

EQ: The Competitive Edge in Project Management

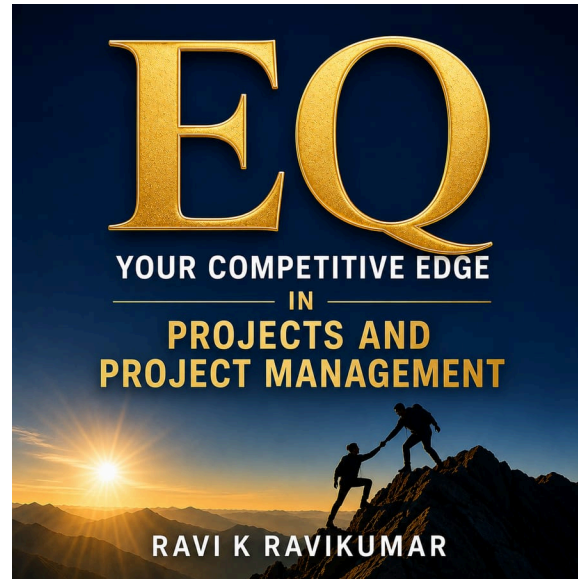
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Engineering

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Detailed Licensing

Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.

Program Page



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De Anza is proud of its diverse student community, and we hold our ZTC materials to the same standard of excellence that defines the college. Faculty across departments write, adapt, and review these resources themselves, keeping them accurate, current, and grounded in the perspectives of the students who use them, with accessibility and inclusive design built in from the start.

This program reflects the time and care our faculty invest in their students. If you have questions, feedback, or come across any issues with a ZTC resource, contact De Anza College's ZTC Grants Coordinator, [Shagun Kaur](#).

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Our Accessibility Review Process

Accessibility was built into the resource as it was written. This resource went through the following stages of review:

1. **Template check.** The project coordinator and instructional designers checked the first chapter for accessibility as a model to ensure later chapters meet accessibility standards.
2. **Progress checks.** The manuscript was checked at approximately 40%, 60%, and 80% completion to catch and correct accessibility issues in production.
3. **Specialist review.** Once the manuscript was complete, an accessibility expert conducted an accessibility check.
4. **Remediation.** The author and the project manager who conducted the earlier progress checks worked together to remediate the issues identified by the accessibility expert.
5. **Final check.** The resource underwent another full check by the accessibility expert before the book was deemed ready for publication.

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This statement was last updated August 2026

This resource was project-managed by **Shagun Kaur**, overseeing scope, budget, and schedule; stakeholder coordination via monthly meetings; training and platform support (LibreTexts, troubleshooting, technical support); QA/accessibility check scheduling; and licensing and copyright governance.

A Note on Known Limitations

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AI Use

AI Use in Course Development – Transparency & Standards

During early idea generation and drafting of course pages, we used ChatGPT as a supportive tool, not as a substitute for human expertise. Specifically:

- We deployed a custom, equity-aware Chatbot (prompt-engineered and trained on OER-curated readings and open resources).
- The AI's role was strictly ideation and initial drafting, not final content production.
- Every output was then thoroughly reviewed, edited, and revised by the course authors to ensure pedagogical quality, accuracy, and alignment with learning goals.

Copyright & Fair Use Considerations

We aligned with evolving IP policy frameworks, especially insights from the U.S. Copyright Office:

- The [Office's Part 3 report on AI model](#) [Links to an external site.](#) Training highlights the importance of fair use analysis and restricts reliance on generative AI when it could replicate copyrighted works—our use was limited to non-protected, openly licensed materials.
- This cautious approach is consistent with [guidance links to an external site.](#) that encourages transformative use, transparency, and limits output that could inadvertently mirror protected content.

About the Book

Introduction to the Textbook

The traditional textbook publishing model no longer serves the best interests of students, educators, and authors. Textbooks are too expensive for students and too inflexible for instructors. With traditional textbooks routinely costing \$150 or more, this book was developed under the Open Educational Resources (OER) model as an alternative free, digital textbook for the course Emotional Intelligence for Effective Project Management.

Target Users

The book is targeted at everyone involved in contributing to or managing projects and programs—individual contributors, project managers, and program managers. The book is designed to bring out the importance of emotional intelligence in projects and project management at a practical level, using real-life case studies from project and program management. The case studies highlight the "why" and "how" of emotional intelligence in the workplace and demonstrate its lifelong value beyond one's career.

Attributions

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1: THE EQ EDGE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Management vs. Team Management

Managing a project is vastly different from managing a team. A team manager is responsible for managing a team of employees and holds the authority to decide what they work on, how they are compensated, and how their performance is evaluated. The manager retains the team across multiple projects or programs until a reorganization occurs.

On the other hand, a project manager is responsible for managing the scope, schedule, and budget of a given project to achieve an expected outcome using a matrixed team of people assigned to the project. Their assignment is project-specific. In most corporate structures, the project manager has no direct control over personnel performance reviews, raises, or bonuses, and certainly no power to terminate problematic workers.

Unlike line or team managers, project managers must constantly influence people without holding formal authority over them to achieve what is needed to successfully complete the project. Multiple studies over the last twenty-five years have shown that EQ (emotional quotient), which measures emotional intelligence (EI), is significantly more important to career success than IQ. While IQ is commonly associated with academic success, EQ is entirely about social interactions—it is fundamentally related to people.

In today's workplace, whether one is an individual contributor, a project manager, or a team manager, it is impossible to get work done without interacting with people. Success requires the ability to leverage the positive, manage the negative, and stay focused on the goals. In addition, managers require the ability to resolve conflicts, motivate, and empower teams to achieve success. These are what emotional intelligence is about. The larger the project, the bigger the teams, and the greater the need for emotional intelligence.

This book introduces the importance of emotional intelligence, why EQ is more important than IQ in the work environment, and the five core EQ skills backed by over twenty case studies that help everyone involved in contributing to or managing projects and programs.

[1.1: The Elephant in the Room](#)

[1.2: EQ vs. IQ](#)

[1.3: The Emotional Intelligence Framework for Project Management](#)

[1.4: Alternative Image Descriptions for Chapter 1](#)

1.1: The Elephant in the Room

The Need for Emotional Intelligence

You are here today because you are either a practicing project manager or aspiring to become one. The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) defines project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements. Hence, it is common to hear the question:

Note

Why do I need emotional intelligence for project management?

The question applies to all types of projects: construction, defense, government, hardware, software, etc.

Great question! I will answer that in four ways using,

1. A real-life case study from the technology industry.
2. Emotions and project management.
3. The relevant industry research data.
4. The project lifecycle model and the infiltration of emotions into the model.

Project success hinges not only on tools, processes, and timelines, but also on **people**, who play a major role in the success or failure of a project. While tools and processes are designed to produce predictable outcomes, people are not. Why? People are emotionally charged. When a person is controlled by a strong emotion, predictable behavior is not the norm. Any person (the project manager, team member, or a stakeholder) on a project can be impacted by emotions triggered by any number of sources, internal or external to the company. The ability to sense, understand, and manage emotions within us and others and positively manage our behavior is the foundation of emotional intelligence. The following examples illustrate the need for emotional intelligence.

Real-Life Case Study: Project Saboteur

Scenario

I was managing a solution rollout planned as a 6-month project. It started with two beta cycles involving two customers to utilize and calibrate the quantitative benefits the solution offered. The solution was designed to serve a fast-growing segment of the chip (integrated circuits) design market. The beta program yielded two successful and happy customers, ready to provide us with a quote for a press announcement outlining the solution's quantitative benefits.

Next, as part of the marketing rollout, a day before circulating the press release through the executive cycle for their review and approval, a very competent engineering leader from the product team raised an issue, citing potential legal ramifications. We had to delay the executive review cycle and immediately get legal counsel. Due to the workload, the legal department took 3 weeks to review and provide their approval saying that the issue raised was not a problem. Right when the approval came in, the engineering leader raised another issue with more legal ramifications. Obviously, that needed advice from our legal team. This time, after four weeks, the legal team told us to proceed saying that it was a non-issue. All these excursions to the legal team delayed the rollout by several weeks. In the meantime, the engineering lead raised a third issue.

My management had expected the solution to be announced just before the industry's largest trade show. Our PR team had arranged several meetings at the show with analysts and key editors for our key executive. The plan was to get the editors and analysts to amplify and broadcast our message. With all the legal issues raised by the engineering leader, this plan hit a brick wall. The pre-booked meetings with analysts and editors had to be canceled. My management was not happy with that outcome. For me, it was a "failure." Deep down, I felt that the engineering leader was battling a hidden emotional issue. I could not get even a glimpse of it because every time I tried to meet up with him, he would cancel in the last hour, citing various reasons. That

lack of cooperation created the dead end I was in. ***What would you have done if you were in my position?***

At that point, I took up the latest issue raised by the engineer to his manager, requesting his help. I also requested the manager's participation in the project meetings. The manager reviewed the latest issue and authorized us to proceed with the rollout. He confirmed that the problems I was running into were beyond my control and that he needed to address them separately.

We ended up releasing a very good press release with good customer quotes with great quantitative messages. Even though we missed the trade show, since we released it right after, the editorial coverage stood out since the tradeshow-related messaging had died down. In other words, we achieved the best we could.

Lessons Learned

- Some emotional issues are not easy to recognize.
- We can play catch with only the person who wants to play with us. In other words, some people make it difficult for us to work with them for a variety of reasons that are not obvious.
- Not seeing a set of events as a red flag—Cancellation of the one-on-one meetings in the last hour. While this behavior is not a common occurrence, it does happen in projects and there is always a reason for it. Lesson: Take action early.

Is there a need for emotional intelligence? Yes!

Emotional and Project Management

It is important to review the resources required to successfully complete projects to gain an understanding of the need for emotional intelligence.

The Unpredictable Resource

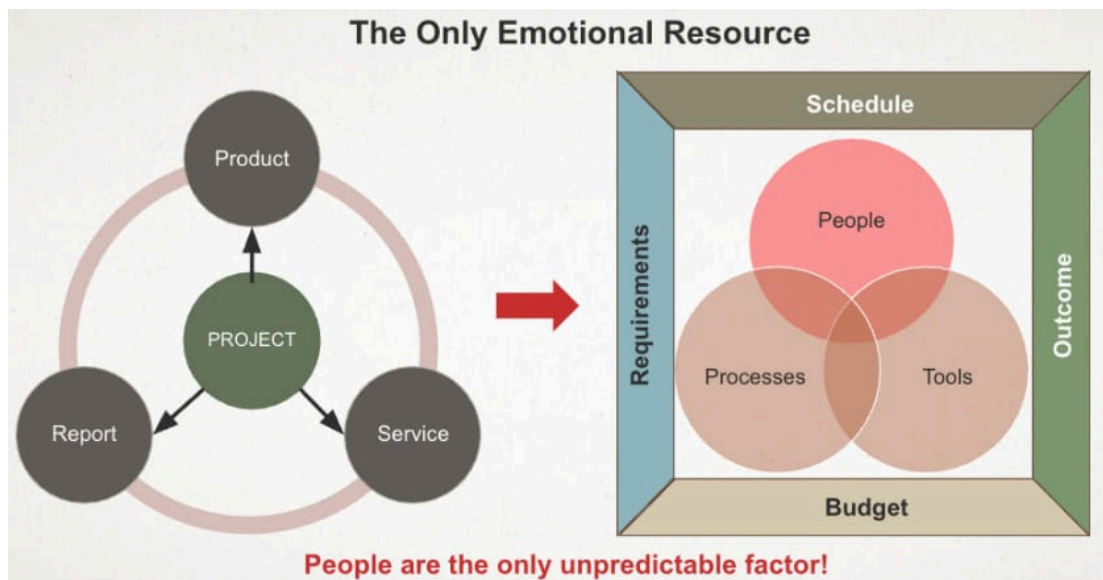


Figure 1.1.1: The unpredictable resource. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative description of image.](#)

Projects typically produce a product, service, or a report. Apart from funds and a budget, people, processes, and tools are the three resources needed to successfully complete projects. The (Figure 1.1.1) titled, 'The Only Emotional Resource' shows two images connected by an arrow. The image on the left shows that a product, service, or report is the expected outcome of a typical project. The image on the right shows that the project is executed using people, tools, and processes. The project outcome must meet the boundary conditions (requirements, budget, outcome, and schedule). Unlike processes and tools, **people are the only resource that can be impacted by emotions**. That makes people the only **unpredictable factor** in a project.

Emotional Triggers

Emotional issues are provoked in us by what are called "emotional triggers." They could impact the project outcome when they are not managed.

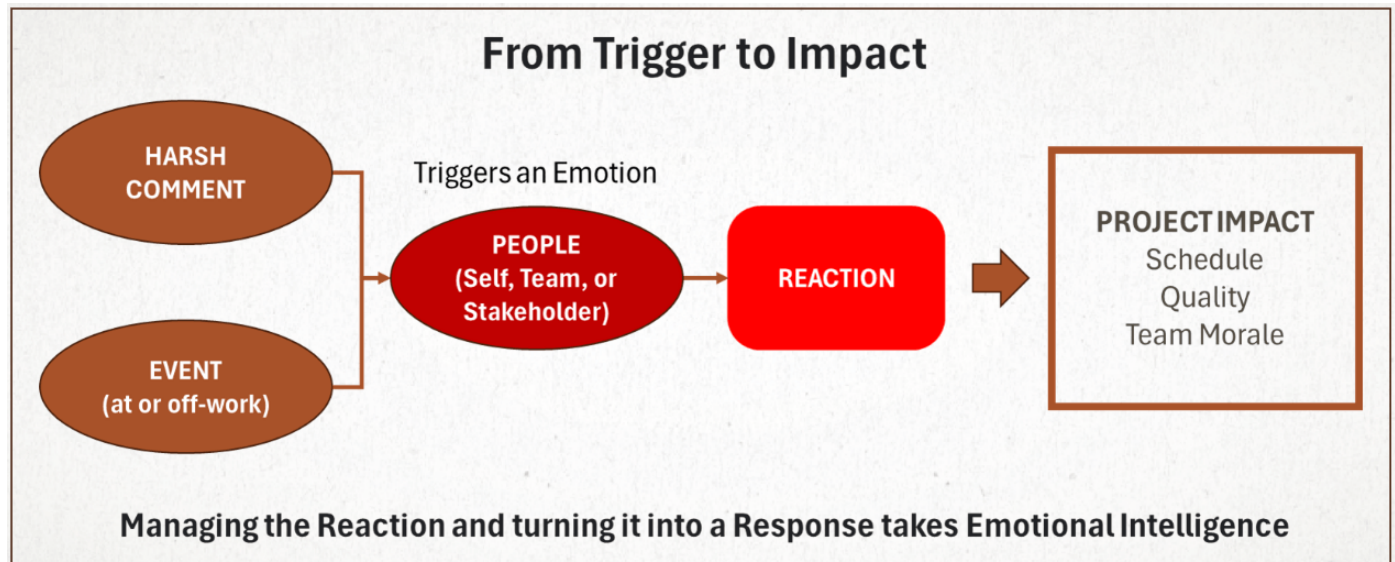


Figure 1.1.2: Emotions from trigger to impact. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative description of image.](#)

The figure 1.1.2 illustrates how a negative emotional trigger (stimulus) provokes an individual's emotions, causing the person to react negatively in a very short time. Typical triggers are a work/life event or other people's harsh remarks. The affected person could be anyone in the project, including the project manager. Such emotional "reactions" affect the person's performance, which in turn impacts the project schedule and quality. The ability to recognize an emotional trigger and act immediately to turn any negative reaction into a meaningful response takes emotional intelligence.

Example

Sudden discovery of a serious health issue in the immediate family of a project team member or an upcoming separation or divorce are common problems that arise in the lives of people. When that happens, it is normal for the team member's focus to shift away from the project to their own issue. This causes the team member's performance to slip, leading to mistakes and delays of their deliverables. Sooner or later, it starts to impact the project outcome. In such situations, it is very common for the affected team member to not share their issue with anyone. What are some of the reasons why a project team member will not share the issue bothering him or her? If it were a construction project, any hourly construction worker might be worried about the immediate loss of pay or the probability of removal from the project affecting his/her near-term cash flow. If it were health, separation, or divorce, regardless of the industry, the affected person may not want to share because of the personal nature of the issue.

An emotionally intelligent project manager (PM) would recognize the performance drop as a clue to the presence of an issue and validate it through a one-on-one discussion with the person. Once identified, the project manager would make alternate resource plans and allow the affected member to take the time to address the issue. On the other hand, a not-so-emotionally intelligent project manager will not recognize the presence of an issue and would continue to bear down on the affected team member about the performance slip and its impact on the project outcome. The affected employee would see the PM as overly focused on metrics and insensitive to the hardships and feelings of a team member.

Based on the example just discussed, take a moment to reflect and note down your input in columns 2 and 3 in Table 1.1.1. Think about what type of a project manager you would like to be.

Table 1.1.1: Emotionally Intelligent Management: PrIndustry Research Data - The Top 10 HR Trends for 2022

Questions	Emotionally Intelligent Project Manager (PM)	Not-So-Emotionally Intelligent PM
What would you think about the project manager?		
Would you work for this project manager in a future project?		

In 2022, HRC ap published its Cracking the Top 10 HR Trends for 2022:

Recommendations for Staying Ahead of the Trend (2022). Emotional intelligence came out in the top five. The key points from that trends report are:

- As more employees face burnout and consider quitting, leaders need to have the ability to empathize and properly motivate and lead.
- TalentSmart's research found that EI is the strongest determinant of performance, supported by CareerBuilder's survey, in which 71% of employers said they value EQ over IQ (2016), reporting that employees with high emotional intelligence are more likely to handle stressful situations and conflict resolution and have an empathetic response to employees.
- Catalyst's survey indicates that when people reported their leaders were empathetic, there were increases in innovation, engagement, retention, inclusivity, and work-life balance (2025).
- Daniel Goleman's research, which shows that 80-90% of high performers (Acertitude) in the C-suite are differentiated by high emotional intelligence.

The summary is that leaders with high emotional intelligence will not only perform well but could also empower employees by increasing overall engagement and productivity.

In other words, it comes down to what type of project manager we want to be.

Emotional Intelligence in the Context of a Project Lifecycle

All projects are about getting the work done by people for people. Whenever people are involved, emotions crop up. All projects go through a structured lifecycle with five phases: Initiate, Plan, Execute, Monitor & Control, and Close. At every stage, emotionally driven people issues crop up. The sooner the project manager detects and manages those emotional issues, the better are their chances of success.

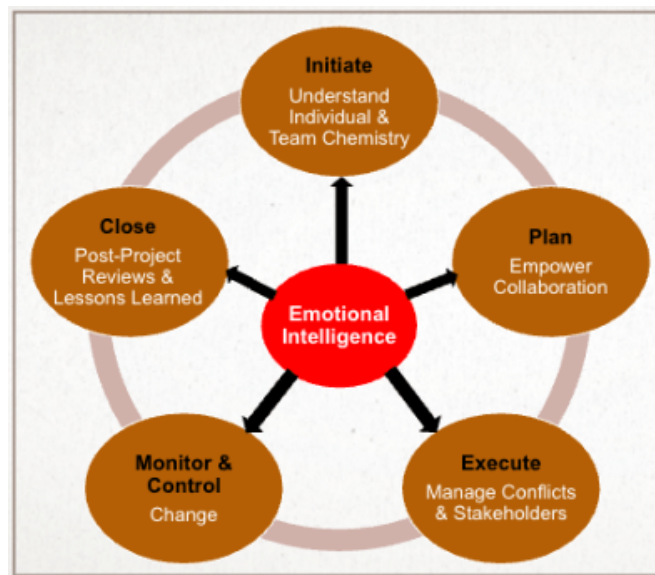


Figure 1.1.3: Project lifecycle showing the role emotion plays in the five blocks, Initiate, Plan, Execute, Monitor & Control, and Close (Within Project Closure). (CC BY 4.0 Ravi K Ravikumar).

Figure 1.1.3 shows a cyclical model of a project lifecycle. People are involved in each stage with the potential to generate emotional issues. Here are some examples of what could go wrong in each stage:

- **Initiate:** Inside the circular block "Initiate" are the words "understand individual & team chemistry." For a project manager, it is important to understand the strengths and motivations of each team member. Are they good and willing team players? Are they aligned with the project goal? Do they see themselves working as a team, and what's in it for them? Similarly, it is critical to understand what each stakeholder expects from the project and the value of the business benefit to them. It is important for the project manager (PM) to make sure that they can rely on help from a stakeholder if needed. By sorting these questions early, a PM could increase their odds of success. These interactions with stakeholders call for a certain level of relationship-building.
- **Plan:** Inside the circular block "Plan" are the words "empower collaboration." A better plan is a holistic plan. Requesting the team to develop the plan through collaboration is a better strategy. Why? It becomes their plan. As a result, they would take pride in executing it. By watching them discuss and come up with the plan, the PM might see some potential emotional issues in team dynamics. Knowing them ahead will better prepare the PM to anticipate and manage those issues during project execution.
- **Execute:** Inside the circular block "Execute" are the words "manage conflicts and stakeholders." Experiencing conflicts is normal in any project. Emotionally charged conflicts can delay or torpedo a project. Recognizing and managing such conflicts is a critical skill for effective project management. Working with stakeholders on scope changes, resource requirements, and more could present emotional scenarios that need to be handled successfully.
- **Monitor & Control:** Inside the circular block "Monitor & Control" is the word "change." When a problem is identified in the closing stage of the project, it needs to be addressed or fixed. The fix request is typically directed at a person or a sub-team. That could trigger an emotional reaction causing the feeling of shame. The ability to achieve project success by motivating the person or the sub-team to fix the problem and creating an environment where they feel good about getting the fix done is a critical skill for the PM.
- **Close:** Inside the circular block "Close" are the words "post-project reviews and lessons learned." Both tasks involve people, and they could very well bring up uncomfortable feelings. Addressing them objectively and empathetically takes a PM with good communication skills.

Communication plays a pivotal role in addressing the emotional issues in all five phases.

Aren't these good reasons to pick up some emotional intelligence skills?

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1.2: EQ vs. IQ

EQ and IQ at the Workplace

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is different from **intelligence quotient (IQ)**. IQ measures intelligence based on a score derived from intelligence tests. Cherniss (2000) points out that EQ refers to a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use that information to better guide one's thinking and actions towards achieving a project or program's targeted outcome. Unlike IQ, which is stable over a lifetime, EQ can be improved over time. This key differentiator allows a person to learn and become better with EQ.

Note

Why is emotional intelligence necessary for success?

Contrary to traditional belief, IQ is not a good predictor of job performance, happiness, or success. Research by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves has shown that EQ contributes to 58 percent of our job requirements. It is the single biggest predictor of performance in the workplace and the strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence (2009). Their research also showed that 90 percent of high performers at work had high EQ, and that EQ accounts for nearly 60 percent of job performance. In other words, if one wants to thrive at work, EQ is their competitive edge. EQ research by Bradberry and Greaves (2009) shows a link between higher EQ and higher salary. **In fact, for every point increase in EQ, there is a \$1,300 per year increase in salary (2009).**

In a study conducted by Virginia Tech (2005), 600 undergraduate computer science students and twenty institutions participated in a survey that measured emotional intelligence and the ability to handle a demanding curriculum. Although emotional intelligence was not directly linked to academic success in the study, students with higher levels of emotional intelligence demonstrated higher self-efficacy (belief in one's own ability), which enabled them to handle problems better and reach higher levels of academic success. For example, the ability to read body language and recognize when someone is sad, angry, or in need of support is a key emotional intelligence skill. These competencies enable us to interact more effectively with others. Consider a person who does not have a "filter" and continually puts down others and says exactly what is on their mind, even if it is hurtful. This obvious lack of emotional intelligence affects the person's ability to have good, healthy relationships, both at work and in their personal life.

IQ is not the differentiating factor between star performers and others, whereas EQ is. In an interview with Big Think, Goleman (2012) points out that if IQ were a true predictor of success, everyone who graduated at the top of their class with honors would be the most successful people. Because we know this isn't the case, qualities other than just IQ could help predict success. He further argues that IQ and EQ are distinct, and while the traditional belief is that IQ is the standout variable of success, in reality, it is EQ. He states, "Many people who are book smart but lack emotional intelligence end up working for people who have lower IQs than they, but who excel in emotional intelligence."

In another study conducted across 286 organizations worldwide, researchers identified the superior-to-average performers among engineers using a set of 21 performance-defining competencies. Eighteen of those competencies were related to EQ, and only three were related to IQ. The point to note is that more than 80 percent of those competencies were related to EQ. In other words, it is the emotional intelligence that differentiates a star from a mediocre engineer.

IQ vs Emotional Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman

Video length: 4:28.

About Dr. Daniel Goleman: He is an accomplished psychologist, author, and science journalist. He is an authority on emotional intelligence and wrote *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), the international bestseller.

Video introduction: Daniel Goleman explains the need for IQ and EQ, whether it is for studies or a job in a top profession, and when it comes to success, how EQ turns out to be the differentiator. Every job or degree requires a certain level of IQ, technical skills, and cognitive capacity to perform well. That creates a pool of people competing with similar IQ scores. At that point, IQ provides no added benefit. The difference makers are your personal abilities—how you manage yourself, do you stay motivated, do you stay focused, are you adaptable, can you read other people, can you get along, can you be a team player, can you be a leader? Those are driven by emotional intelligence.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Reflection

1. How important is EQ, to you?

The global business content hub, WOBI, by focusing on the issues most relevant to today's business world, stimulates new thinking and inspires action. In the next video, WOBI brings in Dr. Travis Bradberry, an accomplished psychologist, author, and authority on emotional intelligence, to present his research findings about top performers and their EQ levels in companies to stimulate new thinking and action.

Why is EQ More Important than IQ, by Travis Bradberry

Video length: 4.28.

Video introduction: Watch Travis Bradberry share his research finding that 90% of the top performers are high in EQ. He presents interesting research findings done at a cross-section of a large number of companies by job titles. The research shows how the companies are missing out on the benefits of emotional intelligence by starting to focus on metrics and short-term gain after people reach middle management and how that hurts those companies from achieving the success they deserve.

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title="Why is EQ More Important than IQ"

Reflections:

1. What are the practices in your company?
2. Does it match your career aspirations?
3. If not, what would be your strategy?

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Attributions

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1.3: The Emotional Intelligence Framework for Project Management

Overview

Emotional intelligence (EQ) has been researched since the early 1990s and is a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Cary 2000). The original researchers of EQ, John Mayer and Peter Salovey (Mayer 2000), provided the first hint of emotional intelligence in their research, but much of the later research on emotional intelligence was done by Daniel Goleman (Goleman 2012).

Goleman used four main competencies or skills in the form of a framework to describe and bring out the benefits of emotional intelligence. Those competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. All subsequent work on emotional intelligence follows Goleman's (Goleman 2012) model.

The Five Core Skills

Project management is fundamentally about people: motivating teams, communicating effectively, resolving conflicts, and guiding diverse stakeholders toward a shared vision. While project plans, schedules, and budgets provide the structure, **emotional intelligence provides the glue that holds projects together**—especially when challenges arise.

A project manager with strong emotional intelligence can adapt to change, build trust across people and departments, and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics while staying focused on the project's goals and outcomes. In addition, the biggest personal benefit an emotionally intelligent project manager would achieve is presenting themselves as a knowledgeable, socially adept, and effective leader—beyond achieving project success, emotional intelligence is critical for career growth.

In this book, we will use an adapted model of Goleman's emotional intelligence framework customized for project management. The customized framework identifies five distinct, core skills. They are the four inter-related emotional intelligence (EQ) skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) applicable to all layers of employees and the fifth skill set applicable to current or want-to-be project or team managers.

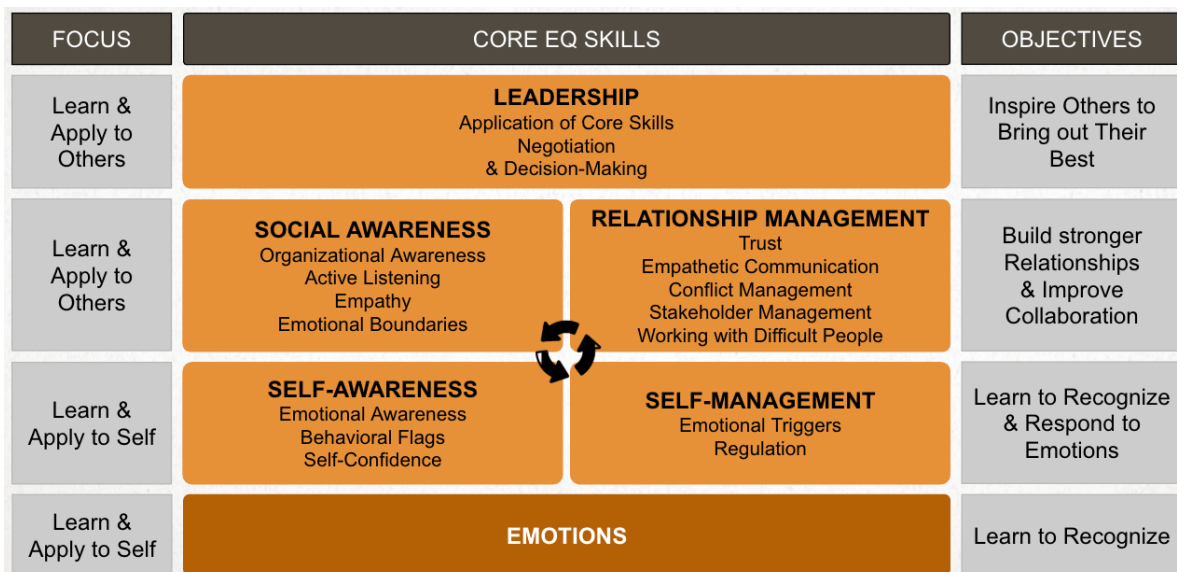


Figure 1.3.1: Emotional Intelligence Framework for Effective Project Management. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar) [Alternative Text Description of the Image](#)

Emotions drive the need for **emotional intelligence** and play a critical role in all five core skills: self-awareness, self-

management, social awareness, relationship management, and leadership. The customized emotional intelligence framework (figure 1.3.2) shows the building blocks required for a person to learn and become more emotionally intelligent. All five skills are built on top of the knowledge of emotions. The column titled FOCUS shows who the target is for the skills in a specific row. Similarly, the column titled OBJECTIVES shows the desired outcome from the corresponding skills. The other-focused skills are built upon the self-focused skills for a reason. This brings out the fact that in an emotional situation, we must first learn to respond in a beneficial and meaningful way to be accepted by others. Only then we can guide and inspire people to collaborate for the benefit of the project. Leadership is what brings it all together. Columns two and three show the skills categorized as awareness and application-type skills. The simple and straightforward descriptions and benefits of the core skills are:

- **Self-Awareness:** The ability to recognize our own emotions as they happen and understand our tendencies across different situations.
- **Self-Management:** The ability to use our awareness of our emotions to stay flexible and positively direct our behavior.
- **Social Awareness:** Our ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them.
- **Relationship Management:** The ability to use our awareness of our own emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully.
- **Leadership:** The ability to inspire, guide, motivate, and direct a project team toward achieving the project success criteria while balancing stakeholder expectations.

