

Chapter 6 - Leadership

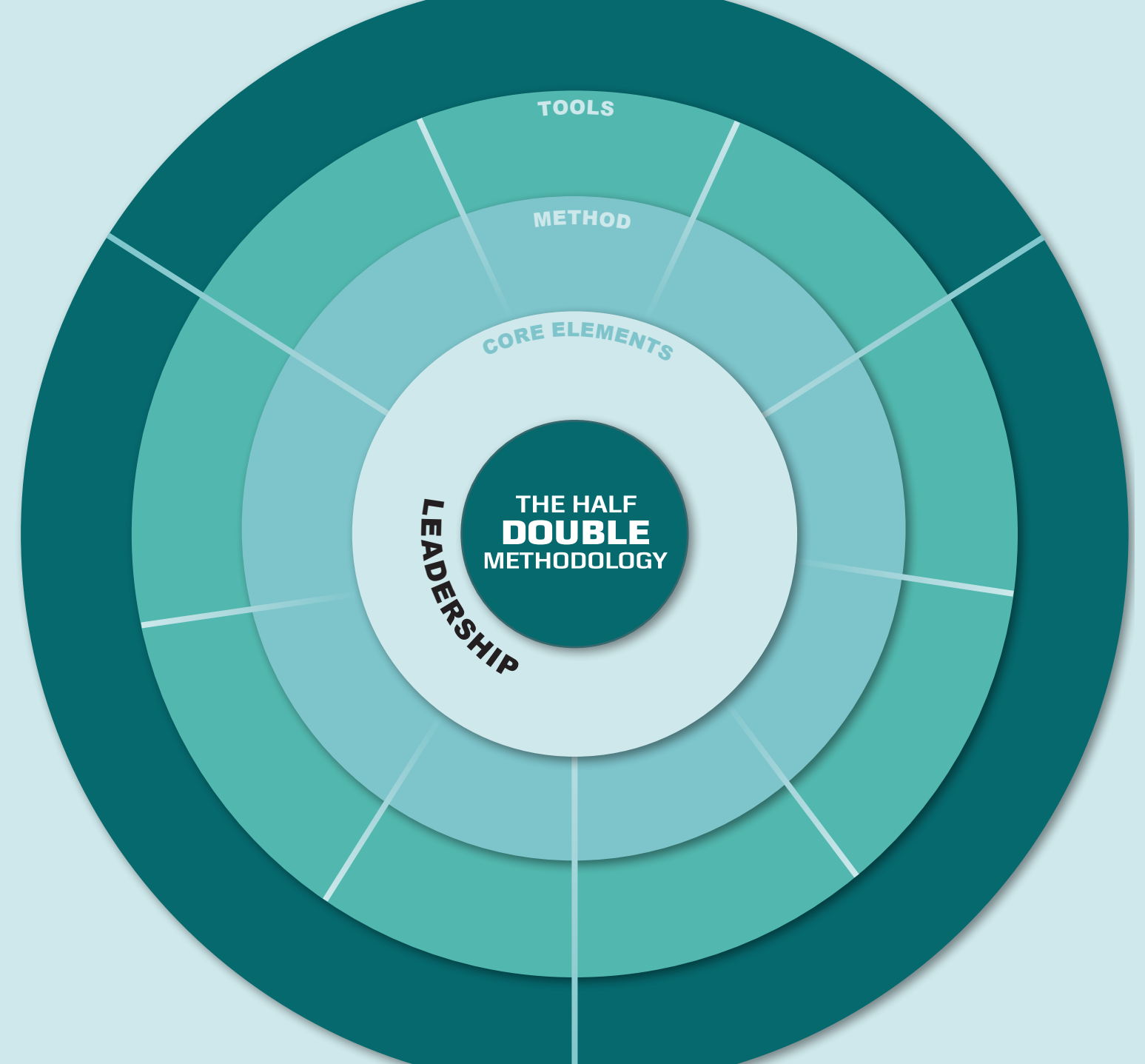
Let's get hands-on with ...

Powerful project leadership requires
commitment to three methods:

- ▶ Active Project Ownership
- ▶ Collaborative Project Leadership
- ▶ A Reflective and Adaptive Mindset

