain why employees

are motivated at work and how management can provide extrinsic and intrinsic rewards as incentives needed to create a motivating work environment. To attract the best employees, companies need to offer benefits that include a wide array of offerings such as competitive pay, health care, paid time off, retirement, and family-friendly benefits that are in line with the current marketplace (Autry, 2019).

After individuals are hired, their paychecks will provide their food, shelter, and safety needs. Once these needs are met, they can focus on fulfilling their need to be loved/belong by interacting with others and working in teams (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2015). This will result in employees who are satisfied and happy at work because of their desired salary, and perks, etc. Employees may respond favorably to the "What's in it for me" question, but are they fully engaged? The answer may be no (Velasquez, 2014). Then, according to Maslow, (1943), the company can strive to meet the employees' higher esteem needs such as recognition, rewards, bonuses, and perks. That may motivate them to work toward higher personal gain, which is good for the individual but may not always be in line with the company. They may be motivated but not fully engaged with their work (Velasquez, 2014). Satisfying the employees' self-actualization needs involves fulfilling one's potential or, as Maslow put it, "...what a person can be, they must be." Thus, the work would be designed more to provide intrinsic rewards (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019). Ultimately, an organization's leadership can learn from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory by allowing employees an opportunity to self-actualize and grow in their jobs.

An organization's leadership that capitalizes on such factors can create a motivating work environment in which intrinsic rewards reinforce the employee's engagement, so they perform at the level that the company expects of them. Thus, an organization's leadership should be striving for a work environment that has engaged employees moving to take the business to the next level by asking, "What is in it for us?" not "What is in it for me?" (Velasquez, 2014). Skill variety, task significance, and task identity together can intellectually stimulate one in his or her job. This can lead to experiencing a psychological state commonly referred to as meaningfulness of the work (Anjali & Anand, 2015). Hence, the goal for businesses certainly should be to create a motivating work environment that fully engages project managers with their work, energizes them, and establishes a connection with the project that is jibes with the organization's goals and next level objectives.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Purpose of the Study

Successful project completion does not occur by accident (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2015). Hence, in this research paper, the aim is to gain insight into which factors project managers believe in contributing to their being motivated and fully engaged in their work. It is crucial to find evidence of the meaningfulness of this supposition and determine how it can assist organizations in achieving project success. As it has evolved as a profession, project management increasingly is perceived as not merely something a person does, but something a person is (McKevitt, Carbery & Lyons, 2017). Oftentimes, research on project managers and engagement focuses on what project managers do to motivate and engage their subordinates in order to increase their productivity. Less attention is given to factors that fully engage project managers themselves (Wang, Arditi & Damci, 2017).

3.2 Research Question

Based on the preliminary literature review, it becomes apparent there is a greater desire to understand what project managers want most from a business in terms of being motivated and fully engaged when leading projects is vital to an organization's performance than in the past.

Thus, we began our research with the following question: *'What are the factors practicing project managers report as contributing to their motivation to be fully engaged when working projects for organization success?'*

3.3 Data Collection

The research question was evaluated by interviewing 120 practicing project managers working in a variety of industries. These project managers represent several countries from around the world. They also represent a multigeneration work environment.

3.4. Statistical Measures

Over the years, there have been many attempts to measure work engagement using quantitative research surveys (Milhem, Muda, & Khalil, 2019; Naidoo, Abarantyne & Rugimbana, 2019). However, many of the factors that can contribute to a project manager's work engagement can be overlooked by an organization administering a quantitative survey (Fuller, 2014). The present research study takes a different focus on the project managers' perceptions regarding their motivation in

project settings and attempts to shed new light on the factors that motivate project managers to engage fully with their work in achieving project success. Therefore, we decided to use a qualitative research method. Rahman (2016) maintains that one of the advantages of this approach is that it produces a detailed description of respondents' feelings and opinions. He goes on to say the qualitative research design has a flexible structure that can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater extent. Consequently, when data are collected, respondents have enough freedom to answer questions in a way that is consistent for them.

3.5 Task and Procedure

Microsoft Access was used to code the project managers' interview responses. The data were then grouped using the database's generator, which made it easier to determine trends that otherwise might go unnoticed.

