WHAT STARTS WELL, ENDS WELL!

HOW SAP CORE VALUES IMPROVE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR SAP PROJECT
— Kent Lamb, Partner

A project is like a new day. It's a fresh opportunity to collaborate, learn, and contribute. Much like the early hours of the morning set the tone for the rest of the day, the beginning of a project offers a chance to bring energy, creativity, and alignment to your work.

Do you look at each new project as an exploration of the possible or a slow dredging of careers, spirits, and souls through the mud of the improbable?

We believe "what starts well, ends well" reflects a proactive mindset that's essential in IT projects, where early planning and alignment often determine long-term success. Core Values act as the foundation for navigating complexity, managing stakeholders, and maintaining team cohesion under pressure.

Why have Core Values for your project?

To consider this, you should first consider why most projects fail. Although there are many other reasons to blame for the failure of ERP projects, here are three of the top reasons:

- Master Data and Data Conversion issues.
- Inadequate Testing and Team Training.
- Lack of Communication or Organizational Readiness.

When asked what are the Core Values for your project team, we often hear "No problem – we have a charter, mission statement, project goals, and objectives." This is a common trap in project management. Reusing old project initiation documents can save time, but when done without careful tailoring, it risks overlooking the unique goals, risks, stakeholders, and technologies of the new project.

The problem – typical Project Initiation Documents are created at the beginning of each project to align purpose, goals, responsibilities and more. These documents are required by the PMO, sponsors, and auditors, but may not see the light of day once the project begins.

Core Values drive the culture and behavior of your project!

Are you convinced that Core Values are important? But that will not be enough to go through the process of Core Values discovery, convey your passion to others, and ultimately align the entire project team and stakeholders around them.

Evolving companies like Zappos and Apple don't just list their Core Values; they live them. That's what makes them powerful. In projects, the same principle applies – when values are clear and embraced, they guide decision-making, behavior, and collaboration more effectively than rigid rules or outdated manuals.

Here is a brief list of benefits that Core Values bring to your company:

- Create a self-managed and responsible team.
- Support your decisions or decisions linked to your values.
- Define the culture and experience.
- Outlive people, trends, goals, and challenges.

Why does this work?

Zappos leaders will tell you that values provide loose constraints. There is not a rule book used around expectations, but these companies have a culture of high integrity.

When chaos hits during a project (and you know it will), values are essential to driving the norms for communication, trust, and action.

Let's review a few Core Values that align the PMO, Project Team, Business and IT organization. These values provide rationale, reasoning, and inspiration for enhancing your Project Initiation Documents with engaging stakeholders and attracting the talent, investment, and resources that your project needs to succeed.

One of my favorite Core Values is "No Surprises"!

When asking executive sponsors and project managers, "How does your team respond to values like these?" the response that we usually receive is, "We've taken a proactive step by introducing joint responsibilities in high-risk, mission-critical areas."

This approach fosters shared accountability, ensuring that both Business and IT teams are aligned, not just in strategy, but also in ownership. It encourages faster decision-making, greater engagement, and a culture where success – and risk – are owned collectively.

One of our manufacturing clients faced a major challenge in cleaning up their material master data before conversion. Despite having an experienced developer and business lead, the project hit several false starts and growing frustration. Ultimately, we overcame the setbacks by redefining the communication approach, which brought much-needed clarity and alignment.

To supplement the value of "No Surprises", we asked the fundamental question, "Can you run the business for the day with this master data?" At that point, we created a new value for success and simplified the expectations for the cleansing of the material master data.

Some other suggestions to help in a high integrity project environment:

- Set Clear, Shared Expectations
- Create a Culture of Transparency
- Define and Uphold Joint Accountability
- Establish Decision Rights and Escalation Paths

Define the values that work for your company and project. The principle and benefit of values are universal. However, that doesn't mean all specific values are relevant or appropriate in every environment.

How do you work through the right values for your project team?

Consider the primary failures of projects bulleted above. What Core Values could prevent such consequences and occurrences?

Placing Core Values at the heartbeat of your project and following them through the good times and bad will help you to attract the best talent for your project teams. Team members will look forward to the project work as fulfilling and beneficial, and not a dead-end career move.

Next Steps:

Do you believe that what starts well, ends well? While a strong start is critical, every project also needs a post-mortem review to ensure continuous improvement for both your future projects and your business.

Do you fall into the trap that your new projects look and sound just like your old projects? Do you have the confidence that these projects will succeed? If your project initiation steps need an independent review and assessment, let our team help you craft Core Values that fit your business and goals. Visit our website at titanconsulting.net to find out more information or to contact us. We look forward to connecting with you on your Digital Transformation journey!