... you need to create leadership in your project

*the 3 methods
the 9 behaviors*



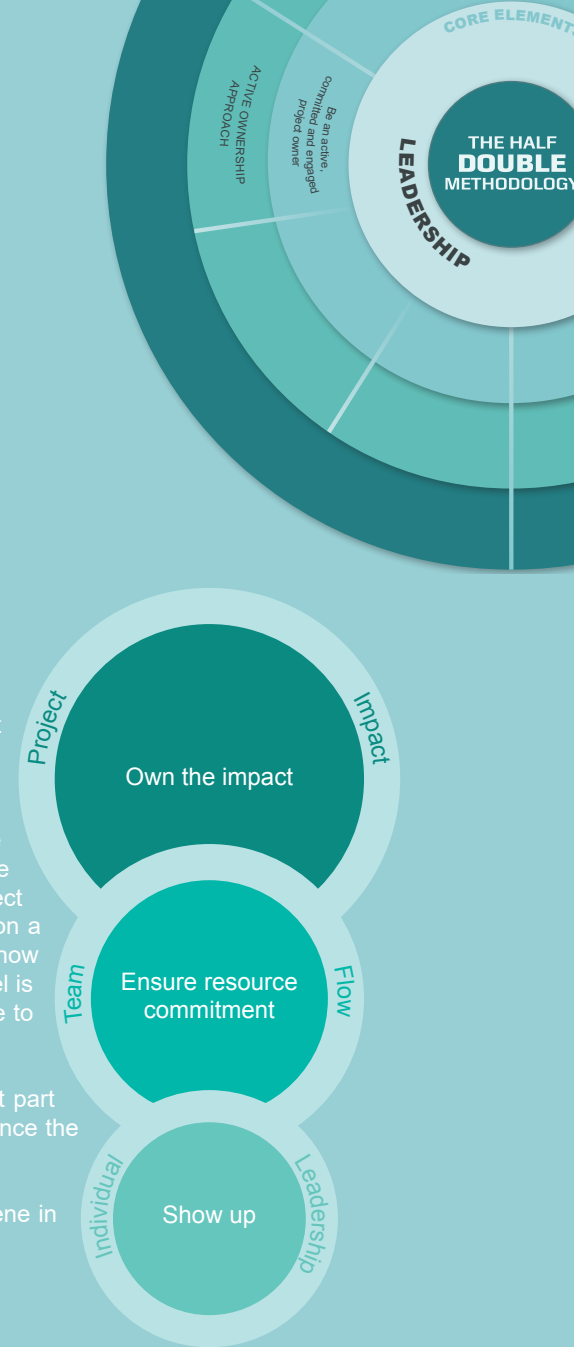
LEADERSHIP METHOD 1

Active Project Ownership creates strategic impact and ensures organizational commitment

The project is not led by the project leader alone, but by a project leadership team consisting of a project owner and a project leader. In some organizations, it is advisable to distinguish between the project owner and the sponsor. We think it is appropriate for the same person to promote leadership attention. In cases where the sponsor and the owner are two different people, the sponsor would usually reside on executive level and the owner would reside on upper/mid-management level. In such cases, it is important that the sponsor delegates the real power to the project owner. We call this “own it or leave it”. Having an active project owner has been proven to be a crucial driver for a project’s success – regardless of industry or project type.²⁵ However, the key here is the word active. It is not enough for the project owner to just commission a task. He or she must be actively involved in the realization of the desired impact of that task. Projects are how the organization implements strategic changes, and it is therefore essential that the top management level is closely involved. Only they have the formal power to change the organization’s direction and the mandate to make critical decisions regarding the focus and the intended impact of the project.

Furthermore, projects are one-off events demanding extraordinary resource allocation, which is often not part of the operating budget. Consequently, the organization’s activities need to be prioritized in order to advance the project, and that can only happen with a strong, high-level leader in front.

Finally, projects are often run across the organization, thus the project owner needs to be able to intervene in multiple departments, negotiate with mid-level managers and eliminate impediments along the way.



ACTIVE PROJECT OWNERSHIP: OUR DEFINITION

A project owner must be able to build consensus around the project's impact targets within the organization, ensure relevant resources, and lead the way toward achieving the target.

The project owner's role at the project level

The project owner plays an essential role in ensuring that the project delivers the desired impact. In practice, this means the project owner needs to own the impact case for the project, consequently making him or her responsible for following up on impact creation. This requires insight into and the ability to influence the organization's strategy. The strategy is ultimately the sum of all the projects within an organization, and each individual project should effectively support the strategy.

The project owner is also responsible for ensuring consensus for and support of the strategic changes generated by the project. He or she is responsible for communicating the purpose and creating followership for the objectives and strategies of the project.²⁶ More often than not, different managers and key stakeholders hold different opinions about which impacts are the most important. In such situations, the project owner needs to actively create a strong coalition behind the project and its impact objectives.

Leadership is about creating new realities

– Peter M. Senge

The project owner's role at the team level

Ensuring that the mid-level managers support the project's resource requirements and the targeted behavioral impacts can be quite a challenge. It is the project owner's job to help overcome this and hereby enable the project's flow. In practice, this means the project owner is responsible for ensuring optimal resource allocation. He or she must identify and allocate the right people to the project. That is, individuals with the ideal skills who represent the areas of the organization that are key to or most affected by the solution. Furthermore, the project owner is responsible for making sure that the team has the best possible working conditions by introducing measures such as a project situation room, stable allocation, and focus, as well as other drivers of progress.

The project owner's role at the individual level

The project owner is responsible for collective learning and for empowering the employees.²⁶ While the project leader's primary focus is on leading the team, the project owner's leadership role focuses to a great extent on leading and developing the project leader.

Active Ownership behaviors

OWN THE IMPACT – PAVE THE WAY FOR IMPACT AND REMOVE UNNECESSARY BUREAUCRACY

The project owner's most important responsibility is to drive the strategic impact. This is done through three focus areas:

- ▶ **Formulation of a mutual vision for the project** with clear impact objectives. The objective should contain specific behavioral objectives and short, middle, and long-term business goals. The project owner is the one who creates and tells the story about the project's strategic significance within the organization and ensures that management and stakeholders support this vision.
- ▶ **Accelerating behavioral change and change in general.** The project owner should motivate and pave the way for the organizational changes. He or she is responsible for setting the pace and ensuring that the relevant groups of employees acquire the necessary competences and actually change their behavior. This area of responsibility is highly dependent on the ability to build trust with key persons and mid-level managers, as well as the use of formal power when necessary.
- ▶ **Ensuring the smooth execution of the project** within the organization and eliminating obstacles and unnecessary bureaucracy. Often rigid demands from existing project models and management procedures can delay the project and thereby reduce the business case by increasing the costs and decreasing the impact. The project owner is key to adapting these structures to the uniqueness and the needs of the individual project.