Understanding these five dimensions allows us to establish a baseline for our personal professional development and systematically target weak points in our project leadership styles.

Real-Life Case Study 2: The Customer is Right Even When They are Not

Scenario

We were a small startup company with a very critical, first-to-market technology solution for semiconductor design and manufacturing. We had one other competitor in the market. We had managed to draw the attention of one of the leaders in the semiconductor industry to jointly offer the solution to mutual customers. The strategic value of the partnership with the leader was a win-win opportunity—enable the production of better silicon for the partner and a stream of revenue for us. It would be a valuable win for mutual customers with better silicon.

As we embarked on technical discussions with the semiconductor company (partner), one of our co-founders made a strong remark to the vice president (VP) at the partner company about our expertise. In essence, he conveyed the message that we were the experts and that they would benefit by listening to us. That did not go well with the VP and his team since they were a large company with a great track record of success.

What do you think happened next?

Yes, the VP decided to stop working with us and sought the help of our competitor.

Outcome

- Our competitor won the partnership deal, and we lost the opportunity to provide the first joint solution with the semiconductor partner.

Lessons Learned

1. Poor communication could kill opportunities.
2. Leave our ego outside the door.
3. Always treat customers with respect.
4. Do not directly challenge a customer, especially a market leader.
5. Remember: **The customer is right, even when they are not.** In that case, let our **results** speak for us.

As a next step, we will dive into each core skill.

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1. Cherniss, Cary. (2000). Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, New Orleans, LA, April 15, 2000. Accessed February 26, 2012, www.eiconsortium.org/reports/...elligence.html; Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D., & Salovey, P. (1999). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence. *Intelligence*, 27, 267–98.
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3. Goleman, Daniel. (n.d.). Emotional intelligence. Accessed February 26, 2012, danielgoleman.info/topics/emo...-intelligence/

Attributions

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1.4: Alternative Image Descriptions for Chapter 1

Figure 1.1.1: The only emotional resource

The (Figure 1.4.1) titled, 'The Only Emotional Resource' shows two images connected by an arrow. The [image](#) on the left shows that a typical project (circle in the center) produces (represented by the arrow) either a product, service, or report, each represented by circles with an arrow connecting it to the project. The image on the right shows that the project is executed using three resources, which are people, tools, and processes (each represented by a circle in the Venn diagram). The project outcome must meet the boundary conditions' requirements, budget, outcome, and schedule, which are listed in the square frame.

A note at the bottom reads: "People are the only unpredictable factor." The diagram is designed to convey the message that while schedules, budgets, tools, and processes can be planned, project success often depends on how effectively people collaborate, communicate, and apply these resources. People are the only resources that can be impacted by emotions.

Figure 1.1.2: Emotions from trigger to impact

The diagram illustrates how [emotional](#) triggers from a work-life event and/or other people's harsh remarks could impact the project outcome. The diagram, from left to right, illustrates the fact that emotional triggers such as harsh comments directed at a person and/or a negative work-life event could trigger an involuntary negative reaction. That could hurt the project from succeeding. Three examples of success criteria are listed as schedule, quality, and team morale. A note at the bottom reads: Managing the reactions and turning it into a response takes emotional intelligence.

The person impacted by the emotion could be anyone involved in the project, including the project manager. Such negative emotions could potentially defocus a person, affecting their performance and negatively impacting the project. Learning to curb the involuntary reaction and produce a responsible response takes emotional intelligence.

Figure 1.3.1: Emotional Intelligence Framework

The image is a block diagram illustrating the emotional intelligence framework for effective project management. Emotions are the foundation, with the two self-focused EQ skills followed by the two other-focused EQ skills, and the leadership skills are built in layers on top of emotion. The layout has three main sections:

- The left column labeled 'Focus' indicates who (target audience) the skills apply to.
- The two center blocks show the five interconnected skills and sub-skills.
- The right column labeled 'Objectives' indicates the desired outcome expected from the corresponding target audience.

The arrows in the center emphasize that the four skills are interconnected.

The red rectangle highlights the main content of the framework—the five skills: **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and leadership**.

Left Column: Focus (Identifies who the skills apply to)

- Self
- Others

The Two Center Blocks: Core Skills and Sub-Skills

- **Leadership** (A skill that involves the four core skills plus negotiation and decision-making)
- **Social Awareness**
 - Organizational awareness
 - Active listening
 - Empathy
 - Emotional boundaries

- **Relationship Management**
 - Trust
 - Empathetic communication
 - Conflict management
 - Stakeholder management
 - Working with difficult people
- **Self-Awareness**
 - Emotional awareness
 - Behavioral flags
 - Self-confidence
- **Self-Management**
 - Emotional triggers
 - Self-regulation

Right Column: Outcomes

- For Emotions: Learn to recognize
- For Self: Learn to recognize & respond to emotions
- For Others:
 - Build stronger relationships & improve collaboration
 - Inspire others to bring out their best

2: OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, whether it is about managing the construction of a bridge, the rollout of a new healthcare system, the launch of a software product, or a government community program, technical skills alone are no longer enough to deliver successful projects.

Wherever people are involved, emotions come into play. Emotional reactions, when not managed, could impact the project. Our ability to *recognize, understand, and manage the behavioral response to emotions, both ours and others'*, is critical for success. These are emotional intelligence (**EQ**) capabilities. It is quite different from intelligence quotient (**IQ**). IQ alone cannot ensure project success.

Emotional Intelligence and Project Management

Project management typically requires knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to identify requirements, address various needs, concerns, and expectations of stakeholders, balance a set of competing project constraints, and manage using a clearly defined set of project management processes to achieve the project outcome. Scope, quality, schedule, budget, resources, and risk are the constraints a project manager is expected to balance to achieve the project outcome on time and under budget. The Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK) has identified over forty project management processes for effective project management. They are logically grouped into five process groups: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing.

Project success hinges not only on tools, processes, and timelines, but also on **people**, who play a major role in the success or failure of a project. While tools and processes are designed to produce predictable outcomes, people are not. Why? People are emotionally charged. When a person is controlled by a strong emotion, predictable behavior is not the norm. Any person (the project manager, team member, or a stakeholder) on a project can be impacted by emotions triggered by any number of sources, internal or external to the company. The ability to proactively manage one's emotions to contribute to or successfully manage a project to the desired conclusion is a critical skill for success. The ability to sense, understand, and manage emotions within us and others and positively manage our behavior is the foundation of emotional intelligence.

Who is This Book For

The concepts of emotional intelligence presented in a practical and experiential manner using real-life product, project, and program management scenarios are applicable to any level of employee with an intent to grow in their career. The leadership concepts are applicable to managers ranging from project to general mid-level managers. The selected real-life, non-work-related case studies illustrate the fact that these concepts are equally applicable to life scenarios.

How Can this Book Benefit You

The book is written using a practical and experiential approach to teach emotional intelligence for project management. The essentials of emotional intelligence for contributors to project managers are presented using a practical and experiential approach by reviewing a variety of real-life product, project, and program management cases, including product definition and launch scenarios. Chapter 1 ('The EQ Edge in Project Management') explores why EQ is vital for project success. Chapter 2 ('The Emotional Intelligence Framework') provides a comprehensive overview of the concept. Chapter 3 ('Emotions Drive the Need for Emotional Intelligence') introduces emotions in an easy-to-understand and practical manner. Chapter 4 ('Self-Focused Core EQ Skills') introduces the first two core skills—self-awareness and self-management—at a practical level using real-life examples and case studies from actual project management scenarios. Chapter 5 (Others-Focused Core EQ Skills) introduces two core skills—social awareness and relationship management—at a practical level using real-life examples and case studies from actual project management scenarios. Chapter 6 ('Leadership Skills for Project Managers') is designed to teach existing and soon-to-become project managers the essentials of leadership characteristics. Finally in chapter 7 ('Bringing It All Together'), more case studies from project and program management are used to illustrate the practical applications of the skills. The key elements of each core and sub-skill are presented in an easy-to-read and reference 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' format using individual tables.

Essentially, that brings out what each skill is, why they are important, and how they could be managed.

The real-life case studies are intended to enrich our learning experience far more effectively than a purely theoretical approach. Additional case studies that bring out emotional issues from daily life are used to showcase how the lack of emotional intelligence would impact us both at work and in life. Since emotional issues are universal and do not follow any logic, case studies are powerful tools to learn the core skills and their application in real project scenarios. Every case study ends with "Lessons Learned." The lessons are from the author's point of view. The reader is encouraged to derive additional lessons from those case studies.

This book is designed to empower both experienced project management professionals and people new to project management with a critical set of emotional intelligence skills, and empower them to become better project managers. Even though the case studies are specific to one industry, since people issues are universal, the learnings apply across the board to many industries such as software, construction, healthcare, and government.

How to Navigate the Content in this Book

Remember, emotional intelligence is about understanding emotions and learning to manage them appropriately to maximize project outcomes. That is exactly the scope of this book. How to navigate this book to learn emotional intelligence in a practical way? It is a process of learning & recognizing, applying, and achieving.

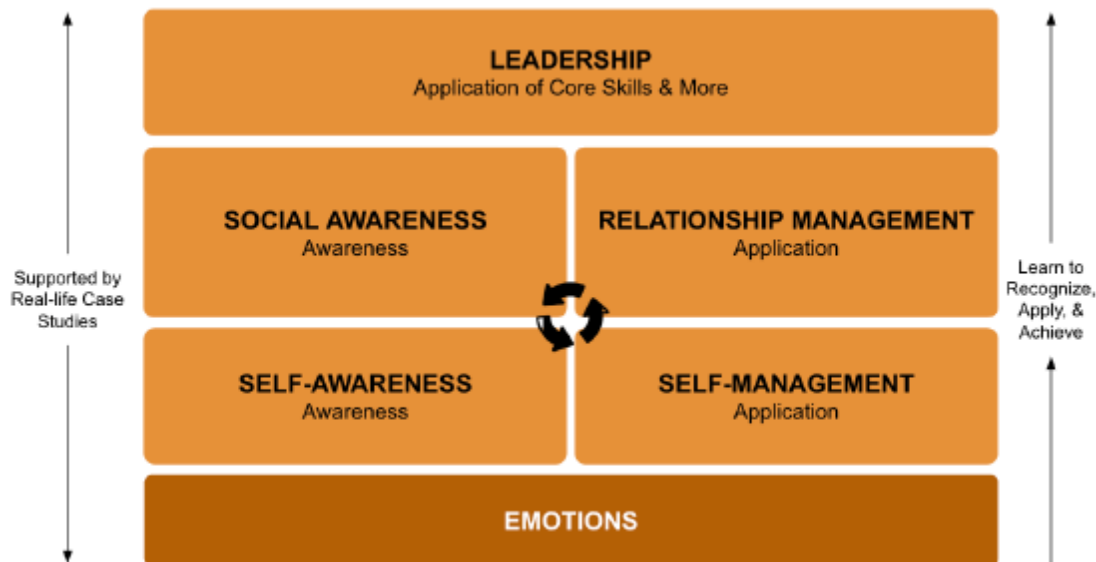


Figure 2.1: EQ for project management shows how core skills build up on top of emotions and their awareness to develop better leadership and successful project outcomes. ([CC BY 4.0](#); Ravi K Ravikumar)

The **EQ for Project Management** illustrates how leadership and project success are developed through layered skills and experiences, starting with emotions as the base.

1. **Emotions** are the underlying driver of emotional intelligence and are positioned at the bottom. This foundation highlights the importance of emotional awareness and regulation. Understanding one's own emotions and recognizing others' emotions lay the groundwork for effective collaboration, communication, and decision-making.
2. Above this layer are the **Core Skills**, divided into two categories.
 - The first layer contains the **self-focused core skills**, self-awareness, and self-management. They include abilities such as self-management, reflection, and personal accountability. These skills help individuals understand their strengths, regulate their behavior, and develop personal effectiveness.
 - The next layer contains the **other-focused core skills**, social awareness, and relationship management. They emphasize interpersonal abilities such as communication, empathy, and collaboration. These skills enable individuals to work effectively with teams and build positive relationships.
3. The next level is **Leadership** (Application of Core Skills and More). At this stage, individuals combine their personal and interpersonal skills to guide projects, coordinate teams, and support shared goals. Negotiation and decision-making come into play. Leadership emerges not as a separate skill but as the applied integration of the skills developed in earlier layers.
4. Along the **right side of the figure**, a vertical progression shows stages of learning and application:

- **Learn & Recognize** the events that trigger the emotions, the resulting behavior, and their impact.
 - **Apply** the learned skills.
 - **Achieve** showing the consistent achievement of the objectives from the skills and successful project outcomes.
5. On the **left side**, a label indicates **Case Studies**, showing the value of learning from real-world examples and experiences.

Overall, the diagram illustrates that effective leadership and successful outcomes are built step-by-step—from emotional awareness and core skills to applied leadership, tools, and measurable results, with real-life case studies showing how the skills are applied in project scenarios.

Learning Objectives

Learn and apply emotional intelligence to:

- Recognize emotions and their impact on an individual, a team, and a project.
- Respond, not react responsibly to emotions.
- Manage conflicts with the project outcome in mind.
- Motivate a project team.
- Influence stakeholders as needed.
- Build lasting relationships to make project management easier.

Key Takeaways

- People-related problems are most unpredictable, difficult to resolve, and can make or break a project.
- It takes all five core skills to manage people-related problems faster and better.
- Leverage the real-life case studies to learn the five core skills in a practical and easily relatable context.

2.1: A Case Study on Emotions

2.1: A Case Study on Emotions

Real-life Case Study 3 - Team Performance Issue

The Situation

A capable software project team was consistently missing deadlines. This alarmed the project manager (PM), who was totally focused on deadlines and technical metrics. The project manager continued to bear down on the team to get their act together and start meeting deadlines. Yet, there was no visible progress. Offering to help, the higher-level program manager met with the team and each team member individually to understand the real issues.

The team recently lost two people, and the extra workload was distributed among the remaining staff, with no sense of gratitude from the management. The team was feeling overworked and poorly treated. They were struggling with the emotions of **frustration** and **resentment**. The project manager's lack of emotional awareness and focus on deadlines only exacerbated the problem.

The program manager shared with the project manager the emotional issues he had identified and also provided a communication script to use with the team. The script helped the PM communicate with empathy that recognized and validated the feelings of the team members. That brought the project back on track, even though it was with a slightly modified schedule.

Lessons Learned

1. It is critical for the project manager to recognize, understand, acknowledge, and manage emotions, both their own and their team's.
2. Addressing them through proper communication is key to effective project management.

Emotions are the foundation of emotional intelligence. We will now dive into the five core skills to help us recognize, understand, and manage emotions using real-life project scenarios.

3: EMOTIONS DRIVE THE NEED FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

What are emotions?

Emotions are feelings (a mental state) triggered by thoughts or stimulus events and acted out through behaviors associated with pleasure or displeasure. They are brought on by neurophysiological changes in a human. Emotions are the primary drivers of the need for emotional intelligence, not only at the workplace but in life in general.

If you are interested in the origin of the word "emotion," it dates back to 1579, when it was adapted from the French word "*émotion*," which comes from the [Old French](#) word "*émouvoir*," of the same meaning as "to stir up." The term "emotion" was introduced into academic discussion as a catch-all term to [passions](#), [sentiments](#), and affections. [\[Dixon\]](#) The word "emotion" was coined in the early 1800s by Thomas Brown, and it was around the 1830s that the modern concept of emotion first emerged for the English language. [\[Smith\]](#)

Dr. Robert Plutchik (1927–2006) was an American psychologist and a professor emeritus at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He identified eight primary emotions and created a wheel of emotions to illustrate different emotions. His circumplex model makes connections between the idea of an emotion circle and a [color wheel](#). Like colors, primary emotions can be expressed at different intensities and can mix with one another to form different emotions.



Figure 3.1: Plutchik's wheel of emotions. (CC BY 1.0; Robert Plutchik via [Wikipedia](#))

Plutchik's wheel of emotions has been widely used in psychological research, therapy, marketing, artificial intelligence, and media studies.

For the scope of this book, instead of getting more into the theoretical aspects of emotions, we will focus on the eight primary emotions: anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation (for project management, we will use a synonym, anxiety), trust, and joy.



Figure 3.2: Eight basic emotions for projects and project management. (CC BY 1.0; Ravi K Ravikumar adapted via Wikipedia)

Plutchik's reasoning for picking the primary emotions was that each triggered behavior with high survival value, such as the fight-or-flight response—a psychological defense mechanism. The complex, probabilistic sequence of events involved in the development of emotions, the resulting behavior, and the effect are captured in the following table.

Table 3.1: Probabilistic Sequence of Events Leading to Development of Emotions. (CC BY 1.0; Robert Plutchik via Wikipedia).

Stimulus Event	Inferred Cognition	Feeling	Behavior	Effect
Threat	Danger	Fear	Running, or flying away	Protection
Obstacle	Enemy	Anger	Biting, hitting	Destruction
Potential mate	Possess	Joy	Courting, mating	Reproduction
Loss of valued person	Isolation	Sadness	Crying for help	Reintegration
Group member	Friend	Trust, acceptance	Grooming, sharing	Affiliation
Gruesome object	Poison	Disgust	Pushing away	Rejection
Management's eyes on the project	Pressure	Anxiety	Critical and micromanaging	Stress
Sudden change	What is it?	Surprise	Stopping, alerting	Orientation

The defense mechanisms, when not managed, can impact reasoning, decision-making, collaboration, and misinterpretation by

both individual contributors and project managers. From the projects and project management points of view, we will focus on six emotions that trigger negative behaviors and outcomes. They are anger, fear, anxiety, sadness, surprise, and disgust. It will be more effective to review real-life workplace scenarios related to one of those six emotions, their behavior, and the impact the emotion created.

Emotions, Impact, and Correct Behavior

In a project, dealing with negative emotions is paramount to our project outcome and our own reputation. Negative emotions have the potential to trigger undesirable behaviors that could impact our progress. A common negative emotion and its potential impact are illustrated below using realistic sample scenarios. ([CC BY 4.0](#); Ravi K Ravikumar).

Emotion: Anxiety

1. Project Management Scenario
 - In the middle of a major software project, the engineering project manager learns that multiple executives were monitoring the project for its outcome. The visibility creates a feeling of anxiety for the PM.
2. Behavior
 - The anxiety creates the fear of failure, which in turn drives the PM to micromanage the team on deliverables.
3. Impact
 - The team feels distrusted and demotivated.
 - As a result, the engagement and productivity drop.
4. Teaching Point
 - Both the anxiety and the resulting behavior of micromanagement are destructive and must be replaced with a constructive plan and execution
5. Correct Behavior
 - Turn anxiety-driven insecurity into an opportunity for the team to shine. Communicate the visibility to the team and encourage them to re-optimize the project plans. Empower the team to monitor the progress and deliver a quality product.

In the next chapter, we will discuss the recognition and handling of emotions in greater detail from a self-awareness standpoint.

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3.1: Emotions and their Impact

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3.1: Emotions and their Impact

Emotions, their Defensive Mechanisms, and Impact

Looking at the landscape of projects and project/team management, we will focus on the eight primary emotions - anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation (for project management, we will use a synonym, anxiety), trust, and joy. Also, to keep the discussions at a practical and experiential levels, we will stay away from the theoretical depths of emotions.



Figure : Eight basic emotions , their defensive mechanisms and impact. (CC BY 1.0; Ravi K Ravikumar adapted via Wikipedia)

Plutchik's reasoning for picking the primary emotions was that each triggered behavior with high survival value, such as the fight-or-flight response—a psychological defense mechanism. The complex, probabilistic sequence of events involved in the development of emotions, the resulting behavior, and the effect are captured in the following table.

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Stimulus Event	Inferred Cognition	Feeling	Behavior	Effect
Threat	Danger	Fear	Running, or flying away	Protection
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Potential mate	Possess	Joy	Courting, mating	Reproduction
Loss of valued person	Isolation	Sadness	Crying for help	Reintegration
Group member	Friend	Trust, acceptance	Grooming, sharing	Affiliation

Stimulus Event	Inferred Cognition	Feeling	Behavior	Effect
Gruesome object	Poison	Disgust	Pushing away	Rejection
Management's eyes on the project	Pressure	Anxiety	Critical and micromanaging	Stress
Sudden change	What is it?	Surprise	Stopping, alerting	Orientation

The defense mechanisms, when not managed, can impact reasoning, decision-making, collaboration, and misinterpretation by both individual contributors and project managers. From the projects and project management points of view, we will focus on six emotions that trigger negative behaviors and outcomes. They are anger, fear, anxiety, sadness, surprise, and disgust. It will be more effective to review real-life workplace scenarios related to one of those six emotions, their behavior, and the impact the emotion created.

In a project, dealing with negative emotions is paramount to our project outcome and our own reputation. Negative emotions have the potential to trigger undesirable behaviors that could impact our progress. A common negative emotion and its potential impact are illustrated below using realistic sample scenarios. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar).

Emotion: Fear

1. Project Management Scenario
 - Ben is the project manager working on a new product launch. The timeline between alpha test, beta test, and launch is very tight. Three days before the alpha (for internal testing) release, the team finds out that under certain realistic but not-so-common conditions, a key feature is failing. The team believes it can be fixed within a week. This is Ben's first opportunity for action.
 - However, a few days later, the team finds out that they need at least two more weeks. With a cascade of tasks and a tight schedule, the beta release is pushed out, delaying the final rollout.
2. Behavior
 - Action #1: Ben, fearful of looking incompetent and believing that the feature can be fixed in days, decides not to inform the stakeholders—No **Action**.
 - Action #2: Days after the identification of the problem, Ben informs the stakeholders of the delay.
3. Impact
 - Late escalation about the problem and redesign is not received well by management, which impacts Ben's reputation.

Emotion: Anxiety

1. Project Management Scenario
 - In the middle of a major software project, the engineering project manager learns that multiple executives were monitoring the project for its outcome. The visibility creates a feeling of anxiety for the PM.
2. Behavior
 - The anxiety creates the fear of failure, which in turn drives the PM to micromanage the team on deliverables.
3. Impact
 - The team feels distrusted and demotivated.
 - As a result, the engagement and productivity drop.

Emotion: Anger

1. Project Management Scenario
 - During the project team meeting, a key contributor criticizes the PM's unrealistic deadlines.
2. Behavior
 - Feeling angry, the PM snaps back, blaming the team for incompetence.
3. Impact

- The team withdraws from providing honest feedback.
- Morale and collaboration suffer.

Emotion: Surprise (Bad)

1. Project Management Scenario
 - A product manager (PM) was working with the engineering team and a key customer on a new product. The VP of engineering was also involved. Just weeks before the product rollout, the VP of marketing (the product manager's upper management) cancels the product without informing the PM. The VP of engineering was surprised and upset for having his team's time wasted by the PM. The VP of engineering lashed out at the PM only to find out that the PM had no idea that his project was cancelled.
2. Behavior
 - As a next step, the PM communicates the sudden cancellation to the team, inadvertently sharing some of his own frustration.
3. Impact
 - The team feels blindsided and feels that their time was wasted.

Emotion: Disgust

1. Project Management Scenario
 - A PM discovers that a senior engineer manipulated test results to meet a milestone in a key customer design project. The PM is disgusted by the unethical behavior.
2. Behavior
 - Disgust could drive the PM's behavior in at least two possible ways:
 - Disengage with the senior engineer.
 - Or, respond angrily to the senior engineer.
3. Impact
 - Disengagement:
 - Would have only allowed the issue to fester.
 - The team's reputation would have been damaged with the customer.
 - Angry response:
 - Neither addresses the customer issue nor the unethical behavior.

In the next chapter, we will discuss the recognition and handling of emotions in greater detail both from a self-awareness and self-management points of view.

4: SELF-FOCUSED CORE EQ SKILLS

An Overview of Self-Awareness and Self-Management

Of the five core skills, self-awareness and self-management are core EQ skills focused on "self," both in terms of awareness and management of emotions.

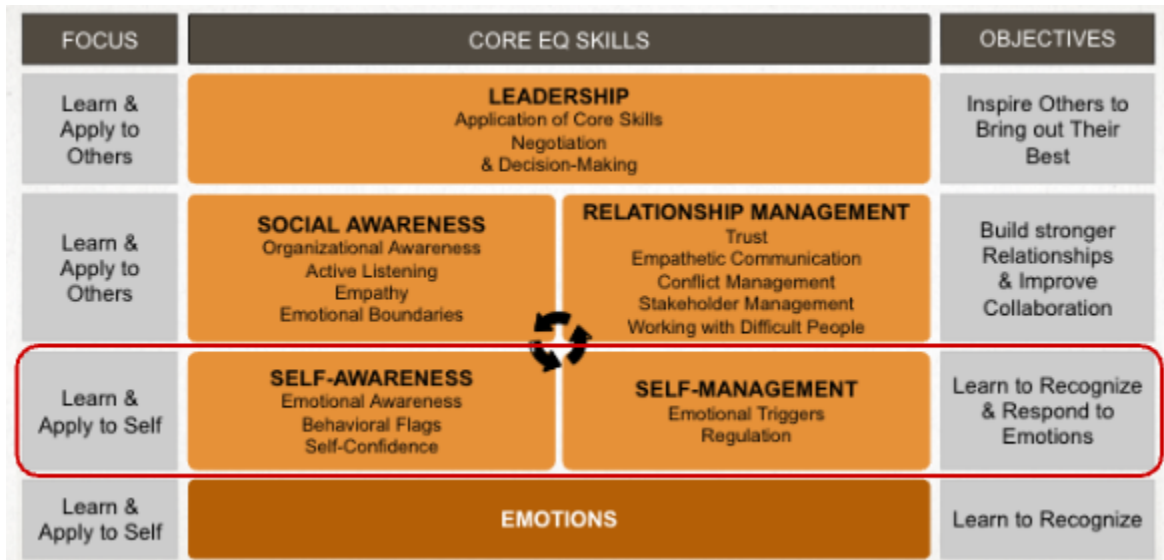


Figure 4.1: Self-Focused Core EQ Skills. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar) [Alternative description of the image.](#)

The red rectangle in the figure 4.1 highlights the two skills, self-awareness and self-management, that will be covered in detail in this chapter. It also points out the fact that the two skills are self-focused. The expected outcome is to become better at recognizing your emotions and learn to respond, and not react to them—better self-management.

Self-awareness is our ability to recognize and understand our own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and the impact of resulting behaviors on others. In project management, if we were self-aware, we would understand the impact our feelings and actions have on our team and our project outcomes. The reality is that most people lack self-awareness. They go about their day unaware of their emotions, allowing the corresponding reactions and behavior to follow. Poor behavior causes undesirable results. Managing that behavior is **self-management**.

Understanding our emotions can help us reduce stress and make better decisions, especially when we are under pressure.

Learning Objectives

Learn and apply self-awareness and self-management skills to bring out the best in us by:

- Recognizing and becoming aware of our own emotions.
- Becoming aware of behavioral flags and how they impact us.
- Recognizing emotional triggers within and their impact.
- Consciously get into the practice of curbing the reaction by applying self-regulation (self-management) techniques.
- Learn and apply ways to improve self-awareness.
- Learn and apply ways to improve self-management.
- Learn the recognition and application of self-awareness and self-management from real-life case studies.

Real-Life Scenario - The "Everything is Under Control" Manager

The Situation

Alex, a project manager, presents a calm demeanor to his team. However, he is known to stress out his team with his emails marked "urgent" and demand urgent completion of tasks like

- Delivering a project ahead of the schedule, or
- A deep-dive analysis of a past project as an add-on deliverable, while the person responsible for it is already stretching to meet the current project timeline.

Discussion Points

Alex has done this many times in the current year. Here are some questions and possible answers from observing Alex. For each question, think about what else could be driving Alex to do what he has been doing.

- What could be driving Alex to do so?
 - Maybe requests from his management.
- What emotions might Alex be struggling with?
 - It could be fear or fear of negotiating with his management or trying not to display weakness to his team.
- Do you believe Alex is aware of his emotional issue? Is he trying to overcome it?
 - Not if such emails are a common occurrence.
- How is Alex impacting the project and his team?
 - By not being honest with himself and his team, Alex is losing the team's trust.
- How would the team feel if this happened multiple times during a project?
 - Overworked, disappointed, and demotivated.

Would you like to be a project manager like Alex?

Do you see the importance of self-awareness and self-management?

We will now dive into self-awareness and self-management, the first two critical skills.

[4.1: Self-Awareness - A Core Skill](#)

[4.2: Self-Management - A Core Skill](#)

[4.3: Alternative Image Descriptions for Chapter 4](#)

4.1: Self-Awareness - A Core Skill

Self-Awareness - An Overview

Self-Awareness (Perry) is the foundation of emotional intelligence. It's about recognizing our own emotions, behaviors, strengths, and weaknesses and their impact. Behaviors are expressions of our emotions. A negative emotion would likely trigger regrettable negative behavior. Hence, it is important to recognize and understand the situations that trigger a negative emotion in us. For example, knowing that we get impatient when a team member is late with a report allows us to manage that feeling and not let it escalate. When we are aware of our own emotional state, we can control our behavior to make better, more objective decisions and prevent derailment of our reputation and project.

Sub-skills of Self-Awareness

Emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence are three key sub-skills of self-awareness.



Figure 4.1.1: Self-awareness and its sub-skills. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Emotional Awareness (A Sub-Skill)

Emotional Awareness: It is about recognizing and understanding our emotions, the resulting defense mechanisms (behavior), and their impact on others. For example, when we are feeling frustrated by a project delay, how we project ourself plays a critical role in how others perceive us, including our team members and stakeholders. To create the right perception, we must recognize that feeling of frustration and its impact on others.

In the last chapter, we illustrated the negative impact on others created by the common defense mechanisms of emotions using examples. To make it easy for the readers, the following section brings out the same emotions, behaviors, and impact, followed by a "teaching point" for each emotion.

