

# *Greater Toronto Information Systems Local Interest Group*

## **The 15 Fallacies That Will Kill Your Project**

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**Speaker:** Wasim Jalal, MBA, CMA, PMP, CMC

# *Presentation Synopsis*

## **Topic:**

### **The 15 Fallacies That Will Kill Your Project**

**Many executives live in fallacies preventing them from seeing the truth and missing the opportunity to apply true leadership that corporations need. Project managers who depend on the support of upper management also suffer from these fallacies. This leads to a lack of interest from sponsors and eventual termination of the project.**

**During this presentation you will learn:**

- **The 15 fallacies which kill projects.**
- **Tactics to protect your project in organizations where these fallacies exist.**
- **Communicate positively with sponsors/stakeholders who have these fallacies.**
- **Build/change organization culture where you can stop these fallacies and gain/maintain the support for your projects.**

## Speaker

### Wasim Jalal, MBA, CMA, PMP, CMC

Rotman School of Management, U of T.

- Wasim has been a successful Program Manager and IT Professional through a career that has spanned over 19 years. His diverse experience has been gained through various PM and corporate roles serving large and small organizations, both public and private. Initiatives range from the delivery of large-scale complex Supply Chain and ERP projects to instituting organizational change and corporate growth strategies.
- During his career, Wasim has worked extensively in the Financial Services, Manufacturing and Distribution sectors, serving an international client base in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. Wasim's track record also includes projects for leading organizations in the Telecommunications, Semiconductor, Pharmaceutical, Natural Resources, and Automotive sectors.
- Wasim has a firm foundation in structured project management techniques and an ability to adapt these appropriately into unique environments to optimize the performance of cross-functional teams. He strongly believes in a customer-centric approach that brings people, business processes and technology together toward profitable business performance.

# *Unsuccessful Leaders Fallacy*

Unsuccessful leaders often show certain stereotyped fallacies in their thinking. Consider the following flaws

- The first, the unrealistic optimism fallacy occurs when they think they are so smart and effective that they can do whatever they want.
- The second, egocentrism fallacy, occurs when successful leaders start to think that they are the only ones that matter, not the people who rely on them for leadership.
- The third, omniscience fallacy, occurs when leaders think that they know everything, and lose sight of the limitations of their own knowledge.
- The fourth, omnipotence fallacy, occurs when leaders think they are all-powerful and can do whatever they want.
- The fifth, invulnerability fallacy, occurs when leaders think they can get away with anything, because they are too clever to be caught; and even if they are caught, they figure that they can get away with what they have done because of who they imagine themselves to be.
  - *Why smart people can be so stupid.* Yale University Press. (Sternberg, 2002b, 2002d).

# *Fallacies that will kill your project*

1. Being tough versus small act of kindness fallacy, “I understand people very well.”
2. Results matters (not efforts) fallacy
3. The born leader fallacy
4. I should be passive aggressive to survive the company culture fallacy, (the survivor of the fittest, outlast, outsmart...) because the organization can function properly without a bedrock level of trust and cooperation.
5. Subordinate feeling safe and protected is not important, fallacy
6. “I know you better than you know yourself” fallacy, the manager/sponsor decides who you are without consulting you.

# *Fallacies that will kill your project*

7. Emotions lies fallacy, not showing any emotions (conviction) make you a better leader fallacy.
8. Relationship Substance: executive sponsor(s)-project manager relationship is not more than a simple substance of the project the project manager is working-on fallacy. Choosing the project sponsor wisely
9. Responsibility: The project manager is 100% responsible of the project outcome fallacy
10. Project Manager have no needs fallacy: It's easy to fall into service mentality, in which, project manager see him/herself charged with delivering the company's project -and it might be possible to act in such way that project manager appear to have no needs,
11. Leadership: Leaders are individuals with an upward conforming and downward controlling orientation toward their roles (i.e. managing by exception.), fallacy

## *Fallacies that will kill your project*

12. Project resistance will go away by itself fallacy, we will get everyone onboard.
13. The process of negotiation is not as important as the project process of (Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling, and closing) fallacy.
14. The flawless (Project) manager fallacy, he believes he is more important than everyone else. He cannot self-reflect and rarely takes responsibility for his actions and decisions
15. Likeability is not important (Poor People Skills, Team Player, Isolating Yourself, Neglecting Your Image) is not important as long as I am technically superior fallacy
16. Fear fallacy, fearing Risk or failure; (Superficial relationship and avoidance behavior) risk-aversion over time, can be more hazardous to your project more than error. I the key to failure is....

