

## The Principled Project Manager - *Negotiating for Win-Win-Win*

by Dr. Bill Moylan, PMP

One of the most important skills of the savvy Project Manager is the ability to negotiate the best outcome that satisfies the needs of all stakeholders. Reaching the consensus agreement may require compromises between the parties to meet or exceed the necessary project goals while building and maintaining important relationships among the project stakeholders.

The Principled Project Manager follows the twelve principles detailed in PMI's recently updated *Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide - 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 2021)*. These 12 Project principles serve as the PM's compass, road map and mantra in preparing, executing and controlling their negotiation scenarios. In particular, the first four principles of 1) being a diligent, respectful, and caring steward, 2) creating a collaborative project team environment, 3) effectively engaging with stakeholders, and 4) focusing on value. [The complete list of the 12 Project Principles is included at the end of this article.]

### Negotiating the Outcome

Adhering to these principles leads to a favorable *win-win* outcome with a preferable position for all parties involved. However, the PM may find themselves in a *win-lose* situation where one side's gain [winning] causes a loss [whining] at the other's expense. Project stakeholder relationships will suffer with imbalance in goals attained versus missed -- an unfortunate situation that could have been avoided. Compromise, with each side making concessions, can yield an overall agreement that satisfies the key goals of the stakeholders involved without sacrificing their core values. When the compromise is made by the stakeholders for the sake of finding a solution, with the negotiating sides violating their principles, the result is *lose-lose* with no winners. But the negotiating scenario ended, which is sometimes the goal of an unprincipled party.

The Project Manager must know the point at which they must end the negotiation, either momentarily or indefinitely. The Principled Project Manager needs to develop alternative options as part of the planning process with a tangible backup plan that does not involve the negotiation counterpart. If the options offered do not meet the interests of the negotiators, and the opposing party will not make acceptable concessions, it may be best to cease and desist. Moreover, if the Principled PM is confronted with unethical, inequitable or other unacceptable tactics by their opposition, any resolution to proceed will be courting disaster. Time to move on.

### Negotiation Styles

The Project Manager has a variety of negotiation styles to consider, each with advantages and disadvantages. The PM's personality, their comfort level with confrontation, the business situation and other external factors (such as, the opposition) will impact the tactics employed. The Project Manager's success or failure in negotiating the outcome will depend on matching the appropriate negotiation style to the situations, the progression of the discussions, leading to the final resolution.

Negotiation styles include accommodating, competitive, compromising and collaborative. A brief review of each style:

- Accommodating – This style prioritizes the value of stakeholder relationships. It requires transparency in sharing critical information and the willingness to make concessions.
- Competitive – The PM with an aggressive, type-A personality prefer this style. They tend to believe negotiations are all about winning with clear winners and losers. This style is effective for quick resolutions with limited options.
- Compromising – This style requires the negotiating sides to work together to determine their mutual agreement of shared points in common, to both make concessions and to meet halfway on finding a

solution. This style is effective for time constrained situations and the stakeholders have good a rapport with each other. The relationships will remain intact although the solution may be less than ideal for both sides.

- Collaborative – This style is time consuming since the stakeholders work tother to develop an integrated solution satisfying everyone’s needs, both short and long term. The stakeholder relationships will improve. Moreover, all 12 Project Principles will be employed, tested and cemented.

In a future article, the writer will discuss negotiation strategies and tactics for the Principled Project Management to consider.

As always, your questions, comments and criticisms are welcome. Feel free to contact me via email at [William.moylan@emich.edu](mailto:William.moylan@emich.edu)

Best regards,  
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## **12 Project Principles**

1. Be a diligent, respectful, and caring steward
2. Create a collaborative project team environment
3. Effectively engage with stakeholders
4. Focus on value
5. Recognize, evaluate, and respond to system interactions
6. Demonstrate leadership behaviors
7. Tailor based on context
8. Build quality into processes and deliverables
9. Navigate complexity
10. Optimize risk responses
11. Embrace adaptability and resiliency
12. Enable change to achieve the envisioned future state

## **12 Project Management Principles**

PMBOK Guide 7th Edition