



Top 10 Soft Skills That Set Great Project Managers Apart

Technical skills matter, but soft skills truly separate good project managers from great ones.

These human-side superpowers enable PMs to lead with influence, navigate complexity, and deliver results under pressure.



by Kimberly Wiethoff

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)



Read the Room

Recognize emotional cues and adjust your approach accordingly.



Manage Emotions

Stay calm under pressure. Guide others through stressful situations.

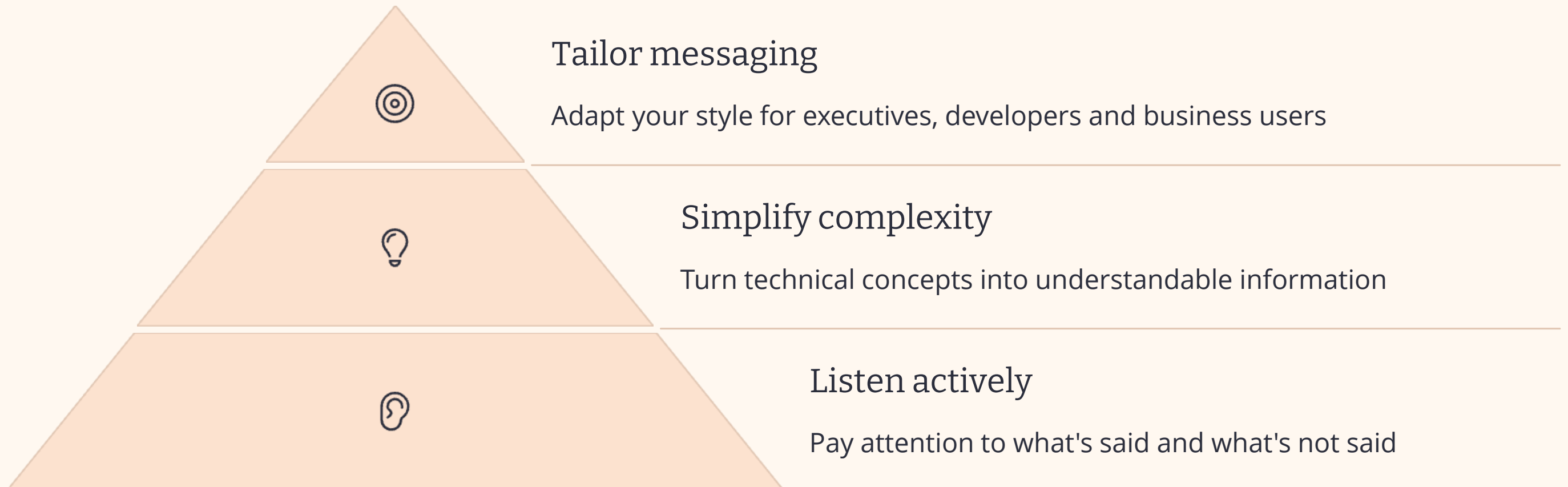


Foster Trust

Create psychological safety where team members feel valued.