4. RESULTS

The focus group events turned out to be an effective means to interview project managers. The top six most frequently cited responses of the respondents in the present study that lead to project managers being motivated to be fully engaged in their work include: making a difference and influencing change, having a challenging project to lead and manage, working with a high-performance and fully engaged team, having the opportunity for growth and advancement, recognition of my work and being valued, and having my supervisor support.

5. DISCUSSION

The following is a discussion revolving around the question:

'What are the factors practicing project managers report as contributing to their motivation to be fully engaged, when working on projects for organization success?'

5.1 To Make a Difference and Influence Change

According to Branson (2015), "If you are not making a difference in other people's lives, you shouldn't be in business. It is that simple." Banuris, de Oliveira, and Eckel (2019) find the desire to "do good" is the motivation to contribute to the business' mission and helps others impact the quality of an employee's work. The number one reported answer to the question 'What motivates you to be fully engaged in your work

as a project manager?' was to make a difference and influence change.

Research has shown that when it comes to being engaged with their work, people want a sense of purpose (Cappelli & Eldor, 2019). Individuals who are values-driven in their career attach the most robust importance to independence, way of life, autonomy, achievement, and altruism, where they can help others (Abessolo, Hirschi & Rossier, 2017). Therefore, project managers need to have a strong sense of purpose, which enables them to make a difference and influence change resulting in them being fully engaged with their work. The project managers in our study reported that a regular paycheck and organizational benefits were important. At the same time, having a purpose, making a difference, and influencing change were substantially more intrinsically motivating leading to their fully engaged. The following are some of the interview responses that support this finding:

- PM: Knowing that I am making a difference in someone's life.
- PM: Making a difference or leaving a mark.
- PM: A "cause"/mission to complete a project of high value.
- PM: Having a purpose and being able to make a difference with the product or service.
- PM: Working on interesting projects with meaningful outcomes.
- PM: Seeing results; improvements that contribute to making a positive impact on peoples' lives.

It can be argued that project managers are just doing their job by managing a project. However, because they create new products and services, they are also making a difference that can be of extreme value to the community or the environment (Silvius, Kampinga, Paniagua, & Mooi, 2017). Thus, they bring tangible benefits that can have a tremendous impact on the success of any business or organization (Erslin, 2014).

An organizational culture where creativity is present will contribute to a project manager bringing their best ideas to the table and promoting change, as they develop the skills to meet the current and future challenges of the profession (Young, Glerum, & Joseph, 2018). Moreover, in today's global workplace, project managers may be in a variety of different situations, which requires them to undergo a culture change for the project to be successful in making a difference (Adviso, 2017).

The current global competitive marketplace finds most people in business fail simply because they give up too soon (Cole, 2017; Rohm, 2019). A project manager's world is always changing; however, project managers have the opportunity to stick it out, influence change, and make a difference by creating superior products and services (van der Hoorn & Whitty, 2017). Our findings indicate the opportunity to influence change and make a difference are two factors that engage project managers. This can impact not only morale and the organization's bottom line. In addition to receiving a good salary, that is a nice reward they will remember as being highlights of their career (Verma, 2019). Project management historically creates value by bringing about change. A project manager can use his or her leadership skills to influence change and make a difference that can add value to the business organization and stakeholders (Caietti, 2016). Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Become the change you wish to see in the world and, it will happen" (Heathfield, 2018). It is evident from the project managers' responses in our study that they welcome change by leading projects with enduring value both inside and outside of the organization. They also are willing to show leadership how to accomplish the change by being part of the team, making the change.

5.2. Challenging Work

Intrinsic work values relate to the actual tasks and fulfillment that comes from doing the job, which includes helping others or doing challenging work (Maloni, Hiatt & Campbell 2019). This serves to motivate Baby Boomers, members of Generation X, and Millennials alike (Cote, 2019). Along those same lines, van Dam, van Vuuren, and Kemps (2017) hold that a job is considered to have intrinsic value when the task responsibilities are seen as meaningful and challenging to the person doing the work. In keeping with those findings, the number two reported answer to the research question of the current study was challenging work.