The neglected leadership role is the designer of the ship

- Peter M. Senge

ENSURE RESOURCE COMMITMENT AND +50% ALLOCATION OF HIGH-CALIBER PEOPLE

The project owner needs to ensure proper resources at the right time throughout the project (Read more about the rationale behind the +50% concept in the chapter on Flow on page XX). This can be done by focusing on:

- ▶ **Skilled facilitation of a process for analyzing the project's manpower needs** and for allocating the right competences, from within the organization or externally. The aim of the process is to secure the support of management and mid-level management for the resource requirements.
- ▶ **Focused negotiations** regarding resources with top and mid-level management. The aim is not just to procure the necessary resources but also to ensure that they are available at the right time and physically or virtually present on the designated project premises.
- ▶ **Use power and influence** when needed to convince mid-level management and stakeholders of the necessity of investment and of the mutual benefit of the project.

SHOW UP AND ENGAGE – AT LEAST TWO HOURS EVERY WEEK

Through his or her presence, the project owner demonstrates the importance of the project and through direct contact he or she conveys leadership and decisions. The two dedicated hours might be invested as one hour in regular meetings included in the project rhythm (such as a biweekly project owner meeting and a biweekly review meeting) and one hour for informal touchpoints.

- ▶ **Leading the project leader.** It is essential to motivate and inspire the project leader to do his or her best. The project owner needs to ensure that the leadership task makes sense to the project leader. Qualified feedback is needed so the project leader can develop his or her leadership skills. At the same time, the project owner needs to give the project leader plenty of room to maneuver.
- ▶ **Approval and decisions within the project.** The project owner is the main person responsible for approval of project results and for decision-making. To keep up the pace and quality of these decisions, presence is required at all important decision-making moments throughout the project.
- ▶ **To ensure an adequate presence** and opportunities for touch points²⁷ between project owner, project leader, the team, and key stakeholders, experience shows that the project owner needs to be actively involved in the project for at least half a day every week.

ACTIVE PROJECT OWNERSHIP

Sebastian Søderberg

Vice President, Head of New Business Development, Incubation & Acquisitions at Novozymes

Sebastian holds an MSc in Economics and Business Administration from Copenhagen Business School (2000) and has 16 years' leadership experience from both the military and the Danish private sector.

He has worked at Novozymes for 10 years, where his responsibilities have spanned from sales & marketing to partnering, business development and M&A. His current unit is tasked with applying Novozymes' biotechnology to create new opportunities or solve big challenges for the company's partners and the world.

Sebastian is the project owner of a new product development project set in motion to develop new microbial solutions for the food industry. He is also responsible for the businesses and project portfolio in the area of New Business Development, Incubation & Acquisitions.



Owning the impact, paving the way for impact creation and removing unnecessary bureaucracy

My first focus as the project owner was to find the right project leader for the team. A project leader I felt I could trust, with the right combination of leadership capabilities, an impact-oriented mindset, and professional experience and competences. I believe it is essential that the project leader maintains a strict focus on realizing the steps toward impact creation.

It was my responsibility to ensure that everyone knew what was truly important for the project to become a success. They also needed to understand their role in realizing that ambition. In other words, to drive and nurture the right mindset for impact. Moreover, I emphasized the need for continuous involvement and demonstrations of selected solution elements to our chosen innovation partners – our customers – to continuously maintain that burning platform.

Asking the right questions has been my primary tool for enforcing in practice the right commercial focus within the team.

With Half Double, or when developing new technologies in general, my experience tells me that taking the pulse of your target customers or partners early in the project ensures you are

moving in the right direction. Far too often, we find ourselves spending too much time in the laboratory, perfecting our ideas. Instead, we need to release and test these ideas rapidly, often long before we have the ideal concept. We tend to go for the Ferrari. But shouldn't we try to start out with the bicycle, and get some feedback on that first? To guide that process, I often find myself asking my teams how often they

interact directly with the customers and whether we are meeting their needs. I also help guide the conversation with our customers, who definitely need to buy into this Minimum Valuable Product journey as well – as some may want a Ferrari from the outset and we can deliver both.

To pave the way for impact creation and to frontload the change management aspect inherent in the project, an essential focus for me is to involve the upper management team to ensure that they understand and buy into the project's impact targets and execution. Besides regular stakeholder management and regular touchpoints, this also means, in practice, that I must bring my leader and his leadership team to the project situation room. Here, they participate in the standard weekly review meeting, which gives them an individual sense of what the project is all about.

It is important to stress, however, that the ultimate responsibility for the project is mine as the owner, and that everyone knows it. I always make sure to emphasize that if we fail or if we encounter challenges, people can feel free to point the finger at me.

Ensuring resource commitment – +50% allocation of high-caliber people

One of my first challenges as a project owner was related to ensuring the high resource allocation needed to run a project comprising parallel tracks and aimed at continuous customer validation. We were faced with typical “resistance to change” reactions in some parts of the organization when requesting resources: “We tried this before” and “It won’t work in our part of organization”, were two of the classics.

To kill complexity, I made it clear that I would be the main high-level target and team setter while most of the decision-making and execution would reside with the project leader and team members. I also chose to face the resistance quite brutally by simply saying: “It’s not up for debate, this is the way we’re doing it. If you aren’t able to allocate the resources, I’ll look for them externally.”

Today, after a couple of months, I am 100% certain that we’re doing things more efficiently, faster, and more beneficially for our customers and with high job motivation for our team.

If your approach to projects creates obstacles, you need to find other ways of working – even if it means working around the system. You need to lead the way and encourage that kind of entrepreneurial mindset.