Emotion: Fear

1. Project Management Scenario
 - Ben is the project manager working on a new product launch. The timeline between alpha test, beta test, and launch is very tight. Three days before the alpha (for internal testing) release, the team finds out that under certain realistic but not-so-common conditions, a key feature is failing. The team believes it can be fixed within a week. This is Ben's first opportunity for action.
 - However, a few days later, the team finds out that they need at least two more weeks. With a cascade of tasks and a tight schedule, the beta release is pushed out, delaying the final rollout.
2. Behavior
 - Action #1: Ben, fearful of looking incompetent and believing that the feature can be fixed in days, decides not to inform the stakeholders—No **Action**.
 - Action #2: Days after the identification of the problem, Ben informs the stakeholders of the delay.
3. Impact
 - Late escalation about the problem and redesign is not received well by management, which impacts Ben's reputation.
4. Teaching Point
 - Do not fall to "fear of failure" because it negatively impacts both the PM and the project.
 - The identified conditional failure of the product is an engineering and not a project management issue. Being transparent with the stakeholders by communicating the bad news without pointing out the engineering team and as

early as possible would have been a better approach.

Emotion: Anxiety (repeat of this example from chapter 3)

1. Project Management Scenario
 - In the middle of a major software project, the engineering project manager learns that multiple executives were monitoring the project for its outcome. The visibility creates a feeling of anxiety for the PM.
2. Behavior
 - The anxiety creates the fear of failure, which in turn drives the PM to micromanage the team on deliverables.
3. Impact
 - The team feels distrusted and demotivated.
 - As a result, the engagement and productivity drop.
4. Teaching Point
 - Both the anxiety and the resulting behavior of micromanagement are destructive and must be replaced with a constructive plan and execution
5. Correct Behavior
 - Turn anxiety-driven insecurity into an opportunity for the team to shine. Communicate the visibility to the team and encourage them to re-optimize the project plans. Empower the team to monitor the progress and deliver a quality product.

Emotion: Anger

1. Project Management Scenario
 - During the project team meeting, a key contributor criticizes the PM's unrealistic deadlines.
2. Behavior
 - Feeling angry, the PM snaps back, blaming the team for incompetence.
3. Impact
 - The team withdraws from providing honest feedback.
 - Morale and collaboration suffer.
4. Teaching Point
 - Responding to anger with anger is impulsive. It is destructive and ruins both trust and engagement.
 - This is where you must employ self-management techniques, a topic of discussion in the next chapter

Emotion: Surprise (Bad)

1. Project Management Scenario
 - A product manager (PM) was working with the engineering team and a key customer on a new product. The VP of engineering was also involved. Just weeks before the product rollout, the VP of marketing (the product manager's upper management) cancels the product without informing the PM. The VP of engineering was surprised and upset for having his team's time wasted by the PM. The VP of engineering lashed out at the PM only to find out that the PM had no idea that his project was cancelled.
2. Behavior
 - As a next step, the PM communicates the sudden cancellation to the team, inadvertently sharing some of his own frustration.
3. Impact
 - The team feels blindsided and feels that their time was wasted.
4. Teaching Point
 - Most likely, it was the lack of alignment between the PM and the VP of marketing that became the PM's problem when the project was cancelled.
 - Stakeholder management and communications are paramount in every project.

Emotion: Disgust

1. Project Management Scenario
 - A PM discovers that a senior engineer manipulated test results to meet a milestone in a key customer design project. The PM is disgusted by the unethical behavior.
2. Behavior
 - Disgust could drive the PM's behavior in at least two possible ways:
 - Disengage with the senior engineer.

- Or, respond angrily to the senior engineer.
- 3. Impact
 - Disengagement:
 - Would have only allowed the issue to fester.
 - The team's reputation would have been damaged with the customer.
 - Angry response:
 - Neither addresses the customer issue nor the unethical behavior.
- 4. Teaching Point
 - It is always important to focus on the issues, identify, and correct them ASAP.
 - In this case, the issues are:
 - The delivery of a sub-standard product to the customer, and
 - Unethical behavior by the senior engineer.
 - Manipulation:
 - A moral violation must be addressed using proper channels.

Behavioral Flags and Their Impact

Behavioral flags are a set of commonly displayed behaviors that trigger emotional reactions in others, creating a negative outcome. Becoming aware of these behaviors in ourselves is a critical skill set for success. These behaviors can be seen both at the workplace and in life. One of the simplest ways to illustrate the impact of behavioral flags is through real-life examples from project management.

Behavioral Flag: Sarcasm

1. Project Management Scenario
 - During a project meeting, a day before code freeze, one of the developers stated that he found a bug on a critical feature and needed a week to fix it.
2. Behavior
 - The PM responds: "Oh sure, thanks for bringing this in the last hour."
3. Impact
 - The team member feels ridiculed and shuts down.
 - The team does not feel comfortable anymore bringing up real issues, out of fear of being ridiculed.
4. Teaching Point
 - Sarcasm can appear humorous, but it often masks frustration or anger. It damages trust and psychological safety, and discourages engagement.
5. Correct Behavior
 - Replace sarcasm with concern (shows you care) and collaboration (shows you are willing to work with that person on the problem):
 - "Interesting! Let's review the bug and see if there is a way to accelerate the bug fix."

Behavioral Flag: Passive Aggression

1. Project Management Scenario
 - At a project meeting, the engineering PM assigns the task of helping a junior member to the lead developer, who is overloaded and is disgruntled because he believes that he is long overdue for a promotion.
2. Behavior
 - The lead developer responds, "I will try to help," but does not follow through. When the junior developer approaches, the excuse is always, "I am too busy right now."
3. Impact
 - The deadline slips.
 - Resentment builds up between the PM and the lead developer.
4. Teaching Point
 - "I will try" is a passive-aggressive response. Passive aggression allows resentment to fester, undermines trust, and builds tension.
5. Correct Behavior
 - As soon as passive aggression is detected, take it offline. Discuss the issue privately in a **1-on-1 meeting**:
 - "I sense some hesitation. Let's talk about what's bothering you so we can resolve it."

Behavioral Flag: Judgemental Behavior

1. Project Management Scenario
 - During a design review of a robotics project, one of the engineers presents an alternative design idea as better for the robotic arm. Believing that it would delay the project, the PM is annoyed—a quick judgment.
2. Behavior
 - The PM says, "I don't see how that would be better."
 - The engineer responds, "It is lighter, faster, and offers a greater range of motion."
 - The PM responds, "We don't need that. We will stay with our current design."
3. Impact
 - The engineer feels belittled in front of the team.
 - Openness and engagement from the team slow down, fearing belittlement by the PM.
4. Teaching Point
 - Quick judgment stems from ego or perfectionism and blocks learning and empowerment. Criticism kills the opportunity to reward great ideas and motivation to innovate.
5. Correct Behavior
 - Use neutral, growth-oriented language to not bring judgment into the picture:
 - "Sounds like a great idea. Let's review your design in a separate meeting to see if it would benefit the project without delaying it."

Behavioral Flag: Hostility

1. Project Management Scenario
 - During a high-pressure project delivery week for a key product, the PM finds out that the documentation is not quite ready.
2. Behavior
 - The PM yells at a document developer in front of the team: "It is not the first time your document is late. What is the problem?"
3. Impact
 - Triggers fear and resentment.
 - The document developer and the team withdraw emotionally.
 - Productivity, trust, and morale collapse.
4. Teaching Point
 - Hostility may release tension for the speaker, but it creates lasting damage to trust, morale, and relationships.
5. Correct Behavior
 - Step back and address the frustration privately:
 - "I am under pressure with this deadline. Can we review the documentation plan and identify how it can be accelerated?"

In addition to the project-specific impact, any employee (an individual contributor or a manager) displaying any of the behavioral flags is at the risk of creating the following perceptions in the minds of the team and the stakeholders:

- Incapable of handling difficult project-related issues
- Loss of credibility

Both are career-limiting for the employee and hence, must be addressed.

Real-Life Case Study 3 - Mix of Emotions (Parents and Teenager)

The Scenario

The following is a true incident that occurred within a family. The lessons from this case study apply to any management role, including project management.

John and Jenny decided to go on a family vacation with their two children, Bill, 11, and Mark, 15 (a new driver with a learner's permit). This was going to be a one-week road trip from the Bay Area through Las Vegas, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, the Grand Canyon, Flagstaff, and back to the Bay Area.

Jenny talked to Bill and Mark about the trip, stating how nice it would be to go on a family vacation. Mark declined, saying he would stay home to catch up on schoolwork. Jenny, uncomfortable with a teenager staying home alone for a week, told him in a stern motherly voice that he must join the family and could not stay home. That erupted into an argument with no conclusion. This type of interaction continued a few more times. Finally, Jenny told John about it.

John assured her that he would take care of the issue but wanted her to stop talking to Mark about it for at least a couple of days to avoid arguments and ill will. Despite John's request, Jenny's motherly instinct did not stop her from bringing it up with Mark ending in arguments every time. At that point, Jenny decided not to discuss the trip with Mark. That is when John decided to act on the issue.

How do you think John addressed the problem?

That evening, Mark walked into the house. The conversation between John and Mark was:

John: "Hey Mark, I am sure you know that we are planning a week-long road trip. I have a challenge with the trip."

Mark: "Dad, what is the challenge?"

John: "I have no idea how I am going to do all the driving by myself."

Mark thought for just a moment and said, "Dad, I can help you with it."

John: "Mark, that is great! Thank you. That will help me for sure."

Outcome

- Mark willingly offered to join the vacation.

Analysis

- John presented to Mark the problem, not the solution. Mark responded with a solution—that was his solution.
- What dominant emotion was the mother experiencing in the discussion?
 - Fear of leaving a teenager alone in the house for a week.
- What dominant emotion was Mark (the son) experiencing in the discussion?
 - Anger for two reasons.
 - His mother did not trust him.
 - His mother's approach of "telling" him that the only option was to join the family on vacation.
- What did John leverage?
 - Thinking win-win.
 - What's in it for Mark? (Opportunity to drive long distances through multiple states).
 - Letting Mark come up with the solution.

Lessons Learned

- Not paying attention to one's own emotions and their impact on others is not a skill set for success.
- Think about what's in it for the other party—impact of our own emotions on others.
- Nobody likes to be told what to do. Lay out the problem, and they will come up with the solution.
- Always think win-win.

Real-Life Case Study 4 - "Suddenly Unengaged" Team Member

The Scenario

Bill, an experienced project manager, noticed a sudden change in Wendy, a key contributor. Uncharacteristically, she was missing meetings, not responding to emails, and missing deadlines. This was clearly placing the project at risk. His next update to the

stakeholders was just a few days away. He had two choices: escalate or investigate. He decided to investigate. Expecting an emotional issue behind this sudden change in behavior, he scheduled a private, one-on-one video call with Wendy. In the call, he could have directly asked her about the missed deadlines. Instead, he asks, "Hi Wendy, I have noticed you've been quiet lately. Is everything okay?" The open-ended question in a one-on-one call created a safe space for Wendy to share. Wendy disclosed that she had been dealing with a personal issue that had made it difficult for her to focus.

Analysis

- What emotions was Bill experiencing initially, and how could they have negatively impacted the situation?
 - Frustration
- Why did Bill's approach lead to a better outcome?
 - Bill's decision to focus on the hidden emotional issue was the right choice.
 - The open-ended question was concerning, caring, and personal, clearly creating a safe space.

Lessons Learned

- Put people before project metrics. Without the people, metrics mean nothing.
- Address emotional issues with concern and care.

Real-Life Case Study 5 - Recognizing a Team's Emotional State

The Scenario

Susan, a seasoned project manager, was working with a competent team on a critical project to develop a brand-new product with many unique capabilities that would take the company into a new market. Deadlines were tight, with the final rollout synchronized with a major trade show. Developing just the core capabilities of the product and making them work together was a challenge. It required multiple reworks. After spending long hours for several weeks just on this critical phase of the project, the team was delighted to see the core capability performed as expected. The next phase of the project was not as difficult, but it had a tight timeline. Susan scheduled a project meeting the next day to dive into the next phase. At the meeting, when she asked for input about the next phase, the team barely responded.

Being a seasoned project manager, instead of pushing through her agenda, Susan changed the tone of the meeting on the fly. She said, "I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank you all for the excellent job on delivering the core capabilities on time. The late nights and long hours were noticed and well recognized. Let's take a break today, and we will reconvene tomorrow. You all deserve the day to relax and recharge."

Analysis

- What emotions were the team likely experiencing?
 - Joy and exhaustion, both from completing the critical phase of the project
- What did Susan's actions communicate to the team? Why was it effective?
 - recognition, care, and concern.

Lessons Learned

- Timely recognition of good work goes a long way.
- Care and concern for the team is critical for the ultimate success of the project.
- The level of judgment is an indicator of the emotional state of a team.

Accurate Self-Assessment

To improve our self-awareness, we must first understand where we currently stand in terms of our emotional triggers, strengths, and limitations. This includes knowing what tasks we excel at and where we may need help. Self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence. Do we know how emotionally intelligent we are? Discovering that is a good first step. Unlike IQ, we can improve EQ over time. Several free online self-assessment tools are available today. They would provide you with a baseline of your emotional intelligence capability. Here are a few that I am not authorized to endorse.

- Free EQDNA Test: [DNA EQ Test](#)
- Global Leadership Foundation Test: [GLF EQ Test](#)
- Psychology Today Test: [PT EQ Test](#)

Real-Life Case Study 6 - Self-Confidence

The Scenario

I was an entry-level customer applications engineer at an integrated circuit (IC) design company. In my job, I worked with an assigned set of customers in our design center to help them use our design tools in the most effective way to create and complete their designs. The use of our design tools was a requirement to get that design implemented in a chip. This is about one such customer.

I welcomed the new customer in his own secure room in our design center and asked him about his design to figure out the level of help he might need from me. Since he had already created and validated the design using his company's tools, he planned to translate the design descriptions into our tool line-by-line. Noticing a problem with this approach, I stated that might not be the best approach with our tools. He reacted as follows:

Customer: "How many years of experience do you have?"

Me: Obviously, I had offended him. I responded by saying, "I have just one year of experience with these tools."

Customer: "I am a senior design manager with 10 years of experience. I know what I am doing."

Me: "I apologize. Please proceed with your plan. If I can be of help in any other way, I'll be happy to. I am only a call away."

I stopped by his room in the design center twice a day for a few days. All I ended up listening to was his complaints about how slow our simulator was, and that he had to wait for more than an hour for each simulation to complete before he could analyze the results. Every time, I responded by saying, "John, I understand your frustration. Hopefully, you will get it done in a few days."

After a couple more days of his complaining, I finally responded as follows.

Me: "John, I sincerely believe I can help you."

John: "Do you have time now?"

Me: "Yes, I do."

Next, he tried to show me his simulation program, which was translated line-by-line from the program he had used in his company's simulator. Since the two simulators used different algorithms, I suggested that it would be better if I created a brand-new program for him and ran it through our simulator. He agreed. Based on how he wanted to validate his design, I developed a program for him in the next 45 minutes. When we uploaded the program into our simulator, it took only one tenth of the time to simulate.

Outcome

- The simulation results validated his design as created.
- He was very happy with the results but was embarrassed by his past behavior.

- At that moment, he said, “Ravi, I am sorry for the way I treated you.” I responded, “John, no worries and no hard feelings.”
- Achieved a state of mutual respect.

Analysis

- What were the emotions that the customer was experiencing?
 - Frustration with our design tools used to design integrated circuits
 - Annoyed when I (a junior engineer) offered to help him overcome his problem
- Later, it was embarrassment and happiness at the same time.

What Helped Me?

- Know-how of our design solutions.
- Ability to understand the limitations of the customer's approach.
- Confidence in my knowledge and skills.

Lessons Learned

- Work with, not against, a customer's or a stakeholder's ego.
- In this case, since timeline was not an issue, giving the customer the time and space for him to realize and own his mistake was the right choice.

Techniques for Improving Self-Awareness

If self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence, learning and improving this skill is key to success.

- Maintaining a **journal of our feelings** that need to be addressed.
- **Tracing back** to recognize an emotion from a feeling is a good way to understand and address it, especially negative emotions such as fear, anger, and disgust.
- Role-Playing: **Share our emotions** with another person and reverse the role with the person. This is an effective way to find out how the other person saw our emotional response. Did they get it as we intended? If not, we need to work on our response.
- **Checking in the mirror** is another way to see if the response on our face is appropriate or not. If not, we need to work on your facial response.

Increase Your Self Awareness with One Simple Fix

Video Length: 17 minutes 17 seconds

Video introduction: Dr. Tasha Eurich presents at a TEDx Talk, a simple way to increase self-awareness. Dr. Eurich, as a successful organizational psychologist, has helped thousands of leaders improve their effectiveness, from Fortune 500 executives to early-stage entrepreneurs.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



title="TEDx Talks: Increase Your Self-Awareness by Tasha Eurich"

Reflection Question: What is the fix that Dr. Tasha Eurich is talking about?

Review Questions (Think them through and no need to submit the answers)

1. What is the fix that Dr. Tasha is talking about?
 2. How would you implement them in your career and life?
-

Attributions

1. Some of the content on self-awareness was adapted from [BMT 2660: Conflict Management \(Perry, 2021\)](#) by Perry from [Prince George's Community College](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
2. [Increase Your Self-Awareness with One Quick Fix](#) by Dr. Tasha Eurich is shared under the license [CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0](#)

4.2: Self-Management - A Core Skill

Self-Management - An Overview

In Chapter 1 we learned that events and people are the primary sources of emotional triggers, which could lead to poor and sometimes reprehensible **behavior** in a person. For example, you are in a team meeting with your manager and your co-workers. Each co-worker is managing independent projects. During the meeting, one of the co-workers, John, who is not connected with your project (let's call it Project A) and with whom you have had a difficult time, makes an unwarranted comment: "The additional resources being provided to Project A are not going to help." First and foremost, it is important for you to know that you could have never prevented that person from uttering that remark. Next, you can either react to it or respond in a calm and objective way.

Reaction: "What do you know about my project that makes you say that?" This only exacerbates the tension in the room. It brings out your anger and makes you look weak. Is that what you want?

Instead, you can take a deep breath and **decide** to respond with some objectivity and calmness, focused on the issue and not the person.

Response: "John, that is an interesting comment. I'd like to understand your rationale. Since you are not familiar with the details of my project, let's take this for an offline discussion." This would be a controlled response making you look strong to everyone in the room.

By reacting, you give the power to the other person, whereas by responding, you keep the power. This is what **self-management** is about. Instead of getting upset when a project faces an issue, a self-managed project manager will remain calm, assess the situation by focusing on the issue, and proactively work with the team to find a solution. This skill allows you to adapt to change, stay resilient under different emotional pressures, and maintain a positive and professional demeanor.

Let's review some real-life project management scenarios, including the responses with and without self-management in place.

Sub-skills of Self-Management

Emotional triggers and self-regulation are the two key sub-skills of self-management.



Figure 4.2.1: Self-management and its sub-skills. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Manage Emotional Triggers (A Sub-Skill)

Emotional Triggers are causes (people or events) that trigger a strong emotional reaction in a person. An emotional trigger provokes a psychological response in the form of a feeling, which is a response to an emotion, and often a related physiological response like increased heart rate, sweating, muscle tension, behavior, etc.

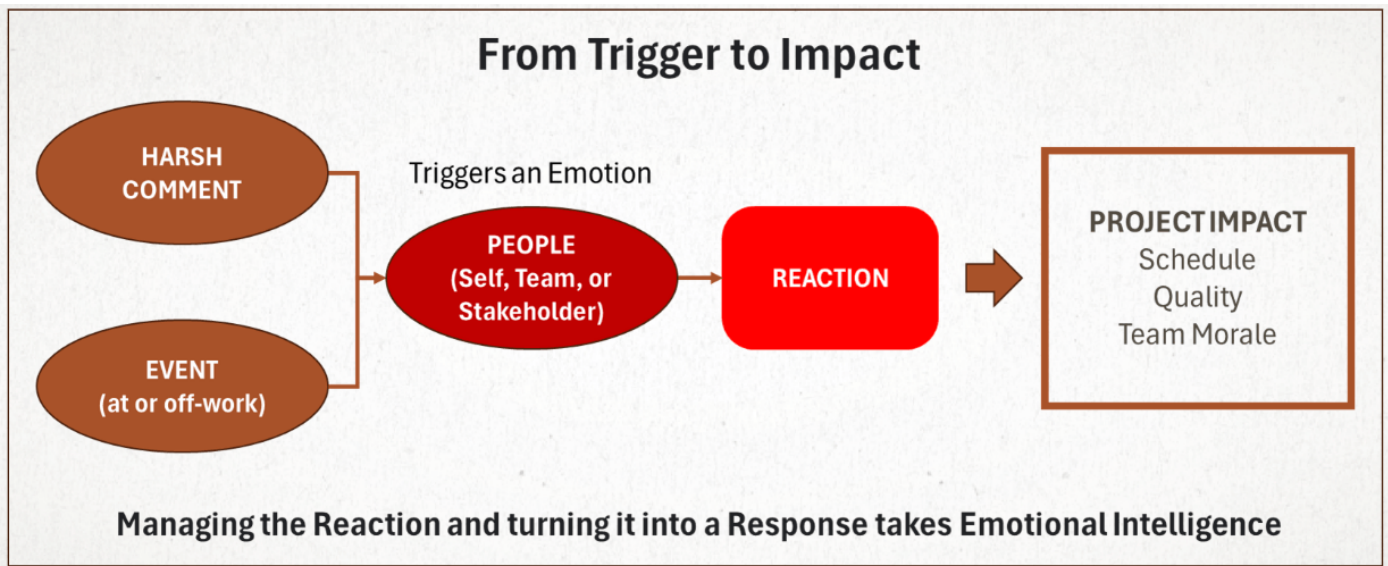


Figure 4.2.2: Emotions from trigger to impact. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative description of image.](#)

Typically, people (Harsh comments) and events (as shown in Figure 4.2.2 and also discussed in chapter 1) create these situations. It is important to note that one cannot manage something that they cannot recognize—without the ability to recognize (self-awareness) the triggers, it is impossible to manage them!

In any workplace, the emotional reactions that matter the most are the negative ones. Again, to make it easy for the reader, we will take the six basic emotions, their defense mechanisms, and the corresponding negative impact to show how to better manage them using a "corrective behavior" suggestion.

Emotion: Fear

1. Project Management Scenario
 - Ben is the project manager working on a new product launch. The timeline between alpha test, beta test, and launch is very tight. Three days before the alpha (for internal testing) release, the team finds out that under certain realistic but not-so-common conditions, a key feature is failing. The team believes it can be fixed within a week. This is Ben's first opportunity for action.
 - However, a few days later, the team finds out that they need at least two more weeks. With a cascade of tasks and a tight schedule, the beta release is pushed out, delaying the final rollout.
2. Behavior
 - Action #1: Ben, fearful of looking incompetent and believing that the feature can be fixed in days, decides not to inform the stakeholders—No **Action**.
 - Action #2: Days after the identification of the problem, Ben informs the stakeholders of the delay.
3. Impact
 - Late escalation about the problem and redesign is not received well by management, which impacts Ben's reputation.
4. Teaching Point
 - Do not fall to "fear of failure" because it negatively impacts both the PM and the project.
 - The identified conditional failure of the product is an engineering and not a project management issue. Being transparent with the stakeholders by communicating the bad news without pointing out the engineering team and as early as possible would have been a better approach.
5. Correct Behavior
 - Communicate the bad news as soon as possible to the stakeholders using the Buffer-Bad News-Goodwill approach. Here is an example of the approach.
 - **Example:** Thank you for entrusting us with this critical project. The team has been working hard to deliver the product on time with top quality. Yesterday, during an extensive testing session, the team detected a critical failure under certain special conditions. A fix was identified and is already being worked on to get the product out with no more than a two-week delay.
 - This 3-part approach (for [Bad News](#)) is described in Chapter 4. When the delay is inevitable, it is critical to communicate the bad news to the stakeholders as soon as possible.

Emotion: Anxiety (repeat of this example from chapter 3)

1. Project Management Scenario
 - In the middle of a major software project, the engineering project manager learns that multiple executives were monitoring the project for its outcome. The visibility creates a feeling of anxiety for the PM.
2. Behavior
 - The anxiety creates the fear of failure, which in turn drives the PM to micromanage the team on deliverables.
3. Impact
 - The team feels distrusted and demotivated.
 - As a result, the engagement and productivity drop.
4. Teaching Point
 - Both the anxiety and the resulting behavior of micromanagement are destructive and must be replaced with a constructive plan and execution
5. Correct Behavior
 - Turn anxiety-driven insecurity into an opportunity for the team to shine. Communicate the visibility to the team and encourage them to re-optimize the project plans. Empower the team to monitor the progress and deliver a quality product.

Emotion: Anger

1. Project Management Scenario
 - During the project team meeting, a key contributor criticizes the PM's unrealistic deadlines.
2. Behavior
 - Feeling angry, the PM snaps back, blaming the team for incompetence.
3. Impact
 - The team withdraws from providing honest feedback.
 - Morale and collaboration suffer.
4. Teaching Point
 - Responding to anger with anger is impulsive. It is destructive and ruins both trust and engagement.
 - This is where you must employ self-management techniques, a topic of discussion in the next chapter
5. Correct Behavior
 - Turn anger into a response that brings out curiosity and collaboration.
 - For example, ask "Help me understand why you feel that the deadline is unrealistic?"

Emotion: Surprise (Bad)

1. Project Management Scenario
 - A product manager (PM) was working with the engineering team and a key customer on a new product. The VP of engineering was also involved. Just weeks before the product rollout, the VP of marketing (the product manager's upper management) cancels the product without informing the PM. The VP of engineering was surprised and upset for having his team's time wasted by the PM. The VP of engineering lashed out to the PM only to find out that the PM had no idea that his project was cancelled.
2. Behavior
 - As a next step, the PM communicates the sudden cancellation to the team, inadvertently sharing some of his own frustration.
3. Impact
 - The team feels blindsided and feels that their time was wasted.
4. Teaching Point
 - Most likely, it was the lack of alignment between the PM and the VP of marketing that became the PM's problem when the project was cancelled.
 - Stakeholder management and communications are paramount in every project.
5. Correct Behavior
 - Understand and align with every stakeholder, and maintain a regular communication cadence.

Emotion: Disgust

1. Project Management Scenario
 - A PM discovers that a senior engineer manipulated test results to meet a milestone in a key customer design project. The PM is disgusted by the unethical behavior.

2. Behavior
 - Disgust could drive the PM's behavior in at least two possible ways:
 - Disengage with the senior engineer.
 - Or, respond angrily to the senior engineer.
3. Impact
 - Disengagement:
 - Would have only allowed the issue to fester.
 - The team's reputation would have been damaged with the customer.
 - Angry response:
 - Neither addresses the customer issue nor the unethical behavior.
4. Teaching Point
 - It is always important to focus on the issues, identify, and correct them ASAP.
 - In this case, the issues are:
 - The delivery of a sub-standard product to the customer, and
 - Unethical behavior by the senior engineer.
 - Manipulation:
 - A moral violation must be addressed using proper channels.
5. Correct Behavior
 - Inform the customer about the known issue in the product before they find out.
 - Unearth the reason for manipulation of results through a 1-on-1 with the engineer. Next, seek help from the proper channel (HR) for corrective action.

Commonly Encountered Emotional Triggers

Table 4.2.1: Impact of Emotional Triggers. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar).

Emotional Trigger	Description	Impact
Past Experiences	A current situation in your project reminds you of a past failure, triggering your negative self-criticism (self-talk), locking you into a negative frame of mind.	Emotional Impact: Fear Project Impact: Decision-making suffers and impacts project outcome
Criticism and Blame	Criticisms are opinions and are not necessarily correct. Also, there are three types of criticisms. Constructive Criticism: This is considered feedback. It comes with good intentions and a possible solution. Self-Criticism: It is your negative voice in your head. You are your own enemy. Unwarranted Criticism: Comes from another person. It might target a person or a team. Whether it is intentional or not, it hurts. Blame is unwarranted criticism that is personally directed at you.	Emotional Impact: Deflation, letdown, and anger Project Impact: Schedule delay
Unexpected Change Request	Change could come to the scope, budget, resources (e.g., loss of a key resource), or suspension of the project.	Emotional Impact: Frustration, anger, disappointment, and shock Project Impact: Schedule Delay

The ability to recognize the triggers and their impact is a critical skill in the workplace. It does not stop there. Learning to manage

the emotions caused by the triggers is paramount.

Self-Regulation (A Sub-Skill)

Self-regulation is a person's ability to manage their emotions and turn any reactions into meaningful responses. This may require some intentional work on our part to develop and train our brain to execute this skill in all situations. There is a physiological explanation for this.

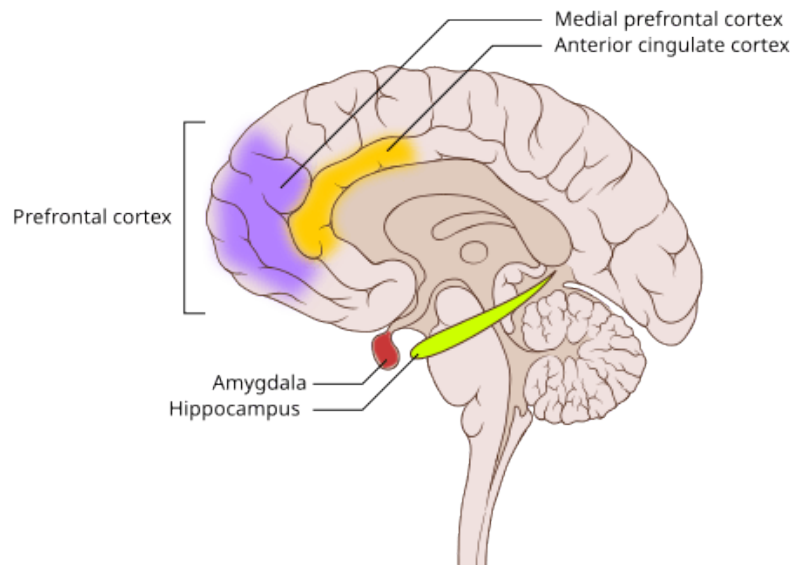


Figure 4.2.3: Processing of Emotional Reactions and Responses by Human Brain. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). The image is adapted from Wikimedia and licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

The figure 4.2.3 illustrates the physiological system of a human brain related to self-regulation. The limbic system of the brain processes and manages our emotions, behaviors, and memory. The amygdala and hippocampus are two key components of the limbic system. The prefrontal cortex (rational brain) handles planning, decision-making, and emotional regulation. Everything we experience enters the base of our brain as signals and travels through the limbic system before going to the prefrontal cortex.