# *Understanding your roll as a Project Managers*

- There are three ways project managers work with line manager(s) and sponsor(s): in an expert role, a pair-of-hands role, or a collaborative role. The choice depends on individual differences in management style, the nature of the task, and project manager's own personal preference.

## A. *Expert Role:*

The project manager becomes the “expert” in the performance of given task. Here is what is happening in this kind of relationship:

- Information needed for problem analysis is gathered by project manager
  - Collaboration is not required
  - Two-ways communication is limited
  - The sponsor’s/director’s role is to judge and evaluate after the fact
  - The project manager role is to solve the immediate problems. Neither the sponsor nor the project manager expects the director to develop skills to solve similar problems in the future
- Given a problem of purely technical nature, the project manager can use certain technical expertise to isolate the problem and develop a solution. But problems that are purely technical are rare. Most problems have a “people element” in them. And if the prevailing organizational climate is fear, insecurity, or mistrust, essential information on the people part of the problem may be withheld or distorted. Without valid data, accurate assessment becomes impossible. Action projects based on faulty discovery have little chance for success.

## *B. Pair-of-Hands Role:*

Here the sponsor sees the project manager as an extra “pair-of-hands.” The sponsor(s) retains full control. The project manager is expected to apply specialized knowledge to implement action plans toward the achievement of goals defined by the sponsor. Here are some of the clues that the project manager is acting as a pair of hands:

- The project managers takes a passive role
- Decisions on how to proceed are made by the sponsor/director
- The sponsor selects methods for data collection and analysis
- Control rests with the sponsor(s)
- Collaboration is not really necessary
- Two ways communication is limited
- The sponsor specifies change procedures for project manager to implement
- The sponsor’s role is to judge and evaluate from close distance
- The project manager’s goal is to make the system more effective by application of specialized knowledge.

➤ In a pair-of-hands mode, the project manager is dependent on the sponsor/director ability to understand what is happening and to develop an effective action plan. If the sponsor’s/director’s assessment is faulty, the action plan won’t work. The project manager who provided the “service” become a convenient scapegoat.

## *C. Collaborative Role:*

The project manager who assumes a collaborative role enters the relationship with the notion that management issues can be dealt with effectively only by joining his or her specialized knowledge with the sponsor's/director's knowledge of the organization. Problem solving becomes a joint undertaking, with equal attention to both the technical issues and human interactions involved in dealing with technical issues.

Here's what happens:

- The project manager and the sponsor/director work become interdependent
- Decision making is bilateral
- Data collection and analysis are joint efforts
- Control issues become matters for discussion and negotiation
- Collaboration is considered essential
- Communication is two-way
- Implementation responsibilities are determined by discussion and agreement
- The project manager's goal is to solve problems so they stay solved. That is, the project manager establishes a helping relationship designed to broaden the competence level of sponsor(s) and directors to develop and implement action plans that will make the system more effective. Next time, the sponsor will have the skills to solve the problem.

There are also problems in trying to work collaboratively. Project managers often have special skills that the sponsor sees quick answer to their problems. Sponsors who prefer to work with project manager in an expert role may interpret any attempts at collaboration as indifference or foot dragging. Sponsors with preference to work with project manager as a pair-of hands role may interpret moves toward collaboration as insubordination.

# *Project Management and Transformational Leadership*

- Transformational leaders communicate a collective vision and inspire followers to look beyond their self-interests for the good of the group.
- Is composed of:
  - Idealized influence (Charismatic / Inspiration)
  - Inspirational motivation
  - Intellectual stimulation (presenting an intellectual challenge, getting people to about old problems in a new ways)
  - Individualized consideration
  - Contingent rewards (also referred to as constructive transactions), providing feedback, setting goals, rewarding behaviors.
- It affects critical subordinate attitudes:
  - Trust in Management
  - Organizational commitment
  - Satisfaction with leadership
  - Work performance

## *Model Leader*

“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another, it is the only mean.”

- Albert Einstein

# *Transactional Leadership*

- Means of controlling followers' behaviors and eliminating problems by using corrective transactions between leader and subordinate.
- A transactional leader addresses the self-interests of those being influenced by them
- Consist of:
  - Management-by-exception (Active or Passive), it reflect the basic reactive and routine behaviors
  - Laissez faire management, reflects an unwillingness to take any action at all.

# *Emotional Intelligence*

- Emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for successful leadership
- Compromises five characteristics:
  - Understanding one's emotions;
  - Knowing how to manage them;
  - Emotional self-control, which includes the ability to delay gratification;
  - Understanding others' emotions, or empathy; and
  - Managing relationship

# *Transformational Leadership and Emotional intelligence*

- Individuals with high emotional intelligence would be more likely to use transformational behaviors.
- Leaders who manifest emotional intelligence characteristics of high empathy and have the ability will also be adept at contingent reward.
- What differentiates successful and unsuccessful leaders is how they handle failures, perhaps because failure experiences are demotivating and decrease persistence.

