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Title of the Paper:

Leadership GearBox - Are you shifting your Gear to suit the type of program you are leading?

Theme:

Project Management Leadership > In a Rapidly Changing World

Keywords:

Leadership, Program Management, Consulting, Leadership agility, Response to change, Challenges, Skills, Competencies

Abstract:

Every project/program has two key players – a performing organization and a client (internal/external). These projects/programs may belong to any of these four categories:

Type 1:   New to Organization, Known to Client

Type 2:   New to both – Organization and Client

Type 3:   Known to Organization, New to Client

Type 4:   Known to both – Organization and Client

It's important to understand the skills & competencies required and the challenges to operate in each of these quadrants.

Is it just that? Is there something more to this than just the program being new/known to the client/organization?

Certainly Yes! A second dimension comes into play – the relationship!
Is there an existing relationship between the client and the organization or is this a new relationship?

Add to this, a third dimension that plays a crucial role is the Individual Personality Types - Type A and Type B!

Imagine the possible combinations
  • Type 1 Program, existing relationship, different personality types
  • Type 3 Program, new relationship, same personality type

• Type 2 Program, new relationship and different personality types…. and many more

How do we lead programs in such a complex environment?

What does it take to shift your leadership style to manage such programs? Are YOU ready to change your gears to embrace this challenge?

We take this opportunity to share how these three dimensions integrate and make the program a success or failure. We present "**Leadership lessons"** from one such real-time program.

Intent:

The intent of this paper is to provide an insight into the various types of programs along with types of organizations and the relationship between the client and the performing organization. These three factors form the main dimensions of a Consulting engagement. This paper throws light on the challenges and complexity that exist in such an environment, which a consulting organization needs to be aware of. It also provides pointers to the Consultants as to how to manage these challenges and thereby ensure long-standing relationship with their clients.

Table of Contents

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1. Introduction

A program management consultant gets to work with different clients and different types of programs. Unlike a program manager in a corporate who manages a given program, the program management consultant's clients and the programs keep changing based on the consulting engagement. So, what factors drive the program towards success or failure?

There are multiple dimensions to it:

The **first dimension** is the *Category to which the program belongs to* - Are both parties aware of what entails this program, is one of the parties unaware or are both parties unaware of it?

The **second dimension** is the *Relationship* - Are the two parties known to each other; have they worked together earlier or is this a new relationship?

The **third dimension** is the *Individual Personality Type* - Are the individual stakeholders Type A or Type B personality types?

These dimensions when combined in a program environment lend complexity to a program that if not managed well, can bring about unpredictability and undesired outcomes to the program. Effective Leadership and management of these challenges in such situations are of utmost importance. The consultant, as a leader, should be able to change his/her gears to suit the type of program he/she is leading.

This paper enables such leaders to change their gears accordingly and manage the programs to deliver par excellence.

2. Main Body of the Paper

2.1.1 Dimension 1: Types of Programs

Every project/program has two key players – a Consulting/performing organization and a client; who could be internal or external. These projects/programs may belong to any of these four categories:

Type 1: New to Organization, Known to Client   (IDK-YK) (I Don't Know; You Know)

Type 2: New to both – Organization and Client   (IDK-YDK) (I Don't Know; You Don't Know)

Type 3: Known to Organization, New to Client   (IK-YDK) (I Know; You Don't Know)