This should not come as any surprise to anyone that has been a project manager for any lengthy period (Roseke, 2015). The very nature of project management is challenging when it comes to managing a project's scope, time, cost, and quality. It also entails applying the leadership skills needed to solve communication deficits, compete for resources, control risks, and make tough decisions such as recommending that a project be terminated before completion and dealing with the subsequent fallout (Lombardi, 2019). A project manager who is working in an environment that gives him or her little legitimate

authority is another challenge they face (Green & Stellman, 2018). Consequently, project managers must cope with increased amounts of stress caused by rapid developments in technology, changing customer requirements, and the risk that goes along with managing projects (Naughton, 2018).

Furthermore, project managers often must deal with complexities driven by the size, volume, and the number of stakeholders involved and their sometimes-difficult personalities and the ambiguity of project sponsor and stakeholder expectations (Naughton, 2018). Planning a project is very challenging but seeing the project through to completion is an even greater challenge, and many of them do not end successfully (Ramchandran, 2017). Another challenge project managers face is working in a functional or matrix organizational structure that gives them little legitimate authority (Green & Stellman, 2018).

Since projects are risky undertakings with varying degrees of complexity that aim to deliver benefits, a project manager must manage risk (Green & Stellman, 2018). This is yet another challenge for the project manager and his or her team. It can even be said that the riskier or more complex, or challenging a project is, the more opportunity it is for the project manager to thrive and create a positive self-image through achievements that allow him or her to be fully engaged with their work (Jissink, Schweitzer, & Rohrbeck, 2019). A project very well may fail, but if it does succeed, there is normally a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction. This results in a very rewarding career that goes beyond what most others do (Verma, 2019).

To that end, the following are some of the reactions from the project managers that are consistent with this point:

- PM: I like having a challenging project work environment.
- PM: I like a challenge in my job if I find a problem and come up with a viable solution to proceed and implement the solution.
- PM: The challenge of working on projects that are always changing and different.
- PM: Work that is interesting/stimulating/challenging is what motivates me to be fully engaged with work.
- PM: For me, it is the challenge of doing something different every day.

Another challenge the project managers also reported that keeps them fully engaged is going from a waterfall-type project to an Agile project management perspective or with a

combination of both. Many times, a project manager must identify which projects need to be Agile and which one needs to be managed traditionally or with a combination of methodologies for optimal project performance. Research shows if a company or organization fails to use the right project management methodology, there can be a waste of about 9.9 percent of every dollar invested (Singh, 2019). Engagement is a critical part of ensuring the Agile methodology works. It is successful because all the different stakeholders on a team work closely together and are empowered to have more say in both what they do and the order the work is done (Mayfield, 2019). The results of the current study indicate that this type of involvement is something project managers consider to be a challenge.

Moreover, the project managers in this study indicated that identifying and keeping the project's stakeholders engaged is not only important but can also be quite a challenge, especially when it comes to dealing with a negative stakeholder. This can be particularly true when a project manager is struggling with unrealistic project deadlines or expectations that customers and stakeholders' expectations (Kashyap, 2019). Stakeholders can include those who have commissioned the initiative, enablers who can determine the success or failure of the project, and clients who will be directly affected by the products or service, and are aware who needs to know (Lilaney, 2019). Poor communication between the project manager and the stakeholders can serve as the biggest project management challenge and can account for up to 50 percent of unsuccessful project delivery (Project Insight, 2019).

In this section, the project managers in our study indicated they like to deal with new challenges by using their talents to overcome barriers for project success, which contributes to a rewarding career for them.

5.3 Working with a High Performance Fully Engaged Project Team

"Behind every successful project is a great team" (Green & Stellman, 2018). High-performance work systems positively impact organizational output and productivity, when they are aligned with the organization's objectives (Koser, Rasool & Samma, 2018). They are made of team members who are perseverant and highly motivated. Koser et al. also find that, with these teams, performance is not enhanced by the equipment. Rather, it increases because members can use their skills in concert with others to contribute to a project's outcome.