How to show up and engage

I must emphasize that I’ve being closely involved in this project and following it on a more rugged, everyday basis has been a fantastic experience. I’ve had the chance to follow the team’s journey and to see how they have become more attuned to the project and the set project rhythm. Furthermore, I’ve enjoyed the spark of energy, the pride and their strong confidence that we will realize the impact case on a more everyday basis. I’ve been surprised by the quantum leap we’ve taken within the organization compared to how we usually work, and by how much they are able to deliver in such a short period of time.

I believe it is vital that the project owner is always updated in real time on what really matters. My approach has therefore been to have ongoing touch points with the project leader and to drop by the project informally as often as I can. I simply open the door to the war room, and happily, they have always invited me to join them. Often, they give me a brief update on the status of the project before continuing with their business as usual. On a more structured basis, I join the second weekly review and planning meetings where the team explains what’s important at the given moment – regarding both the scientific and the commercial aspects of the project. They get straight to the point, and within a short period of time they provide insights into what is doing well, and less well. This enables me to take a stand and provide support where it is needed.

Of course, it’s also about striking the right balance. I find that engaging with projects fills me with energy and I need to take care that I don’t get too deeply involved. It’s important that I allow the team to operate freely and to make the right decisions. My job is to create the ideal framework, ask the right questions and offer my help when the team asks for it. I also assist the project leader. All of this requires a high level of trust. Trust that we’ve identified the right, most qualified team. Trust that they are capable of making key decisions autonomously – they are the experts. Trust is the key to success in the role of project owner.

Usually, I would receive very long project updates and reports. In the Half Double project, I engage with the project so frequently that it is always top-of-mind.

I know what is truly important at a high level and I don’t feel the need for such massive reporting

case

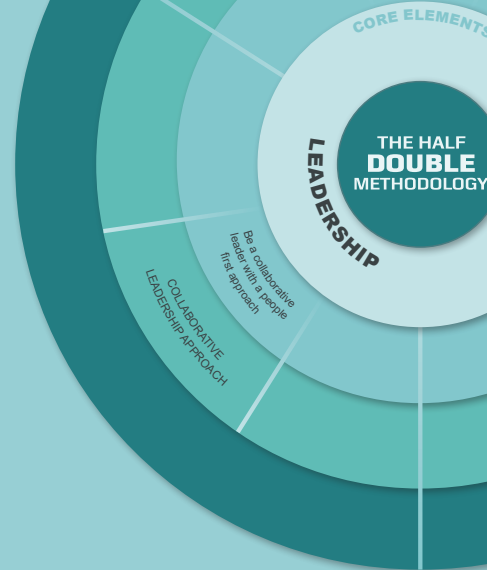
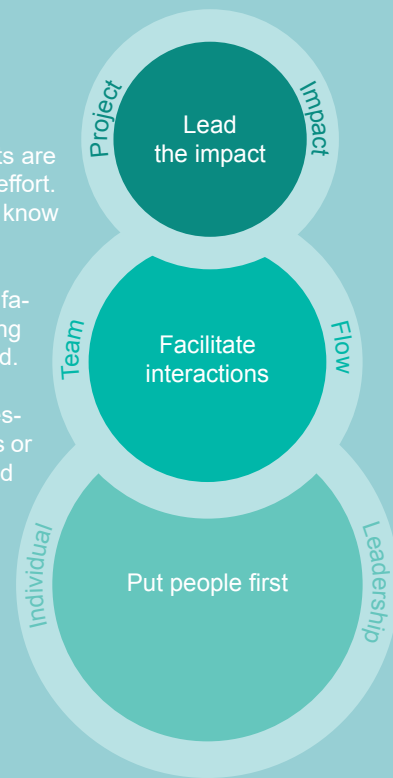
LEADERSHIP METHOD 2

Collaborative Project Leadership energizes the team and key stakeholders

The project leader's job is primarily to motivate each team member to do their best. Project results are produced by people and the trick is to get many different experts to do their very best in a joint effort. Personal potential and what gives an individual energy vary greatly, so the project leader needs to know each team member both professionally and personally in order to push the right buttons.

Joining team members' contributions or aligning different key stakeholders' opinions takes good facilitation skills. Thus, the project leader needs a reflective leadership style and collaborative working method to create an energetic environment and a common vision and approach to the task at hand.

The mutual effort should result in the agreed impact. In order to ensure this impact, it is often necessary to adjust the deliverables along the way. Often, this will not be well-received by team members or stakeholders as they prefer certain solutions. It therefore requires skilled conflict management and a collaborative leadership approach.



*Leadership is
unlocking people's
potential to become
better*

– Bill Bradley

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT LEADERSHIP: OUR DEFINITION

The project leader's role at the project level

The project leader needs to understand the correlation between the project and the overall strategy and how the project supports this strategy. In every action and situation, the project leader needs to be guided by the impact. The project leader helps interpret purpose and creates followership through the objectives and strategy. This forms the foundation of tasks, commitment, and optimism.²⁶

The project leader's role at the team level

The project leader's responsibility within the team is primarily to organize and coordinate activities in such a way as to create flow. This is done by strengthening the collective identity, through active facilitation and by ensuring mutual trust and cooperation. Projects are a learning process and the project leader therefore needs to support and facilitate collective learning, as well as ensuring that everyone is using their professional knowledge and experience optimally within the team.²⁶

The project leader's role at the individual level

Each individual team member is a key resource in the project and needs optimal conditions in order to do his or her best. Often, we are most concerned about whether we have enough or relevant resources. However, if team members only achieve 80% or less of their full potential, the resources are actually gushing out of the project even as the team members are charging the project budget for their work hours. Each individual is motivated by different factors, so it is absolutely essential that the project leader knows which buttons to push. The project leader's most important question for each team member is: "What can I do for you?" Leading individuals is all about giving each one attention and ensuring they are happy.