A negative emotion could cause the limbic system to experience it and immediately trigger an undesired behavior before the prefrontal cortex gets the opportunity to make a rational decision. The undesired behavior could impact our reputation and the project outcome. If the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex to work together, the reactions could be turned into meaningful responses. Learning to curb the involuntary reaction and produce a meaningful response takes emotional intelligence.

Travis Bradbury ([Bradberry](#)), an accomplished Psychologist and an authority on emotional intelligence, eloquently explains in his [TEDxUCIrvine](#) talk.

Note

Video Length: 19:12.

Video Description: Why do people with average IQs outperform those with the highest IQs 70% of the time? It all comes down to emotional intelligence. And unlike IQ, emotional intelligence is a choice and a discipline, not an innate quality bestowed upon the lucky. In this powerful and entertaining talk, Dr. Travis Bradberry, coauthor of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, shows you how to use this critical skill to your advantage.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Reflection:

1. How important is emotional intelligence to you?

Same Scenario and Three Different Reactions

What happens when someone cuts us off on the road?

1. When in a Bad Mood: We might yell or make some gestures showing our displeasure.
 - Limbic system in action.
2. When in a Good Mood: We might smile and go on our way.
 - Both systems are working together.
3. When in Fear: We would make no eye contact and stay away from the person who cut us off.
 - Both systems are working together to create a different outcome based on our state of mind.

Let's review some real-life project management scenarios, including the responses with and without self-management in place.

Self-Regulation Against Emotional Triggers

Most causes (of emotional triggers) trigger the emotions of fear and/or anger. Managing emotional triggers takes self-regulation and a three-step process. Handling criticism and blame takes a special variation of that process.

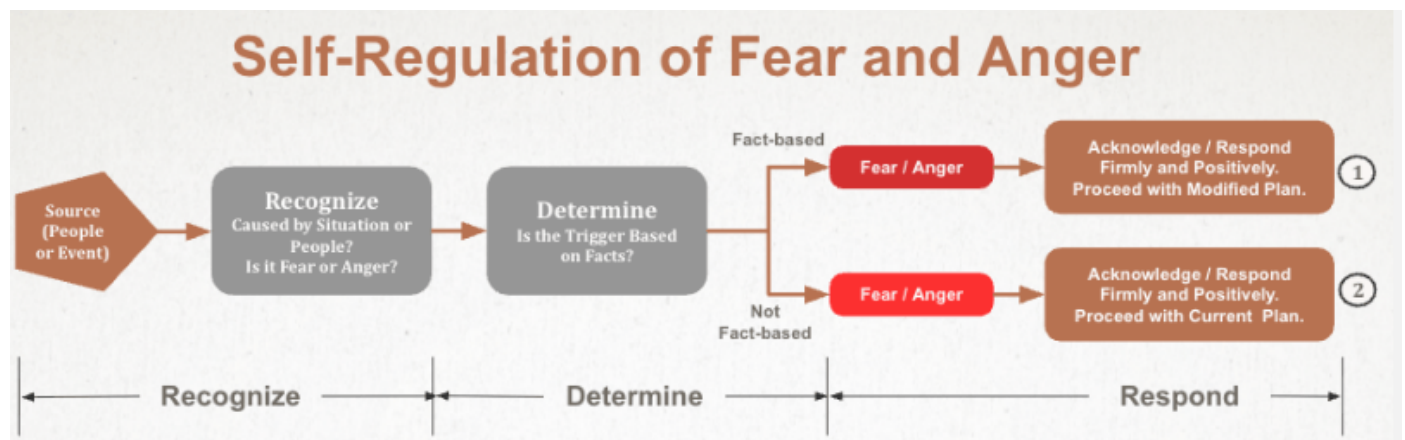


Figure 4.2.4: Three-step approach to self-regulation of fear and anger. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative description of image.](#)

Figure \PageIndex{4} illustrates a three-step approach for the self-regulation of fear and anger. Fear or anger is typically triggered by past or present events, projects, or people's comments. A failure in a past event is not a predictor of the outcome of the current project. People, processes, and tools are not the same. Therefore, it is important not to allow fear or anger from a past failure to overcome us in our current project, as doing so may negatively impact the outcome. The three-step approach consists of recognizing, determining, and responding.

If the emotion is fear, in the recognition step, we identify the source and type of emotion—whether it is fear or anger. In the next stage, we determine whether the emotion is based on facts. If the emotion is fear and it is based on facts, we should acknowledge it and move forward with a modified plan to address the fear. If it is not based on facts, we would dismiss the fear and proceed with our current plan of action.

If the emotion is anger and it is based on facts, we should respond firmly and positively before proceeding with a modified plan to address the anger. If it is not based on facts, we should still respond firmly and positively and then proceed with our current plan of action.

Self-Regulation Against Criticism and Blame

Self-regulation against criticism and blame follows a three-step process similar to that of emotional triggers.

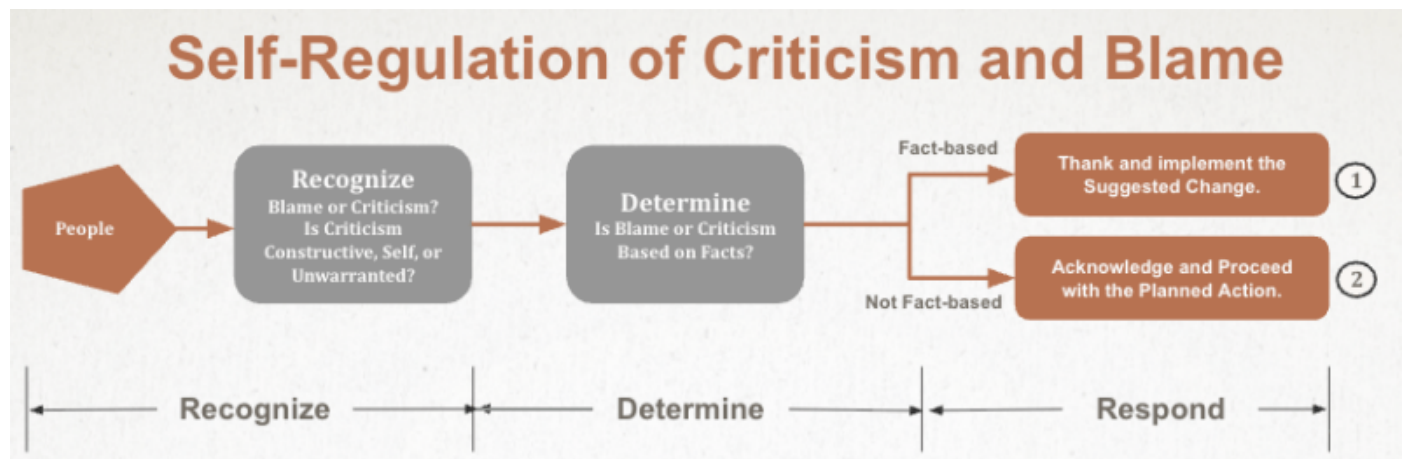


Figure 4.2.5: Three-step approach to self-regulation of criticism and blame. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative description of image.](#)

The figure 4.2.5 illustrates a three-step approach for the self-regulation of criticism and blame. Criticism and blame are typically triggered by people (the left-most trapezoidal block called Source). Both criticism and blame are opinions. Therefore, it is important to make sure any criticism or blame is fact-based.

The three-step approach consists of recognizing, determining, and responding. In the recognition step, we identify the type of emotion—whether it is criticism or blame. In the next stage, we determine whether the criticism or blame is fact-based. The third step is our response, which is either a 'fact-based' or 'not fact-based' path to respond. The fact-based response would be to thank and implement the change if suggested, and the not-fact-based response would be to acknowledge and proceed with no changes to our planned action.

Importance of Self-Management

The importance of self-management is explained below using common issues in realistic project management scenarios.

Issue: Managing a Conflict

Scenario

- A senior engineer criticizes the PM's plan in a team meeting.

Response

- PM's reactive response (with an angry tone):
 - "What part of my plan is bothering you?"
- PM's self-managed responses (with a normal and concerned tone of voice):
 - "I would like to understand the problem you see with the plan. Can you explain?"
 - After listening, the PM says, "I appreciate your perspective. Let us review the plan together to see what needs refining."

Impact

- From the PM's reactive response:
 - Builds a little tension between the criticizer and the PM
 - In the worst case, it angers the PM, and if that is unchecked, it could expose the PM's weakness and create a negative environment.
- From the PM's self-managed response:
 - Criticizer feels 'heard to' and appreciated by the PM.
 - The PM creates a transparent and safe environment for the team.
 - Brings out the competence of the PM in handling criticisms well.

Required EQ Skills

- Emotional awareness
- Impulse control

Issue: Past Experience and Self-Criticism

Scenario

- More than halfway through a software project, John, an engineer, detects a problem with his code that makes the software product fail in certain not-so common scenarios. Feeling bad about it, he tells the PM that he believes he could fix the problem within 4 days. Already, the project is on a very tight time schedule with a key customer waiting for the product, and the management focused on getting it to the customer on time.

Response

- PM's Reactive response:
 - "John, how come you didn't catch this problem earlier? This increases the schedule risk. You need to get this fixed and validated in 4 days to still meet the timeline."
- PM's self-managed response:
 - "John, I am glad you found this issue. Do you need any help in getting this taken care of in 4 days?"

Impact

- From PM's non-self-managed response: (prior experience creeps in)
 - PM's response is problem-focused and not solution-focused. It also blames John, making him feel hurt.
- From the PM's self-managed response:
 - John feels appreciated, and the question about additional help conveys the PM's 'caring' attitude. Motivates John to tackle the problem right away.
 - The team good too.

Required EQ Skills

- Being critical of a team member who is honest and forthright is bad for the team member and the team. This is a reactionary behavior and not a meaningful response.
- Need self-awareness to understand how the team member would feel and self-management to respond and not react.

Issue: Managing Change

Scenario

- Halfway through a retail showroom construction project, during a project review meeting, the client requested the PM to

make an unexpected design change while insisting the project be completed as per the original schedule. The client was a high-volume customer for the company.

- Both the PM and the project team felt frustrated with the situation.

Response

- PM's Reactive Response:
 - "This is unfortunately going to add some delay into the project, and I don't see any other option."
- PM's Self-Managed Response:
 - Thank you for bringing this change request now. We will review the change as a team, assess the impact, determine how to pivot efficiently, and propose our plan of action by tomorrow."

Impact

- From the PM's reactive response:
 - Builds tension between the client and the PM.
- From the PM's self-managed response:
 - The PM illustrates calmness and resilience.
 - By stating a plan of action, the PM is creating an inclusive, team-based approach with the client to move the project forward.
 - Turns the change request into an opportunity to develop a collaborative solution in a separate meeting with the team—gives the team an opportunity to voice their opinion.

Required EQ Skills

- Flexibility
- Resilience
- Professionalism

Real-Life Case Study 7 - A Shocking Experience

The Scenario

This is about a recent, personal experience for my wife and I. A week before we left for a pre-paid vacation to Alaska, our dog decided not to eat its food. It had no problem eating eggs or any other food and showed no signs of slowing in energy. Since we were going to board her for 11 days, we were concerned and took her to a vet.

The vet suggested a comprehensive blood test and an X-ray. We refused the X-ray and negotiated the cost for the blood test down to \$1,200. He came back with the results and told us that our dog needs immediate hospitalization and may have a problem with its spleen and more. He also said the hospital would do the blood test again. He said the total cost could be in the range of \$6000 to \$8,000, which is in addition to the \$1,200 we already spent on the blood test with him. Refusing to eat food (dry dog food) was the only issue with our dog. Otherwise, she was perfectly normal, and I saw no signs of any problems that called for immediate hospitalization. After all this, he said, "Please take her to the hospital, and it is important you take her right away. I will send them her data in advance."

I was fuming inside. Yet, controlling myself, I responded, saying, "Thank you for the advice. We will take her to the hospital."

We left his clinic right after. On the way home, we called a friend of ours, and she suggested that we should try giving our dog wet food to see if she eats it. We gave her the wet food and boy, she gobbled it enthusiastically. We monitored her for the next 4 days and saw no issues at all. In the meantime, the vet called us and asked us why we did not take her to the hospital. Politely, I responded, saying, "She is fine, and I don't see a need for hospitalization. Thank you for the call." In the meantime, just out of curiosity, we input her blood test results into ChatGPT™ and got the exact report the vet gave us. This raised serious questions not about ChatGPT, but about the blood draw and the doctor's diagnosis. Did they really draw the blood or use fake blood test data to provide us with the shocking diagnosis? Is there an illegal medical practice program between the Vet and the doctor at the hospital? This was at one of the private vet clinics in the Bay Area.

Two days later, we boarded our dog at the PetSmart where we usually board her and left on our vacation. While on vacation, we checked periodically and found that she was doing great. We could have spent an additional \$8,000 for nothing. We now believe even the \$1200 with the vet was a waste. Two red flags (the dog's condition compared to the diagnosis by the Vet and the urgency created by the vet) and our common sense thinking saved us.

Analysis

The experience left us angry and shocked. We started wondering how many people got taken for a ride by this Vet and this clinic/hospital. Think about the following:

- Would you continue working with such a veterinary doctor?
- What would you do if you were in the same situation?

Lessons Learned

- Expect the unexpected.
- When the situation creates red flags, stay calm and use common sense to discern.
- Leverage your self-confidence to respond and not react to the person triggering your emotions - Don't give power to them.

Real-Life Case Study 8 - Unexpected Input

The Scenario

A company hired me to market a new product line. I had to collaborate with people from multiple organizations to create and drive the required campaigns. I met with every person to get to know them and understand what's in it for them and how they can help if needed. One of the people on that list had some very unique skills that could benefit the project. When I met with that person (let's say, Mr. A), he threw a curve ball at me. He said, "Ravi, you are in the wrong job!" I said, "What do you mean? Can you explain?" He said, "I wanted your job and didn't get it. Instead, they hired you for it. However, I will find a way to get your job. Sorry, you are in the wrong job." In some ways, it rattled me.

On the other hand, since I was hired over him to do the job, it gave me the sense of confidence I needed at that moment. With that sense of confidence, I said, "Thank you for being candid with me about your feelings. I appreciate it. Can we still work together?"

He said, "Maybe." This was using a tone that signaled uncertainty. At that point, I said, "I have come to know that you have some unique skill sets that could be a valuable and visible asset to this project. Can we meet again in three days with some ideas on how you could help?" He agreed. At that point, I thanked him and ended the meeting.

Right after, I shared the experience with my mentor. He suggested that I need to think about bringing the enemy closer because of the unique skill set he could provide for the project. Why? He reminded me that since I was hired over Mr. A to drive the project as PM, Mr. A could only be considered a contributor. By bringing Mr. A into the project, it would be a win-win for both of us, and the person visible to the stakeholders would be me, not Mr. A. My mentor also emphasized the fact that the stakeholders will see me as an effective PM bringing the best resources together to successfully complete the project. I acted on that advice.

Three days later, when I met with Mr. A, I invited him to join the project and develop the specific capability I wanted from him, explaining how that would "wow!" the stakeholders. He agreed.

Analysis

The initial experience shocked me. Two things that helped me were a) the fact that I was hired to market the product line over Mr. A and b) acting on my mentor's advice.

If you were in my situation,

- How would you have reacted or responded?
- Would you continue working with such a person?
- The fact that I invited him to contribute—do you see any risk?

Lessons Learned

- Expect the unexpected.
- If you could glean a positive message from an unwarranted remark, respond to it and not the negative.
- Collaborating with a mentor could pay dividends.
- Self-confidence and resilience are key skills for success.

Techniques for Better Self-Regulation and Self-Management

The goal is to build resilience by responding, not reacting.

- Focus on the issue and not the person when recognizing the trigger.
- Practice intentional pausing by counting to 10 or by taking a few deep breaths.
- Curb the reaction and respond responsibly.
 - For example, someone tells you, "Your plan will not work." Instead of reacting with, "What do you mean it will not work?" ask them, "Can you explain why you believe this will not work?"

Self-Awareness and Self-Management

Before a project manager can hope to manage a complex room of stakeholders or de-escalate a heated project conflict, they must first master their own internal emotional landscape. Internally focused core skills are the foundation upon which all external social skills are constructed.

Example: Friction Before a High-Stakes Delivery

Scenario

A critical server deployment failed an hour before a major client presentation, instantly wiping out weeks of hard work by the development team.

Response & Outcome

The Low-EQ Response & Outcome: A project manager lacking self-awareness might immediately react out of fear or anger, publicly blaming the lead engineer during the status call. This knee-jerk reaction shuts down communication, spikes team anxiety, and fails to solve the technical issue, while permanently damaging trust.

The High-EQ Response & Outcome: An emotionally intelligent project manager experiences the exact same surge of adrenaline and panic. However, through practiced self-awareness, they recognize these physiological triggers (e.g., a racing heart, a sudden urge to interrupt). Through self-management, they pause, take a breath, and consciously choose a constructive path: "Let's focus 100% of our energy on the rollback plan for the presentation, and we will perform a blameless post-mortem tomorrow morning."

Lesson Learned

By controlling the internal message, the project manager shifts the team from a state of panic to structured problem-solving, protecting project momentum.

Review Questions

1. What are emotional triggers? How do they impact you?
 2. What are the different types of criticisms?
 3. Why is self-regulation important?
 4. What do you give up by reacting?
 5. What is the three-step self-regulation practice?
-

Reference

1. Bradberry, Travis. The Power of Emotional Intelligence | Travis Bradberry | (August 3, 2017) [TEDxUCIrvine](#)

4.3: Alternative Image Descriptions for Chapter 4

Figure 4.1: Emotional Intelligence - Self-Focused Core EQ Core EQ Skills

The image is a block diagram illustrating the emotional intelligence framework and highlighting the two skills, **self-awareness** and **self-management**. They are the self-focused (targeting ourselves) skills. The layout has three main sections:

- The left column labeled 'Focus' indicates who (target audience) the skills apply to.
- The two center blocks show the five interconnected skills and sub-skills.
- The right column labeled 'Objectives' indicates the desired outcome expected from the corresponding target audience.

Arrows in the center emphasize that the four skills are interconnected.

The red rectangle highlights the two skills, self-awareness and self-management, that will be covered in detail in this chapter. It also points out the fact that the two skills are self-focused (targeting ourselves), and our objective is to become more aware (self-awareness) of our own emotions and manage (self-management) them to respond, not react. By learning to respond, we will project a better image of ourselves to your team and stakeholders.

Left Column: Focus (Identifies who the skills apply to)

- Self
- Others

The Two Center Blocks: Core Skills and Sub-Skills

- **Leadership** (A skill that involves the four core skills plus negotiation and decision-making)
- **Social Awareness**
 - Organizational awareness
 - Active listening
 - Empathy
 - Emotional boundaries
- **Relationship Management**
 - Trust
 - Empathetic communication
 - Conflict management
 - Stakeholder management
 - Working with difficult people
- **Self-Awareness**
 - Emotional awareness
 - Behavioral flags
 - Self-confidence
- **Self-Management**
 - Emotional triggers
 - Self-regulation

Right Column: Outcomes

- For Emotions: Learn to recognize
- For Self: Learn to recognize & respond to emotions
- For Others:
 - Build stronger relationships & improve collaboration
 - Inspire others to bring out their best

Figure 4.2.2: Emotions from trigger to impact

Figure 3.2.2 illustrates the physiological system of a human brain related to self-regulation. The limbic system of the brain processes and manages our emotions, behaviors, and memory. The amygdala and hippocampus are two key components of the limbic system. The prefrontal cortex (rational brain) handles planning, decision-making, and emotional regulation. Everything we experience enters the base of our brain as signals and travel through the limbic system before going to the prefrontal cortex.

Figure 4.2.4: Self-Regulation of Fear and Anger

Figure 3.2.4 illustrates a three-step approach for the self-regulation of fear and anger. Fear or anger is typically triggered by past or present events, projects, or people's comments (the left-most trapezoidal block called Source). A failure in a past event is not a predictor of the outcome of the current project. People, processes, and tools are not the same. Therefore, it is important not to allow fear or anger from a past failure to overcome us in our current project, as doing so may negatively impact the outcome.

The three-step approach consists of recognizing, determining, and responding. In the recognition step (the block called Recognize), we need to identify the source (caused by situation or people) and type of emotion—whether it is fear or anger. In the next stage (the block called Determine), we need to determine whether the emotion is based on facts. If the emotion is fear and it is based on facts, we should acknowledge it and move forward (as per the box labeled "1") with a modified plan to address the fear. If it is not based on facts, dismiss the fear and continue with our current plan of action (as per the box labeled "2").

If the emotion is anger and it is based on facts, we should respond firmly and positively before moving forward (as per the box labeled "1") with a modified plan to address the anger. If it is not based on facts, we should still respond firmly and positively and then continue with our current plan of action (as per the box labeled 2).

Figure 4.2.5: Self-Regulation of Criticism and Blame

Figure 3.2.5 illustrates a three-step approach for the self-regulation of criticism and blame. Criticism and blame are typically triggered by people (the left-most trapezoidal block called Source). Both criticism and blame are opinions. Therefore, it is important to make sure any criticism or blame is fact-based, as doing so may negatively impact the outcome.

The three-step approach consists of recognizing, determining, and responding. In the recognition step (the block called Recognize), identify the type of emotion—whether it is criticism or blame. If it is criticism, it is important to dig down to find out if it is constructive (feedback), unwarranted, or self-criticism. In the next stage (the block called Determine), determine whether the criticism or blame is based on facts. If it is based on facts, consider it to be constructive criticism or feedback, thank the person, and proceed (as per the box labeled "1") with a modified plan to address it. If it is not fact-based, acknowledge it and proceed with the current plan of action (as per the box labeled "2"). There is no value in a defensive response.

5: OTHERS-FOCUSED CORE EQ SKILLS

An Overview of Social Awareness and Relationship Management

Of the five core skills, social awareness and relationship management are focused on others, both in terms of the awareness and management of emotions.

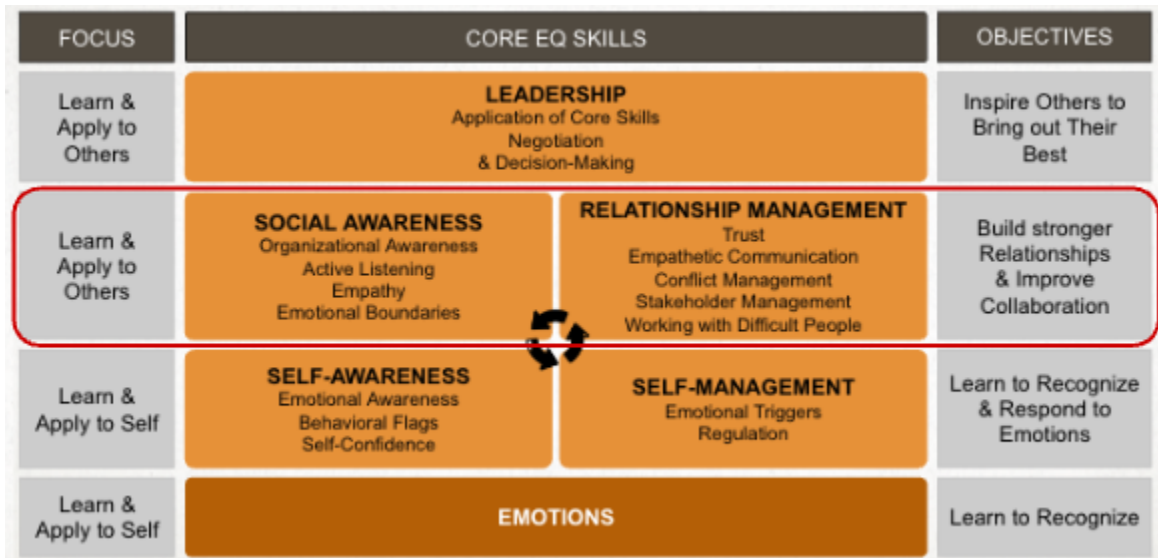


Figure 5.1: Copy and Paste Caption here. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar) [Alternative description of the image.](#)

The others-focused quadrant covers two skills: social awareness and relationship management. Under social awareness, we will cover four sub-skills: organizational awareness, active listening, empathy, and emotional boundaries. Under relationship management, we will cover the sub-skills of building and managing trust, effective communication, managing conflicts, stakeholder management, and working with difficult people. The desired outcome of these others-focused skills is to build stronger relationships and improve collaboration.

Social awareness is our ability to understand how another person around us is feeling based on the situation they are currently experiencing. This person could be a part of the project team or a project stakeholder, and they could be either internal or external to the organization. **Relationship management** refers to our ability to ensure we interact effectively with others.

Real-Life Scenario - A Balancing Act

The following real-life scenario illustrates how an emotionally intelligent project manager can successfully address a demanding client's requests while simultaneously protecting his hard-working team from burnout and low morale.

The Situation

John is managing a major construction project for a client. Midway through, the client insists on several design changes that would require additional effort and time from the engineering team. During a progress review meeting, the client expresses dissatisfaction with the current design and demands major changes that would require significant rework.

Following the client's comment, John noticed the signs of stress on the faces of his team members. Rather than reacting defensively or immediately agreeing to the client's demands, John took a deep breath and paused to assess the situation.

John, being an effective project manager, instead of agreeing with the client or defending his team, came up with an empathetic and balanced response:

"I understand your concern about the current design and the changes you want to get done. My team is 100% committed to delivering quality work. Let's review the changes together and see which design changes can be phased in without compromising quality and timeframe."

Impact

John's self-awareness allowed him to manage his own emotional reaction and remain calm under pressure. His social awareness enabled him to recognize the impact of the client's feedback on his team's morale and well-being.

By understanding the emotions in play, John was able to respond in a way that balanced the client's needs with his team's capabilities. He acknowledged the client's concerns and validated their feedback, while also gently explaining the potential impact of major design changes on the project schedule and team workload.

Observations:

1. John's emotional intelligence played a critical role in navigating this challenging situation.
2. His ability to manage his own emotions and understand the emotions of others allowed him to maintain a constructive dialogue with the client while protecting his team from unnecessary stress.

Lessons Learned

- Self-management is key: Pausing and remaining calm under pressure helps project managers respond thoughtfully rather than reacting emotionally.
- Social awareness is essential: Recognizing the emotional impact of feedback on team members allows project managers to advocate effectively for their well-being.
- Balanced communication works: Acknowledging client concerns while clearly communicating project constraints leads to more collaborative, professional problem-solving.

Learning Objectives

- Define and explain social awareness, relationship management, active listening, empathy, and empathetic communication.
- Explain the impact of these skills on team dynamics, trust, and project outcomes.
- Apply strategies to build trust, improve social awareness, manage conflict, and navigate difficult interactions.
- Analyze and evaluate the effects of ineffective interpersonal skills and the effectiveness of different management approaches.
- Develop a plan to strengthen relationship management using insights from real-world cases

We will now dive into social awareness and relationship management.

5.1: Social Awareness - A Core Skill

5.2: Relationship Management - A Core Skill

5.3: Alternative Image Description for Chapter 5

5.1: Social Awareness - A Core Skill

Social Awareness - An Overview

Social awareness is our ability to understand how another person is feeling based on the situation they are currently experiencing and understanding the dynamics of the environment or organization related to the people and project. The person could be a project team member or one of the stakeholders. They could also be internal or external to the organization. To understand how another person is feeling takes more than just observation. It takes active listening and empathy to become more aware about others - social awareness. The people and the organizations are highly interrelated social circles.



Figure 5.1.1: Social Circles in Project Management. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

The entities that matter the most in projects are the project team, stakeholders, and the organizations they belong to. Each of them is represented as a circle in figure 5.1.1. To be successful with a project, the project manager needs to be socially aware of all three entities. It is represented as a box encompassing all three circles.

With a better understanding of others and the social circles, we can become more effective in communicating to, collaborating with, and managing them.

Sub-skills of Social Awareness

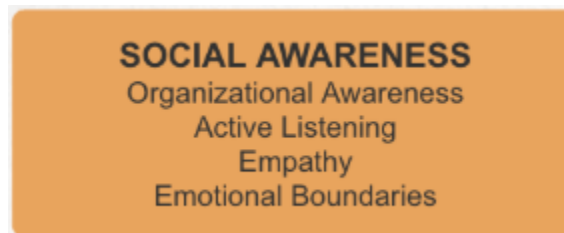


Figure 5.1.1: Social awareness and its sub-skills. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Social awareness is focused on understanding "others" in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and last but not least, from an emotional point of view. Active listening, empathy, and organizational awareness are the three key sub-skills of social awareness.

Active Listening

Active Listening: It is the practice of listening with an intent to understand and remember a conversation with a person. It takes undivided attention to the words, the tone, and body language of the person. Learning to listen to our conversational partner, team member, customer, supplier, or supervisor is an important part of business communication. Too often, instead of listening to the other person, we mentally start planning or rehearsing what we want to say next. That typically leads to missing much of what the speaker shared.

Communication involves the sharing and understanding of both the words and the intent that are being communicated. We need to be fully present, paying attention to the actual words, tone of voice, body language, or, if it is written, the writing style. Remember, we hear with our ears but listen with our brains, and sometimes it is all too easy to tune out the messenger or their message with our brains. To actively listen, our ears, eyes, and brain need to work together. Choosing to listen attentively takes effort. People communicate with words, expressions, and even through silence, and our attention to them will allow us to communicate and collaborate better. By not listening, we are essentially communicating the messages of disrespect and 'I don't care' to the speaker.

With active listening, we can increase our capacity to support, influence, motivate, develop, or serve people effectively.

Practical Active Listening Techniques

Table 5.1.1: Active Listening Techniques. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Technique	How To
Pay Attention	- Put away distractions (phone, laptop, etc.). - Make eye contact, but do not stare. - Be mentally present.
Recognize Body Language and Non-Verbal Cues	- Recognize gestures used by the speaker. - Recognize facial expressions. - Recognize body language related to emotions such as fear, anger, etc.
Ask Clarifying Questions to Understand the words and Intent	- To fully understand the speaker, ask clarifying questions - Example: "What did you mean when you said . . .?"
Reflect and Paraphrase to Understand	- Summarize what the speaker said in your own words. - Example: "What I hear you say is . . ."

Active Listening Pitfalls to Avoid

- Pretending to listen.
 - Makes us miss details.
 - When the other party recognizes our pretense, we lose credibility, and they stop engaging.
- Listening to respond, not to understand
 - Listening to respond makes us miss some details shared by the conversational partner.
 - Responding with your opinion without a key point that was said in the conversation brings out our disrespect to the speaker.
- Jumping in with your opinion or advice when not needed or too soon. If we are one of those people who will jump in and say, "Let me tell you one thing first" and give their input before the other person completes his or her statement?
 - Interrupting with our input shows our disrespect to the speaker.