The third highest response rate reported by the project managers in the present study was working with a high-performance, fully engaged project team. Studies have shown that while the company or organization itself may be the initial draw for people, once they are hired, it is the team that truly matters to them (Lantz, Sjöberg & Friedrich 2016; Xu, Liu & Chung 2017). Furthermore, studies have shown that when they are working with a high-performance team on projects, members are 2.3 times more likely to be fully engaged with their work (84 percent of employees reported they are just coming to work) (Thomas, 2019). Plus, if a trusting teamwork environment is established with the project manager as a leader, the team members are 12 times more likely to be fully engaged with their work and will give the performance required to achieve the project's goal because, they personally are connected to the team and the project goals (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019; Henson, 2019). Moreover, when project managers and their team members have positive experiences, there is a higher degree of creativity and innovation, greater attainment of sales goals, and higher customer satisfaction (Herbst, 2017).

Considering that not all projects will occur in a projectized organization structure, it becomes even more important for a project manager to develop a high-performance team when the team members do not report directly to them. This is especially true if the team members have insufficient skills (Ada, Noorderhaven & Vallejo, 2016). A project manager can assemble a group of people, but that does not mean it is a team, let alone a high-performance team (Lussier & Achua, 2016). To build a high-performance project team, members need to have a combination of shared purpose and goals, talent, skills, and performance ethics. Team members also should have efficacy, communication, empowerment, trust, norms, and standards (Chaudhuri & Jayaram, 2019). The experience of working with a high-performance project team that has the preceding attributes impacts how productive, happy, creative, innovative, and resilient the project manager will be (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019). Baby Boomers, in particular, tend to feed off of this positivity (Cote, 2019).

Consistent with that, here is what project managers from that demographic said about being part of a high-performance project team:

- PM: When I know members of the project team are engaged, support the process we are trying to follow, and feeling they have a voice and can see the impact they make on our success.

- PM: Being taken seriously as a team member and working with a project management team where the members are truly caring about what the project is accomplishing.
- PM: For me, it is working with a highly competent and engaged project management team.
- PM: I like working where the teamwork level is high and very cooperative.
- PM: Working with collaborative team members is what motivates me.
- PM: I want to be a member of a high-performance project team that works well together and being placed in on a project management team where my skills allow me to be a successful resource for project success.

When faced with a global talent shortfall, industries are getting creative about how to find and develop high-performance project teams (Keller & Meaney, 2017). Therefore, when a project manager reviews the team roster, he or she hopes to see all the team members will be motivated and fully engaged with their work and not the type of people who will be just going through the motions or, worse yet, activity disengaged (Clark, 2014). Project team members who are burned out and disengaged are a matter for concern (Jugdev, Mathur & Cook, 2018). Teamwork is a critical factor for project success and developing effective teams is one of the core responsibilities for project managers (Windsor, 2017). Project managers want to work with fully and emotionally engaged team members who find new and innovative ways of responding to the challenging conditions of any project (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019). This goes beyond knowing what is expected of the team members to being well connected to the goals of the project and the development of camaraderie among the team members (Thomas, 2017). High-performance project teams create more opportunities for each project team member to use their strengths (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019).

It has been said that the 'heart and engine' of a project's success are the team members working together in a coordinated way. Therefore, project managers need to acquire the right team members, develop the team, and lead it successfully (Haas & Mortensen (2016). If done correctly, it can become one of the top factors leading to a project manager being motivated and fully engaged with their work throughout the life cycle of a project. Ada, Noorderhaven, and Vallejo (2016) as well as Bond-Barnard, Fletcher, and Steyn (2018), note that project managers want to work with a high-performance and engaged team where trust and collaboration

exist when finding new and innovated ways to deal with challenging conditions of projects. Additionally, there should not be a groupthink dysfunctional team culture. Consistent with all of this, our study revealed project managers want to be a part of a high-performance engaged team where the aforementioned criteria are met.

5.4. Having the Opportunity for Growth and Advancement

Jyoti and Rani (2019) hold that human resources comprise the most valuable asset an organization has. They go on to note that there is a link between effective employee engagement and improved organizational performance. According to Alima and Faizuniah (2018), at the center of this are human resource practices that develop and hone the skills, abilities, and behaviors of employees in a way that aligns them with organizational goals and objectives. They point out that, when opportunities for advancement are made available, workers view them as good for their well-being. The end result is a decrease in burnout and an increase in employee engagement. Ultimately, engaged employees have the autonomy to create opportunities for career development at work, in line with their individual needs (Nikolova, Schaufeli & Notelaers (2019).

