

Achieving Credibility as a Project Manager

Hal Mooz

Hal Mooz was co-developer of an innovative government/industry Project Management Training Course, and he has trained more than 5,000 high-technology project managers. A graduate of Stevens Institute of Technology, he was a project manager and systems engineer at Lockheed before he founded CSM. His new book with Kevin Forsberg, *Visualizing Project Management*, was published by John Wiley & Sons in 1996.

Leadership is the most important factor in the successful management of projects, Mooz asserts, and the most important element of leadership is credibility. Citing Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner's book, *Credibility* (Jossey-Boss, 1993), Mooz claims that credibility is earned and depends on the project manager's competency as observed, valued and appreci-

ated by stakeholders, those who can affect or are affected by the project.

He laments the fact that few project managers are trained in systems engineering, and few systems engineers are trained in project management. Fewer yet belong to both the PMI and INCOSE. Yet, the skills and knowledge of both are needed to achieve the competency and earn the credibility to manage projects with clarity and purpose.

Four things are essential to project management, according to CSM.

1. Common Project Vocabulary. Projects that do not define their terms and explain their jargon are vulnerable to serious miscommunication that can

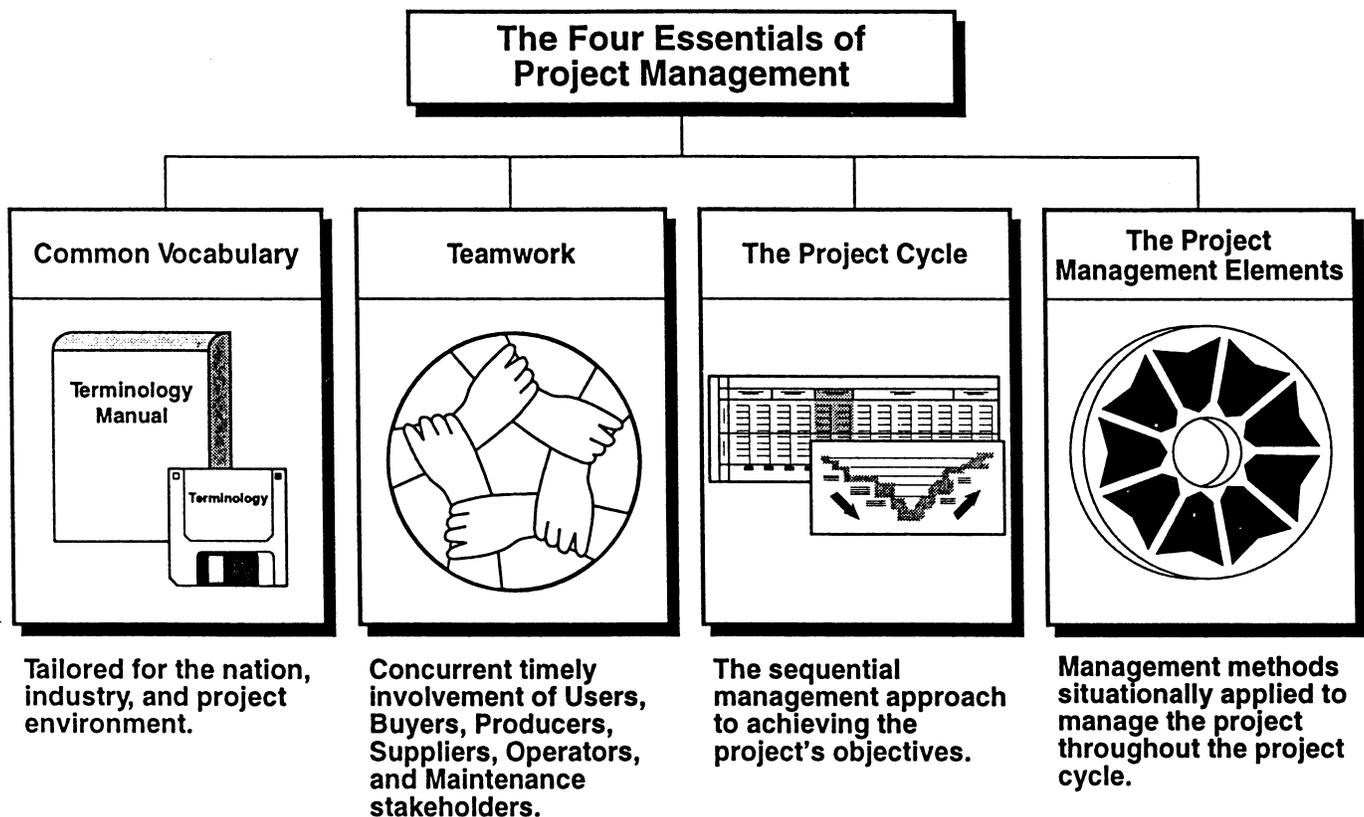


Figure 19. The Four Essentials of Project Management

lead to mistakes, even disasters. A project dictionary or glossary, in hard copy and soft, is essential. A competent project manager gains credibility through mastery and mentoring of such vocabulary.

2. **The Project Cycle.** Competent project managers can also earn credibility by involving stakeholders in the development of a coordinated project cycle. Many professional project management organizations have their own standards or template of a project cycle, based upon their preferred approach. CSM prefers the “Vee” format for the technical aspect of the project cycle to show the sequence for system or product decomposition, definition, integration and verification.

3. **Ten Project Management Elements.** The competent project manager earns credibility by demonstrating skill and tool proficiency in each of the following categories:

- 1) Requirements must be created and managed.
- 2) Organization options, ranging from functional and matrix to integrated teams and “skunk works,” must be applied to the situation.
- 3) Project Team selection must include the right mix of skills and attributes.
- 4) Project Planning should be an ongoing process.
- 5) Risks and Opportunities must be continuously identified and evaluated and then mitigated and enhanced, respectively.
- 6) Project Control should be proactive and reactive, to ensure that planned events happen and unplanned events do not.

7) **Project Visibility** includes physical techniques like MBWA and electronic techniques like Email, FAX and videoconferencing.

8) **Project Status** should involve tools like earned value to detect unacceptable variances and determine the need for corrective action.

9) **Corrective Action** may include overtime, alternate technical approaches or new leadership.

10) **Project Leadership**, the most important element, is based on credibility. “The competent leader makes sure the team is doing the right things before making sure things are being done right,” Mooz says.

4. **Project Teamwork.** The fourth essential of effective project management is teamwork, not just individuals working together to achieve a common goal but rather mutual respect and trust, a common code of conduct, shared rewards, and team spirit and energy among all the project shareholders. Projects often fail, notes Mooz, because of adversarial relationships. Timely involvement of users, buyers, producers, suppliers, operators and maintenance stakeholders can reduce conflict considerably.

Beyond technical management, the savvy project manager must also manage the budget and business aspects of a project. Leadership, however, is the force that inspires and motivates the team to accomplish their personal and collective best, and effective leadership is based on credibility.

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