Clear Communication



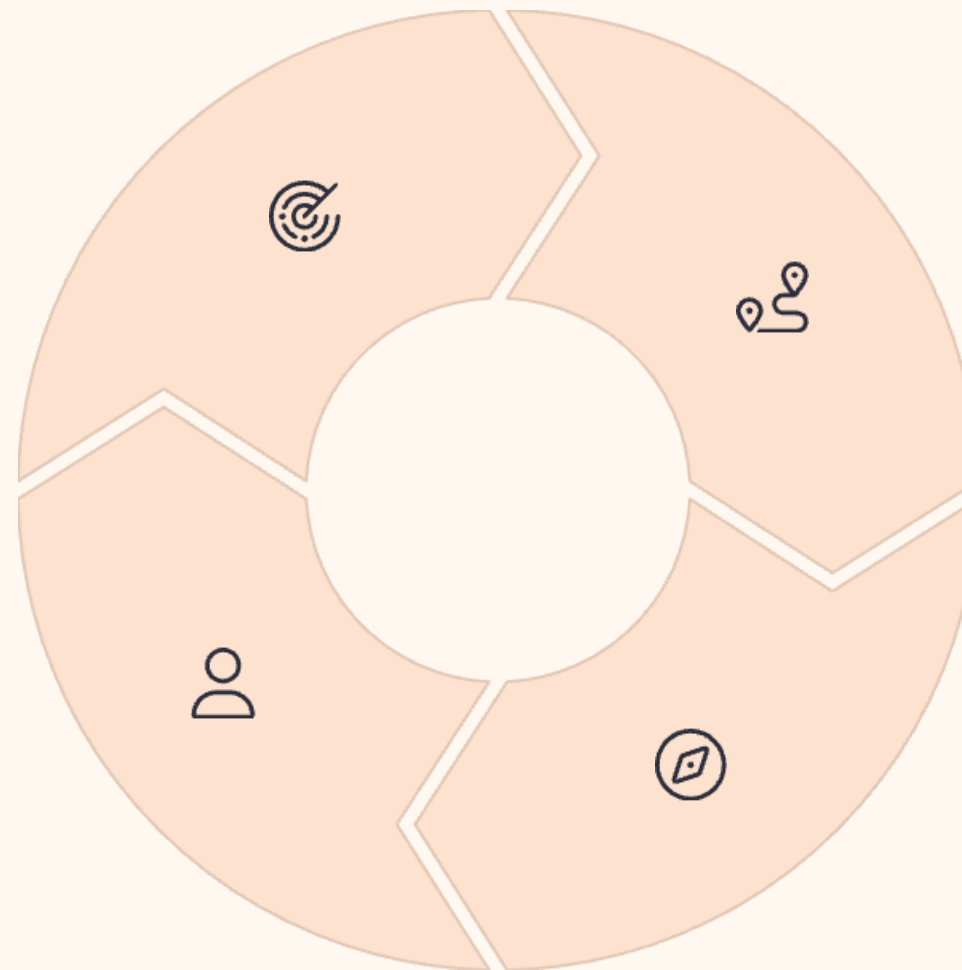
Adaptability

Anticipate Changes

Spot potential shifts before they
create problems

Support Team

Help others adapt to new priorities
and approaches



Pivot Gracefully

Change direction without losing
momentum

Maintain Vision

Keep the end goal in sight despite
changing conditions

Stakeholder Management



Identify influencers

Map key players and their interests



Build relationships

Create trust before you need support



Align expectations

Ensure shared understanding of goals and constraints



Deliver value

Demonstrate progress that matters to each stakeholder



Conflict Resolution



Recognize early signs

Address tensions before they escalate into larger issues.



Facilitate open dialogue

Create space for all perspectives to be heard respectfully.



Find common ground

Identify shared interests that can lead to compromise.



Move forward constructively

Document agreements and maintain team momentum.

Problem Solving

Frame the problem clearly

Define what success looks like. Identify constraints and boundaries.

Remove blockers proactively

Anticipate obstacles. Create paths for the team to progress.

Assess trade-offs thoughtfully

Consider time, scope, resources, and quality implications.

Document lessons learned

Turn each problem into a future advantage through reflection.



Influencing Without Authority

Build credibility

Demonstrate expertise and follow through on commitments.

Be consistent in your actions and transparent in your reasoning.

Understand motivations

Learn what drives each team member and stakeholder.

Connect project goals to personal and departmental priorities.

Create coalitions

Build networks of supporters across organizational boundaries.

Use shared interests to overcome departmental silos.



Decision-Making Under Pressure

Stay Calm

Manage your stress response. Think clearly under pressure.



Adjust Course

Be ready to pivot if new information emerges.