# *Transformational Leadership and Communication Style*

## ➤ Careful Listener

- Focuses attention on what direct reports are saying
- Lets direct reports finish a point before interrupting

## ➤ Open and two-ways

- Asks for direct reports' views on problems and issues
- Is respectful to direct reports' points of view which differ from his/her own
- By being open to others' ideas and comments, especially during times of uncertainty and turbulence, transformational leaders may be better able to determine how well followers understand the strategic goals.

## ➤ Careful Transmitter

- Chooses his/her words carefully
- Organizes his/her thoughts before speaking
- Adjust his/her messages to the level of the follower's understanding.

# *Transformational Leadership and Moral Reasoning*

- Moral potential of leadership refers to the basic tension between altruism and egoism, That is, some leaders balance the development of themselves and their subordinates, rising the aspirations of both the leaders and led in the process. Other leaders wield power to satisfy their own needs and have little regards for either helping the development of their subordinates or behaving in socially constructive ways.
- Leader's moral reasoning (as indicator of moral development) is related to subordinates perceptions of their leaders' transformational and transactional leadership behaviors.

# *Transformational Leadership and Persuasion*

- Leadership's fundamental challenge: getting things done through others
- No leader can succeed without mastering the art of persuasion.
- But there's hard science in that skill, certain interactions lead people to concede, comply, or change.

# *Six basic laws of winning friends and influencing people*

- Persuasion works by appealing to a limited set of deeply rooted human drives and needs,
  - Liking: People like those who like them
    - The application: uncover real similarities and offer genuine praise
  - Reciprocity: People repay in kind
    - The Application: Give what you want to receive (first over advantage)
  - Social Proof: People follow the lead of similar others.
    - The Application: Use peer power whenever it's available
  - Consistency: People align with their clear commitments
    - The application: Make their commitments active, public, and voluntary.
  - Authority: People defer to experts.
    - Expose your expertise; don't assume it's self-evident.
  - Scarcity: People want more of what they can have less of.
    - Highlight unique benefits and exclusive information.

## *Workplace Politics*

- Having boss who is too politically oriented could put you in a position where he could take advantage of you
- However, Having a naïve boss who does not understand politics he could frustrate you.

## *Feedback and Recognition*

- The Right Way “The key of developing people is to catch them doing something right.”
  - Blanchard and Johnson, The One-Minute Manager
- The Wrong Way: the key to developing people is to catch them doing something wrong. Management-by-Exception

## *Your Personal Leadership Goal*

- Start identifying what it is that you want to change about your own leadership behavior
- You must be able to count them on the fingers of one hand
- Remember: **LITTLE CHANGES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE LONG TERM.**

# TRUST

- Building trust with your team members as a project leader takes between 3-6 month.
- Breaking Trust, The airport analogy...
- However, once you get that trust, your employee are willing to forgive a leader mistake, If a sincere apology is given.
- “All the work place practices and changes should be evaluated by a simple criterion: do they convey and create trust, or do they signify distrust and destroy trust and respect among people?”
  - Pfeffer, 1998

# Apology

- Acknowledge your mistake (be explicit)
- Empathy, show your understanding how this mistake affect others
- Plan of Action: How are you going to rectify the mistake
- Timing: You have to apologize as immediate as possible to the mistake
  - Don't promise that you want do it again, because you might.

# *Apology and Explanations*

- Apologies are constructive
- Explanations are constructive
- Explanation + Apologies, would be seen as an excuse. If you have to explain, decouple them.
  - Apologize first, then a couple of days latter you give the explanation
  - If you don't believe an apology is justified, don't do it, because people will preserve it as phony.

## *Remember*

- Your team will not hold you responsible for what you could not do
- But...They will hold you accountable for what you could have done but chose not to do.
- And...They will reward you for what you did but could have chosen not to do.

## *Valuable Lessons*

- Never elect a man of low character to high office
- If you have integrity, nothing else important
- If you don't have integrity, nothing else is important
- Make yourself accountable
- Trust people and they will proof you right. Distrust people and they will proof you right
- Control, is part of us
- Optimism is infectious; Pessimism is contagious.

# *Top Ten Qualities of a “Good Leader”*

10. Good listener
9. Get things done
8. Creative, lots of ideas
7. Helpful
6. Willing to take blame and accept responsibility
5. Committed and Patient
4. Strong-willed, stands up for beliefs
3. Honest
2. Considerate
1. “Being fair”

➤ Listed by young Canadian

## Contact

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