- Only the people who are self-centered and disrespectful will do such a thing. Others will stop engaging with such people.
- Allowing oneself to get distracted is again a sign of disrespect to the speaker.

Empathy

Empathy: It is our ability to understand how the people around us think and feel. When someone is feeling down, positive words seldom do anything good for them. On the other hand, emotionally connecting with that person and making them feel they are not alone in the emotional state they are in helps.

Genuine empathy is heartfelt and helps us to build stronger relationships. We must think about how we would feel if we were in the other person's shoes. When trying to empathize, we cannot let our biases influence us. The acronym, CONNECT ([Rae](#)) is a tool to use:

- **C** - Create open body language
- **O** - Observe nonverbal cues
- **N** - Notice what our gut tells us
- **N** - Nurture the conversation
- **E** - Engage with eye contact
- **C** - Convey warmth with our voice
- **T** - Talk less, allow others to talk more

Maya Angelou's Quote

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." ([Glaves](#), 2017)

Empathy vs. Sympathy

Video Length: 2 minutes 53 seconds

Video Introduction: Dr. Brené Brown is a research professor and best-selling author. She has spent the past two decades studying vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame.

- *This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.*

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Reflection Question: What two points from this video appeal to you?

Barriers to Empathy

Being empathetic is not easy. Why? Living in this world, we acquire and retain some bad qualities without even being aware of it. They become barriers to empathy.

Table 5.1.2: Common Barriers to Empathy. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Qualities	Self-centered	Outcome and not People-oriented	Attitude	Filters and Biases
Barriers	When a person is self-centered, it prevents that person from observing and understanding others' emotions	A person totally focused on the project milestones and outcomes is oblivious to people and their emotions.	A person with an attitude of superiority can seldom observe or understand other people's emotions.	Filters and biases such as religion, gender, race, perceived social status and language are developed through our upbringing and the environment we grew in.
How to Overcome	It takes extra work to break away from these barriers. 1. Observe non-verbal cues from the person we are interacting with. 2. Listen with an intent to understand. 3. Listen without judgment. 4. Try to recognize the emotion(s) the other person is experiencing. 5. Visualize and try to experience the emotion from their shoes to understand how they feel.			

Importance of Empathy

- Helps us better understand others from an emotional standpoint.
- People feel valued.
- Builds trust with the person.
- Improves sincerity and depth of our communication with others
- Helps build stronger relationships.

Organizational Awareness

A project could involve multiple organizations. Organizations could be both internal and external. Finance, sales, or marketing are examples of the internal organizations. Examples of external organizations are vendors, customers, and industry associations who are either beneficiaries of or contributors to the project. A project manager needs to gain sufficient awareness of the organizations he or she is dealing with to maximize the value for the project. What does that entail? It is about understanding an organization's structure, leadership, and power dynamics. In other words, it is about knowing who is influential, how decisions are made, and how to navigate the organization's social landscape for a win-win outcome. Why does it matter?

- Enhances the ability to influence the power players in the organization.
- Improve the collaboration within the organization.
- Better navigate the internal politics.
- Improves our odds of success.

Next, we will review the types of organizational information needed and why it matters to a PM.

Table 5.1.3: Organizational Information. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Core Elements	Helpful Data	Why Does it Matter?
Organizational structures and power dynamics	Organizational charts, key players, decision makers, and influencers	Helps us find better ways to collaborate
Political landscape	Political networks, intra- and inter-organizational politics and how do they map into the current project	Helps us navigate efficiently and ethically
Stakeholders	Knowing the key stakeholders, their roles in the organization, their political alignments, and what's in it for them in our project.	Enhances the odds of getting help from them when needed.

Core Elements	Helpful Data	Why Does it Matter?
Cultural practices	Values, acceptable and not acceptable behaviors and communication styles	Helps us align and work with the organizations effectively

Table 5.1 shows the four categories of information, the actual information, and the benefits to a project manager. The left column shows the four categories, which are, organizational structures and power dynamics, political landscape, stakeholders, and cultural practices. The middle column lists the key information related to the core element. The right column lists the respective benefits to a project manager.

How to find organizational information

- *Ask questions* - Ask the project sponsor questions about the organization(s), the key people, their roles, and political networks and alignments.
- *Stakeholders*—Meet and learn the project-related stakeholders to find out their objectives, what they plan to get out of the project, their preferred communication style, and if they will help if needed.
- Other Data Sources:
 - Organizational data from emails
 - Quarterly Reports: Business objectives and priorities
 - Friendly Sources (People): Decision makers, organizational charts
 - LinkedIn: People and their work record

Example 1: Social Awareness of a Team Member

Consider Erik's behavior in meetings. He continually talks and does not pick up subtleties, such as body language. Because of this, he can't understand (or even fathom) that his monologues can be frustrating to others. This demonstrates low social awareness.

On the other hand, if Erik had a higher EQ, he would also spend time listening to and observing people in the meetings and get a sense of how others feel. He may also directly ask people how they feel.

Social awareness also includes having empathy for another and recognizing power structures and unwritten workplace dynamics.

Example 2: PM's Savvy Social Skills

Marla is managing a key software project for her company. She and her project team had to deal with multiple change requests during the middle of the project while striving to meet the original phase 1 deliverable deadline. The team worked long hours for several days to implement all requirements and validated them in time for the phase 1 milestone review the next day. Marla called a team meeting to prepare for the milestone review that was scheduled for the next day. During a team meeting, Marla was surprised by the curt replies and lack of enthusiasm from her team. Being an experienced project manager, Marla understood the behavior to be signs of fatigue and stress. She immediately ended the meeting by saying, "Team, I want to thank you all for the long hours and the excellent work. I understand you are tired and stressed out. We will end this milestone review meeting right now, and I will reschedule this two days from today. Please take the rest of today off to recharge."

Impact: The team feels

- Listened to
- Appreciated
- Emotionally rewarded

They came back fully recharged and ready to tackle the review meeting and move on to phase 2.

For a socially unaware PM, the curt replies and lack of engagement might have triggered some anger and, hence, an angry response. The team would have felt under appreciated for their long hours and quality of work, leading to demoralization and disengagement. These apply not only to project management but to one's life too.

Real-Life Case Study 9 - Active Listening and Organizational Awareness

The Scenario

As a vendor relations manager, I had to obtain a certification of "sign-off" from multiple semiconductor vendors for our software products. At one vendor, as I sat down to discuss certification with the manager responsible for it, he told me without beating around the bush that since they had already certified our competitor's product, there was no reason for his team to do the work to certify our product. He could steer customers to our competitor's product instead. Also, since none of his customers or his design center engineers were asking for certification of our product, he saw no reason to embark on that project. I responded saying, "let me make sure I understood your last statement correctly. Did you say that because none of your customers or your design center engineers have expressed any interest in my product, you don't see a need to certify? Is that correct?" He said, "Yes." That immediately opened up an opportunity for me. With that information, I thanked him and left.

Yes, it was a tough meeting. However, I walked out with a critical piece of information—what it takes to get him to certify our product was to get a mutual customer or his design center engineers to request a signoff. Next, I leveraged the key information to come up with a strategy to turn the situation into a win-all (for him, mutual customers, design center engineers, and my sales manager) outcome.

I sought the help of the local sales manager (in my company) who was working with mutual customers. Since our product was not certified, the mutual customers were working with the vendor's design center engineers to get their integrated circuit (IC) designs into manufacturing by using the vendor's "sign-off" process. That process used our competitor's product. The sales manager arranged a free "Lunch and Learn" event for the design center engineers. I had provided two limited time (30-days) licenses of the product for use. This was based on the assumption that the design center engineers will ask for our product as soon as they find out it's value. With a certified product our mutual customers could do the sign-off process from their own location, saving themselves a two to four week trip to the design center. A point to note is that our product was much better than our competitor's in performance and equally good in accuracy.

Thirty days after the lunch and learn, I got a call from the vendor manager asking for a presentation about our product. He mentioned that his design center engineers were asking him to "sign off" on our product. I enabled the right resources on our side to help him complete the sign-off project as quickly as possible.

Outcome

- The vendor manager looked like a hero to his management by completing signoff in record time.
- As promised, our sales manager started getting calls from the customers for our sign-off product.
- Customers were happy to eliminate several iterations between them and the design center by pre-validating their design using our sign-off-certified product.
- My management was happy with the certification from the vendor because it increased the sales of the product.

Last but not least, I was happy because it helped me close a key objective and obtain my bonus. It was a total win-win-win-win outcome for everyone involved.

Analysis

- What enabled me to come up with a strategy?
 - The critical piece of information he said in my discussion with him: "Not a single request from a mutual customer or his design center engineers."
- What core skill helped me get the critical information?
 - Active listening.
- Was the outcome a win-all outcome?
 - Certainly, yes!

Lessons Learned

- Active listening is key for success.

- Empathy (thinking from the vendor manager's point of view) was a key factor to create a win-all strategy.
- Always use a win-all approach.
- Organizational awareness and product and application knowledge are key enablers of success.
- Self-confidence is key.

Real-Life Case Study 10 - Poor Social Awareness

The Scenario

As a customer applications manager, one of the customers I was working with was a defense contractor. He was an extremely amiable person. The chip that he was developing was the smallest size that we offered, but it was highly confidential. Hence, I could not see the design details and had to rely on the customer's words to offer any support or determine the status of the design. Every month, I had to forecast which customer designs would get into manufacturing process flow at the end of that month. My management had already told me that I will not be able to access the design details. The customer had been running several simulations, much more than what a normal chip of that size required. When I questioned him about the number of simulations, he told me that he was thoroughly testing the design. A week after, he informed me that he found out about a piece of circuit that he forgot to include in the design, which he found out through simulation. When I found out that the circuit he missed was one third of his design, it shocked me that it took two months of simulation for him to find that out. I had documented every discussion with the customer. This was one design for which I could not provide an accurate forecast.

Apparently, the customer was trying to validate the design through simulation without knowing how to leverage the simulator. Either his shyness or pride kept him from asking for help. My social awareness of him was insufficient, and I did not know that. After running simulations for 3 months, he suddenly failed to show up. Neither did he return my calls. That is when my general manager (GM) called me to discuss this customer situation. When I went in, he said, "Ravi, I have a concern, and I am not sure how to lay it out. I will be frank. This customer's management told me that they believe the support they have received is sub-standard, and I was shocked. What I expected from you was just the opposite. Are you overloaded with customers? Why is this happening?"

Since I had my notebook with me, I showed him my detailed documentation of every discussion I had with the customer, including the episode where the designer found out that he forgot to add a piece of circuit after simulating the design for two months and that the circuit was one third the size of the design. That should have been caught in the very first simulation run. That specific detail and the complete documentation of every conversation with the designer were enough for my GM to work with. He gave my notebook to his admin to photocopy the relevant pages. He told me about the call he received from the designer's management and about the accusation that our support was sub-par. He thanked me for the detailed documentation. His next step was to share the designer's management with my notes and what he had heard from me about the circuit that the designer had to add after two months of simulation.

Outcome

- The designer's management handed the design over to another designer to complete the design. This new designer had successfully completed his design using our competitor. Since this designer was familiar with our competitor's tools, he decided to get the design done at our competitor's. Essentially, we lost the design.
- With the inability to see the design details and my quality of support being on target, my personal reputation did not suffer with my management.

Lessons Learned

- My gaps in social awareness could have led to the outcome of losing the design. When it happened (before emotional intelligence was a known entity), neither my management nor I knew about social awareness or the lack thereof. Better social awareness on my part could have pointed to the possibility that the engineer was portraying a false sense of confidence to hide his inability to complete the design and too much pride preventing him from asking for help.
- Detailed documentation is key in every customer engagement.

Review Questions

1. What are the social circles in project management?
2. What are the four core elements of organizational awareness?
3. What are the active listening techniques?
4. What are the barriers to empathy?
5. What are the ways in which you can become more empathetic?

References

1. Rae Ann Ianniello, Melissa Paterson, *Mastering Business Communication*. OERI.
2. [Glaves, B. \(2017, September 28\). People Remember How You Made Them Feel. The Chicago Bar Foundation. https://chicagobarfoundation.org/bob...ber-made-feel/](https://chicagobarfoundation.org/bob...ber-made-feel/)

Attributions

1. *Mastering Business Communication* by Rae Ann Ianniello and Melissa Patterson from [The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Open Educational Resources Initiative \(OERI\)](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).
2. [Brene Brown on Empathy vs. Sympathy](#) by Dr. Brene Brown is shared under the YouTube license [CC-BY-ND 4.0](#)

5.2: Relationship Management - A Core Skill

Relationship Management - An Overview

Relationship management is about strategies and practices used to build, maintain, and enhance [relationships](#) with individuals and teams. In addition to specific sub-skills, effective relationship management requires the use of the other three core skills - self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness.

Take Caroline, for example. If Caroline had low EQ in the area of relationship management, she would have difficulty building and managing relationships. In that case, it is very likely that she lacks in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. That could lead to behaviors such as belittling people, diving into the negative on anything and everything, and being self-centered and not team-centered.

On the other hand, with high EQ, Caroline would be good at reading people's emotions and showing empathy for them, even if she did not agree. As a manager, her door would always open, and she would make it clear to colleagues and staff that they could speak with her anytime. She would be successful at building and managing relationships.

Why Does it Matter?

- Enables better collaboration
- Eases conflict management
- Personally, paves a better path for our career success

Sub-skills of Relationship Management



Figure 5.2.1: Relationship Management and its sub-skills. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative description of the image.](#)

In addition to a win-win approach, successful relationship management requires us to learn and apply three new sub-skills. They build and maintain trust, communicate effectively, and manage conflicts.

Build Trust

Trust is the feeling we get about a person or entity when they consistently do what they say they will, and without fail. Trusting a person is believing they will support something we value through their words and actions and not compromise. In other words, trust is “choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person’s actions” (Feltman, 2011, p. 7). For example, if vulnerability is launching yourself into the air, trust is knowing someone will be there to catch you. In project management, trust is believing that everyone will deliver their piece of the project on time and with the expected quality.

Trust is the bedrock of all relationships. The emotions connected to trust are care, open-handedness, and curiosity. When we’re with someone we trust, we feel safe and open with them. When experiencing trust, we are prone to cooperation and collaboration, open communication, thinking critically about our behaviors, and expecting the best from people and situations.

Distrust, on the other hand, is defined as the belief that “what is important to me is not safe with this person in this or any situation” (Feltman, 2011, p. 8). When we have not built trust with someone, we might feel a need to protect ourselves. The feelings related to distrust are resignation, bitterness, and fear. When experiencing distrust, we are likely to be defensive, blame and

shame others, judge others, withhold information, and expect the worst from people and situations.

Model of Trust

Strong relationships are not built overnight. Getting to know someone at a deeper level takes time, and most importantly, it takes trust. Building trust with a person is not a one-time occurrence; it takes continual investment. Building on that idea that trust is built over time in small moments, Feltman (2011) shares a model in which the *choice to trust* is composed of four distinct aspects, or factors (see Figure 5.2.2).

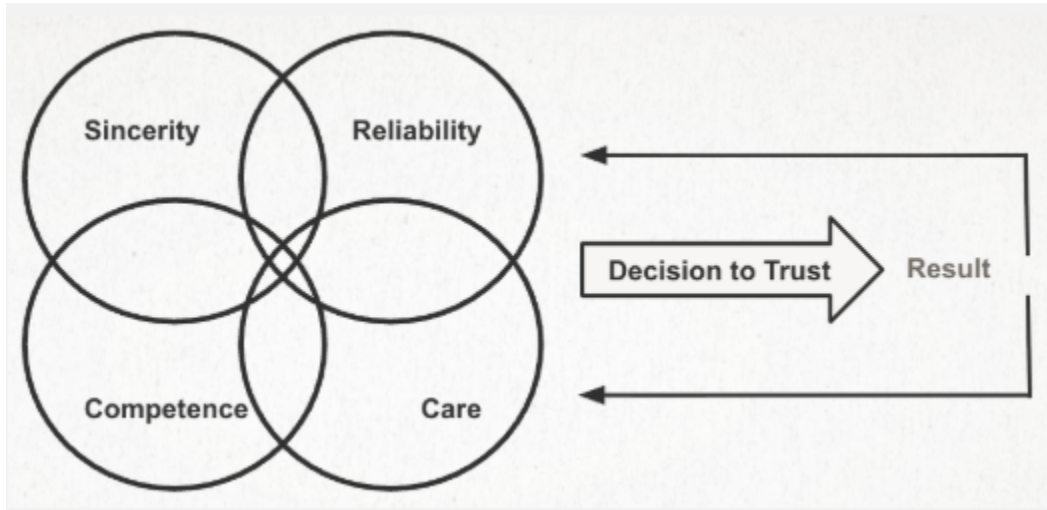


Figure 5.2.2: Model of Trust Adapted from Feltman (2011). (CC BY-NC 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar modified from Developing Human Potential via Online Educational Resource OER licensed CC BY-NC 4.0)

The figure 5.2.2 shows the four aspects of the Model of Trust, which are:

- Sincerity is the assessment that a person is honest, they are true to their word, and their opinions are valid and supported by evidence. (e.g., a manager outlines the three largest obstacles facing a group and shares a two-part strategy grounded in research for overcoming them).
- Reliability is the assessment of how well a person keeps commitments. (e.g., a friend says they'll reach out to you in a week to schedule a time to get together, and they do).
- Competence is the assessment that a person has the required skills, knowledge, and resources to do what they are supposed to do. For example, a social media chairperson for a campus organization knows how to build a social media plan.
- Care is the assessment of how much a person is concerned with the interests of others as opposed to being exclusively motivated by self-interest (e.g., a friend tells you about the opportunity to apply for a competitive scholarship for which they are also applying).

The arrow pointing to the right with the words 'Decision to Trust' in it shows that collectively, these four aspects of trust lead us to either *choose to trust* or *choose not to trust* someone. The two arrows going back to the circles point to the fact that even after we decide to trust a person, we continue to assess the person. Trust in that person grows as they continue to comply with the four aspects of the Model of Trust.

Vulnerability is critical to building trust (as evidenced by the definition of trust we discussed previously). When the person we are choosing to trust responds to our vulnerability with kindness, it provides us with the sense of safety and security required to self-disclose—strengthening our trust in them. As such, trust and vulnerability are iterative processes, building upon each other to foster strong relationships. As trust builds in an interpersonal relationship, so does our willingness to be vulnerable. As vulnerability occurs in our interpersonal relationships, trust builds.

Note

Trust is Hard to Build, Easy to Break, and Difficult to Maintain

While trust is critical to interpersonal relationships, it can also be difficult to maintain. Most of us could think of an experience where we lost trust in a friend, family member, or co-worker. Research has revealed that interpersonal trust is most often lost “when the trusted individual lied or did not follow through with what they were expected to do” (Research study by [Hupcey & Miller, 2006](#), p. 1136). While a few participants in the research study described a situation in which trust had been lost all at once (e.g., a partner who has an affair), the majority of participants shared that interpersonal trust was lost slowly over time (e.g., a friend not listening to you, ignoring your texts, etc.). In other words, trust is like a brick wall. We build interpersonal trust by gradually adding bricks. Likewise, we most frequently lose trust by taking apart the wall brick-by-brick. Once in a while, the loss of trust occurs more like a wrecking ball slamming against the wall and scattering many bricks at once.

Rebuilding Trust

When trust is broken, unless the experience was devastating to the impacted person, it can be rebuilt through a slow and long process. When trust is lost, the first step is a sincere apology in which a person does the following ([Lewicki et al., 2016](#)):

- Express regret
- Explain what went wrong
- Take responsibility
- Declare remorse
- Share how they will make it right
- Ask for forgiveness

After a sincere apology, trust may be rebuilt through the intentional and consistent implementation of the four aspects: sincerity, reliability, competence, and care (Figure 5.2.2). Trust in our interpersonal relationships is necessary for building committed groups and teams that can achieve meaningful change.

Trust is necessary for interpersonal relationships. When we choose or experience trust, we experience care, open-handedness, and curiosity; however, when we choose or experience distrust, we experience resignation, bitterness, and fear. We can build trust over time by being sincere, reliable, competent, and showing care ([Flaherty & Pappas, 2000](#)).

Real-Life Case Study 11 - Building Trust with Unwavering Empathy

The Scenario

I had joined a company as a strategic alliances manager. My role was to build relationships with specific international semiconductor vendors to get them to support one of our products (product S) as a "signoff" solution for mutual customers. What is a signoff? A semiconductor design software product is called a "sign-off" product when its prediction of a semiconductor design's performance prior to manufacturing is very close to the design's performance in silicon when manufactured. It takes time and effort by the semiconductor vendor to qualify and certify another company's product as a signoff. In my role, I was competing with a solution that was lower in performance but had a head start of several years with a track record of successful designs behind it. My job was to obtain signoff certification from several international semiconductor vendors, and my bonus depended on that deliverable.

As a new employee, I reached out to a leading semiconductor vendor and requested a 30-minute meeting with the manager responsible for certifying semiconductor design products as "signoff." After a few tries, I got a meeting setup. When my manager and I met the semiconductor vendor's certification manager (Mr. A) and his team, I explained the differentiated values of our solution compared to the market leader and asked for an opportunity to demonstrate it to him and his team. At the end of the meeting, he said, "Thank you for coming and presenting your solution. We already have a signoff solution from your competitor. It is a risky proposition for us to qualify and certify your product, which is a new and limited success with silicon. Sorry we are not ready to do this at this time." We walked out disappointed.

After thinking through, I sent an email thanking the vendor for the opportunity to meet and discuss our solution. In that email, I included a proposal for a pilot project that he could not refuse. Intrigued by my proposal, he agreed to a meeting to understand the details. After learning the details, he couldn't refuse the proposal. Why? He would provide the design example (the same design he had provided our competitor) to us. We would do all the work without any support from his team and present the results. Once he reviews, he could decide if he wants to proceed to certification or not. My promise was that if he decided not to proceed, I would not approach him on the same project for another six months. Based on the differentiated value of our product, I was confident he would proceed to certification. Sure enough, three weeks later he decided to proceed to certification. Right away, I

introduced our engineering team, and they started helping his team with the certification work.

Three days before the first project review meeting, when I called to discuss the agenda, Mr. A disclosed to me about a call he received from my manager about another product (product N) from our company. The product marketing manager (PMM) for that product was also on the call. He told me that he had assigned one person from his team to evaluate that product for certification. I was shocked to hear that. Why? The product N was far from ready for such an engagement. However, I thanked him for supporting that product as well but recommended that he follow the same model I had suggested for the product M that we were working with him on. The model was that he was not required to assign a dedicated resource from his team while we were doing all the work. Two days later, the PMM for product N walked into my office and asked me to tell Mr. A that he needed 6 more months to provide any results to Mr. A. Right away, I called Mr. A and asked him if he had a minute to talk about product N with the PMM. When I said yes, I handed the phone to the PMM, who communicated the bad news.

The next day, after a successful project review meeting, Mr. A took me into his office and told me, "Ravi, I admire your candid approach in working with me and my team. It was disappointing to hear the bad news from the PMM. Obviously, that product is not ready. In future, if you ever need a reference for a new job, I would gladly provide you with that reference." That last statement told me that he trusted me.

The PMM first approached me and asked me if I could present his product to Mr. A. Knowing how unstable that product was, I had turned down the PMM's request and told him that I would be happy to do that after the product gains some stability. He then went directly to my manager and got Mr. A to evaluate his product for certification.

Outcome

- In a few weeks, we obtained certification for my product from the vendor.
- We also obtained a great quote for a press release from the vice president who was the manager of Mr. A.

Lessons Learned

- Be honest with vendors (customers). Dishonesty is a trust breaker!
- Do not waste a vendor's (customer's) time.
- Customer-centered thinking and using a win-win approach help build trust.

Real-Life Case Study 12 - Broken Trust

The Scenario

One day after I had exited a company that shut its doors in the US, out of the blue, one of my past customers reached out and requested me to talk to his company's (a small company) CEO (chief executive officer). Somehow, he knew that my employer folded. He arranged the meeting with his CEO the very next day. I met the CEO and COO (Chief Operating Officer) and impressed them with my business and technical knowledge. At the end of the interview, they offered me a vice president role. Since I was skeptical about the company, I did reject the job but offered to help them plan and participate in a major industry event, working as a consultant. After the event, if they still want me in their company, they could make me an offer, and I would consider it. After witnessing the preparation for the event, including the promotions, announcements, and more, they made me an offer with some extra incentives. I was told that to avoid the risk of losing me, they wanted me to go into the event as an employee. After confirming with a major customer about the claims that we were going to make on a press release, I accepted the offer. The event was very successful, as communicated by the CEO, who recognized me for the results.

Over the next two quarters, as we were following up with the leads from the event, the CEO took up a GM role at another large company, and the current COO took over as the new CEO. I was instructed by the new CEO to redo a list of critical marketing work that was done under the previous CEO. When I asked the new CEO for clarification, he told me that the information I had used for marketing was false. This was the information provided to me directly by the previous CEO. Unfortunately, none of the published information could be retracted. This was a bad situation both for me and the new CEO.

Outcome

- Feeling cheated by the previous CEO, my trust in the company crumbled.
- Soon after, I took up a job at another company which I felt was more ethical.

Lessons Learned

- Be honest with vendors (customers). Dishonesty is a trust breaker!
- Do not waste a vendor's (customer's) time.
- Customer-centered thinking and using a win-win approach help build trust.

Real-Life Case Study 13 - A Single Event Anchors Trust

The Scenario

As a customer applications engineer, I had earned the confidence of my manager with my track record of guiding customers to successful completion of their designs on time and functionally as expected.

Our new general manager (GM) came back from a customer visit with an order for two chips, each with a multi-million dollar business per year. The design details were provided to our engineering team. After a month, when the GM asked the engineering manager about the two designs, they immediately took a quick look at the two designs and concluded that they could be implemented with our standard technology platform. The GM reached out to my manager responsible for implementing customer designs and requested the two designs be implemented as soon as possible. My manager handed them to me along with the design requirements and the customer contact information and requested that I first see if the designs could be implemented. He also told me that it was a multi-million-dollar order and its importance to the company.

Since it was a big deal for the company, I reviewed the two designs and concluded one of them could not be implemented using our standard technology platform and would require a custom implementation. Why? It needed to support six different modes of operation, and with our standard technology platform, we did not have the necessary building block to support one of the modes. Immediately, I reached out to the customer and asked if that would be a problem. He confirmed that he was not using that mode of operation. Since it was a high-volume chip, I asked if there are other groups that might need that mode of operation. After checking with his internal teams, he came back and confirmed that one of the groups would need that mode of operation. I thanked him for the information. Three hours after I was handed the design details, I reported my findings and included the complete analysis to show the need to do a custom implementation. My manager reported my findings to the GM. The GM was totally impressed with my work:

1. Understanding and analyzing the design in detail
2. Reaching out to the customer to validate the need for all six modes of operation
3. Developing the report with details of the need for custom implementation
4. All of that was done in three hours.

The work I did in those three hours was a reflection of how well I enjoyed my job and the opportunity to make that multi-million-dollar business happen.

Outcome

- This event created a lasting trust in my capabilities for the GM.
- We won both designs from the customer and delivered them.

Lessons Learned

- Understanding the bigger picture that includes the business and the technical aspects of a customer design was a critical success factor.

- Taking the initiative to go above and beyond was crucial for the success at all levels, including the fast-tracking of the building of trust with my manager and the GM.

Exercise: Real Life-Case Study: England Football Team\(\PageIndex{1}\)

Read the Guardian article (not mandatory but very informative) titled "How [the psychology of the England football team could change your life](#)" about how the England football team deals with facing fear and failure.

Consider the following questions:

1. What stood out to you in the article?
2. How did the article demonstrate the power of trust?
3. Consider a time when you've been on a team; how did your group/team compare to the England football team in terms of trust?
4. How might your team build a culture of trust?

Communicate Effectively

In today's fast-paced business world, communication is more than a skill—it's a necessity. Whether we are managing a team, negotiating with clients, or presenting ideas to stakeholders, we will need strong communication skills to achieve success. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducted a survey asking employers to identify the skills they desire in a job applicant. The survey found that over 77% of employers demand good written communication skills and 69% demand good oral communication skills ([Rae](#)). Poor communication is frequently cited as the root cause of project failures ([Hupcey](#)).

Effective business communication enhances trust and relationships and ensures the understanding of intent. By building our communication skills, we can:

- Enhance productivity: When goals are clear, tasks can be completed more efficiently. Individuals and organizations become more successful.
- Improve collaboration: Communication helps team members build relationships and work well together.
- Satisfy customers: Clients and customers appreciate clear, timely messages and are more likely to continue working with strong communicators.
- Make better decisions: When teams and management communicate well, they are more likely to identify and address issues that impact the organization.
- Develop our strengths: By enhancing our communication skills, we will be better equipped to handle conflict and manage team and business relationships.

Effective communication enhances trust, creating an environment of clarity, empathy, and respect. It is flexible and should be adjusted to fit the other person's style, and it is complicated because it involves both words and nonverbal cues, which are subject to interpretation. While you can use specific techniques that will likely result in success, you can never know how your message is being interpreted. Many factors, called communication barriers, influence the ability of your messages to convey exactly what you mean.

Communication Barriers

The common communication barriers to be aware of are

- Cultural differences: Our audience's background may impact how messages are received. For example, what's okay in the U.S. may be offensive in another culture.
- Language barriers: Communicating with people whose primary language is not English.
- Technology overload: Too many messages from different channels (email, text, social media, etc.). Messages can easily become lost or distorted when too many messages are to be reviewed, resulting in lack of communication or miscommunication.
- Limited feedback: Feedback can help us improve the way we communicate with others. It is our responsibility to ask for feedback.

Note

Remember: No Magic Formula Exists.

While influencers and experts provide helpful tips to improve communication, no magic formula exists. We can choose the best time, place, channel, and words, and yet our message may not be interpreted the way we intended. When we are at the receiving end of communication, flexibility and an open mind are needed to understand the different styles we will encounter.

Essential Skills for Effective Communication

Effective communication is to communicate information, thought, or feeling with empathy so that it is received and understood as intended. It is communication that is received as intended and makes people feel they are being heard. Learning and applying a few key skills will make the communication more effective.

- Active Listening
- Empathy
- Relationship Building
- Body Language and Non-Verbal Cues

Active Listening

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *active listening* is the practice of listening with an intent to understand and remember a conversation with a person. It takes undivided attention to the words, the tone, and body language of the person. Learning to listen to our conversational partner, team member, customer, supplier, or supervisor is an important part of business communication. Too often, instead of listening to the other person, we mentally start planning or rehearsing what we want to say next. That typically leads to missing much of what the speaker shared.