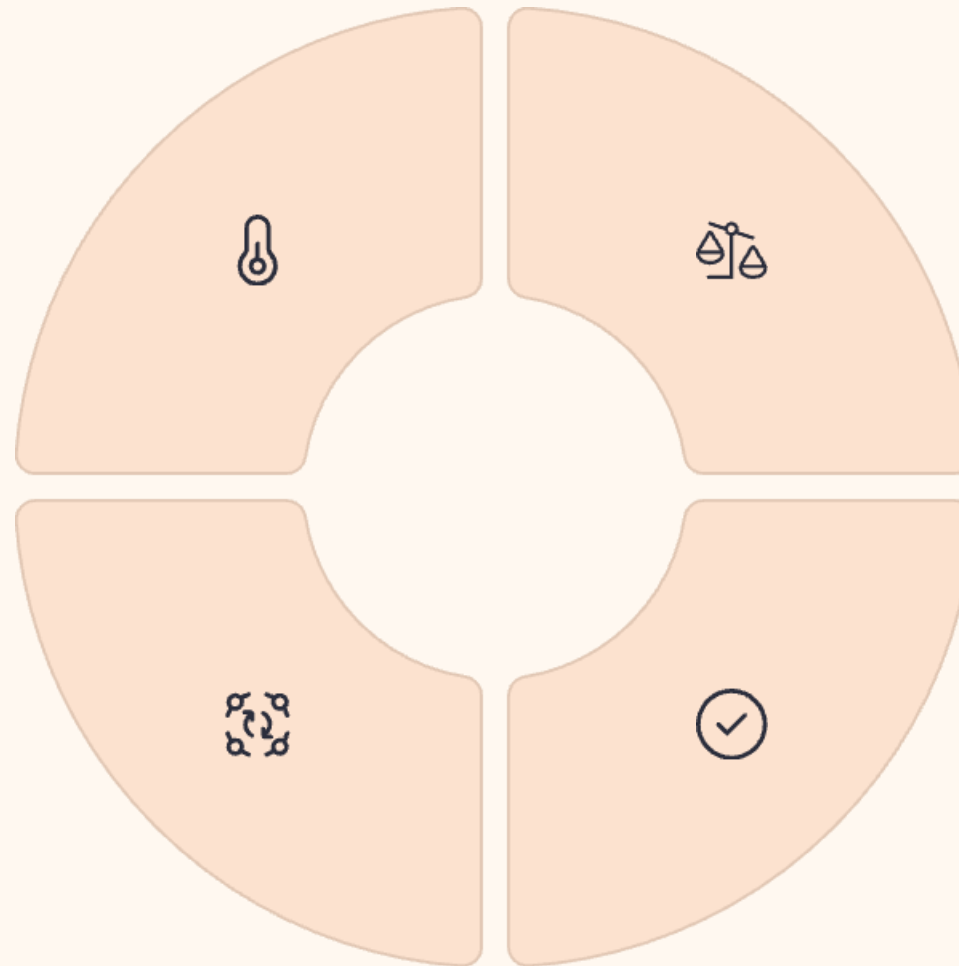
Assess Trade-offs

Quickly evaluate options against project constraints and goals.



Make the Call

Decide with available information. Avoid analysis paralysis.





Continuous Learning



Study Best Practices

Stay current with industry trends and methodologies.



Reflect on Projects

Analyze successes and failures for improvement opportunities.



Seek Feedback

Ask team members and stakeholders for honest input.



Apply Insights

Implement lessons learned in your next project.



Leadership Presence



Project Confidence

Stand tall. Speak clearly. Show conviction in your words and actions.



Provide Direction

Clarify the path forward. Make complex situations manageable.



Rally the Team

Unite diverse stakeholders around a compelling shared vision.



Take Responsibility

Own outcomes, both positive and negative. Protect your team.



Final Thoughts

70%

Project Success

From soft skills vs.
technical skills alone

2X

Career Growth

Rate for PMs with
strong soft skills

90%

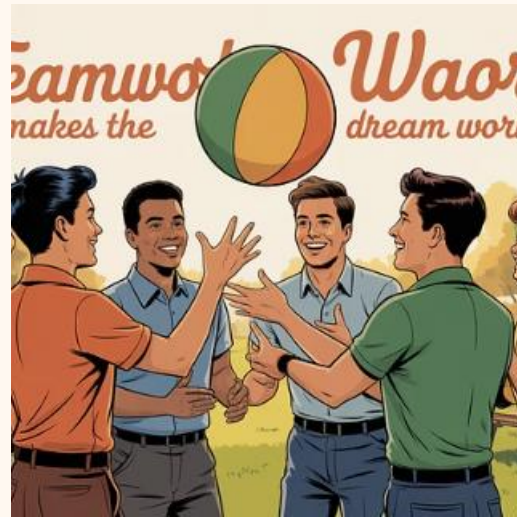
Team
Satisfaction

Under emotionally
intelligent leadership

Processes can be taught. Tools can be learned. But soft skills must be practiced and earned through experience.

As projects grow more complex, soft skills provide your competitive edge. If you're looking to grow as a project leader, invest just as much in **listening, empathizing, and influencing** as you do in your Agile or PMP toolkit. Your team—and your career—will thank you.

Related Resources



Related Reads from ManagingProjectsTheAgileWay.com:

- [Team Building, Collaboration, and Managing Stress in Project Teams](#)
- [The Art of Leadership: Inspiring Change, Empowering Growth](#)
- [Expectation Management: A Guide for Project Managers](#)