

Project managers must constantly extend themselves to all of the consultants on the team in a personal and individual manner, so that they can attempt to identify and resolve perception problems as they begin.

CONSISTENT APPROACH

Another aspect of project management that affects consultants' perceptions is how consistently the project manager truly treats all of the team members with equal respect. Even if a consultant is responsible for a relatively insignificant project deliverable, the project manager must allocate equal time and attention to that team member. Regardless of how small a consultant's scope of work is for the project, chances are that without the information he or she is providing, the project goals cannot be fully achieved. Further, the project manager must tap the consultants' expertise in their particular discipline to solidify the overall project goals. The manager should confer with all of the professionals on the team to corroborate overall schedule and budgetary constraints. The project leader should keep in mind that the inherent knowledge and experience that consultants bring to the table regarding their discipline is an invaluable resource, and respect the validity of information the consultant presents to the client. If the project manager issues information as important as the project schedule and costs without team approval, the team will develop a perception that their leader does not want a collaborative effort from the team. Similarly, to preserve collaboration and communicate respect, the project leader should never criticize the work of the professionals on the team in a public forum. Instead, he or she should set up a private conversation, in which it will be possible to express displeasure surrounding a task or deliverable constructively. This gesture of respect will go a long way toward rectifying the problem and avoids the animosity created when a work product is demeaned publicly. The amount of effort the project leader exhibits in response to each consultant will be returned exponentially to the project in those consultants' efforts to do good work as members of the team. Team members will always respond favorably to a project leader who exhibits respect and attention to the team.