Communication involves the sharing and understanding of both the words and the intent that are being communicated. We need to be fully present, paying attention to the actual words, tone of voice, body language, or, if it is written, the writing style. Remember, we hear with our ears but listen with our brains, and sometimes it is all too easy to tune out the messenger or their message with our brains. To actively listen, our ears, eyes, and brain need to work together. Choosing to listen attentively takes effort. People communicate with words, expressions, and even through silence, and our attention to them will allow us to communicate and collaborate better. By not listening, we are essentially communicating the messages of disrespect and 'I don't care' to the speaker.

With active listening, we can increase our capacity to influence, motivate, develop, or serve people effectively.

How can we make active listening a habit? Apply the practical active listening techniques (outlined in the previous chapter):

- Paying attention
- Recognizing and using non-verbal cues
- Reflecting and paraphrasing
- Asking clarifying questions
- Avoid interrupting

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of those around us.

When someone is feeling down, positive words seldom do anything good for them. On the other hand, emotionally connecting with that person and making them feel that they are not alone in the emotional state they are in helps.

Genuine empathy is heartfelt and helps us to build stronger relationships. How can we become more empathetic? When trying to empathize, we cannot let our biases influence our perceptions. The acronym CONNECT ([Rae](#)) is a tool to help us practice and become more empathetic.

- **C** - Create open body language

- **O** - Observe nonverbal cues
- **N** - Notice what your gut tells you
- **N** - Nurture the conversation
- **E** - Engage with eye contact
- **C** - Convey warmth with your voice
- **T** - Talk less, allow others to talk more

Being empathetic is not easy. Why? Living in this world, we acquire and retain some bad qualities without even being aware of it. They become barriers to empathy. It takes *extra work* to break away from these barriers.

1. Observe non-verbal cues from the person we are interacting with.
2. Listen without judgment and with an intent to understand.
3. Try to recognize the emotion the other person is experiencing.
4. Visualize ourselves in their shoes and experience the emotion to understand how they feel.

Mary Angelou's Quote

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." -- (Glaves, 2017)

Relationship Building

The better the relationship, the easier it is to collaborate. Building a positive relationship with our stakeholders is critical for achieving project success.

We can build better relationships by:

- Building trust: Strive to have positive interactions, keep our promises, match our body language to our words and actions, offer help, and avoid gossip.
- Connecting: Learn what's important to that person (work, hobbies, travel, family). Create shared meaning with rituals, inside jokes, stress relievers, and common interests.
- Being mindful: Recognize what works for the way in which the other person communicates. Flex to that person's style. Ask for feedback and reflect on what we could do better.
- Supportive: Be there for others; offer praise and recognition. Give credit where credit is due. Tell people how much we appreciate what they say or do.

In addition, respect personal and professional boundaries, ask for feedback, and manage conflicts productively.

Body Language and Non-Verbal Cues

Body language is important in business because it can communicate trust, confidence, and competence. Positive, engaged body language can help us to build rapport, influence decisions, and foster collaboration. Whether we are sitting in a meeting or pitching an idea, our body language sends powerful messages about our commitment, attitude, and intentions.

What do you think is happening between the two people in the figure 5.2.4? How are they demonstrating their concern about a workplace problem?



Figure 5.2.3: Body Language Example: A Concerned man speaking to a defensive Woman. (Google [2025]; Gemini)

The way we walk, talk, smile, stand, and greet people conveys how we are feeling and influences how others see us. Hence, it is important to be aware of how we appear to others and strive to present a professional appearance through nonverbal communication. General guidelines:

- Maintain confident posture; stand tall and avoid slouching.
- Walk with purpose but avoid tensing our hands or shoulders
- Maintain enough eye contact to show we are engaged, but not so much as to make others uncomfortable
- Be aware of our facial expressions. Are we smiling, frowning, or looking distracted? Do we know how we appear to others? (Ask for feedback)
- Use strong hand gestures to emphasize key ideas. Open palms convey approachability. Crossing our arms may communicate defensiveness.
- Choose the appropriate tone of voice; use vocal variety strategically, slowing down or speeding up, articulating each word, and using pause or silence.
- Observe the body language of the most respected leaders. Think about what we can emulate.

Communicating Different Types of Messages

In business communication, not every message brings good news—but how we deliver bad news can make a big difference in how we are perceived by our team and stakeholders. When we communicate a negative outcome, such as a delay, denial, or policy change, our message directly influences how our reader, or in verbal communication, the receiver feels about us. That's why learning how to deliver bad news with clarity, empathy, and respect is essential to maintaining strong business relationships and also protecting our organization's reputation.

In a business context, situations may require us to deliver bad news, complaints, or gratitude messages. Recognizing these situations helps us respond appropriately and maintain goodwill and professionalism. Below are common scenarios for each type of message:

Bad News

In the business world, bad news refers to any message that communicates something our audience doesn't want to hear. This could be a project delay, a sudden loss of a key resource, a late change to the project, or the cancellation of the project itself. No matter the situation, delivering bad news requires careful thought and skill. How we handle these messages reflects directly on our professionalism.

As a business communicator, one needs to deliver the truth clearly and honestly while showing empathy and respect for the receiver. When people receive bad news, they may feel disappointed, frustrated, or confused. If we fail to acknowledge those emotions, it can damage our relationship with the audience. On the other hand, when we handle bad news with care, we can

protect goodwill, demonstrate integrity, and even build trust over time.

Common situations in project management that call for communicating bad news are:

- Project Delays: Informing stakeholders of a situation causing a delay.
- Sudden Loss of a Resource: Communicating the loss of a key contributor to the project due to the employee leaving the company.
- Late Change to Project's Scope: Announcing a late-stage change to the scope of the project to the project team.
- Sudden Cancellation of a Project: Informing the project team about the cancellation of the project.

Bad news messages are a normal part of business communication. They can't be avoided. However, they can be managed in ways that are respectful and constructive.

When it comes to communicating direct, negative, and persuasive messages, the subject plays a critical role. Below is a table with recommendations, followed by another table with examples.

Table 5.2.1: Subject Line Examples. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Mastering Business Communication by Rae Ann Ianniello and Melissa Patterson)

Type of Message	Avoid in the Subject Line	Use for the Subject Line
Direct Message	Project Scope	Confirming Project Scope
Negative Message	Problem!	Discovery of a Problem and a Potential Solution
Persuasive Message	Need Someone to Step Up	Opportunity to Stand Out as a Key Contributor

Example of a Bad News Message

It is important to use a simple 3-part structure to soften the impact before delivering a **bad news**. When the focus is on what the reader needs to know and how they might feel, we increase the chances of keeping the relationship strong—even after disappointing news. For example:

Table 5.2.2: Framework for Bad News Message (CC BY-NC 4.0; Mastering Business Communication by Rae Ann Ianniello and Melissa Patterson)

Structure	Content to Be Included	Bad News as Written
Buffer	Begin with a Buffer (First Paragraph) • Start with a note that relates to the message, one in which both can agree. Do not be so cheerful as to mislead the reader. • Prepare the reader. If the message is well written, by the time the "no" comes, the receiver will be in agreement.	Thank you for entrusting us with yet another critical project. We feel honored to work on your projects. We have been working hard to deliver our best outcome. We have a highly competent team of engineers working on the project. We even added two design and two test engineers to the team because they bring in the relevant expertise to tackle the challenges posed by your current project.

Structure	Content to Be Included	Bad News as Written
Bad News	Bad News (Second or Third Paragraph) - Choose neutral or positive words and tone. - Imply the bad news when appropriate. This is the most difficult part. The reader is likely to be prepared for a "no," but the words and tone should be true and as positive as possible.	While the test plan is clearly defined and validated, yesterday, one of the test engineers suddenly experienced a medical emergency and is going to be unavailable for the next month.
Action and Solution:	Build Goodwill; End As Positively As Possible - Provide an option or alternative. - Reinforce the relationship or commitment to common ground. In this case, you are telling the client that you are doing everything you can to build upon their trust in your team.	However, an alternate test engineer was identified right away. The engineer has already jumped in to get familiar with the test plan while the development work is ongoing. We are doing everything we can to keep the project on schedule and hence, be the partner you can continue to trust.

Conveying Intent

Most readers are naturally more concerned about their needs (what's in it for me) than the writer's intent. Use positive words to convey your intent. Consider the following examples:

Table 5.2.3: Use of Positive Words. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Mastering Business Communication by Rae Ann Ianniello and Melissa Patterson)

Avoid	Try	Why
Do not park in Lot C. It is being resurfaced.	While Lot C is being resurfaced, please use Lots A and B.	Coupling a "you" with a "no" in the same sentence may annoy the receiver, thus damaging the relationship. State what is possible rather than what is not.
I can't wait to help you.	I look forward to helping you.	Choose positive over negative words such as "can't." Also, the negative phrase could be confusing to some people. The positive phrase is easy to understand and also addresses the "what's in it for me" for the reader.
Your refund would have been processed on time; however, you did not sign the form.	Please add your signature to the refund request so we can process your return.	"However" and "but" are often considered negative words since they contradict what precedes them. Consider more positive ways to say the same thing.

Gratitude Messages in Business Communication

Gratitude messages are short, sincere communications that express appreciation. In a business context, they are more than just polite gestures—they help build relationships, reinforce positive behavior, and contribute to a respectful and collaborative workplace culture.

The *purpose* of a gratitude message is to acknowledge someone's effort, support, or contribution. Whether it's a colleague, client, supervisor, or vendor, expressing thanks shows that you value their time and actions.

The *outcome* is often stronger professional relationships, increased goodwill, and a more positive work environment. Gratitude can also encourage continued collaboration and reinforce a culture of respect and recognition.

A good question here would be, **Who do you write a gratitude message to?**

Gratitude messages could be written to:

- A colleague who helped you meet a deadline.
- A manager who provided mentorship or support.
- A client who gave you a referral or testimonial.
- A vendor who delivered excellent service.
- A team that exceeded expectations on a project.

It is important to use the right *language and tone*. Use *clear, specific, and sincere language*. Avoid overly formal or generic phrases. Instead, personalize your message by mentioning what you're thankful for and why it mattered.

- Use a *warm* and *professional tone*
- Be *specific* about the action or behavior you're recognizing
- Keep it *brief but meaningful*

Instead of:

"Thanks for everything."

Try:

"Thank you for staying late last week to help finalize the presentation. Your input made a big difference."

The following *situations* are ideal for sending a Gratitude Message:

- After receiving help on a project.
- Following a successful meeting or event.
- When someone provides a reference or recommendation.
- After a job interview.
- At the end of a contract or partnership.
- When someone goes above and beyond expectations.

Example of a Gratitude Message in Email

Subject: Thank You for Your Support on the Marketing Campaign

Dear Jordan,

I wanted to personally thank you for your outstanding support during the launch of our spring marketing campaign. Your creativity, attention to detail, and ability to meet tight deadlines played a huge role in its success.

I truly appreciate your dedication and teamwork. It was a pleasure collaborating with you, and I look forward to working together on future projects.

Warm regards,
(Name)

Stakeholder Communications

A project manager (PM) needs to have all stakeholders on their side, and how the PM communicates with stakeholders makes a big difference. The type of communication that needs to be used with them is stakeholder-specific. Common types of communication methods are face-to-face, online video/audio, or email. Regardless of the type, the communication must be

- On a regular cadence. With some stakeholders this is not possible, and in that case, keep them informed by email.
- Short and to the point (they are busy people and avoid wasting their time).
- Clearly and simply stating your need and what's in it for them.
- Timely by being prompt at communicating bad news (use the bad news communication framework).

Manage Conflicts

Conflict is a disagreement between two or more people where neither one sees the other's point of view. Such conflicts are destructive to the team and/or project. Conflicts lead to:

- Lack of cooperation between the parties.
- Lowering of morale.
- Lack of participation and more.

Types of Conflict

- **Intrapersonal Conflict:** Intrapersonal conflict arises within a person. For example, when we are uncertain about what is expected or wanted, or we feel inadequate to perform a task, we are experiencing intrapersonal conflict. A common situation where an intrapersonal conflict is experienced by an employee is when he/she is expected to do a job that requires some expertise outside their domain.
- **Interpersonal Conflict:** Interpersonal conflict is among individuals such as coworkers, a manager and an employee, or CEOs and their staff. For example, in 2006 the CEO of Airbus S.A.S., Christian Streiff, resigned because of his conflict with the board of directors over issues such as how to restructure the company (Michaels, Power, & Gauthier-Villars, 2006). According to one estimate, 31.9% of CEOs resigned from their jobs because they had a conflict with their board of directors (Whitehouse, 2008). CEOs of competing companies might also have public conflicts. Many companies suffer because of interpersonal conflicts. To avoid escalation of a conflict, the focus must be centered on ideas and not individual differences.
- **Intergroup Conflict:** Intergroup conflict is a conflict that takes place among different groups. Types of groups may include different departments or divisions in a company and employee unions and management or competing companies that supply to the same customers. Departments may conflict over budget allocations; unions and management may disagree over work rules; suppliers may conflict with each other on the quality of parts. Merging two groups together can lead to friction between the groups—especially if there are scarce resources to be divided among the groups.

Causes and Outcomes of Conflict

There are many potential root causes of conflict at work. We'll go over six of them here. Remember, anything that leads to a disagreement can be the cause of a conflict. Although conflict is common to organizations, some organizations have more than others. Content from Organizational Behavior by Anonymous ([Anon](#)).



Figure 5.2.4: Potential Causes of Conflict. (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0; Anonymous via [Organizational Behavior](#))

- **Causes of Conflicts**
 - **Organizational Structure:** Conflict tends to take different forms, depending upon the organizational structure (Jaffe, 2000). For example, decisional conflict is common in a company that uses a matrix structure as its organizational form,

because the structure specifies that each manager reports to more than one boss.

- Limited Resources: Resources such as money, time, and equipment are often scarce. Competition among people or departments for limited resources is a frequent cause for conflict. This is one source of conflict many companies have to live with.
- Task Interdependence: Task interdependence conflict is when the accomplishment of your goal requires reliance on others to perform their tasks. For example, if you're tasked with creating advertising for your product, you're dependent on the creative team to design the words and layout, the photographer or videographer to create the visuals, the media buyer to purchase the advertising space, and so on. The completion of your goal (airing or publishing your ad) is dependent on others. Conflict could arise when each subtask is to be performed by a group that is under a different manager with their own priorities.
- Incompatible Goals: Conflict due to incompatible goals arises when two parties think that their goals are mutually exclusive. Within an organization, incompatible goals often arise because of the different ways department managers are compensated. For example, a marketing manager's bonus may be tied to customer success stories, which requires the help of the sales manager. Typically, a sales manager's bonus is tied to the dollar value of the sales made for any given quarter. If the sales manager has to negotiate a customer success story with a customer, it may require offering some discounts, which will reduce the dollar value of the sale, and that is a clear conflict for the sales manager.
- Personality Differences: Personality differences among coworkers are common. By understanding some fundamental differences in the way people think and act, we can better understand how others see the world. Knowing that these differences are normal, we could anticipate and mitigate interpersonal conflict. It is often not about "us." It is simply a different way the coworker visualizes and behaves. For example, Type A individuals have been found to have more conflicts with their coworkers than Type B individuals (Baron, 1989).
- Communication Problems: Sometimes conflict arises simply out of a small, unintentional communication problem, such as lost e-mails or dealing with people who don't return phone calls. Giving feedback is also a case in which the best intentions can quickly escalate into a conflicting situation. When communicating, be sure to focus on behavior and its impact, and not on the person.
 - For example, Jeff always arrives late to all your meetings. We might quickly conclude that he has a bad attitude. In reality, we don't really know what Jeff's attitude is. We only know the impact Jeff's behavior has on us. We could say, "Jeff, when you come late to the meeting, I feel like my time is wasted." Jeff can't argue with that statement, because that is a fact. In our minds, it is indisputable, because it is our reality. What Jeff could apologize and say is that he did not intend to create that problem. That would create an opportunity to have a discussion regarding the behavior.
 - In another example, the Hershey Company was engaged in talks behind closed doors with Cadbury Schweppes about a possible merger. No information about this deal was shared with Hershey's major stakeholder, the Hershey Trust. When Robert Vowler, CEO of the Hershey Trust, discovered that talks were underway without anyone consulting the Trust, tensions between the major stakeholders began to rise. As Hershey continued to underperform, steps were taken in what is now called the "Sunday night massacre," in which several board members were forced to resign and Richard Lenny, Hershey's then-current CEO, retired (Jargon, Karnitschnig, & Lublin, 2008). This example shows how a lack of communication led to an escalation of conflict. Time will tell what the lasting effects of this conflict will be, but in the short term, effective communication will be the key. Now, let's turn our attention to the outcomes of conflict.
- Outcomes of Conflict
 - One of the most common outcomes of a conflict is that it upsets parties in the short run (Bergman & Volkema, 1989). Conflicts can have both positive and negative outcomes. For example, due to a disagreement over a policy, a manager may learn from an employee that newer technologies help solve problems in an unanticipated new way, leading to positive outcomes including:
 - Consideration of a broader range of ideas, resulting in a better, stronger idea.
 - Surfacing of assumptions that may be inaccurate.
 - Increased participation and creativity.
 - Clarification of individual views that build learning.
 - On the other hand, conflicts can be dysfunctional if they are excessive or involve personal attacks or underhanded tactics. Examples of negative outcomes include the following:
 - Increased stress and anxiety among individuals, which decreases productivity and satisfaction.
 - Feelings of being defeated and demeaned, which lowers individuals' morale and may increase turnover.
 - A climate of mistrust, which hinders teamwork and collaboration necessary to get work done.
 - The word "conflict" produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience.
 - Conflict is universal.
 - Conflict cannot be avoided.
 - Conflict cannot always be resolved.

- Conflict is not always bad.

Ways to Manage Conflicts

There are many ways to manage conflicts. Here are the commonly used techniques.

- Change the Structure
 - When structure is a cause of dysfunction and conflict, a structural change could be the solution to resolve the conflict. Consider this situation:
 - Vanessa, the lead engineer in charge of new product development, has submitted her components list to Tom, the procurement officer in the purchasing team. Tom, as usual, rejected two of the key components and refused the expenditure on the purchase. This infuriates Vanessa. She tells Tom, “Every time I give you a request to buy a new part, you fight me on it. Why can’t you ever trust my judgment and honor my request?”
 - Tom counters, “You’re always choosing the newest, leading-edge parts—they’re hard to find and expensive to purchase. I’m supposed to keep costs down, and your requests always break my budget.”
 - Vanessa responds by saying, “When you don’t order the parts we need for a new product, you delay the whole project.”
 - Sharon, the business unit’s vice president (VP), comes up with a structural solution and informs both: “From now on, both of you will be evaluated on the total cost and the overall performance of the product. You need to work together to keep component costs low while minimizing quality issues later on.”
 - If the conflict is at an intergroup level, such as between two departments, restructuring the organization to have those two departments report into one executive would be a good structural solution. The executive could align the goals.
 - If you are in Vanessa’s position, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of the business unit VP and seek their help for resolving the conflict.
- Change the Composition of the Team
 - If the conflict is between two team members, the easiest solution may be to change the composition of the team, separating the personalities that were at odds. In instances in which conflict is attributed to the widely different styles, values, and preferences of a small number of members, replacing some of these members may resolve the problem. If that’s not possible because everyone’s skills are needed on the team and substitutes aren’t available, consider a physical layout solution. Research has shown that when known antagonists are seated directly across from each other, the amount of conflict increases. However, when they are seated side by side, the conflict tends to decrease ([Gordon](#)).
- Direct the Focus to a Common Opposing Force
 - Group conflict within an organization can be mitigated by focusing attention on a common enemy such as the competition. For example, two software groups may be vying against each other for marketing dollars, each wanting to maximize advertising money devoted to their product. But, by getting them to focus their attention on a competitor, they may be motivated to work together to enhance the marketing effectiveness for the company as a whole. The “enemy” need not be another company—it could be a concept, such as a recession, that unites previously warring departments to save jobs during a downturn.
- Problem Solving
 - Problem-solving is a common approach to resolve conflicts. In problem-solving mode, the individuals or groups in conflict are asked to focus on the problem, not on each other, and to uncover the root cause of the problem. This approach recognizes the rarity of one side being completely right and the other being completely wrong.
 - In your project, if we notice a conflict between two team members who are in different offices or locations, applying both the problem-solving and the negotiation techniques (one of the ways to manage techniques in this discussion) might be a good solution.
- Consider Majority Rule
 - Sometimes a group conflict can be resolved through majority rule. For example, a group is tasked with the implementation of a solution to a problem. They come up with multiple ideas leading to conflicts on which idea to implement. The group members take a vote, and the idea with the most votes is the one that gets implemented. The majority rule approach can work if the participants feel that the procedure is fair. It is important to keep in mind that this strategy will become ineffective if used repeatedly with the same members typically winning. Moreover, the approach should be used sparingly. It should follow a healthy discussion of the issues and points of contention, and voting is not a substitute for that discussion.
- Negotiation
 - When dealing with conflicts, good negotiation skills are critical assets. When multiple people are involved in an endeavor, differences in opinions occur about desired outcomes. Negotiation is a process for developing a mutually acceptable outcome. A project manager will need to negotiate on different aspects of a project (e.g., scope, schedule, budget, quality, purchases, and conflicts with stakeholders) with the client, team members, vendors, and other project stakeholders. Negotiation is an important skill in developing support for the project and preventing frustration among all

parties involved. Negotiation is used to achieve an agreement that supports the work of the project or its outcomes and resolves conflicts within the team or with stakeholders. There are four steps or principles involved in negotiations. They are:

1. Separate people from the problem:
 - Framing the discussions in terms of desired outcomes allows the negotiations to focus on finding new outcomes.
 2. Focus on common interests:
 - By not focusing on differences, both parties are more open to finding acceptable solutions.
 3. Generate options that advance shared interests:
 - Once the common interests are understood, solutions that do not match with either party's interests can be discarded, and solutions that may serve both parties' interests can be more deeply explored.
 4. Develop results based on standard criteria:
 - The standard criterion is the success of the project. This implies that the parties develop a common definition of project success.
- For the project managers to successfully negotiate issues on a project, they should first seek to understand the position of the other party. They should figure out the business drivers, personal drivers, concerns, and expectations of team members or stakeholders with whom they will negotiate. Without this understanding, it is difficult to find a solution that will satisfy them. Project managers should also seek to understand what outcomes are desirable to the project. Typically, more than one outcome is acceptable. Without knowing what outcomes are acceptable, it is difficult to find a solution that will produce that outcome.

Conflict Management Styles

Individuals vary in the way that they handle conflicts. There are five common styles of handling conflicts. These styles can be mapped onto a grid that shows the varying degree of cooperation and assertiveness each style entails. Let us look at each in turn.

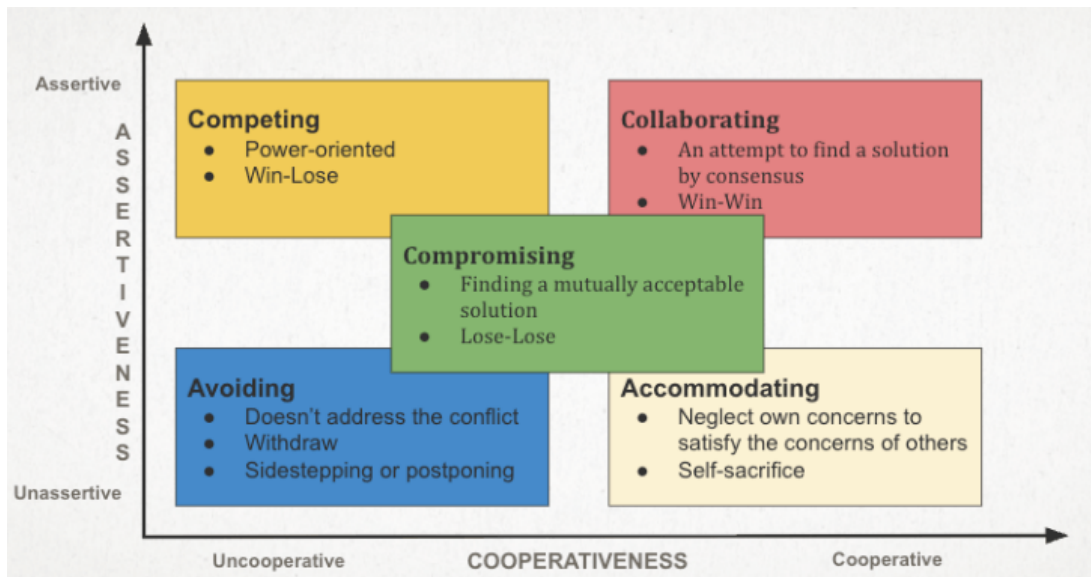


Figure 5.2.5: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. ([CC BY-NC-SA](#);

[Project Management Fundamentals](#) by J Scott Christianson)

Conflict-Handling Styles. ([CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#); Anonymous via [Organizational Behavior](#))

The five conflict-handling styles (Anon), avoidance, accommodation, compromise, competition, and collaboration are illustrated in terms of level of competitiveness along the x-axis and level of cooperation across the y-axis.

- The Styles:
 - Avoidance: The avoiding style is uncooperative and unassertive. People exhibiting this style seek to avoid conflict altogether by denying that it is there. They are prone to postponing any decisions in which a conflict may arise. People

using this style may say things such as, “I don’t really care if we work this out” or “I don’t think there’s any problem. I feel fine about how things are.” Conflict avoidance may be habitual to some people because of personality traits such as the need for affiliation. While conflict avoidance may not be a significant problem if the issue at hand is trivial, it becomes a problem when individuals avoid confronting important issues because of a dislike for conflict or a perceived inability to handle the other party’s reactions.

- Accommodation: The accommodating style is cooperative and unassertive. In this style, the person gives in to what the other side wants, even if it means giving up one’s personal goals. People who use this style may fear speaking up for themselves, or they may place a higher value on the relationship, believing that disagreeing with an idea might be hurtful to the other person. They will say things such as, “Let’s do it your way” or “If it’s important to you, I can go along with it.” Accommodation may be an effective strategy if the issue at hand is more important to others compared to oneself. However, if a person perpetually uses this style, that individual may start to see that personal interests and well-being are neglected.
- Compromise: The compromising style is a middle-ground style, in which individuals have some desire to express their own concerns and get their way but still respect the other person’s goals. The compromiser may say things such as, “Perhaps I ought to reconsider my initial position” or “Maybe we can both agree to give in a little.” In a compromise, each person sacrifices something of value to them. For example, in 2005 the luxurious Lanesborough Hotel in London advertised incorrect nightly rates for £35, as opposed to £350. When the hotel received a large number of online bookings at this rate, the initial reaction was to insist that customers cancel their reservations and book at the correct rate. The situation was about to lead to a public relations crisis. As a result, they agreed to book the rooms at the advertised price for a maximum of three nights, thereby limiting the damage to the hotel’s bottom line as well as its reputation ([Horowitz](#)). In the process, the immense visibility that the hotel received was an added benefit, without the expensive cost of marketing.
- Competition: People exhibiting a competing style want to reach their goal or get their solution adopted regardless of what others say or how they feel. They are more interested in getting the outcome ‘they want’ as opposed to keeping the other party happy, and they push for the deal they are interested in making. Competition may lead to poor relationships with others if one is always seeking to maximize their own outcomes at the expense of others’ well-being. A win-loose situation! This approach may be effective if one has strong moral, ethical, or safety-related objections to the alternatives.
- Collaboration: The collaborating style is high on both assertiveness and cooperation. This is a strategy to use for achieving the best outcome from conflict—both sides argue for their position, supporting it with facts and rationale while listening attentively to the other side. The objective is to find a win-win solution to the problem in which both parties get what they want. They’ll challenge points but not each other. They’ll emphasize problem-solving and integration of each other’s goals. For example, an employee who wants to reduce his work hours in order to complete his MBA program may have a conflict with his/her management. Instead of taking opposing positions in which the employee defends his need to pursue his career goals while the manager emphasizes the company’s need for the employee’s time, both parties may review alternatives to find an integrative solution. In the end, the employee may decide to pursue the degree while taking online classes, and the company may realize that paying for the employee’s tuition is a worthwhile investment. This may be a win-win solution to the problem in which no one gives up what is personally important, and every party gains something from the exchange.
- Which Style Is the Best?
 - Like much of organizational behavior, there is no one “right way” to deal with conflict. It depends on the situation. In general, the collaborative style has the potential to be highly effective in many different situations.
 - We do know that most individuals have a dominant style that they tend to use more frequently. Think of a friend who is always looking for a fight, or a coworker who always backs down from a disagreement. Successful individuals are able to match their style to the situation. There are times when avoiding a conflict can be a great choice. For example, if a driver cuts you off in traffic, ignoring the driver and going on with your day is a good alternative to “road rage.” However, if a colleague keeps claiming ownership of your ideas, it may be time for a confrontation. Allowing such intellectual plagiarism to continue could easily be more destructive to your career than confronting the individual.
 - Research also shows that when it comes to dealing with conflict, managers prefer forcing, while their subordinates are more likely to engage in avoiding, accommodating, or compromising ([Howat](#)). It is also likely that individuals will respond similarly to the person engaging in conflict. For example, if one person is forcing, others are likely to respond with a forcing tactic as well. Negotiation takes anticipation and planning.

Real-Life Case Study 15 - Managing a Conflict with a Co-Worker

The Scenario

As the marketing manager of a product line, I was working with my engineering counterpart on the development and roll-out of

a brand new product. We had released the minimalist version of the product to establish ourselves as the first to market. We had the next version, which was truly awe-inspiring, ready to be released in three months. The main tradeshow related to the product, which happens once a year, was scheduled exactly two months before the product release. We had paid for a booth to showcase our released product, which was the minimalist version. As the marketing manager, I was totally convinced to showcase the new version for multiple reasons:

- The internal testing already showed great results.
- All of the target customers, editors, and analysts will be at the show.
- Since the new version was an "update" release, a roll-out was not in the plans. The event would offer better visibility than shipping the software as an "update" release.

My counterpart, the engineering manager, was totally against showcasing the new version because it had not gone through beta customer testing. He was following the process to a T. This became a conflict between the two of us.

After some passionate discussion, we came to a *compromise*. The compromise (I proposed this compromise plan) was that I would take full responsibility if anything went wrong with the new version of the product at the tradeshow. On the other hand, if everything went right at the tradeshow, the engineering manager will be recognized for boldly showcasing the new product. Our witness to this discussion was the application engineer who was going to showcase the product at the show.