Collaborative Project Leadership

LEAD THE IMPACT

– BE HARD ON IMPACT AND FLEXIBLE ON DELIVERABLES

The project leader needs to ensure coherence between the organization's strategy and the project's impact objectives. In other words, there must be a logical correlation between the project impacts, deliverables, work streams, and resource consumption. The following leadership behavior is important:

- ▶ **Define impact objectives through cooperation** in workshops where the team members, management, and key stakeholders are actively involved.
- ▶ **Be hard on impact and flexible on deliverables.** This means ensuring that everyone on the team understands and accepts the impact objectives and how each deliverable taps into them. Make impact objectives visual and match the team with those management representatives and key stakeholders who desire the impact in question. If a deliverable is delayed, don't ask "What went wrong?" but "How will this affect the impact case?" and "What can we learn from this going forward?"
- ▶ **Focus on the necessary training of the target group** in an engaging and motivating manner. Achieving a business impact always requires the integration of new competences and behaviors into the target group. Pave the way for the target group's behavioral changes with involvement, consultation, and change communication.



Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity

- General George Patton

Leadership behaviors

FACILITATE INTERACTIONS AND ENERGIZE

Project team members and stakeholders are highly skilled and make important contributions to the project. Being a project leader is like being the conductor of an orchestra of skilled musicians and virtuosos. The goal is to make beautiful music together:

- ▶ **The project leader's responsibility is to facilitate the many different skills.** It is impossible to play every instrument yourself. The trick is to involve the relevant people and make the objectives visual. Let the team members influence the process as long as it supports the project impact objectives. Use visual methods to ensure that everyone is "playing from the same score".
- ▶ **Facilitate planning and organize the process** using short learning loops and the greatest possible involvement of the target group. Support tests and verify results to allow everyone to come into contact with reality as quickly as possible.
- ▶ **Create relations and strong alliances** with the most important players to gain an understanding of their view of the situation and use the network energy to promote progress.

PUT PEOPLE FIRST – CREATE PURPOSE, AUTONOMY, AND MASTERY FOR THE TEAM AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

People create the results and in order for them to do that you have to help them. People produce results, but to help them do that you need to tap into their energy and direct it toward the project objectives. To bring this to life in practice, the following mindset is needed:

- ▶ **Make the individual on the team important.** Create purpose and meaning for each individual. Every team member should know that they are included because the project needs their specific skills and that they are essential for the project and the overall objectives. Tell them: "We can make a difference because of the specific skills you bring to the project."
- ▶ **Let each team member be responsible for planning their own work** and remember that responsibility should be allocated adequately as an appreciation of their skills rather than as a heavy burden.
- ▶ **Try to give every member stimulating and interesting tasks** and give them honest and constructive feedback so they grow in the process. Establish a culture of constructive feedback within the project team to ensure team members give each other feedback in a positive manner.
- ▶ **Be appreciative and share success and credit abundantly.** Everyone likes to be in the sun. Remember that people are all different, and what motivates or demotivates each person differs as well.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT LEADERSHIP

Mikael Bonde

Strategy & Change Consultant at The VELUX Group

Mikael holds an MSc in Economics and Business Administration from Aarhus University (2005) with a background in consulting, project management, and process optimization.

He has worked at The VELUX Group as an internal consultant and project leader for seven years. For the last three years, he has been responsible for the cross-functional PMO forum, the main purpose of which is to ensure a common direction and coordination of Project Management and Portfolio Management development across the entire The VELUX Group organization.

Mikael is the project leader on the internal capability development project “Benefits Faster”, which has been set into motion to enhance the focus on impact across the project portfolio. This entails the creation of a common project language, new practices, and local anchoring of new behaviors. Together with his team, he has applied a business-driven, bottom-up approach to the project to accommodate the many different cultures, project practices, and maturity levels at play. A deep understanding of individual needs, strong facilitation skills, and the ability to establish a common vision have proven to be critical to success.

Case



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Leading the impact – be hard on impact and flexible on deliverables

I have been very firm on the idea that the organizational initiative to strengthen our portfolio and project management capabilities should not be seen as a top-down exercise with an implementation plan created by the senior executives and imposed on the organization. Instead, we’ve designed the project and our execution model to accommodate the maturity levels, local cultures, and existing practices in each organizational unit. In practice, this means we have seen a range of different change and implementation plans for leveraging our ability to execute our strategy through projects across the organization.

What is non-negotiable, on the other hand, is the vision itself. We must realize the desired impact of being able to design and execute projects for faster and higher benefits. And we must live up to our project principles and codex. And while how we choose to work toward that vision can vary, there must be a correlation between the approach and deliverables of each unit and the business and the behavioral impacts we want to see in practice. It’s my job to make that happen in practice.

Sometimes, giving that kind of autonomy to the local teams can make you feel like you’re not progressing as fast as you normally would. Meaning, if you were more focused on how everything should ideally take place and if you had a centralized and standardized roll-out plan. But in my perspective, **the more autonomous, impact-driven approach creates sustainable change.**

A change that is deeply rooted in what actually makes sense in each corner of the organization and to the individual team members. Next to that, I am also always on the lookout for ways to reduce time to impact. Quick wins that create value, feedback, and the feeling of strong progression toward the end target.

