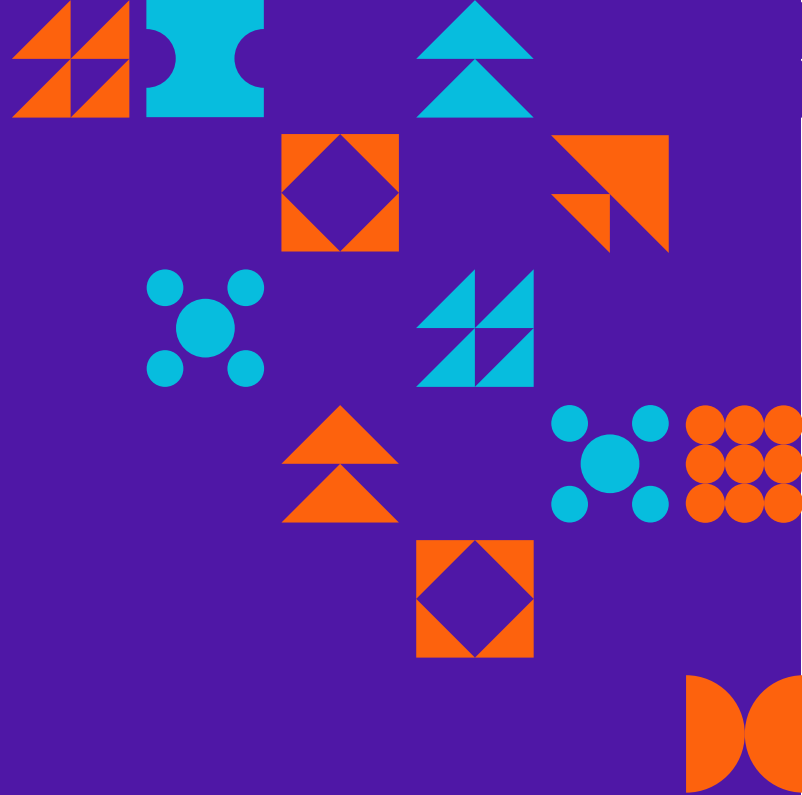


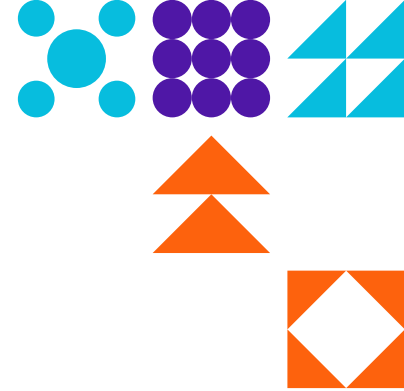


Project
Management
Institute.
Kingdom of Saudi
Arabia



Digital Insights: Project Management is about Engagement

By: Yousef Alamoudi, Majed Almutairi



With years of experience in project management industry, human capital is a key factor for successful project delivery. It does not lie just in achieving project completion and within budget, or innovative execution strategy, but indeed it's all about the engine who drive the project towards its success. In this article, we express the importance of engagement in project management by sharing our own experiences and insights on how to promote an engaging culture that drives success.

ENGAGEMENT IS THE HUMAN ENGINE BEHIND PROJECTS

In project management world, much of the focus is often on processes, timelines, budgets, and deliverables. Charts, trends, risk registers, and progress dashboards dominate the conversation. But beneath all the structure and methodology lies a fundamental truth: project management is really about project team engagement. At its core, it's about people—how they connect and work towards a common objective, strive to achieve milestones, and lead with an engagement mind set.

When you assigned to manage a project, the first thing came in mind is to keep everything on track: tasks assigned, milestones achieved, healthy control of budgets. In fact, most of project management professional lived by their project plan. The work got done—but sometimes, barely. There might be no energy, no buy-in, and definitely no spark. Then one day, midway through a particularly complex rollout, it clicked: the project wasn't stalling because of bad planning. It was stalling because people weren't engaged. That realization changed everything about how we now manage projects.

Engagement is not a soft, supplementary concept, it is a core competency that fuels alignment, accelerates momentum, and fosters shared ownership. In increasingly complex, cross-functional environments, project success is not driven solely by efficient planning—but by the intentional, ongoing involvement of people.



ENGAGEMENT IS THE GLUE IN THE GAPS

In one of my most successful projects to date, we started doing something simple but powerful: we sent out a monthly project newsletter. Just one page. A short update on what we accomplished, what was coming next, and a quick shoutout to someone who'd gone above and beyond. To my surprise, people started looking forward to it, they felt in the loop, they could see progress. Someone told me, "This is the first project I've been part of where I feel like I know what's going on." That little act of communication turned out to be one of the most powerful engagement tools I had. From then on, the department encouraged engagement activities and started new tactics.

HERE ARE SOME ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES THAT HAVE WORKED WONDERS IN MY PROJECTS:

- **Monthly newsletters:** Keep them short, informal, and useful. Highlight wins and thank people by name.
- **Knowledge-sharing:** sharing best practices and benchmarking where team members demonstrate or explain something they learned.
- **Innovation Portal:** Online platform where team members submit their innovative ideas to develop the project in different aspects.
- **Light Breakfast:** Spending time early morning over a light breakfast to share personal life updates.
- **Recognition and management insights:** Acknowledging effort—both formally and informally—reinforces team cohesion and encourages discretionary effort. Leadership insights on spreading "thank you" culture and appreciating individuals.

As an outcome of these practices, engagement became the differentiator between a struggling rollout and a high-performing team.



ENGAGEMENT IS THE KEY TO GREATER PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Juanita M. Woods, a clinical assistant professor, the Academic Director for the MS Project Management Program, and the author of the Project Management Institute (PMI) article "Engaging Your Team for Great Project Performance". mentions in her article that employee engagement is a crucial factor in achieving high-performing project teams. Woods defines engagement as "a state of mind held by individuals, and is characterized by active involvement in work activities (vigor), commitment to project success and the team (dedication), and an ability to stay focused on work (absorption)" (Costa, 2014). She emphasizes that engagement is not something that can be trained into individuals, but rather it is an internal state of mind that can be fostered by project managers and leaders. Woods cites research that shows engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and reduced intention to leave the organization (Saks, 2006). She also notes that engagement is negatively correlated with job burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli et al., 2008). To foster individual and team work engagement, Woods suggests that project managers focus on building team collective efficacy, providing social support, and promoting a positive and inclusive team culture. As Woods states, "When employees are engaged, the team is successful."



ENGAGEMENT IN A NUTSHELL

In conclusion, effective project management is inextricably linked to the engagement and motivation of team members. By prioritizing engagement and fostering a positive, inclusive team culture, project managers can unlock the full potential of their teams and drive successful project outcomes. This approach not only enhances productivity and job satisfaction but also promotes a collaborative and innovative work environment that is better equipped to navigate complex challenges and deliver exceptional results. Ultimately, recognizing the critical role of engagement in project management is essential for achieving sustainable success and driving long-term value for organizations.

REFERENCES:

Citation: Woods, J. M. (2015). Engaging your team to greater project performance. Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2015—North America, Orlando, FL. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.