Outcome

The show was a roaring success for the product. A week later, to our surprise, the general manager recognized the success at the divisional communications meeting. As the marketing manager, he invited me to say a few words on stage. I went up there and stated that without the help from the engineering manager we would not be where we were at that time. Next, I brought him on stage to say a few words. He greatly appreciated my invite and the visibility. That paved the way for a great working relationship and a rewarding friendship.

Lessons Learned

- Taking **bold** steps **to compromise** is okay when the parameters align. Building and growing trust is paramount!
- Giving credit where credit is due adds to trust-building.

Handling Difficult People

In the work environment, you could run into two types of "difficult" people, and they are micro-managers and narcissists. As a project manager you would typically run into such people at the stakeholder level.

Micro-managers

- Their Behavior
 - Managers who seek constant visibility into every step of your work and ask for details.
- Outcome
 - You feel undervalued and sense a lack of trust on their part.
 - You feel the stress of being hovered over by the manager.
- Possible Reasons
 - They could have an inherent problem of trusting people.
 - New to the job.
 - Pressure from their upper management.
- What Not to Do
 - Don't take micromanagement personally.
 - Don't go against them.
- Working with micro-managers
 - Although there is no quick-fix way, we can take some steps that would make it easy for us, such as:
 - Meet all deadlines.
 - Stay a step ahead—proactively communicate details before they ask you for it.

- Copy the manager in all communications.

Narcissists

Narcissists are the most difficult people to work with. Working for one could be frustrating and demeaning.

- Their Behavior
 - Have a grandiose view of themselves.
 - Always take credit and never hesitate to blame.
 - Crave recognition.
 - Arrogant with no empathy.
 - Cannot take criticism.
 - Will align with anyone when they see a need and will drop the person in a heartbeat when not needed.
 - Revengeful—Will not hesitate to go out of their way to hurt you.
- Outcome
 - You feel like a doormat being stepped on all the time by such a manager.
 - Your self-respect will be drained out.
- Possible Reason
 - In my personal opinion, it is a personality and a character flaw!
- What Not to Do
 - Never compete with or confront them.
 - Do not try to correct them.
- Working with a Narcissist
 - You have no choice but to make them look good.
 - Expect no empathy or even fairness from them.
 - Document everything—preferably using email. For example, to confirm everything you are asked to do through email.
 - When it becomes unbearable, seek the help of HR (Human Resources). When it starts hurting, and they hold the power, for your own emotional well-being, your best bet is to exit!

Note

If nothing works and you are emotionally drained out, move on to a different job!

Real-Life Case Study 16 - Working for a Narcissist

Scenario

Many years back, I was lured into a startup by the CEO, who was a co-founder and had worked in the company I was in. I was not ready to jump in as an employee. Instead, I referred him to key managers at two global corporations for corporate funding. Both decided to fund the company through their VC arm. In the meantime, the CEO was persistent about wanting me to join the company. After speaking to one of the funding referrals I had provided to the CEO, I decided to join the startup as their head of marketing. Soon after, a series of red flags started occurring, but I was blind to them because of the excitement I saw after my referrals decided to fund the company. Within weeks, a major macro event happened, sinking the economy. Here is the set of events that eventually cleared my blindfold, allowing me to see the red flags:

1. Product positioning.
2. Obtaining a design example through my connections from a major corporation (after the CEO and co-founders failed to convince the company to provide them the design) to validate the technology we were developing.
3. Participation with a booth at a major tradeshow that produced great visibility and drew many potential early customers.
4. Introduction to a VC (I had worked in his team in the past) who was willing to fund under a certain condition.
5. Acquiring a major company as a beta customer (after the head of sales could not acquire a beta customer), again through my connections.

Outcome

Each of the above events produced several red flags. To keep them short, the outcomes were:

1. Product positioning.
 - Flag #1: When I positioned the product line as a design optimization technology platform, my CEO ignored the positioning and was still presenting it differently, which made no sense to any IC designer.
2. I leveraged my close friendship with a key leader at the major corporation to get the design example from another design team at that company. They provided the example under the requirements that we must get back to them in 3 months with some proof of our product. At that time, all we had to show were just PowerPoint slides.
 - Flag #2: When I turned in the design example to our engineering team head and published the requirement from the customer, my manager (our CEO) responded saying, "They took a long time to even share the design example, and hence we will not abide by the 3-month requirement." Three months went to six months and to nine months when my name with the design team at that customer's got tarnished. My name was black-listed (according to my friend there) in that design team. The only saving grace was that my friendship with the leader remained good.
 - I disagreed with my manager, but he overruled me.
3. I orchestrated the tradeshow, and it went very well, meeting all expectations.
 - Flag #3: The CEO was still ignoring my positioning when pitching the company to analysts and investors.
4. Introduction to a VC for fundraising.
 - Flag #4: We needed another round of funding, and my CEO was running into brick walls. At that point, I introduced my manager, the CEO, to a VC (one I knew very well) and pitched our story. As we drove up to meet the VC, my manager requested me not to speak at the meeting and that he would do all the talking. I responded saying I will speak if I am directly spoken to by the VC since I knew him very well. After I introduced my CEO to the VC, we embarked on our pitch. Not liking the way my manager positioned the technology and the company, the VC addressed that concern, looking directly at me since I was the marketing guy. At that point, as I started to respond, my manager intervened and told the VC that even though I had been telling him to position the company and the technology the way the VC saw it, he decided to position it differently because... Right away, the VC responded, saying that he would like to fund the company under the condition he could bring in a new CEO. Obviously that did not go well with my manager. We returned back to the office with no funding. Ten minutes after we came into the office, the VC called me on my cell phone and asked if I could talk to him in private. I stepped out of the building to do so. The VC was happy to see my positioning was on target but also realized that I had no power and the CEO had it all. He told me to quit the company right away because he assured me that the company would go nowhere, and at that time, I would be blamed as the marketing guy. Unfortunately, it took a few months before I could leave because the job market was very bad.
5. We had hired a sales head, and his first task was to bring in beta customers. The new sales manager approached the major corporation I got the design example from. They turned him down after all those delays. I reached out through my contact, and I was told that they were very unhappy and decided not to ever work with us.
 1. Flag #5: The sales manager was unable to convince any potential customer to become a beta. Again, as a caring employee, I leveraged my connections and brought another major company (International) into the office to discuss the beta program. They agreed to become a beta customer. When the CEO assigned an engineering person to be the point person, they rejected that idea and requested that I be their point person. That was agreed to by the CEO (my manager), and the beta program started. Within a week, my manager, the CEO, assigned the sales head to manage the beta program—a red flag!

Days later, I resigned.

Lessons Learned

- I should have become aware of the red flags and acted on them much earlier.
 - Throwing me under the bus with the customer, not taking my positioning of the technology and the company, and the re-assignment were all red flags!
- I should have looked for and moved on to another job when the manager started emotionally draining me.

Would you have done anything differently?

Review Questions

1. What are the four components of the Feltman's Model of Trust?
2. When it comes to building trust, what is important?
3. What are the four types of communication?
4. When it comes to communicating effectively, what factors get in the way?
5. What are the types of messaging you encounter in project management?
6. When it comes to stakeholder communications, what are factors to take into account?
7. What are the common types of conflict?
8. What are some of the causes for conflict?
9. What are the principles of negotiation?
10. What are the conflict handling styles?
11. What are the two difficult-to-handle types of people?

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5.3: Alternative Image Description for Chapter 5

Figure 5.1: Emotional Intelligence - Others-Focused Skills

The image is a block diagram illustrating the emotional intelligence framework and highlighting the two skills, **social awareness** and **relationship management**. They are the core EQ skills focused on others. The layout has three main sections:

- The left column labeled 'Focus' indicates who (target audience) the skills apply to.
- The two center blocks show the five interconnected skills and sub-skills.
- The right column labeled 'Objectives' indicates the desired outcome expected from the corresponding target audience.

Arrows in the center emphasize that the four skills are interconnected.

The red rectangle highlights the two EQ skills, **social awareness and relationship management**, that will be covered in detail in this chapter. It also points out the fact that the two skills are other-focused. The objective for you as a project manager is to understand the emotions experienced by others (social awareness) and leverage that in building better relationships with high levels of trust. That will help you deal with conflicts and manage resource needs by leveraging stakeholders and empowering the project team to collaborate and deliver the required outcomes on time and under budget. In other words, become a more effective project manager.

Left Column: Focus (Identifies who the skills apply to)

- Self
- Others

The Two Center Blocks: Core Skills and Sub-Skills

- **Leadership** (A skill that involves the four core skills plus negotiation and decision-making)
- **Social Awareness**
 - Organizational awareness
 - Active listening
 - Empathy
 - Emotional boundaries
- **Relationship Management**
 - Trust
 - Empathetic communication
 - Conflict management
 - Stakeholder management
 - Working with difficult people
- **Self-Awareness**
 - Emotional awareness
 - Behavioral flags
 - Self-confidence
- **Self-Management**
 - Emotional triggers
 - Self-regulation

Right Column: Outcomes

- For Emotions: Learn to recognize
- For Self: Learn to recognize & respond to emotions
- For Others:
 - Build stronger relationships & improve collaboration
 - Inspire others to bring out their best

Figure 5.2.1: Sub-skills of Relationship Management

The image illustrates the critical sub-skills of relationship management from a project management point of view. They are trust, empathetic communication, conflict management, stakeholder management, and working with difficult people. It is upon the project manager to take the initiative in applying these sub-skills to develop good relationships.

6: LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

Project Management Leadership - An Overview

Leadership is the ability to guide, motivate, and direct a team toward achieving project success criteria.

A project manager leads the project team during a project life cycle just like a music conductor. As conductors of their projects, they spend 90% of their time enabling, empowering, and communicating with team members and stakeholders. PMBOK Guide 6th Edition spells out three categories of skill sets project managers must possess. They are technical project management, leadership, and strategic and business management.

Technical project management skills, contrary to the name, do not include technical product or industry expertise. It refers to the skills needed for application of project management knowledge to deliver the desired outcomes for the project. This includes the ability to define critical success factors for the project, create plans for all the knowledge areas (i.e., integration, scope, schedule, cost, quality, resource, communications, risk, procurement, stakeholders), conduct all project management processes, monitor and control all the project work, close out the project, and disband the team.

Strategic and business management skills include developing and applying pertinent product and industry expertise. It requires the ability to see the big picture of the organization in the context of the industry and be able to negotiate and implement decisions and actions that support strategic alignment.

Leadership skills: Leadership is a social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more persons and involves the ability to guide, motivate, and direct a team.

Projects have become increasingly more complicated as more businesses execute their strategies through projects. Project management is more than just working with numbers, templates, charts, graphs, and computing systems. They are measurable and offer a predictable set of output for every input set. People are the common denominator in all projects, and they often create the unpredictability factor. A large part of the project manager's role involves dealing with people. Hence, project managers should study people's behaviors and motivations. Project managers must earn credibility from the project team and stakeholders. They need to detect and clarify the ambiguities effectively to remove obstacles. On projects, the environment changes frequently, and the project manager must apply the appropriate leadership approach for each situation. They must have good communication skills. Lack of communication skills, team-building, and organizational skills would cause problems in a project and even lead to failure.

Leadership

Leadership differentiates a great project manager from the rest.

While self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management are applicable to every employee, leadership is a skill applicable to leaders and managers.

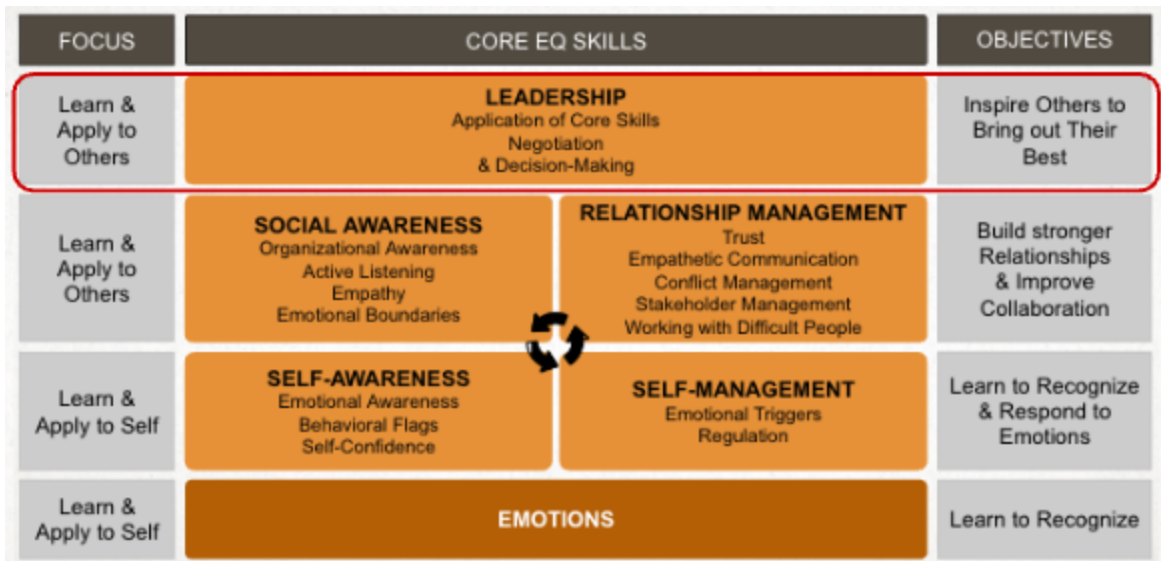


Figure 6.1: Leadership skills from the framework. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar) [Alternate Image Description](#).

Leadership (Figure 6.1) is a core skill that has self-focused components that a PM must learn to recognize and apply to others in managing their contribution to the project.

Sub-Skills of Leadership

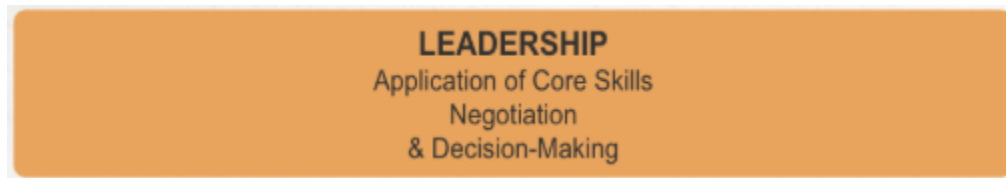


Figure 6.2: Leadership skills for project management. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

Apart from the four core EQ skills, negotiation, and decision-making are the key sub-skills of leadership for project management.

Negotiation

When dealing with conflicts, good negotiation skills are critical assets. When multiple people are involved in an endeavor, differences in opinions occur about desired outcomes. Negotiation is a process of resolving conflicts and developing a mutually acceptable plan of progress. A project manager will often negotiate on different aspects of a project (e.g., scope, schedule, budget, quality, purchases, conflicts with stakeholders) with the client, team members, vendors, and project stakeholders. Negotiation is an important skill in developing support for the project and preventing frustration among all parties involved, which could otherwise delay or cause the project to fail. Negotiation is used to achieve an agreement that supports the execution of a project or its outcomes and resolves conflicts within a team or with stakeholders.

There are four steps or principles involved in negotiations. They are:

1. **Separate people from the problem and focus on the outcome:**
 - Framing the discussions in terms of desired outcomes and not people takes the emotions out of the way and enables negotiations to focus on finding new outcomes.
2. **Leverage common interests:**
 - By focusing on common interests rather than differences, allows both parties to be more open-minded to find acceptable solutions.
3. **Generate options that advance shared interests:**
 - With project success as the primary shared interest and the reason for each party to achieve it clearly understood, both parties can objectively focus on exploring and achieving solutions that serve the common interests.
4. **Develop results based on project success criteria:**
 - With the solutions identified, the parties can focus on achieving the results that meet the success criterion of the project.

For project managers to successfully negotiate issues on a project, they must first seek to understand the position of the other party. Next, focusing on the team members or stakeholders with whom they will negotiate, figure out their business and personal drivers and their concerns and expectations. Also, seek to understand and establish the outcomes that are desirable to the project. Without knowing what outcomes are acceptable, it is difficult to find a solution that will produce that outcome.

Conflict Management

Conflicts in a project are to be expected due to reasons such as the level of stress, lack of information during the early phases of the project, personal differences, and role conflicts. Conflict management from a leadership perspective is managing the trade-off between cooperativeness and assertiveness.

One of the well-known conflict management models is the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), which assesses an individual's behavior in conflict situations when the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible (2008). This model is based on two dimensions of a person's behavior.

1. Assertiveness: The extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns.
2. Cooperativeness: The extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

In other words, conflict management is a trade-off between cooperativeness and assertiveness.

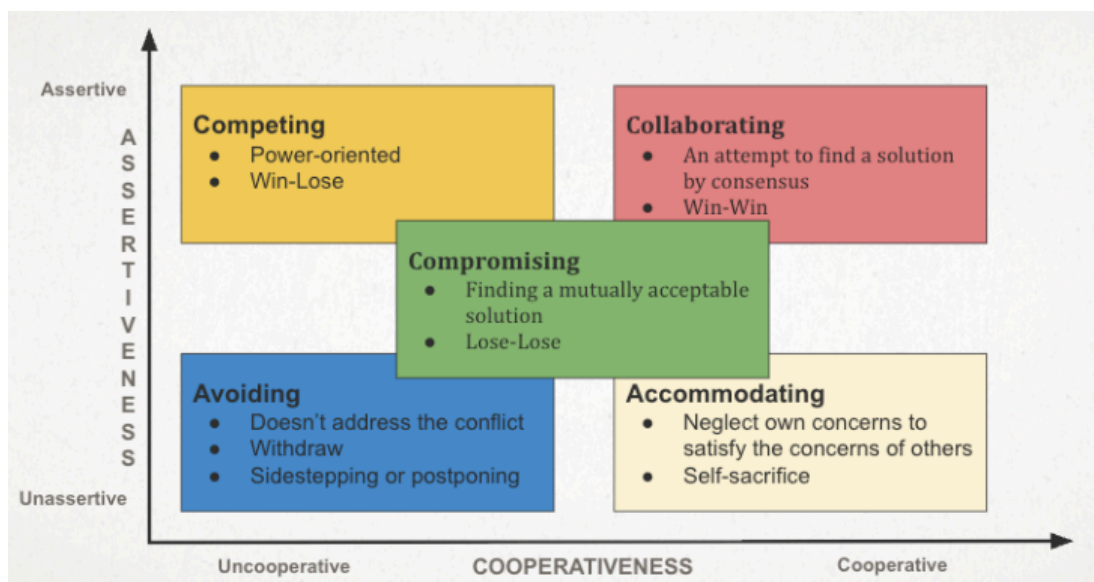


Figure 6.3: Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument. (CC BY-NC-SA;

[Project Management Fundamentals](#) by J Scott Christianson)

The model shows five methods of dealing with a conflict across those two dimensions (Figure 6.1).

Competing (forcing) is assertive and uncooperative. An individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person's expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position. It is power-driven and typically results in a win-lose outcome.

Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative. An individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. It involves digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. Typically, it results in a win-win outcome.

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position. Both parties stand to lose something in the process.

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. When avoiding, an individual neither pursues his or her own concerns nor those of

the other person. He or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. Results with no solution.

Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative, which is the opposite of competing. An individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person. Therefore, there is an element of self-sacrifice, which could stem from a variety of reasons, including timing, some lack of self-esteem, and more.

The situation on hand and the capabilities of a project manager determine the method that will be used to resolve conflicts. Here is an example of a real-life project situation illustrating the application of a conflict resolution method.

Resolving an Office Space Conflict

In this example ([Watt](#)), two senior managers both want an office with the window when only one such office exists. The project manager intercedes with little discussion and assigns the window office to the manager with the most seniority. The situation was a low-level conflict with no long-range consequences for the project and a solution all parties could accept. Therefore, the project manager applied the competing (forcing) method.

Decision-Making

Decisiveness is the ability to analyze data and make decisions quickly and effectively. A project manager will be making multiple decisions on a daily basis. The key is to make them quickly and effectively. In addition to the basic emotional intelligence skills, a current or an aspiring project manager must sharpen their clarity of thought, communication, self-confidence, and courage.

- **Clarity of Thought:** Know the project goals, success criteria, and how they fit into the client's product or program.
- **Self-Confidence:** Important to fill the knowledge gap and believe in one's ability to evaluate options quickly and effectively.
- **Courage:** The courage to make and communicate decisions on a timely basis is crucial.
- **Communication:** The ability to communicate convincingly is critical for success.

Leadership Styles

Leadership is a function of both the personal characteristics of a leader and the environment in which the leadership must occur.

PMBOK Guide 6th Edition provides a list of leadership styles as below:

1. **Laissez-faire:** Leaders allow the team to make their own decisions and establish their own goals. It is also referred to as taking a hands-off style.
2. **Transactional:** Leaders focus on goals, feedback, and accomplishment to determine rewards.
3. **Servant:** Leaders demonstrate a commitment to serve and put other people first. They focus on other people's growth, learning, development, autonomy, and well-being. They concentrate on relationships, community, and collaboration.
4. **Transformational:** Leaders empower followers through idealized attributes and behaviors, inspirational motivation, encouragement for innovation and creativity, and individual consideration.
5. **Charismatic:** Leaders are able to inspire with high energy. They are enthusiastic and self-confident and hold strong convictions.
6. **Interactional:** This leadership style is a combination of transactional, transformational, and charismatic leadership styles.

Among them, the "Agile Practice Guide" accompanying PMBOK Guide Sixth Edition highlights the **servant leadership** style in particular for the agile project management approach. Although servant leadership isn't unique to agile, project managers and organizations can observe and experience that this leadership style integrates into the agile mindset value. As the name refers, servant leaders serve those on the team by promoting self-awareness, listening, facilitating coordination, removing obstacles and organizational impediments, helping team members and stakeholders improve themselves, and coaching rather than controlling. They promote safety, respect, and trust, and the energy and intelligence of others ([2017](#)).

No single leadership approach could be stated as the best for project management. Each project is a unique endeavor. The leadership approach and the management skills required to be successful vary depending on the complexity profile of the project. The Project Management Institute studied project management leadership skills and published research concluding that project managers needed good communication skills, harmonious relationship-building, and motivating others ([2006](#)). Beyond this broad set of leadership skills, the successful leadership approach will depend on the profile of the project.

A **transactional** project manager with a strong command and control leadership approach may be very successful on a small software development project or a construction project, where tasks are clear, roles are well understood, and the project environment is cohesive. This same project manager is less likely to be successful on a larger, more complex project with a diverse project team and complicated work processes.

Each project phase may require a different leadership approach. During the start-up phase of a project, when new team members are first assigned to the project, the command and control leadership approach might be effective. Later, as the project moves into the conceptual development phase, creativity becomes important, calling for a transformational type of leadership. The experienced project managers can adjust their leadership approach to the needs of the project phase. Occasionally, on very large, complex projects, some companies will change project managers after the conceptual phase of the project to bring in a different project leadership approach or change project managers to manage the closeout of a project. The rationale is that this brings the right level of experience and the appropriate leadership approach, but is also disruptive to the project. Senior management must balance the benefit of matching the right leadership approach with the cost of disrupting the project.

Review Questions

1. What are the specific leadership skill sets that the 6th Edition of the PMBOK Guide suggests for modern project managers?
 2. What are the four core principles of negotiation?
 3. What are the two core behavioral dimensions that the Thomas-Kilmann conflict model uses to evaluate a person's response to friction?
 4. What are the four underlying skills required to remain highly decisive under stress?
 5. What two factors drive the selection of an appropriate leadership style for a project?
-

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6.1: A Case Study on Leadership

6.2: Alternative Image Description for Chapter 6

6.1: A Case Study on Leadership

Real-Life Case Study 17 - Conflict Management and Account Turnaround

Great leaders can accomplish results that few can match. This is about a general manager (GM) of a business unit in a large company who, with his leadership, brought a product to market a few years after the market leader and overtook them in 3 years. The market leader could never catch up. This is about a software product used for simulation and analysis of integrated circuits (ICs, or commonly called "chips").

The Scenario

The market leader, who commanded 80% market share, had practically every major customer using their product because it was fast and accurate. My GM, the subject of this case study, had the task of developing a competitive product and breaking into the market dominated with an 80% market share by our competitor and becoming a leader over time. Their product was being used by every major customer, and they were happy with its accuracy and had no complaints about its speed of operation. This presented a major challenge. No customer was willing to even look at our product unless our product was about ten times faster, as accurate as the incumbent, and certified by the chip manufacturers as accurate. Customers would switch only if they saw major productivity gains without any risk! Even the thought of closing in on the market leader was not easy, and at best, it would take a few years.

Our GM assembled a great team of engineers to create a faster and equally accurate product not just one time, but keep that lead with every new update release of the product. The challenges on the technical side were relatively easier to handle than losing capable people in engineering, operations, and marketing to competitors, which came with no warning.

He came up with a compensation strategy and implemented preventing the loss of people and significantly improved productivity. Apart from good salary and other benefits, he offered to take every person in the business unit for a 4-day paid vacation to Hawaii, provided the business unit met its technical and sales objectives for the product. He got the company to pay for the employee's plane ticket and hotel room with a celebratory dinner included. Since the accommodation was provided, the employees could bring their families by purchasing just the plane ticket and paying for food. The GM strongly encouraged the employees to bring their families and also included the families in the celebratory dinner, where he presented awards to the top performers in front of the families. He did this four years in a row.

Analysis

The GM's strategy enabled the following:

- Motivated the employees to perform to earn the trip.
- Earned the families' backing for the employees.
- Employee innovation and productivity grew rapidly.
- The rate of employees quitting dropped drastically.

Outcome

- Every new product release was better and 5X to 10X faster than the previous release—a great serial accomplishment!
- We overtook the competitor in a much shorter time frame and, a year later, widened the gap.
- The product became one of the most successful products for the company.

Lessons Learned

- Application of interactional leadership and the other four core skills were critical to the success.
- Smart decision-making to use recognition and reward systems to motivate employees.
- The win-win approach works!

6.2: Alternative Image Description for Chapter 6

Figure 6.1: Emotional Intelligence - Leadership Skills

The image is a block diagram illustrating the emotional intelligence framework and highlighting **leadership**. It is a skill that every project manager (or any manager) must develop internally, and it is applied to others in the process of managing the team to deliver on the expected outcome for their project. The layout has three main sections:

- The left column labeled 'Focus' indicates who (target audience) the skills apply to.
- The two center blocks show the five interconnected skills and sub-skills.
- The right column labeled 'Outcome' indicates the desired outcome expected from the corresponding target audience.

Arrows in the center emphasize that the four skills are interconnected.

The red rectangle highlights the skill, **leadership**, that will be covered in detail in this chapter. It also points out the fact that the two skills are externally-focused (targeting others). The objective for a project manager is to guide, motivate, and direct a team to produce the expected outcome for their project.

Left Column: Focus (Identifies who the skills apply to)

- Self
- Others

The Two Center Blocks: Core Skills and Sub-Skills

- **Left Half:** This is focused on becoming aware of types of skills.
 - Emotional awareness focused on Self and Others
- **Right Half:** These are the skills that need to be applied.
- **Leadership** (A skill that involves the four core skills plus negotiation and decision-making)
- **Social Awareness**
 - Active listening
 - Empathy
- **Relationship Management**
 - Build and maintain trust
 - Communicate empathetically
 - Manage conflicts
- **Self-Awareness**
 - Emotions
 - Accurate self-assessment
 - Self-confidence
- **Self-Management**
 - Manage emotional triggers
 - Regulate self

Right Column: Outcomes

- For Self:
 - Become self-aware
 - Respond, not react
- For Others:
 - Become socially aware
 - Inspire and collaborate.

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7: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

EQ Skills: Their Application to Project Management and Summary

Here is the big question: Where and how do you apply the EQ skills? We will use three real-life case studies to illustrate the application of the skills. The Summary section brings out the critical information in tables and can be used as reference material in your future projects.

[7.1: Real-Life Emotionally Charged Scenarios](#)

[7.2: Summary](#)

[7.3: Golden Nuggets](#)

[7.4: Alternative Image Descriptions for Chapter 7](#)

7.1: Real-Life Emotionally Charged Scenarios

Emotional issues pop up whenever and wherever people are involved. With people being the only unpredictable resource in project management, emotionally charged situations pop up.

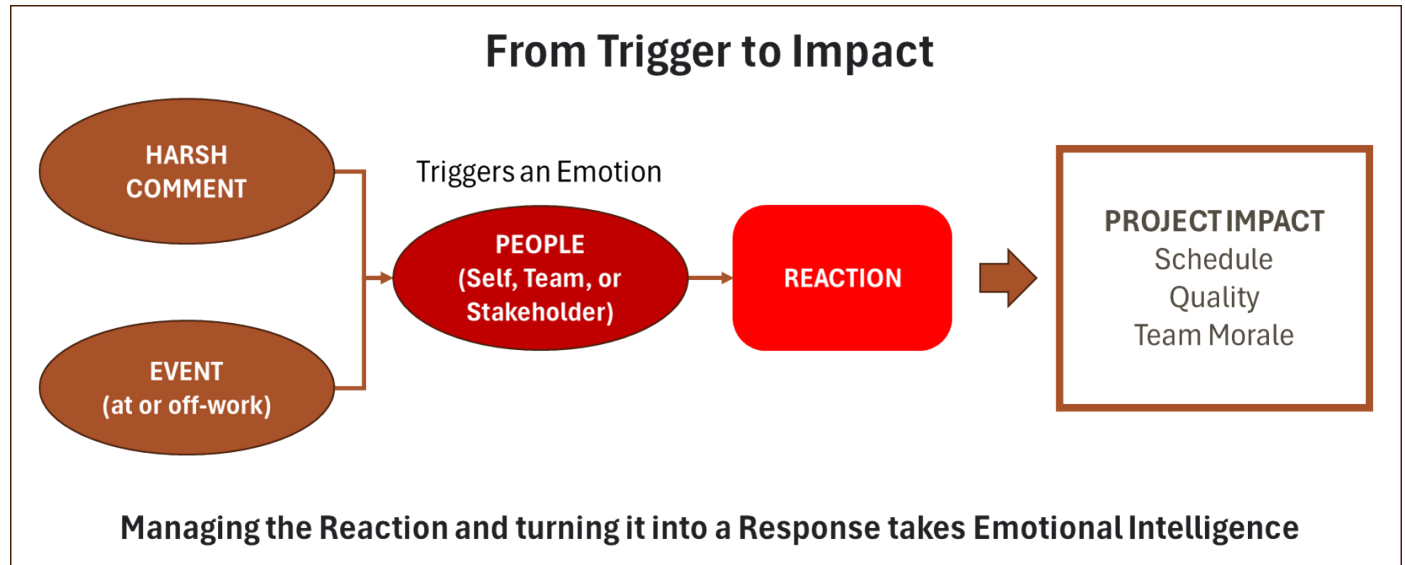


Figure 7.1.1: Emotions from trigger to impact. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar). [Alternative Image Description](#).