Type 4: Known to both – Organization and Client (IK-YK) (I Know; You Know)
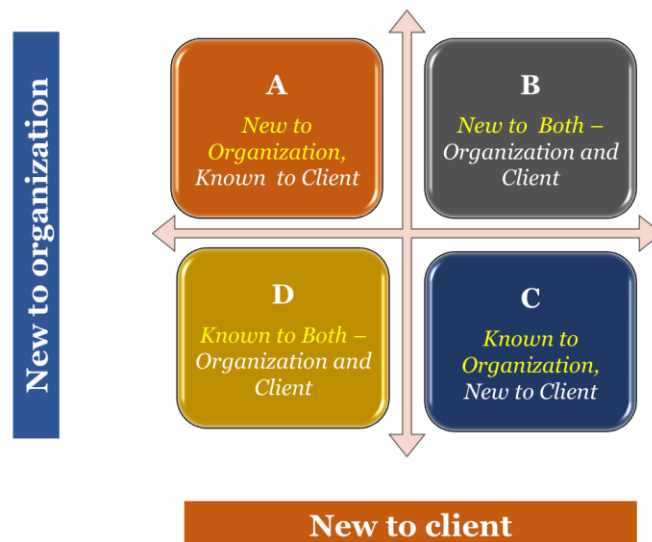
Types of Programs

Fig.1. Types of Programs

Type	Description	Skills & Competencies	Benefits	Challenges
Type 1	New to Organization, Known to Client (IDK-YK)	• Interrogative • Eager to learn • Collaboration with client	• Greater clarity – client knows what he wants • Learning opportunity for organization	• Greater dependency on client • Challenging for organization; may need to pick up the skills and prove to client
Type 2	New to both – Organization and Client (IDK-YDK)	• Open-mindedness; accept it's new for both • Collaborative skills – client and organization should work together	• Learning opportunity for both • Opportunity to increase the sphere of influence (wider network)	• Experimental mode; uncertain results • Incresed Chances of failure • Frequent changes • High dependency on relationship

Type 3	Known to Organization, New to Client (IK-YDK)	• Mentoring skills • Openness to learn	• Organization is able to leverage their skills; greater comfort level • Opportunity for client to develop new skills	• Lack of clarity on the requirements • Frequent changes
Type 4	Known to both – Organization and Client (IK-YK)	• Information sharing • Leveraging the best practices of both • Open communication • Negotiation techniques	• Greater clarity • Less supervision/guidance	• Contradictory ideas • Could lead to conflicts

Table 1 – Types of Programs

As we can see from Table 1, certain skills exist which are common across all the 4 types. Some of the skills running across these 4 types are Communication skills, Collaboration across client and the organization, leadership, empathy, etc. As such, building relationship with client/organization forms the backbone of this framework.

In type 1, when the activity is new to the organization and known to the client (IDK-YK), it is important for the organization to get the complete knowledge from the client. Equally important is for the client to impart knowledge. Both parties have to collaborate to ensure consulting organization gets the required insight so as to provide Value to the client.

In Type 2, new to both the organization and client (IDK-YDK), both parties are in an experimental mode. It is important to collaborate and work towards the common objectives.

In Type 3, activity is known to the consulting organization while it is new to the client (IK-YDK). Here, it is important for the organization to mentor the client and help them gain the required expertise.

In Type 4, it is a known activity for both the organization and the client (IK-YK). Although this appears to be cakewalk, there could be contradicting ideas from both parties leading to conflicts. Add to this, the clash of ego, with each party trying to establish their supremacy.

2.1.2   Dimension 2: Relationship between client and consulting organization

Now, this draws us to the second dimension of Relationship! Relationship between the consulting organization, or the business partner, and the client is extremely important for the success of the program. If the client and the organization have known each other and have been working together for quite sometime now, we can safely presume there is an existing relationship, which has been working

well too. On the contrary, if client and the organization are working together for the first time, the relationship is yet to be built. Consulting organization should be cognizant of this and work towards bridging this gap at the earliest. Organization does not have the luxury to fall back on past history of a strong relationship, nor the time to build the relationship. Both the client and the consulting organization should drive an open culture towards building this relationship.

2.1.3 Dimension 3: Types of Personality

While the first dimension spoke of the skills and competencies of the organizations, the second dimension talks of the relationship between the two organizations, at the bottom line, we are talking of two individuals, the leaders, working together. Their personality traits matter equally well for the success or failure of the program. This leads us to the third dimension, the individual personality traits!!