The fourth highest response reported by the project managers to the research question in the present study is having the opportunity for growth and advancement in their careers. The respondents reported wanting to be able to make the most of their potential. Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials tend to thrive in organizational cultures that allow for this (Cote, 2019). The good news is that as business organizations have become more project-oriented, growth, and advancement opportunities for project managers have become more plentiful (Harned, 2018). This is consistent with studies that show that professional growth, and advancement are two of the most potent elements of employee work engagement (Klungerbo, 2015; Heathfield, 2019). It is particularly true in the project management career field (Pandita & Ray, 2018).

The following are some examples of what the project managers reported with regard to opportunities for growth and advancement that are consistent with this research.

- PM: What motivates me to be fully engaged with my work is being used to my full potential.
- PM: I want to work where there are professional growth opportunities.
- PM: Knowing if my project will lead to another opportunity, a bigger project, and an increased salary.

- PM: For me, it is having room to grow and new things to learn.
- PM: I want to work where there are opportunities for personal development.

With all of the challenges a project manager faces, it is clear they need to be continually developing on a professional basis to achieve their full potential. This extends beyond a basic management job description into getting better at something important, which is intrinsically satisfying (Pretoius, Steyn & Bond-Barnard, 2018; Reilly, 2014). Offering a project manager an opportunity to grow, improve, and advance in his or her career, in order to reach their full potential creates a win/win for the individual and the organization (Klungerbo, 2015; McWha, 2017). Project managers have varied definitions of opportunity for growth and advancement. There are, nevertheless, common aspects of this company or organization that leadership can address to increase a project manager's opportunity and growth. Responses gathered from project managers in the current study show this to be true.

Essential components can consist of expanding a project manager's skill set, leadership abilities, mentorship, and new certifications. They also can include being a part of larger or more challenging projects and having a tailored career advancement plan that aligns with his or her professional goals (Louie, 2014). Project managers who are of the millennial generation are even more likely than project managers from past generations to say that project work that accelerates opportunities for professional growth or career development is vital to them (Mann & Adkins, 2018). From our interviews, it became apparent that project managers want the fulfillment of knowing they are reaching their potential. When an organization's leadership supports project managers in setting and managing their professional goals, it can be a great catalyst in their careers (Harned, 2018). Therefore, assigning them a sponsor is another way an organization can assist them in honing their leadership and communication skills (Louie, 2014). A sponsor can sit down with a project manager and ask what he or she wants to be doing in the next ten years. This will assist them in developing actionable career goals (Harned, 2018). It is true that project managers may not be able to forecast when an opportunity for growth and advancement will arise. However, they should be afforded the chance to prepare in the event one presents itself (Cote, 2019). In the end, our research shows that project managers crave a career growth path that allows them to be the very best they can be in their work.

5.5. Recognition of My Work and Being Valued

An effective Human Resource Management (HRM) strategy encompasses different mechanisms that give employees meaningful ways or opportunities to participate and feel included in their organizations (Johansen & Sowa, 2019). Organizations that have an effective HRM system in place are likely deemed to be more trustworthy by their employees. As a result, employees tend to feel valued when an effective HRM system is in place (Martin, 2019).

Affiliation motivation is the need to belong and obtain approval from others (Makki, DeCook, Kadylak & Lee, 2018; Maslow, 1943). This form of motivation is representative of Baby Boomers (Cote, 2019). When employees feel appreciated and valued, they are more likely to be engaged with their work. This can lead to improved performance, reduced turnover, improved relationships with colleagues and supervisors, decreased absenteeism, and higher customer satisfaction ratings. Therefore, it becomes clear that an organization's leadership has an inducement to ensure that project managers and team members feel valued and are recognized for their work (Miller, 2018).

Rewards and recognition are great ways to keep project managers and team members motivated and engaged with their work (Green & Stellman, 2018). The project managers in the present study indicated they want to do well, reach their full potential, and be recognized and valued for performing exceptionally well. Recognition can come in many forms. Whatever form it comes in, it must be meaningful to the project manager (Furst, 2018). Recognition can be linked to extrinsic motivation, but recognition is an intrinsic reward that motivates project managers by acknowledging their outstanding contributions (Gilbert & Kelloway, 2018). Completing the project successfully can be tied to recognition (Hogg, 2017).