The goal hierarchy and the impact case are two strong tools I use to establish a common understanding of why the project has been set into motion in the first place. In other words, **creating a link between the overall strategy and the role of the project**, including its main impact targets and the end deliverables. I start out with clarifying the initial, overall purpose and target impacts with the project owner. Then, I elaborate on the goal hierarchy and impact case, fine-tuning them to get the right details in place as well as to ensure shared ownership. Embracing the many different viewpoints can be quite challenging. To kill complexity, I will always try to consolidate these inputs and boil them down into three or four key impacts. It can definitely be a challenge to prioritize – for example, how do you choose which is more important, reducing costs or optimizing service? The answer is critical for how you will end up running your project. A close relationship and dialogue with the project owner and the project sponsor is therefore vital. In collaboration, we point out the direction of the project. I then ensure that there is a **common agreement about the essence of the project among the project owner, the team, and other key stakeholders.**

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST – CREATING PURPOSE, AUTONOMY, AND MASTERY FOR THE TEAM AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

To me, being a collaborative project leader requires a high level of presence, preferably face-to-face. In the high-paced world we live in, finding the time and energy to do this can be quite a challenge. But I have made it my priority to do so and to invest my time and energy in each individual team member and key stakeholder. ***I consider it my job to make sure everyone feels seen, heard, and accounted for in the project.*** It is important that they also feel the project contributes to their personal and professional growth.

The informal meetings in-between the set project rhythm are as important as meeting up in the workshops. These one-to-one dialogues are extremely valuable for defining the purpose of the project. A purpose that each individual can identify with and that gives them a clear understanding of what their role is in the project and why.

I trust that my team members know best when it comes to how to realize the desired impact within each organizational unit. In other words, it's up to them how they choose to train and develop their part of the organization and what their main deliverables are.

When you trust someone fully, control becomes redundant.

I can personally see the difference it makes to the team and to each team member when they are empowered to act based on their own insights. Even those with some initial resistance to change regarding the project now buy into it after being encouraged to find their own execution model.

Keeping things personal and nurturing relationships within the team can make a real difference in a project. I've tried supporting projects where these elements were not integrated. Projects where there was a strong focus on deliverables and top-down management rather than personal development and leadership. The result was reduced efficiency and ongoing challenges. I therefore personally invest energy in creating an environment that nurtures the team spirit. This is done through certain events focused on getting to know one another better and on establishing the ideal norms for team collaboration. I make an effort to gather the team as often as possible, often in new environments that take us out of our default way of thinking. The feedback I have received so far is that ***they feel the project team is as important to them as their everyday colleagues in the line organization.*** To ensure individual development and mastery, I also make a conscious effort to provide continual feedback to my team members.

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Facilitating interactions and energizing the team and key stakeholders with skilled facilitation and domain insight

I think the facilitator role is one of the most central roles for the project leader. Facilitation is about getting the best out of your stakeholders, experts, and the leaders you have in the room, as well as setting a common direction. A direction that accommodates a range of different viewpoints. You need to have a certain idea of where you would like the workshop or meeting to go. At the same time, you need to be extremely flexible and open to the possibility that the meeting can move in a completely different direction than what you were originally aiming for.

To achieve this in practice, I take active part in the discussions while at the same time always being alert to the changing dynamics and relationships in the room. In other words, I focus on striking the right balance between being an expert and a process facilitator. For me, one way of overcoming this challenge has been to invest more time in listening. In making sure that all voices are heard instead of just following my own personal agenda – that wouldn't get me anywhere.

Furthermore, I am a true believer in assuming the role of mediator and in articulating what is going on in the room. If there is an obvious conflict, I point it out and ask the team for their input on how they would like to proceed. If we're unable to come to an agreement, it can also be fine to acknowledge that there appear to be different objectives at play that need to be addressed before we can move on.

I make an effort to gather the team as often as possible, often in new environments that take us out of our default way of thinking

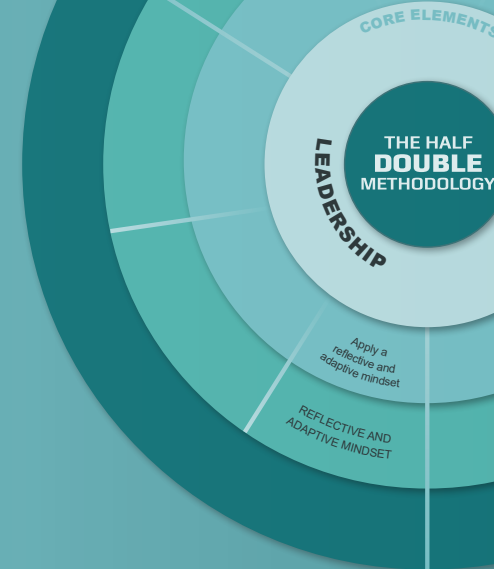
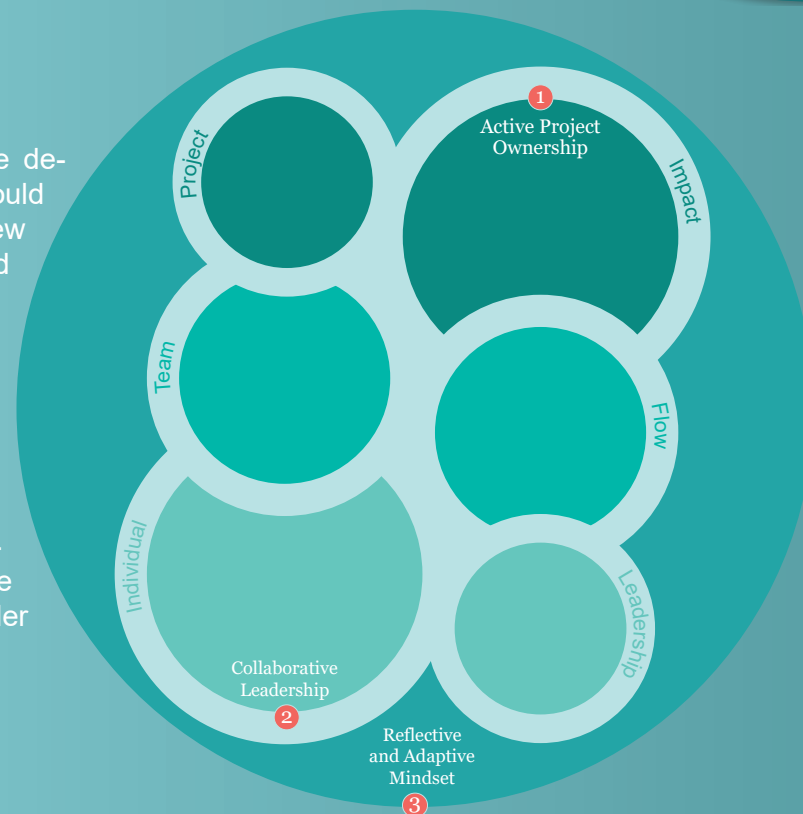
Case