Type A individuals are generally outgoing, ambitious, rigidly organized, highly status-conscious, sensitive, impatient, anxious, proactive, and concerned with time management. People with Type A personalities are often high-achieving "workaholics." They push themselves with deadlines, and hate both delays and ambivalence.

Type B individuals are a contrast to those of Type A. They typically work steadily, and may enjoy achievement, although they have a greater tendency to disregard physical or mental stress when they do not achieve. When faced with competition, they may focus less on winning or losing than their Type A counterparts, and more on enjoying the game regardless of winning or losing. Type B personality, by definition, is noted to live at lower stress levels.

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of Type A and Type B Personalities

Type A	Type B
Goal oriented	Achieving goals is a journey, not a sprint
Hate to wait	Do not rush
To the point	Have a plan – step by step approach
Do not settle for mediocrity – Conscientious	They care – care about quality
Multi task	Like to see the big picture
Have tough time relaxing	Do not share the same sense of urgency – Focus on process as well as outcome
Can become obsessed with making their chosen strategy work	Easily switch gears when it is obvious that something is not working

Table 2 – Characteristics of Type A and Type B Personality

So, given these three dimensions, let us look at the various combinations possible. We get 4 * 2 * 2 = 16 combinations!! Leading such complex programs is indeed a challenge!

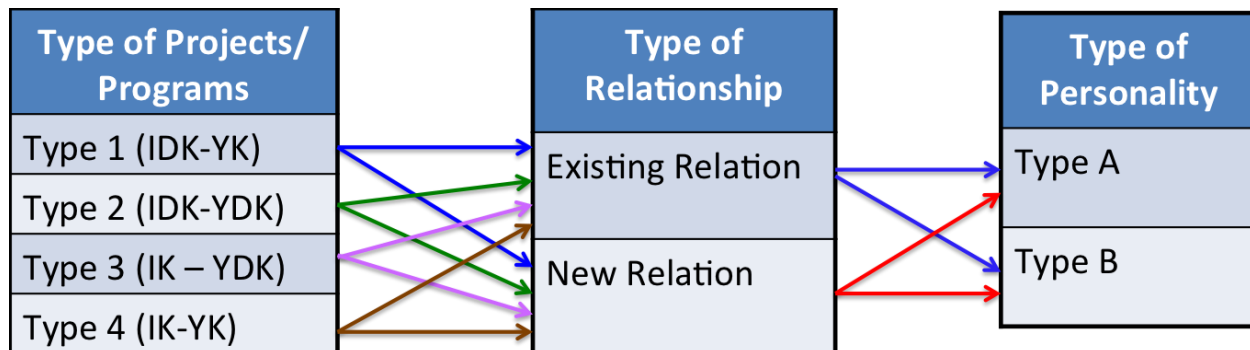| Type of Projects/ Programs	Type of Relationship	Type of Personality
Type 1 (IDK-YK)	Existing Relation	Type A
Type 2 (IDK-YDK)		
Type 3 (IK – YDK)	New Relation	Type B
Type 4 (IK-YK)		

Fig.2. Interaction across the three dimensions

We shall now explain the most complex of these situations, a Type 2 Program, being executed for the first time for a client of Type A personality with the consulting organization demonstrating Type B traits.

2.1.4   Case Study

> *"If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever" - Thomas Aquinas*

ContestPro Corporation, a large MNC, headquartered in US, decides to outsource the complete program management of a large pan-India program. While they are on the lookout for a suitable organization to drive the program management activities, many people recommend they contact SVUN Consultants for this activity.

SVUN Consultants is a consulting organization, known for delivering training and consulting in Project and Program Management. They have created a niche for themselves in the space of project and program management consulting over a period of 20+ years.

ContestPro Corporation and SVUN Consultants enter into a contract, with SVUN Consultants offering to drive the program management activities of the program. Let us take a closer look at the various dimensions of this relationship.

ContestPro Corporation is one of the most reputed organizations in the industry worldwide. Although ContestPro Corporation has been a leader in the industry; the program is the first of its kind for the organization. As such, the management is keen on the success of this program.