A lack of recognition for one's work and feeling undervalued can be very disheartening to an exceptional project manager. Thus, it is best that an organization's leadership show appreciation and celebrate success (Anderson, 2017). It is said that those who contribute the most to the project are usually the ones most in need of appreciation. The most engaged project managers and team members are those who receive attention for work well-done (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019). Celebrating such success will pay dividends (Levine, 2016). These dividends include employees who feel valued and sustainable competitive advantage for the company (Miller, 2018). Research shows that

for employees to feel valued and committed, they need some form of recognition regularly (Dube & Marnewick, 2016; Stone, Brown, Smith & Jacobs, 2018). Therefore, an organization's leadership should recognize that recognition is an important antecedent of work engagement (Ekrot, Rank, Kock & Gemündend, 2018).

That said, the following are some of the responses that are reflecting the importance of being recognized:

- PM: My pay, while important, is good--the best I've ever made--so recognition is most important to me.
- PM: For me, it is knowing that my opinion and input are valued.
- PM: Recognition for work well done.
- PM: Recognized for going the extra mile for project success.
- PM: Being heard and valued within the organization.
- PM: Valued as a professional that contributes to creating excellence.

In the 1960s, Douglas McGregor (1960) argued that a "Theory Y" leadership approach allows capitalizing on the natural desire of employees to do well and reach their full potential. Fully emotionally engaged project managers want to know their work contributes to the organization's success (Gray & Ulbrich, 2017). An organization that provides coaching and a review process allows a project manager to know how they are performing against expectations (Ballesteros- Sánchez, Ortiz-Marco's, & Rodríguez-Rivero, 2019). When feedback is provided to a defensive recipient, their guard goes up, and they are not receptive to what the project manager wants. Thus, frequent, short, light-touch check-ins can make a huge difference when it comes to project managers (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019).

Motivation is what drives an individual's goal-oriented behavior (Kinicki & Williams, 2018). There is a lot to be said for setting project goals, accomplishing them successfully, and being recognized and valued for a job well done. The end result is positive emotions that contribute to a project manager being motivated for full engagement (Houston, 2019).

Gallup Inc. recently reported that only 26 percent or about one in four employees agree their supervisor provides them with meaningful feedback that helps them do better work (Wigert & Dvorak, 2019). Giving feedback that says 'keep doing what you are doing' is too vague to be considered meaningful leadership for employees to perform better (Mercier, 2018). It has been scientifically proven that when organization leaders show

gratitude and appreciation for employees' work, productivity increases significantly, employees are less likely to burn out, and are better corporate citizens. They also have increased commitment, are more engaged, get along better with others, and are less depressed. This creates a culture where both the person showing gratitude and appreciation feels good, and the person being appreciated does, as well (Economy, 2016; Evernote, 2017; Morin, 2014). The project managers interviewed for our study felt it is important that, when they are valued, it is demonstrated by recognition. Such value and recognition go a long way in motivating them to be fully engaged with their work.

5.6. Having My Supervisor's Support

In today's highly competitive and volatile global business environment, the role of a supervisor has become more important than ever before. Supervisors play a critical role in the success of an organization by retaining, motivating, and engaging employees (Harter & Adkins, 2015). Having the support of a supervisor can make an employee feel acknowledged, valued, and more confident (Caniels, 2019). Supervisor support also helps foster a climate of creativity (Locander, Weinberg & Locander, 2018). Holland, Cooper, and Sheehan (2016) note that a supervisor's support can also help develop trust, which in turn promotes employee engagement.

The project managers in the present study reported that it is vital they have the support of their supervisor to produce the best project results.

Here is a representative sampling of their responses:

- PM: Having the support of highly engaged, supportive managers.
- PM: Knowing that the leadership is confident that I can get the project completed with success.
- PM: Having the best tools available to manage the project and having the buy-in from my supervisor to allow my team to do their best work.
- PM: Top management support that enables me to be fully engaged when working on my projects.
- PM: Effective/motivational leadership that supports me and the project.
- PM: Having a supervisor who truly cares about me as a person.