LEADERSHIP METHOD 3

A Reflective and Adaptive Mindset – say yes to the mess

Many project leaders and project owners see changes to the demands for a project as inconvenient disruptions when they should see them as a source of new knowledge, new insights, and new possibilities. As a leader, you need to continuously understand the situation and be able to adjust your leadership to the actual needs and demands accordingly. This is true for business, strategic, and technological possibilities, but it is equally true for human reactions, emotions, and interests.

As a leader, you need to embrace the team members and key stakeholders, understand them, and act on their behavior. As such, it is essential to know how you are perceived as a leader so you can adjust your leadership accordingly. The reflective mindset is a prerequisite for good leadership for the project leader as well as the project owner.



People buy
into the leader
before they buy
into the vision

- John Maxwell

REFLECTIVE AND ADAPTIVE MINDSET: OUR DEFINITION

One of the most important leadership skills is the leader's adaptive competence. The ability to react swiftly and intelligently to whatever changes management might face. To maintain a personal drive as well as to keep track of what happens when you act.²⁸

In order to act swiftly and in a focused manner, you also need to know who you are. You need to be conscious about what you do and why you do it, as well as being able to read and learn from the consequences of your actions. This calls for deep self-insight and a good understanding of your weaknesses and strengths. At

the same time, you need to be able to read other people and their reactions. This will enable you to adjust your approach, tap into their underlying motivational drivers, and make them follow you.

This doesn't mean that you should go wherever the wind takes you. You still need to be aware of your goals as well as of the project's objectives and the organization's strategy. But you also need to be continuously aware of which way the wind is blowing and how you should trim your sails in order to exploit the wind optimally.

A Reflective and Adaptive Mindset

SAY YES TO THE POSSIBILITIES, ACCEPT THE MESS AND ADAPT TO THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Today, the possibilities are infinite and the pace is constantly accelerating. Consequently, it is unrealistic to think that it is possible to define project objectives and deliverables and carry out a two-year project without any adjustments. As a leader you must therefore change your perception of uncertainty from being a threat to being a possibility.

Uncertainties make new possibilities evolve and you need to seize them and exploit them for the benefit of the project. This should be your basic approach to the world and you should inspire your team members to take the same mindset.

*Leadership
and learning are
indispensable
to each other*

- John F. Kennedy

EMBRACE TEAM MEMBERS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS, UNDERSTAND THEIR BEHAVIOR, AND ACT ACCORDINGLY

Develop a mindset where you see any contact or disturbance as an opportunity to lead. When you're approached, ask: "How can I help you?". Listen intensely. Make sure that everybody has the same comprehension of the situation. Further the case by deciding what should be done and by whom. Finally, ask: "Is there anything else I can do for you?" to make sure that all issues have been resolved.²⁷

- ▶ **Listen intensely.** This is about active listening, using your entire body. It is not just about facts, but also about emotions. What is this all about? What kind of help is he asking for? Does it concern the project? Principles? Interests? And so on.
- ▶ **Frame the issue.** When you have listened, pause and summarize to make sure you capture every angle of the issue. "As I hear you, there are three things going on ...", "Did I understand that correctly?" etc. You also need to make sure that everyone involved has the same picture of the situation. Use questioning techniques.
- ▶ **Further the case.** Once you have identified the situation, it's your job to help the team to move forward. If there is a decision to be made, then help make it. If there are people they need to get in touch with, then call them right away. Use behavior-influencing questions: "If you need it by Wednesday, what do we need to get done this week?" "Do you have to coordinate this decision with someone else?" etc.

KNOW YOURSELF – BE REFLECTIVE IN YOUR ACTIONS

An essential prerequisite for responding reflectively is that you have made clear what the team is doing. You lead consciously. You have to develop your own personal leadership model, enabling you to react swiftly and consistently with daily interruptions.

When your approach, your instructions, and your decisions are consistent, your team members know how you will react. In time, they won't need to ask you but will be able to act according to your leadership model. It makes them more independent and offers you more time. This requires that you know your team members and what motivates them. It necessitates that you have a leadership code:²⁷

- ▶ What makes people give their very best?
- ▶ Why do you want to lead?
- ▶ What is your code?
- ▶ Essential challenges in this project

It may seem a bit abstract but one example of a leadership code goes like this: **Leadership code for a project manager:** "It's essential that the customer experiences high quality in the professional process and deliverables. My customer approach is appreciative with respect and presence but also with professional edge and integrity."

Your personal leadership code makes it possible for you to act consistently and at the same time quickly. If you aren't aware of what you're doing, it is impossible to reflect on what went wrong or why you succeeded. You need to constantly have a virtual camera following you. In every leadership situation, you follow your leadership code, "look into the camera" and ask yourself: "How can I say this in the best possible way?"



