



LUCID
50
THOUGHT

50 ways to lead your project

As this is the 50th Lucid Thought, we thought we should have a '50th' theme. The idea that sprung to mind was a list of the top 50 things that we believe a Project Manager should do in order to lead their project to success. Undoubtedly there are things you might add, but here is our Top 50.

- 1. Make sure you know your sponsor;** in many instances this might mean actually finding your sponsor - remember a project without a sponsor is heading for disaster.
- 2. Fully understand why the project is being undertaken;** its business case.
- 3. Be totally aware** of the expected business benefits and the investment of money and skills that will be needed to achieve them.
- 4. Ascertain how the project fits into the business you are working in.** Is it a standalone project or one project in a portfolio or strategic programme.
- 5. Find out the relative priority of the project** in the business, portfolio or programme.
- 6. Carry out an analysis** to understand the project's internal and external context.
- 7. Identify and analyse the stakeholders** for your project and make sure you know who can help you (your saviour) and any who is determined to cause you difficulties (saboteurs).
Listen to your stakeholders and appreciate their different points of view.
- 8. Develop a communication plan** that will allow you to engage with your stakeholders as appropriate.
- 9.** As part of your communication plan **agree your reporting cycle** so everyone knows when they can expect to hear status on the project.
- 10. Let everyone know who will be your deputy in your absence.**
- 11. Understand your user's needs and expectations;** what they must have and what they would like to have.
- 12. Agree the (your) project success criteria** with your sponsor and or steering committee. By success criteria we mean the measures of success for you as a Project Manager.
- 13. Define key performance indicators (KPIs)** to measure the progress towards and ultimate achievement of your success criteria.
- 14. Clearly define what is in your project's scope and what is outside** i.e. what your project is not going to do.
- 15. Confirm if any project management method, or industry/regulatory standards need to be adhered to.**
- 16. Be clear what you need to do to comply with the law, and to keep people and the environment safe from harm.**



17. **Agree the project life cycle and confirm what decision gates** you will need to pass through and what is expected from you at each gate.
18. **Agree key milestones** that you will use for high level reporting; remember milestones should ideally be on the critical path.
19. **Agree acceptance criteria** for all key deliverables (products) as well as the final deliverable.
20. **Create a quality plan** that outlines the quality assurance and quality control approach to be used (this applies whether or not you have an imposed quality standard). The quality plan sets out how you will achieve the agreed acceptance criteria.
21. **Confirm the time, cost and quality 'objectives'** and their relative priorities; they cannot all be equal!
22. **Document the project's constraints** (other than time, cost and quality) i.e. the things that should be considered as fixed or must happen.
23. **Document the project's assumptions** i.e. the things that will be taken for granted as fact and upon which the project plan will be based.
24. **Have an up-to-date project management plan that reflects the current strategy for the project** and ensure that it is available to all members of the project team and especially to those new to the team.
25. **Know which project activities form the critical path**, which parts of your project have total float and which activities have free float.
26. **Have a plan that sets out what resources you need**, when you need them and where you are likely to have problems because of either over demand or under utilisation.
27. **Find out how to get the people and skills you need** - either internally or from third parties.
28. **Get to know your team.** If you don't already know find out what motivates each member so you can attempt to work with them in a way that gives them the most satisfaction.
29. **Take care to understand the cultural norms and expectations of your team members.**
30. **Be a champion and coach for your team;** remember that as a Project Manager you will succeed largely through the endeavour of others.
31. **Facilitate appropriate team building activities** that will enable the creation of a performing team and be constantly aware of your team's development status and take action to improve or maintain its performance.
32. **Adjust your leadership style to suit the situation you find yourself in.**
33. **Confront not avoid difficulties** by ensuring that you resolve current conflicts in an appropriate manner and anticipate future conflicts.
34. **Make sure you know what your current issues are and how they are being resolved;** ideally document these in an issue log.
35. **Make sure you know your top five threats** (downside or 'bad' risks), who owns them and what planned responses are in place.



36. **Make sure you know the top five opportunities** (upside or 'good' risks), who owns them and what planned responses are in place.
37. **Through appropriate modelling, understand the level of overall uncertainty/confidence levels** and therefore the range of expected outcomes for duration and budget.
38. **Find creative ways of engaging your sponsor and key stakeholders** to discuss overall confidence levels and to set appropriately challenging targets for the team.
39. **Negotiate a level of contingency that reflects the 'riskiness' of the project.**
40. **At all times know where you are against your planned schedule and budget** and the work you've 'earned' for the time and money you've used.
41. **If you're significantly deviating from plan, know how you'll recover.**
42. **Always have a current forecast completion date** and outturn cost that reflects actual progress to-date and anticipated future performance.
43. **Put in place a change control process** that enables you to manage appropriately all changes to the project.
44. **Know what configuration items** need to be version controlled and how you'll do that - for specialist products (project deliverables) and management products (your plans and other documents).
45. **Plan your lesson learned sessions** from the start of your project and make sure they happen.
46. **Make sure that reviews and lessons learned feed forward into the wider organisation,** to improve future plans and inform future decisions.
47. **Keep a project diary/day book to record actions, discussions and decisions.**
48. **Do your filing** (hard and soft copies of documentation), or get someone good to do it for you.
49. **At all times focus on the outcomes for your project,** so when there are problems to solve you can be hard on the issue at hand rather than blaming the people involved.
50. **Celebrate success** and turn problems into learning.

...and 'walking on water' didn't get a mention! Good luck.

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