It is not a secret that supervisors seek loyalty and dedication from their project managers. However, these same supervisors may not return the favor, which can leave project managers

feeling unsupported when facing challenges and adverse situations. Consequently, any hope for a professional relationship built on trust and commitment where a supervisor supports the project manager is greatly hampered (Landrum, 2017). Research indicates the primary employee complaint is that managers have no idea what the employees are accomplishing. In these cases, project managers want to do a great job, to make a difference in what they do, and have pride in accomplishing a project successfully (Horn, 2019).

Therefore, it is apparent that having the support of their supervisor is an important aspect of project engagement and organization success (Anderson, 2017). This can be even more important during a project change initiative, which requires project managers and their supervisors to work as lynchpins for the success of the change initiative (Prosci, 2018). Project managers understand the risks that come along with navigating the change that brings all of the project's pieces together, as they strive to meet the project's objective successfully (Erskine, 2014). It is critical to have the supervisors on board and prepared to support the project manager, as well as the team through change (Prosci, 2018).

The more employees feel supported, the more willing to exert more effort (Milošević, Tošković, & Rakočević, 2019). Unfortunately, research has discovered that not many organizational leaders understand just how vital their support is to the project manager and project success (Ekrot, Rank, Kock, & Gemündend, 2018). An organization's leaders may lead with a heavy hand just because they are in charge (Rohm, 2019). On a positive note, research has shown that when an employee has a good relationship with his or her direct supervisor, it is the leading factor influencing employee engagement (Conley, 2018; Martens & Carvalho, 2017). If organizational leaders desire fully engaged project managers, they must recognize that engagement results from a strong relationship between them and with the project manager Ekrot, Rank, Kock & Gemündend, 2018). The project manager should be able to count on his or her supervisors to have his or "back" at all times during a project's life cycle (Levine, 2016; Meng & Boyd, 2017). This is in line with what the project managers in our study indicated. Such supervisor support is particularly important when the project is in the red. There is evidence to show that when organizational members trust their supervisors, they are eight times more likely to be fully engaged with their work (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019). The best organizational leaders understand that the business relies on successful projects. Thus, great leaders care

for and support the project managers and team members' success (Reilly, 2014). The data show that engagement and support from supervisors in change initiatives are extremely or very important to the success of the project (Prosci, 2018).

Similarly, our study indicates that it is vital that supervisors use effective leadership styles, such as transformational or servant leadership, to elicit excellent performance throughout the life cycle of a project. Our research study shows that when a supervisor supports a project manager and shows they care about their project manager, it can result in an increase in the project manager's work engagement efforts.

6. SUMMARY

Blount and Leinwand (2019) hold that many people in today's multigenerational workforce want to work for organizations whose missions and business philosophies resonate with them on an intellectual and emotional level. Psychological empowerment is a motivational construct to perform well because empowered individuals and teams believe they can impact their organization through the way they perform their work (Yu, Vaagaasar, Müller, Wang & Zhu, 2018). This can be a key to motivation. An essential task for organizations globally in the 21st century is to create an engaged workforce that allows for the development, distribution, and selling of products and services by implementing projects to ensure their survival for both the short and long term (Lee, Hom, Eberly, & Li, 2018; Neito-Rodriguez & Sampitro, 2018). One of the leadership's most persistent and most significant challenges is getting people to do their best work, even under adverse circumstances. Nonetheless, it has been found that employees who are engaged in their work achieve positive outcomes including extraordinary performance and helping the organization realize its mission, strategic plan, goals, and objectives (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). According to Sissons and Green (2017), fostering a more engaged workforce will assist an organization in achieving its mission, execute its strategy, and generate positive business results.

One approach to project management and innovation is to start with the customer and work backward (Boulton, 2016). The specific aim of the present study was to look at project managers as internal customers and explore what factors motivate them to engage in their work fully. Our findings emphasize that project managers' engagement with their work can be heavily influenced by their organization's leadership and

other colleagues to build a work environment that leads to higher levels of engagement. Moreover, clear communication, beginning with the organization's top leadership, can implement strategies to foster engagement, which is key to the development of highly engaged project managers (Daft, 2017).

Research shows such reliable leadership results in companies outperforming the market financially in good and difficult times (Hermano & Martin-Cruz, 2016). In sum, upper leadership should be aware that its leadership can affect a project manager's motivation and full engagement in their work (Mann & Harter, 2016). Simply stated, great leaders of the best and most successful organizations understand that practicing people-centered leadership results in a fully engaged workforce (Blanchard, 2015). It is the expectation that this current research demonstrates the factors that lead to project manager work engagement, and it has expanded the current body of knowledge on project management work engagement.