SVUN Consultants, on the same lines, has created a brand for themselves in Project and Program management training and consultancy. However, this is the first time SVUN Consultants are working with this team from ContestPro Corporation. Similarly, this is the first time ContestPro Corporation has

considered outsourcing the program management activities to a consulting organization. As such, this maps to a Type 2 Program – new to the consulting organization and new to the client (I Don't Know – You Don't Know type: IDK-YDK).

Add to this the second dimension where both parties have come together for the first time. There have been no prior engagements where the parties had an opportunity to meet or work together. The parties are working together for the first time and the relationship is yet to be established. Both parties start off on a positive note to build the relationship and drive the program to success!

Having acknowledged that both parties are new to such an engagement and both parties are striving to build a cordial relationship, what about the third dimension on their individual traits? Team at ContestPro Corporation is of a typical Type A personality! The contract, defined by the client, is purely metrics-based. Number driven outcome is their top priority. Team from SVUN Consultants, on the contrary, is of Type B Personality. They focus on program management aspects and quality of deliverables. They strongly believe numbers and metrics are just an outcome of the activities and not the key focus area! So, an organization of Type A personality working with that of Type B personality!

Key features of this assignment are as follows:

a) Both Consulting organization and the client are new to this kind of assignment and are not sure what it entails – even the objectives of the assignment are evolving

b) Consulting organization and the client have not worked with each other before, they are coming together for the first time

c) Client sponsor is a typical Type A personality – more focussed on results and metrics whereas the program manager from SVUN Consultants is a strong Type B personality.

So, as for this case study, the combination across the three dimensions looks as shown in Fig. 3.
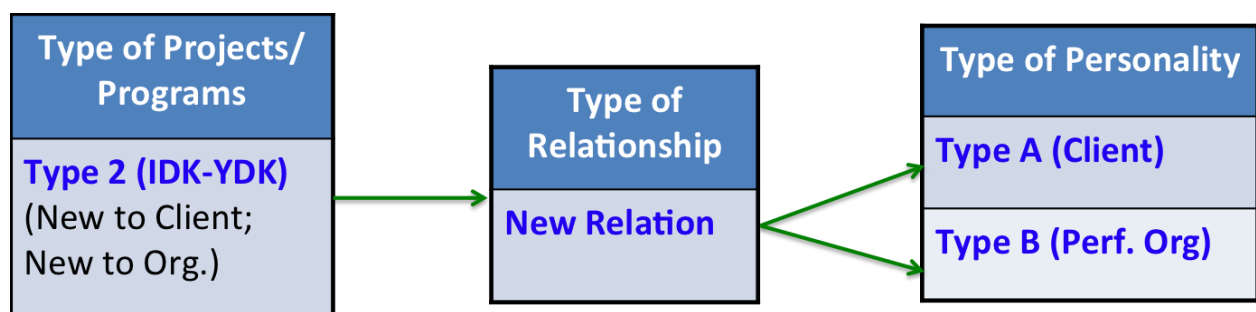

Fig.3. Three dimensions of the Case study under consideration

With this combination, let us see how the parties went about delivering the program. Did the teams succeed? Was the program delivered successfully?

Couples of months down the line………………………. things begin to fall apart! Although the overall program was completed and delivered successfully, both parties did not feel the joy or pride of delivering the program. Why? What went wrong?

On the very first dimension, ContestPro Corporation was competent on the technical aspects of the program while SVUN Consultants had an upper hand on the program management aspects. However, ContestPro Corporation failed to provide complete details of the program to SVUN Consultants. Information was provided in bits and pieces and on need basis only. There was no document explaining the processes. Knowledge resided purely with the team members. It was a great challenge for SVUN Consultants to obtain complete details of the program due to the high dependency on the knowledge of team members and lack of well-defined process as well as documentation.

As such SVUN Consultants had no choice but to approach the client frequently and gather the necessary information. Both parties did not feel good about it. Lack of documentation and lack of processes were great obstacles for the consulting organization. This also hindered building a strong relationship between the parties.