REFLECTIVE AND ADAPTIVE MINDSET

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Christina holds An MSc in Political Science from Aarhus University (1994). She has more than 20 years' experience in the fields of project, program, and portfolio management. She has built numerous Project Management Offices (PMO), and has experience as an enterprise-wide PMO director across functions (HR, Production, R&D, and strategy), across domains (state administration, NGOs, medical devices, and fast-moving consumer goods) and across the world (Europe, US, and China). She is considered a thought leader in project and portfolio management and in 2012 she was named PMO Leader of the Year.

Today, she is Group PMO Director at Lantmännen Unibake International where she focuses on developing project leaders, project governance structures, and project management models.

Christina is also one of the three founders of the Half Double Project.



Case

Saying yes to the mess and adapt to a changing environment

In classic project management, the project owner and the project leader function a bit like an engineer on a train. A train can have many great capabilities, but it can only run on the tracks that have been laid out. You only have to look forward. When working with a new project management methodology, such as Half Double, which emphasizes reflective practice, the roles of the project leader and the project owner are more like the driver of a jeep. A jeep can navigate on and off-road. When you're driving a jeep, you need to closely watch your surroundings. You need to be aware of changing elements, such as wind, mud pits and the terrain, constantly adapting your driving style to the situation and the road ahead. ***To be a strong, active project owner or a collaborative leader, you need to be just as aware of the situation at hand.*** Instead of resenting unexpected bumps in the road, you need to work with them and learn from each hindrance.

This requires extreme courage. As a project leader, if you just apply the Project Management Institute's Body of Knowledge, you can always blame the process if something goes wrong. ***But when you say yes to the mess and subscribe to leading projects in a different way, you're on your own. There is no "one best practice".*** As a project leader or owner, you can't hide behind theoretical models and step-by-step processes.

You can use them as guidelines while depending on your ability to motivate people and engender change as the main drivers. Having said that, there is still something great about Eisenhower's well-known quote: "Plans are nothing, planning is everything". ***Saying yes to the mess doesn't mean that we have to accept all out chaos.*** Nor does it mean that we shouldn't attempt to plan at all. We just need to be aware of the fact that plans often don't hold up in practice and that we must be able to accommodate for that uncertainty in our leadership style. Creating a culture based on transparency and acknowledgement of the uncertain and chaotic nature of projects helps us avoid what is often referred to as "watermelon reporting". Pages upon pages of status reports written with the objective of camouflaging delays or issues within the projects. Reports creating an illusion that the project is in the green on the outside while in reality it is blood-red on the inside. For me, an up-front dialogue about the potential delay of a milestone is always preferable. We may not be able to deliver as promised, but at least we have the opportunity to discuss the potential consequences – if any – of the delay on the overall impact of the project.

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Saying yes to the mess doesn't mean that we have to accept all out chaos.

EMBRACING KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND UNDERSTANDING AND ACTING ON THEIR BEHAVIOR

I spend most of my time on stakeholder management. And yet, you will find very few meetings in my calendar. I believe the chance to influence a stakeholder most often occurs in-between the formal settings. In my experience, this idea of investing more time in talking directly with people rather than working on concrete deliverables can seem somewhat counter-intuitive to many people. **However, in practice, I always invest a day or two extra when I travel to have more informal touchpoints. That is where the magic happens.** So to me, truly embracing key stakeholders requires a change in mindset among our project leaders and owners; allowing for less time spent managing by email and more time spent drinking coffee!

I also encourage my project leaders to reflect upon their communication and subscribe to a situational leadership style. Meaning that I expect them to consider the recipient's role and motivation

in the project. For example, with a steering committee, you need to show that you are ready for change and that you are on top of uncertainty. But when talking to team members, your focus should be on reducing complexity to avoid creating information overload and paralyzing the team. In other words, **as a project leader, you function as the gate keeper of the mess.** You must be able to internalize the chaos and map out a new direction.

To adapt your leadership style in this manner, you must be a reflective practitioner. You must constantly be aware of your target audience, **their situation, needs,** and motivations. The underlying **drivers for why they do what they do.** But you must also be aware of your **contextual** surroundings and yourself.

*Everyone acts
in accordance with what
they find meaningful. What
they believe to be right.*

*If anyone is acting against
your agenda, it's your job
to understand their under-
lying motivational drivers.*

case

To lead others, you need to be able to lead yourself. To me, it's that simple. We first need to be aware of who we are, what we tend to do, and why in order to be able to understand and adapt our behavior to other people. **You need to be aware of your own weaknesses and strengths so you can identify where you need to develop.** Or, so you can involve other team members who can lend a hand where you fall short or learn from you where you shine. I constantly reflect upon my own practice to identify new ways of improving my leadership style. I try to expose myself to as many different tasks as possible to broaden my horizons. I also enjoy reading up on new theories of behavior and diving into leadership and preference models that I can easily put into practice, such as the HBDI® WholeBrain model and the Enneagram of Personality.

My personal leadership codex is based on three principles. First and foremost, everyone aspires to do good. Second, everyone needs to see the purpose of what they are doing. Third, if you still experience issues, look at principles one and two again. It's like the story of the three stonecutters. You ask the first man: why are you cutting stone? He answers: "to make more stones". Then you walk up to the second man, who explains that he is cutting stones to build a wall. Then you walk up to the third man who proudly declares: "I'm building a cathedral!" Who do you believe is most motivated? My job is to create that intense sense of purpose among my team members and other key stakeholders.

Know yourself – be reflective in action

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