The figure 7.1.1 illustrates how a negative emotional trigger (stimulus) provokes an individual's emotions, causing the person to react negatively in a very short time. Typical triggers are a work/life event or other people's harsh remarks. The affected person could be anyone in the project, including the project manager. Such emotional "reactions" affect the person's performance, which in turn impacts the project schedule and quality. The ability to recognize an emotional trigger and act immediately to turn any negative reaction into a meaningful response takes emotional intelligence.

Here are some real-life emotionally charged scenarios captured as case studies.

Real-Life Case Study 18 - Working With A Highly Emotional Employee

The Scenario

As soon as I joined a company to take on the role of managing the marketing of a product line, I found out that one of my direct reports, a product manager, was a highly emotionally charged person with a track record of upsetting people in all the day-to-day interactions. With most people not wanting to work with him, his behavior was a showstopper. The person was already placed on the "must shape up" path by Human Resources. Because of his technical competence, he was driving a major new release of a key product. After talking to the engineering team and the affected person, I concluded that if I did not get involved in the planning meetings, the release would be delayed. The key emotional issues of the product manager and the product impact came down to the following:

1. Crossing the boundary between marketing and engineering.
2. Anger issues.
3. Verbal disagreements with the engineering team.
4. Delay in product development.

Next Steps

The affected product manager was a passionate worker, but it was the anger and complete lack of people skills that ruined every

product planning meeting and killed relationships. The product manager was also frustrated with the engineering team for not acting on the requirements he had provided, which included implementation details. Those details clearly crossed the boundary between marketing and engineering. I realized that if I didn't get actively involved in the planning meetings, it would not only delay the product but also directly impact a major product line roll-out. Engineering preferred that I get involved too. On the other hand, micromanagement has never been a part of my management tactics. However, in this case, I inserted myself by offering to help the product manager to get engineering to participate and implement the product requirements. I did that using a collaborative model where the product manager and I will form a two-person tag team and work with engineering. While it took much more of my time, it helped in dealing with the four issues.

The role of product marketing is to define product requirements. It is engineering's responsibility to implement the requirements using the appropriate architectural foundations and algorithms that would make the product scalable over time. The product manager was known to **cross his boundary** by not only specifying implementation requirements but also demanding they be implemented as per his requirements. This resulted in disagreements with engineering and product delays.

The product manager had major **anger issues**, leading to frequent angry outbursts against engineering (ranging from personal attacks) in the planning meetings, which killed the chance of any participation from engineering and all relationships. I became a coach and guide to the product manager. Prior to a meeting, we collaboratively identified and agreed to the objectives for that meeting. I consistently reminded the product manager (before, during, and after the meeting) that we were paid to plan, do the product roll-out, and work with sales to sell it, while the engineering team was paid to implement and own any issues that came up with poor implementation. Meetings started going well without the **verbal disagreements**, and engineering started engaging with marketing. That got the **product development on track**.

Outcome

- From a product point of view, things fell into line to meet the major product line roll-out planned later in the year.
- HR decided to let go of the product manager after multiple "must shape up" warnings - killing his career with the company.

Lessons Learned

- Anger and boundary crossing are cancerous issues in a workplace. Whether you are a project team member, a project manager, or a stakeholder, anger and boundary crossing are career-killing behaviors and must be eliminated through learning and self-enforcement.
- Angry outbursts kill relationships.
- Unfortunately, the product manager had difficulty controlling both anger and boundary crossing when left unsupervised.

Real-Life Case Study 19 - Customer Raising a "Must Address" Issue

The Scenario

Establishing true interoperability of products with a specific set of ecosystem partners was critical for my employer because much revenue depended on it. The integration between our product and the ecosystem partners' products was crucial for realizing that revenue. There was a problem. Our VP of sales was a stakeholder with a vested interest to bring the integration activities on track because several sales opportunities relied on the integration. I was asked to lead the project to bring them on track. As a first step, together with the VP of sales, I met the top partners to understand the issues from their point of view. It became very clear that we were not prioritizing the engineering enhancements to support their products fast enough. When I asked how soon they needed our product enhancements for better integration, they shared that they were already working with a small, proactive startup company on a much better integrated system for mutual customers. That was a clear threat to our revenue and market share. I shared what I had learned with our engineering team. Engineering's attitude was that we were the leaders, and hence, there was nothing to worry about. The key partners had seen this behavior, and that was the reason why they decided to engage with a smaller company that was motivated to work with them.

By taking on this role, I had to clearly set the stage with my management of where things were with the ecosystem before I embarked on developing a strategy and an implementation plan to bring the ecosystem partners on track with a good solution for mutual customers. This left me with an immediate task with each partner. That was to arrange a management review meeting (MRM) with each partner to achieve two objectives:

1. To get the two management teams aligned on the objectives and expectations
2. To authorize the necessary support for the ecosystem project.

As I started working on getting our company management to agree to an MRM, a key partner brought up a "must address" emotional issue. The issue raised by the partner was to keep a certain member of our team away from the MRM. This member was the one who presented on behalf of our management in these meetings in the past. **I was told that this was an emotional issue and a hard requirement if I wanted their key management to attend the MRM.**

That was a very delicate issue for me to deal with, because of the position held by the person that I had to keep away from the MRM. On the other hand, having their key management at the MRM was an absolute requirement for addressing the engineering issues and getting the integration on track for the sales opportunities with customers. I did not expect such an emotional issue. In baseball terminology, it certainly came from the left field!

Next Steps

After taking some time to recover from the shock and not having a clear idea of how to accomplish what the partner laid out as a "must address" requirement, following the advice of the VP of sales, I decided to seek the help of my top management, the Sr. VP of marketing and sales. His solution was that he would drive the meeting, thereby eliminating the need for the other person, and appreciated me for showing the courage to jump two management levels to reach out to him on the issue. He saw me as focused on getting the partnerships back on track as soon as possible to help both with market dominance and sales revenue.

Outcome

- Achieved the alignment needed .
- Got the project with that specific vendor on track!

Lessons Learned

- Stakeholder awareness was critical to the success of the project.
- Making sure it was a win-win without hurting any person's feelings.
- Courage to approach the top management (a key stakeholder) for advice and help was key in this case.

Real-Life Case Study 20 - A Team Member's Ego-Driven Behavior

The Scenario

I was hired by a startup as a consultant to project manage their participation at a major and critical trade show. Apart from the logistics of getting and putting up an attractive trade show booth, I had to work with the team to develop the key message for target customers, plan technical product demos to support the messaging, and set up and manage customer meetings in the built-in meeting room. After I got the key message approved by the management, I started working on the event details to promote that message through signage, product demos, and more. I was working with multiple outside contractors as well as internal sales and technical management on all of the above. Just as I was brought in to manage the event, the company had been with an external PR consultant who was brought in by the head of sales for media announcements. Although I was not responsible for drafting the event-related press release, which was already underway, I was asked to review and provide feedback. The external PR consultant had drafted a press release.

The Issue

When the media announcement came for my review, I was not happy with the messaging. My solution was to flip the top and the second level messaging, citing that the top-level message was catering to vendors while the second-level message targeted our addressable market of customers. Before communicating my feedback, with an intention to help the PR consultant, I set up a one-on-one meeting with him to discuss the message. I gave him reasons why flipping the order of his two messages is more beneficial. Unfortunately, the PR consultant took it personally, and his ego-based behavior popped right out. He started questioning my knowledge and experience with PR. Since PR was not my responsibility, I let it go.

Next Steps

I met with my manager, the CEO, and explained the benefits of flipping the PR message. To which he requested I write up an email explaining the benefits and copying the rest of the team.

The head of sales stepped in to support the PR consultant's message. Also, based on my CEO's suggestion, I left the media announcement to the PR consultant and continued to focus on the event and the flawless execution of it.

Outcome

- The event was a huge success as measured by the CEO and the CTO (Chief Technical Officer) in terms of,
 - The visibility (from signage) and the booth attendance achieved for the company at the show.
 - Booking of every slot in the meeting room with high-quality target customers, who were reached using a targeted email campaign.
 - The coverage of my customer-targeted message and the product demos by a key publisher (a friend of mine) I had reached out to before the show.
 - The number of leads generated exceeded all expectations.
- Media announcement
 - Received coverage from multiple outlets focused on the message targeting the people who were after the funding we had received and not customers.

The success of the event was so strong despite the messaging. The pre-show email campaign and the signage at the show brought the target customers to the booth, producing a healthy list of customer follow-ups after the show—the CEO was visibly happy with that result. On the other hand, the media announcement brought too many unnecessary calls to the CEO, and he did not appreciate it. That is when he saw the truth in my advice.

Additional Outcome: Based on all the pre-show preparations, just a week before the show, the company offered me a full-time role with an attractive package to manage all the marketing activities for the company, including total control over future media communication.

Lessons Learned

- When a person's strategy is questioned, even if it is done in a helpful way, they could react emotionally based on their biases - you can play catch only with the ones who want to play catch with you!
- When an adjacent project is not helping your project, and you have no control over it, let it go and focus on making your project successful without the adjacent project.
- Documenting feedback, especially when it is not well received, is important.

Real-Life Case Study 21 - Conflict Management and Account Turnaround

The Scenario

Two weeks after I joined a company as a vendor relations manager, a reorganization placed me reporting to my colleague, who was promoted. He assigned a different set of vendor accounts to manage. My job was to get the vendors to certify our simulation software as a sign-off solution and to get a press release out of the work. Sign-off guarantees that a chip validated using our simulator will meet the predicted performance on the manufactured silicon. This validation and certification require up to 6 person-months of work by the vendor, and they work with more than one leading simulation vendor to maximize their exposure to customers.

Among the vendor accounts assigned to me, he had identified the top three vendor accounts. At that point, I asked my new manager for additional information about the accounts. This case study is about the top account. He responded by saying that he could summarize the information in three sentences. They were:

1. The two companies had been working on sign-off for 4 years and identified 20 items for certification.
2. Fifteen to be completed by the vendor and five by us, and the vendor had already completed 13, and we were almost done

with one item.

3. In the latest meeting where VPs from both companies were present, it almost ended in a fist fight.

Right after, he asked me how soon I could get the vendor to sign off. My spontaneous response was that I would get back to him after I spoke to the vendor.

Next Steps

Right or wrong, I felt the account was totally mismanaged and under-delivered by us. Also, knowing that we were only a tier 2 simulator vendor, I could empathize with how the vendor felt after completing 13 of the 15 tasks while we had barely completed one. I could have spoken to my engineering team to find out more information, but I decided not to do that because, to me, the vendor's expectations were much more important in this case. Being technically familiar with not only the requirements of sign-off but also the vendor's priorities (I had the experience of working for a vendor), I could see how they felt about the relationship. All this took just 10 minutes.

Right after, I called the point person at the vendor and introduced myself. My conversation that followed went like this:

"Hi Mr. Edward, I found out that I will be your new account relationship manager. I thought of reaching out to my engineering team to find out more as to what the status is of the work between the two companies but decided not to. What matters to me the most is where you think the work and the relationship are. Hence, my call to you."

His response, with some sense of anger in it, was: "Ravi, we will never give your company the sign-off certification. We started four years ago and identified a bunch of requirements, and we have completed most of them, and you guys have barely completed one. All you guys want is sign-off. We will never give you a sign-off."

Wow! That was an emotional outpour! I could sense frustration and anger in Edward's voice. This happened on a Friday afternoon.

Because of my technical knowledge, I knew the work that the vendor had already completed made the design kit almost sign-off ready. At that moment, I made a decision to focus on producing vendor-certified design kits as the immediate milestone. With confidence and that clarity of thought, I responded by saying, "Mr. Edward, thank you for being candid. I am not interested in sign-off. All I am interested in is a working design kit that will allow mutual customers to use our simulator. Going forward, let's take the word 'sign-off' out of our conversation. Also, if I could deliver only three things for you in the next three months, what would you want them to be? You don't have to tell me now. I will call you again in two days so you can think it through."

We ended our conversation at that point. In my mind, I was willing to stage the project by getting a working kit in stage 1 and going for sign-off in stage 2.

When I called two days later, he had identified the top three items he wanted me to deliver. He also told me that I was the first person from our company that was not for sign-off, which he could not believe when he heard me say that.

Next, I started working with my engineering team on the three requests from Edward while actively engaging with vendors two and three. I had also told my manager that I could get vendor #1 to the sign-off state in 6 months (with some built-in extra time to make it happen). He was not happy with the 6-month window. Despite all that, since I understood their work was almost ready for sign-off, I continued to work with Edward on the 3 deliverables. I delivered all three items to Edward within two months, which surprised him. At that point, he said, "Thank you. With these deliverables, we have a very good working design kit. Also, I want to share another piece of information. I have decided to go back to the engineering team, and that transition will happen in the next three months. I wanted to let you know because you are the first person from your company that I enjoyed working with." Feeling good, I responded by saying, "Is there anything else I can do for you before you move back to engineering?" Edward said, "Yes. Technically speaking, we are sign-off ready, and we can announce that." My response was, "If that is the final task you want to accomplish before you move, I will do everything I can to help you with it." He wanted to proceed. I requested him to create the first draft of the content for the press announcement. He did.

When I took the draft to my higher-level management and our marketing communications team, they could not believe that I was able to turn around the relationship and even obtain the sign-off certification from the vendor in less than three months.

Analysis

- Skills applied include technical understanding, emotional awareness, self-confidence, self-management, active listening,

empathy, building trust, decisiveness, persistence, and last but not least, the courage to proceed despite the manager's push to drop the account.

- Not abiding by my manager's request to drop the account was risky, but under the situation, I felt strongly that I would succeed. That certainly paid off within two months.

Outcome

- Sales people started receiving calls from mutual customers for more software licenses - the ultimate success metric!

Lessons Learned

- The win-win approach works!
- Application of leadership and the other four core skills were critical to the success.
- You don't get something for nothing.
- Quick decision-making—Knowing the big picture, understanding the vendor's emotional state, the quality, and the status of the design kit and deciding to split the objective on a dime into short- and long-term components backed by confidence were critical factors that enabled the success of the project.

7.2: Summary

Summary and Review Questions

The key elements of emotional intelligence for effective project management are summarized starting with the learning process discussed in chapter 1. The "what," "why," and "how" of each of the four core skills are summarized in the tables below.

Learning Process

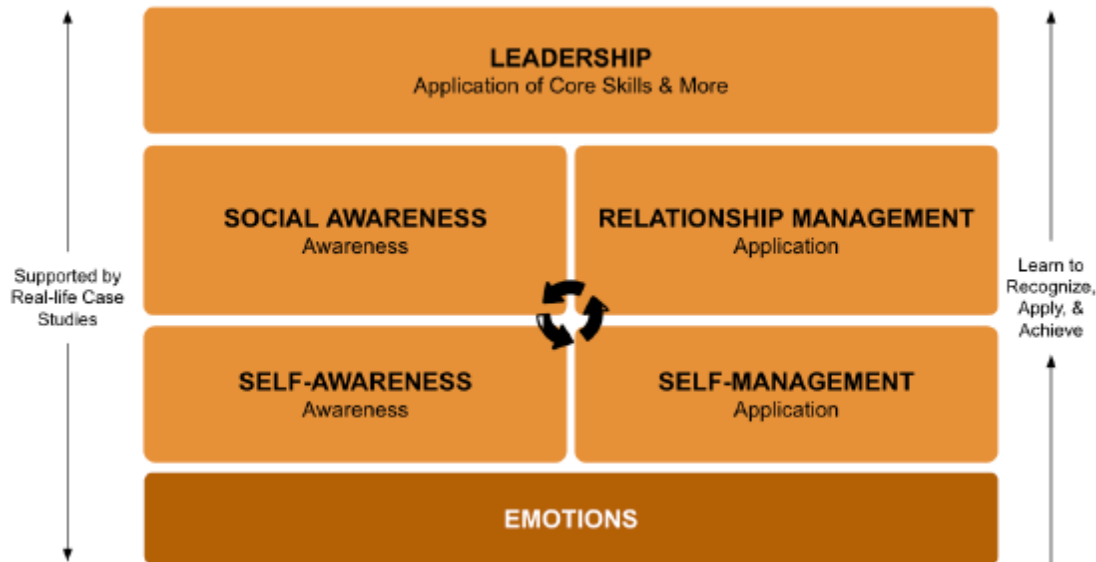


Figure 7.2.1: The EQ for project management - the key elements. (CC BY 4.0; Ravi K Ravikumar)

The figure illustrates the learning process.

The **EQ for Project Management** illustrates how leadership and project success are developed through layered skills and experiences, starting with emotions as the base.

1. **Emotions** are the underlying driver of emotional intelligence and are positioned at the bottom. This foundation highlights the importance of emotional awareness and regulation. Understanding one's own emotions and recognizing others' emotions lay the groundwork for effective collaboration, communication, and decision-making.
2. Above this layer are the **Core Skills**, divided into two categories.
 - The first layer contains the **self-focused core skills**, self-awareness, and self-management. They include abilities such as self-management, reflection, and personal accountability. These skills help individuals understand their strengths, regulate their behavior, and develop personal effectiveness.
 - The next layer contains the **other-focused core skills**, social awareness, and relationship management. They emphasize interpersonal abilities such as communication, empathy, and collaboration. These skills enable individuals to work effectively with teams and build positive relationships.
3. The next level is **Leadership** (Application of Core Skills and More). At this stage, individuals combine their personal and interpersonal skills to guide projects, coordinate teams, and support shared goals. Negotiation and decision-making come into play. Leadership emerges not as a separate skill but as the applied integration of the skills developed in earlier layers.
4. Along the **right side of the figure**, a vertical progression shows stages of learning and application:
 - **Learn & Recognize** the events that trigger the emotions, the resulting behavior, and their impact.
 - **Apply** the learned skills.
 - **Achieve** showing the consistent achievement of the objectives from the skills and successful project outcomes.
5. On the **left side**, a label indicates **Case Studies**, showing the value of learning from real-world examples and experiences.

Overall, the diagram illustrates that effective leadership and successful outcomes are built step-by-step—from emotional

awareness and core skills to applied leadership, tools, and measurable results, with real-life case studies showing how the skills are applied in project scenarios.

Summary of Four Core Skills

Each core skill is summarized using key points only in a table. The detailed descriptions are in the chapters, Self-Focused Core EQ Skills and Others-Focused Core EQ Skills.

Summary of Self-Awareness Sub-Skills

Sub-Skill: Emotional Awareness

Table 7.2.1: Summary of Emotional Awareness (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	
Emotions: Anger, Fear, Anxiety, and Disgust.	
Why are they important	- Leads you to poor emotional decision-making. - You display lack of emotional control to stakeholders.
How to manage	- Consciously recognize the emotion. - Learn to control before reacting. - Ask ourselves 'what' and not 'why' before responding.

Sub-Skill: Action Flags

Table 7.2.2: Summary of Action Flags (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What are they	
Sarcasm, Passive aggression, and hostility.	
Why are they important	- Otherwise, we lose credibility. - Impacts our career growth.
How to manage	- Consciously RECOGNIZE the emotion. - NIP it right away.

Sub-Skill: Self-Confidence

Table 7.2.3: Summary of Self-Confidence (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	
Relevant knowledge and skills.	
Why are they important	- Empowers us to collaborate and manage the project more effectively. - Increases our odds of success.

What they are • Relevant knowledge and skills.	
How to manage	• Fill the gaps through learning

Summary of Self Management Sub-Skill

Sub-Skill: Emotional Triggers

Table 7.2.4: Summary of Emotional Triggers (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are • Past experiences, fear, anger, criticism, blame, and unexpected input or change.		
Why are they important	• Triggers negative emotions such as FEAR, LETDOWN, or ANGER • Impacts our project through poor decision-making or project delay	
How to manage	Self-Regulation of Fear and Anger Alternative Description of the Image.	Self-Regulation of Criticism and Blame Alternative Description of the Image.

Summary of Social Awareness Sub-Skills

Each sub-skill related to social awareness is listed below in individual tables.

Sub-Skill: Organizational Awareness

Table 7.2.5: Summary of Organizational Awareness (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are • Understanding of organizational structures, who are the power players, what is the political landscape, and who are the stakeholders that matter.	
Why are they important	• Empowers us to collaborate effectively • Navigate ethically and effectively • Increase our odds of success.
How to manage	• Ask questions • Keep eyes and ears open for information • Ask friendly sources for information, • Look up LinkedIn and annual and quarterly reports for relevant information.

Sub-Skill: Active Listening

Table 7.2.6: Summary of Active Listening (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	
Practice of understanding and remembering a conversation through concentration during engagement.	
Why are they important	Helps us: - Build trust. - Demonstrate empathy and respect. - Reduce misunderstandings. - Resolve conflicts. - Improve collaboration.
How to manage	- Pay attention without pretending. - Do not jump in with your opinion or advice when not needed or too soon. - Listen to understand, not to respond. - Recognize and use non-verbal cues. - Reflect and paraphrase, only as needed. - Ask clarifying questions as needed.

Sub-Skill: Empathy

Table 7.2.7: Summary of Empathy (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	
Ability to understand how others think and feel.	
Why are they important	Helps us: - Make people feel valued. - Build trust and credibility. - Increase the depth of communication. - Understand others better.
How to manage	- Listen without judgment and with an intent to understand, and not tell "your" story. - Try to recognize the emotion the other person is experiencing. - Visualize yourself in their shoes and experiencing the emotion to understand how they feel. - Ask clarifying questions to better understand. - Avoid interrupting.

Barriers to Empathy

The common barriers to empathy, each of which must be avoided, are listed in a table below.

Table 7.2.8: Barriers to Empathy. (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What are they • Being self-centered. • Focused on "results." • "I am smarter than others" attitude. • Listening through filters and biases	
Why are they important	If they are not avoided, they: • Distance people. • Erode trust. • Prevent us from understanding others.
How to manage	• Intentionally and consciously avoid filters and biases from creeping in. • Avoid categorizing or bucketing people. • Observe nonverbal cues without judgment. • Listen to understand with intent and no judgment. • Actively listen without interrupting to tell "your" story.

Summary of Relationship Management Sub-Skills

Sub-Skill: Build and Maintain Trust

Table 7.2.9: Build and Maintain Trust (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are • Trust is the feeling we get about a person or entity when they consistently do what they say they will, without fail.	
Why they are important	• Helps us make others feel "safe" • Enables collaboration and open communication • Strengthens relationships
How to manage	• Apply "Model of Trust" - Sincerity, reliability, competence, and care • Before taking action, think about what's in it for them • Be truthful in all interactions

Sub-Skill: Manage Conflicts

Table 7.2.10: Manage conflicts (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	- Conflict is a disagreement between two or more people where neither one sees the other's point of view. - Common scenarios that lead to such disagreements are, organizational structure, limited resources, task interdependence, incompatible goals, personality differences, and communication problems.
Why are they important	If they are not managed, it could lead to: - Lack of cooperation. - Lowering morale. - Lack of engagement.
How to manage	- Use one of the styles as applicable: accommodating, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, or competition. - Manage by using one of the following: - Changing the structure - Changing the composition of the team - Directing the focus to a common opposing force - Problem solving - Negotiate

Sub-Skill: Communicate Effectively

Table 7.2.11: Communicate effectively (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	Communicating effectively both in written and verbal forms
Why they are important	Helps us: - Get everyone on the same page - Builds trust - Improves collaboration
How to manage	Observe and apply: - Empathy - Relationship building - Active listening - Body language and non-verbal cues

Sub-Skill: Specific Messages

Table 7.2.12: Specific Messages (Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are		
Communicating bad news and gratitude messages.		
Why are they important	Apart from bringing everyone to one common understanding and building trust, improves the effectiveness of communicating: - Project delays. - Sudden loss of a resource. - Late change to a project. - Sudden cancellation of a project.	
How to communicate	To communicate bad news: Use the 3-part structured model using positive words (Bad news).	To communicate gratitude messages: Create a short and sincere message that expresses genuine appreciation.

Summary of Leadership

Sub-Skill: Active Listening (for Leadership)

Table 7.2.13: Active listening (A Leadership Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	
Practice of understanding and remembering a conversation through concentration on the speaker.	
Why they are important	Helps us: - Builds trust. - Demonstrate empathy and respect. - Reduce misunderstandings. - Resolve conflicts. - Improve collaboration.
How to manage	- Pay attention without pretending. - Do not jump in with your opinion or advice when not needed, or too soon. - Listen to understand, not to respond. - Recognize and use non-verbal cues. - Reflect and paraphrase, only as needed. - Ask clarifying questions as needed.

Sub-Skill: Negotiation (for Leadership)

Table 7.2.14: Negotiation (A Leadership Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	Negotiation is typically an interactive, give-and-take process, where two or more people discuss differences to arrive at a better and a mutually agreeable outcome.
Why they are important	It helps us resolve a problem, a situation, a limitation, or a condition in your project to achieve a better outcome.
How to manage	Use the four principles of negotiation: - Focus on the outcome and not people - Leverage common interest - Generate options or arguments to advance common interests - Define the mutually agreeable outcome in line with the project success criteria

Sub-Skill: Conflict Management (for Leadership)

Table 7.2.15: Conflict management (A Leadership Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	It is a trade-off between cooperativeness and assertiveness on the part of the leader.
Why are they important	Conflicts can be destructive to a project. When it is managed, it will help build energy, creativity, and innovation.
How to manage	Use the five methods of managing conflicts: - Compete - Collaborate - Compromise - Avoid - Accommodate

Sub-Skill: Decisiveness (for Leadership)

Table 7.2.16: Decisiveness (A Leadership Sub-Skill). (CC BY 4.0; by Ravi Ravikumar).

What they are	Ability to make decisions quickly and effectively.
Why they are important	Helps us: - Manage the project better. - With our own career development.

What they are

- Ability to make decisions quickly and effectively.

How to manage

Use the three factors that help you make better decisions:

- Clarity of thinking and communication.
- Self-confidence on project knowledge.
- Courage in handling all situations.

Review Questions

1. What are the leadership skill sets the 6th edition of the PMBOK guide suggests?
2. What are the four principles of negotiation?
3. What are the two dimensions Thomas-Kilmann uses to describe a person's behavior in conflict?
4. What are the four skills needed to be decisive?
5. What are the leadership styles?

7.3: Golden Nuggets

Common Sense Still Rules

Even the emotional intelligence experts trip before learning something new with an emotional situation. Here are some common sense nuggets to bear in mind. Although most of these are already woven into the emotional intelligence framework, it is important to review these individually.

- **We can play catch only with those who want to play catch with us.** Even emotionally intelligent people run into people who are difficult to work with. We are not born with biases and prejudices, but we acquire them through life experiences, and they come in the way. In such situations, it is prudent to continue to work with them to achieve the best outcome. This leads to the next nugget.
- **What's in it for them?** When people see a potential benefit for themselves from the work they are expected to do, they will do it more willingly. Understanding this need and making it possible for them to achieve makes it easy to get work done by others for a project. This even works with people who are difficult to work with.
- **Give credit where credit is due.** One cannot make the mistake of taking away credit. It is important to give credit to the person who deserves it, whether or not they are easy or difficult to work with. A PM who gives credit where credit is due earns the trust and credibility from them. For a project manager (PM), this is a critical success factor.
- **Setting and managing our own expectations are key to success.** Expecting others to think and act like us is a failure-seeking strategy.
- **No one likes to be told what to do, including each one of us.** Hence, we must think before telling someone to do something.
- **Building better relationships means understanding and staying within our own boundaries.** When we cross our boundary, we get into someone else's boundary and unintentionally launch ourselves into their problem.
- **Always think Win-Win.**

7.4: Alternative Image Descriptions for Chapter 7

Figure 7.1.1: Emotions from trigger to impact

The diagram illustrates how **emotional** triggers from a work-life event and/or other people's harsh remarks could impact the project outcome. The diagram, from left to right, illustrates the fact that emotional triggers such as harsh comments directed at a person and/or a negative work-life event could trigger an involuntary negative reaction. That could hurt the project from succeeding. Three examples of success criteria are listed as schedule, quality, and team morale. A note at the bottom reads: Managing the reactions and turning it into a response takes emotional intelligence.

The person impacted by the emotion could be you, the project manager, a team member, or a stakeholder. Such negative emotions could potentially defocus a person, affecting their performance and negatively impacting the project. Learning to curb the involuntary reaction and produce a responsible response takes emotional intelligence.

Figure: Handling of Fear and Anger (Inside the summary table for Self-Management)

The figure illustrates a three-step approach for the self-regulation of fear and anger. Fear or anger is typically triggered by past or present events, projects, or people's comments (the left-most trapezoidal block called Source). A failure in a past event is not a predictor of the outcome of the current project. People, processes, and tools are not the same. Therefore, it is important not to allow fear or anger from a past failure to overcome you in your current project, as doing so may negatively impact the outcome.

The three-step approach consists of recognizing, determining, and responding. In the recognition step (the block called Recognize), you need to identify the source (caused by situation or people) and type of emotion—whether it is fear or anger. In the next stage (the block called Determine), you need to determine whether the emotion is based on facts. If the emotion is fear and it is based on facts, you should acknowledge it and move forward (as per the box called Respond 1) with a modified plan to address the fear. If it is not based on facts, dismiss the fear and continue with your current plan of action (again as per the box called "Respond 1").

If the emotion is anger and it is based on facts, you should respond firmly and positively before moving forward (as per the box related to anger called Respond 2) with a modified plan to address the anger. If it is not based on facts, you should still respond firmly and positively and then continue with your current plan of action (again as per the box called "Respond 2").

Figure: Handling of Criticism and Blame (Inside the summary table for Self-Management)

The figure illustrates a three-step approach for the self-regulation of criticism and blame. Criticism and blame are typically triggered by people (the left-most trapezoidal block called Source). Both criticism and blame are opinions. Therefore, it is important to make sure any criticism or blame is fact-based, as doing so may negatively impact the outcome.

The three-step approach consists of recognizing, determining, and responding. In the recognition step (the block called Recognize), you need to identify the type of emotion—whether it is criticism or blame. If it is criticism, it is important to dig down another step to find out if it is constructive (feedback), unwarranted, or self-criticism. In the next stage (the block called Determine), you need to determine whether the criticism or blame is based on facts. If the criticism or blame is based on facts, consider it to be constructive criticism or feedback, and you should thank the person and move forward (as per the box called Respond 1) with a modified plan to address it. If it is not fact-based, acknowledge it and continue with your current plan of action (as per the box called "Respond 2").

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GLOSSARY

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