On the third dimension, both parties belonged to different personality types. Fact that the contract was driven purely by metrics, which were highly quantitative, left the consulting organization high and dry. Being Type B personality, SVUN Consultants strongly believed in building a long-standing relationship with the client and the metrics defined in the contract were but a natural outcome of the program management activities. Little did they realize the metrics revolved completely around transactional activities while the client expected them to deliver the program through program management activities, which were totally transformational!

Both parties, being highly professional, focused on the end objective and managed to deliver the program successfully, as planned. However, there was no feel good factor about this program with both the parties. While both parties were appreciative of the strengths of the other team, there certainly did not exist a strong relationship between the two. Both parties did not look forward to a continued relationship with the other team.

2.1.5 Key Challenges faced
Let us look at some of the challenges faced, as part of this assignment:

- Each party thinking the other is unsupportive mainly because it is IDK-YDK (I Don't Know – You Don't Know); Type 2 program
- The client starts questioning the capability of the consulting organization
- As this was a new relationship, the client and the consulting organization had still to accept and appreciate the lead times and processes followed by the other
- Both the teams had not understood and was not appreciative of the constraints under which the other team was working
- If the stakeholders' personality types are not the same, it is a tug of war as personalities start clashing
- The personality B stakeholder will normally start losing self-confidence due to clashes and this gradually leads to lack of trust amongst the two parties

What could have been done better? How could the parties have taken the program to the next level?

2.1.6 Lessons Learned

We share here, some of the lessons learned, the key takeaways, which both parties could have considered to take the program to greater heights:

- **Preparedness:** Both parties could take time to understand the contract better and ensure all assumptions are clearly documented. Contractual clauses need to be specific, measurable and achievable without any ambiguity. Contractual terms should be fair to both parties.
- **Team-work:** Both parties could spend time to understand the other team, identify their own strengths and weakness, as well as that of their partners'. They could see how to complement each other and drive the program as "One Team".
- **Open-mindedness:** Both teams could consider this program as an opportunity to build a lasting relationship. They could focus on the larger objectives of the organizations and think beyond the existing program in front of them.
- **Well-defined processes**: Both parties could ensure processes are well-defined and are adhered to. Decisions could be documented and abided by both parties.
- **Strong Governance**: Both parties could discuss and define the governance for the program. Regular review of the progress could help address issues at early stages. Escalation mechanism could be clearly identified.

2.1.6.1 *Key points for the Leader*

Here are some key points the Consultant, as a Leader, could keep in mind:

- Keep the communication channels open at all times
- Communicate for results

- Connect with people at the purpose level

- Appreciate that different personality types complement each other, rather than compete

- Appreciate that sometimes, what seems to be an unreasonable request from the other party may be the real reason for the program – try and understand other person's perspective proactively

- There is always a secondary intent of communication and sometimes it is more important than the primary intent – it is the responsibility of the leader to understand the implied need and address it!

- It is important to align the Key Success Factors

- Be self-aware of what inspires you and what pulls you down

- Be a chameleon – Are you able to change your hat to understand what personality type your client is and what type you are? Am I able to appreciate their point of view or am I holding my own thoughts so close that I am blind to others?

- Take responsibility – Avoid the blame game. It's not about what the client should have done, it is about what I did to get that response from the client

2.1.7 Conclusion

'Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work, and you have to inspire teammates and customers' – Robin Sharma

The Consulting Organization should take charge and lead from the front. This could, at times, mean defying the client processes. In the interest of the program at large, consulting organization should demonstrate their leadership and be willing to change gears as demanded by the situation. Theoretical aspects of Program Management can only be like a needle of the compass, it can show the direction, but it is the Captain of the ship who decides the destination!

In our leadership journey, self-awareness is an important enabler. Our journey starts from there and then shifting gears as required to align with our stakeholders and type of program we are leading.

So, are you shifting your Gear to suit the type of program you are leading?

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