Weeks and Schaffert (2017) hold that because individuals spend much of their life at work, it often defines a portion of their sense of self. Consequently, it is believed that if one's job is meaningful, it should enhance his or her sense of well-being and provide significance to their lives. One group this is true for is Generation Z, who tends to have an innovative and entrepreneurial nature ("Generation Z and project management," 2018).

When considering an organization to work for, project managers say that the most important extrinsic factors are the ability to do what they do best, greater work-life balance, greater job security, great pay, and the opportunity to work for a company with a brand reputation (Mann & Adkin, 2018).

A key intellectual contribution of the current study is that it shows that top intrinsic factors leading to project managers being motivated to be fully engaged in their work include: making a difference and influencing change, having a challenging project to lead and manage, working with a high-performance and fully engaged team, having the opportunity for growth and advancement, recognition of their work, being valued and having their supervisor's support.

Because the project management field and global industry change so rapidly, organizations that invest in project managers who are fully engaged in their work are more likely to achieve project success (Langley, 2017). Traditionally, the primary focus of project manager motivation research has been on the investment in his or her job, as opposed to what it is about the task at hand that energizes them. Central to this is the concept



Figure 1. A New Hierarchy of Project Manager's Motivation for Full Work Engagement.

of absorption. Absorption is the task trait that demands one's full concentration and causes them to sink into what they are doing (Borkowska & Czerw, 2017).

Project management is a way for companies to stay competitive in today's global economy (Katrycheva, 2018). No matter how one counts the benefit, successful completion of a company's projects is the real reason the company decided to do the work in the first place. That benefit has an impact on the overall success of the organization. By understanding the different factors that contribute to a project manager's motivation for total engagement in their work, a company can retain the right talent and help improve its productivity, resulting in a positive project work environment, with fewer failures and lower turnover.

7. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Our research demonstrates the importance of examining the factors that motivate project managers to be fully engaged in their work. Of particular significance were the interviews, which included a cross-section of project managers from five generations of workers, hailing from several different countries, which added a unique socio-cultural dimension to our study.

Contrary to the quantitative research approach listed in the literature, we completed a three-year qualitative interview study, which offers detailed descriptions of the respondents' feelings, opinions, and experiences and interprets their feelings (Rahman, 2016). Many factors motivate people in the workplace. Therefore, when deciding where to work, it is wise for the project manager to decide what matters most to them. Lubin (2020) noted that the organization's culture, in addition to salary and bonuses, is also important. As revealed in the present research study, what motivates a project manager to be fully engaged in their work depends on factors that go beyond pay, benefits, social settings, technical skill sets, and managerial capabilities.

Based on these varying personalities, likes, dislikes, wants, and

desires, it is easy to see how employers grapple with these generational differences. It is important that employers be aware of these differences and embrace ways for these diverse groups to complement each other while celebrating their differences. Organizations that are successful at this will create a competitive advantage for themselves. Using our research findings, business leaders can better ensure the opportunity for project success by focusing on their project managers, as internal customers, and developing practices that maximize their motivation for full work engagement. This, in turn, will assist organizations to better realize their mission and achieve their objectives in a competitive global market.

Ideally, the outcomes of our current research will pique the interest of organizational leaders to adopt a favorable attitude and open-minded approach when seeking to understand the factors as it relates to project managers' motivation. Organizations that develop a business model that includes a strategy to create an engaging culture for their project managers, which meshes with the needs of the modern multigenerational workforce, will provide tangible benefits towards assisting in meeting financial goals.

Regarding the future outlook, a study of a larger size conducted with the corporate world to include for-profit and non-profit organizations to compare the findings of our research related to project manager motivation may prove worthwhile. If the findings were shown to be consistent, the validity of the results of our present study would be strengthened. Researchers may also wish to add a quantitative research component to the study, a dimension that gives the respondents an opportunity to give additional feedback that could enhance findings. Based on our research and the results of the current study, organizations can conduct an organizational climate survey, which can be an essential tool for characterizing the relationship more accurately among certain factors that motivate project managers to work full engagement going forward.

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