



Module 3.1 Team Roles - Project Leader

Project Leader

As a **Project Leader**, your most important duty is to ensure the team attends simultaneously to both the task and the team process. The team leader has to commit extra time to effectively manage the team by performing a variety of tasks:

In Rotation One:

1. Create Ground Rules
2. Create Mission Statement
3. Collect Expectations of people participating in your project
4. Learn how to manage the team by implementing the Situational Leadership concepts.
5. Creating the Logical Framework so you can create a scope statement to be used in the proposal.

In Rotation One, Two, and Three:

1. Having the team adhere to the **ground rules** and adapt the ground rules systems to the team's actual behavior or to change behavior that is causing problems for the advancement of the project.
2. Having the team refer to your **mission statement and logical framework** as a guide.
3. Organizing the **team and faculty meetings**, including preparing the **agenda** and any reports that may be assigned for each of the weekly meetings, such as writing outlines, data analyses needed for the meeting.
4. Assigning tasks by creating **activity lists for laboratory and outside activities** and making sure the team timely follows through on these lists, after discussing whether or not members wish to use their strengths or develop one of their weaknesses during the rotation you lead the team.
5. Meeting **milestones** of the team.
6. Limiting and expanding the **scope** of the project when necessary.
7. Building team morale.
8. Administrating the everyday affairs of the team, including **settling conflicts**, handling team members' frustrations, and **communicating effectively** with the staff and faculty.
9. Setting and maintaining **performance standards** for the team.
10. Giving advice to the new project leader at the end of your rotation at the **Transition Meeting**.

The task process is controlled by two factors:

1. What team life cycle stage the team is experiencing
2. The project management plan (proposal)?

The tasks are stage dependent for the team and task process. In the **Formation Stage** the first task is for the project leader to identify what skills are needed for the project and what skills each team members possess that will help to complete the project. Being **Directive** is important in the **Formation Stage**.

For example, directing other members during meetings by creating **agendas** and using **activity lists** to delineate tasks allows your team to function more autonomously. If a team member does not possess the necessary skills, the project leader challenges and supports team members into functioning properly and develop the necessary skills. Under the guidance of the project leader, the team must articulate and commit to goals and objectives, create activity lists, and carry out its mission.

To further reiterate, the proper formation of the team is critical to high performance. Many teams resist learning the team process basics and want to go directly to the task work. A competent project leader avoids this narrowing of focus by simultaneously focusing on task process, team process, performance standards, and by guiding the team into individual and mutual accountability. Guiding the team into mutual and individual accountability is accomplished through the construction of the ground rules systems. The organizational climate where the team is being formed can have an important effect upon the team. If an organization believes in supporting team based projects the team will organize more rapidly. If upper management exerts stricter supervisory control over middle management this environment may detract from the rapid and effective formation of teams. The **Project Leader** is responsible for defining and managing this effect for the team.

Monitoring progress and ensuring that your project plans are completed is important to becoming high performing. The **Project Leader** assigns monitoring responsibilities to other team members so that the momentum is maintained and the team is ensured that they are focused on solutions to their problems while each team member takes actions within their direct control. The team does not want to become bogged down with waiting for other members to change their behavior. Remember, as a team, always celebrate your progress and agree to take new steps to ensure that you can enjoy the fulfillment that comes from achieving your objectives together.

Project Leaders influence individuals and teams within an organization, help to establish goals, and act as guides toward the achievement of those goals, thereby allowing the team to become effective. Two key leadership behaviors you will want to express during your rotation as leader are initiating structure and consideration.

1. Initiating structure is the degree to which the leader organizes and defines relationships in the team by assigning specific tasks, specifying procedures to follow, scheduling work, and clarifying expectations of team members. Measures of effective initiating structure activities are creating ground rules, the ability to formulate and suggest new ideas and listening to others' ideas, encouragement of slow-working people to work harder, emphasizing meeting deadlines, scheduling regular team meetings to discuss issues and settle conflict, the ability to maintain the team's focus on the mission, and effective team maintenance by keeping the team members collaborating and working to capacity.
2. Consideration is the degree to which the leader creates an environment of emotional support, warmth, friendliness, and trust. Measures of consideration are doing personal favors for team members, treating team members equally, being willing to make changes in ground rules when they are not effectively maintaining the team, managing conflict, and supporting the members of your team during difficult times. A key example of good team management is when a project leader creates a team culture where team members do not complain but state problems and brainstorm solutions, thereby avoiding the complaint process.

As a **Project Leader** you will want to utilize the Criticism Stage by transforming the uncertainty and frustration into a positive for the team. The leader, being highly directive, can have the team explore their problems regarding the scope of the project and resources available so that the team can learn to work within realistic parameters to move the project forward.

To use these key leadership behaviors, initiating and consideration, effectively a project leader encourages all team members to participate in decision-making, setting deadlines, supporting each other, open ended discussion, problem-solving, time management to maintain active participation. Project leaders are skillful at juggling the two dimensions effectively in interpersonal and task-related relationships. An example of good leadership in a 1026 team as described by a Project Leader:

"One problem we had as a team was meeting internal deadlines that were set in advance of actual class deadlines. The new project leader should be more assertive in making sure that assignments are completed by internal team deadlines so that there is enough time for the team as a whole to review them before they have to be submitted. The new team leader should also try to reschedule faculty and team meetings well in advance if necessary in order to accommodate all members' schedules. In general the team leader should be flexible and courteous and take into account all members' views before making final decisions. The Leader should maintain a balance of strict deadlines and flexible scheduling understanding. The Leader should also try to maximize lab time by having members work on assignments during our two-hour incubation period in lab. The project leader should also consider each team members' strengths and weaknesses in delegating tasks. All members have good experimental ability, but our analytical and

writing abilities differ greatly as described in the individual strengths and weaknesses sections.”

As you already understand, developing a team is different than running a working group. A working group has a clearly focused leader while a team shares accountability. In a team there is mutual and individual accountability while in a working group there is only individual accountability. A team is characterized by common commitment (Dubrin, 1995). A team generates collective and individual work products. **Project Leaders** support the development of norms and encourage collaboration. The leader understands that commitment to the task is primary. The leader helps define the mission of the team during all the Team Life Cycle stages.