

# WORDS OF WISDOM

*Leadership advice—from those who said it best.*

BY NEAL WHITTEN, PMP, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**T**he leadership you demonstrate each and every day shapes your career, but many of us need a little reminder from time to time. Here are 12 quotes that may help you through your day, your project or your profession.

**1. Every one of us alone has the power to direct the course of our lives by choosing what actions we will or won't take. While sometimes it's easier to believe you don't have a choice, the reality is that you always have a choice to behave differently.** —*Francine Ward, business leader*

Your project's success is directly tied to your actions. You decide if a solid project plan is created, if effective tracking meetings take place and if problems receive the appropriate attention.

**2. I can't give you a sure-fire formula for success, but I can give you a formula for failure: Try to please everybody all the time.** —*Herbert Bayard Swope, journalist*

Don't trade integrity for popularity. It's not about being liked; it's about doing the right thing. Don't delay or fail to perform a necessary action on your project because you perceive that someone will get testy. Work with them, listen to them, negotiate with them—but when the dust settles, it's most important that you ensure the best business decision has been made.

**3. Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers, you cannot be successful or happy.** —*Norman Vincent Peale, minister and author*

Your strength and confidence come from within you, not from others. Your team is looking for you to lead; they draw strength and inspiration from you. Being a leader can be lonely at times, but you must learn to feel comfortable in making decisions in the best business interests of the project.



**4. People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.** —*Maya Angelou, author*

Treat people with respect and dignity. Show team members they're appreciated. Ask their opinions. Include them in solving problems on the project and then recognize them for their contributions. And don't forget to celebrate when major milestones are reached.

**5. If you listen to your fears, you will die never knowing what a great person you might have been.** —*Robert H. Schuller, minister and author*

Rather than fearing and fleeing from conflict, meet it head on, mitigate it and move on. If you have difficulty mustering the courage, fake it—you can become brave over time.

**6. The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind.** —*William James, philosopher and psychologist*

Take charge of your attitude—don't let someone else shape it for you. As a leader, your attitude has a direct impact on the attitudes of your team members, stakeholders and sponsors. Choose your words and actions accordingly.

**7. The grass is not always greener on the other side of the fence. Fences have nothing to do with it. The grass is greenest where it's watered. When crossing over fences, carry water with you and tend the grass wherever you may be.** —*Robert Fulghum, author*

If you're discontent with the progress on your project or the infrastructure and processes that support you, dig in and address the problems. Don't wait until the next project or organization. Be a catalyst for necessary change.

**8. People are responsible for motivating themselves. You are, however, responsible for creating a work environment in which people can motivate themselves.** —*Paul Falcone, author*

Don't take responsibility for the attitudes of your team members and other stakeholders—that's their job. But do nurture an environment that breeds success. Create a productive and secure environment where all team members want to get out of bed, come to work and make a difference.

**9. At the end of each day, you should play back the tapes of your performance. The results should either applaud you or prod you.** —*Jim Rohn, motivational coach*

Are you making the same mistakes over and over? Are your team members? Look at each day's accomplishments, as well as the missed opportunities, and apply these lessons to the next day.

**10. Asking for help does not mean we are weak or incompetent. It usually indicates an advanced level of honesty and intelligence.** —*Anne Wilson Schaef, psychotherapist and writer*

In today's fast-paced, competitive world, we need one another more than ever. Encourage your team members to request assistance whenever they need it, then do your best to be accessible to them.

**11. I am personally persuaded that the essence of the best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in this single phrase: Organize and execute around priorities.** —*Stephen R. Covey, author and management consultant*

Determine your top three priorities at the start of each day. They define your value, your contributions and your career. Then tenaciously drive to resolve them throughout the day.

**12. Leadership is not about the ability of those around you to lead; leadership is about your ability to lead despite that which is happening around you.** —*Yours truly*

Effective leaders rise to the occasion rather than search for excuses. The chaos around you doesn't really matter—how you handle it does. PM

Neal Whitten, PMP, president of The Neal Whitten Group, is a speaker, trainer, consultant and mentor. He is also the author of Neal Whitten's No-Nonsense Advice for Successful Projects.

