

The Human Factor Formula for Project Managers

WHAT THE PMBOK DOESN'T TELL YOU ABOUT  
**WORKING WITH PEOPLE**



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*Welcome to my  
first  
e-book*

## Preface

**W**elcome to my first e-book! My name is Kevin Ciccotti. I am a Certified Professional Coach, and I'm pleased and excited that you're taking the time to read this book. I'm going to share some profound information with you that, when used, can literally transform who you are as a project leader, and take your skills to a whole new level.

Bold claim? Absolutely. But, there's a good reason for that. I am an unreasonable man. Yep, you read that right.

I'm an optimist. (No! Did he just admit that?) I believe kindness and compassion are essential to families, businesses, and society functioning effectively. I believe people should feel valued and have fun at work. (Heresy!) I believe in the power of people to change their lives and to make an impact on the world. And I believe in *you*; in your ability to make a difference in your life and work through your decisions, choices, and actions. (Yep, pretty unreasonable...)

You see, unreasonable people are the ones who change the world. We're not restricted by "the way we've always done it" or the conventional wisdom of society or groupthink. No, unreasonable people find ways to work around all that. We find ways to make a difference in the world. I invite you to be unreasonable, too.

Now, you may not think the same as I do. And that's okay. All I ask is that as you read what is written on the pages that follow; keep an open mind and heart, and then take these tools and strategies and *apply* them in your daily work and life. See if they don't make a substantial difference in the course and quality of your life.

At the very least, you will find that you have discovered some profound truths about yourself. And at the most, you will have found a new way to lead, a new way to communicate, a new

*“Why do we do  
the things we  
do?”*

way to understand yourself and the people around you, and a new model for building sustainable relationships.

I’ve been coaching and training Project Managers in the skills necessary to build relationships with their teams in order to more effectively lead them to success. It’s been a privilege doing so; and I’ve been able to impact literally hundreds, if not thousands, of Project Managers through my workshops, webinars, speaking, and coaching.

In the world and work of the modern Project Manager, there are many challenges that you face on a daily basis. However, few challenges can create the levels of fear and anxiety that you experience when working with your project teams.

Why is that?

I believe it’s due to the fact that while most of us work very hard to learn and apply our skills as Project Managers within our organizations, very few of us ever learn the idiosyncrasies of human behavior.

I’ve spent much of the last 25 years studying human behavior, peak performance, and team dynamics. You might even say I’ve been obsessed with the question of, “Why do we do the things we do?” And, in truth, much of that curiosity comes from asking myself the question, “Why did I just do that?!”

Many times the Project Managers I work with are being asked to lead a project team over which they have no direct authority, are dealing with conflicting agendas, differing skill levels and experience, and maybe even conflicting bosses. And quite often they are left feeling very much alone in their work as they struggle to find ways to get their teams to gel and work together effectively.

If this sounds anything like your situation, then I’m here to let you know there is hope!

*Enjoy*

*Question*

*Learn*

I am going to share information with you that I wish I had when I was working in my corporate career and leading multiple projects and cross-functional teams.

I will not only share the information you need to be more effective as a project leader; I will also provide you with strategies that will help you to begin using the information immediately in order to make a positive impact on your teams and your organizations.

This work is my passion and my purpose. There is nothing I would rather be doing. This work fuels me, inspires me, and drives me to be better every day.

As you read on, I encourage you to keep an open mind – and maybe more importantly, an open heart. The information you take from this e-book just might change your leadership and your relationships forever.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Enjoy it.

Question it.

Learn from it.

And, if this spurs questions or comments, then contact me. I love hearing from all of you, and welcome the opportunity to share my work on a deeper level with you.

Kevin Ciccotti, CPCC, PCC

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## My Story

**D**on't worry – I'm not going all the way back to the beginning of my life!

But if you are to understand me, why I do this work, and what drives me, then a little background will certainly help. And, you might just want to know why I chose to work with such a specific group as Project Managers. What's the connection?

Prior to becoming a professional coach, I spent more than 25 years working for a world-class manufacturing company – with 16 of those years in management. I ran a large department that was part of the Product Development organization. While there, I was part of hundreds of project teams, either as a Project Manager or team member.

The largest of these projects was a 3-plus year, \$65 million ERP implementation in which I was a Business Process Owner. I was involved in every phase of the project from blueprinting to final implementation.

I can't tell you how many times I saw team dysfunction and conflict drag us down or even bring progress to a screeching halt! And, the worst part was I knew it didn't have to be that way. The problem was, I had no idea how to effectively change it.

Like most teams, we eventually found our way through this and other project bottlenecks. However, situations like this always come at a price.

Stress.

Low morale.

Fear.

Conflict.

Not to mention the untold tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of dollars that companies are losing every single day that their teams are disengaged. In fact, recent studies show that as much as 66% of the workforce is actively *disengaged* from their jobs<sup>1</sup>!

In my heart, I knew that this daily grind was not what I wanted for myself, my team, or my career.

Then it happened. The crash of the economy. Everywhere we looked there was chaos, fear, and panic. Businesses were scrambling to stay afloat, and individual employees lived in fear for their jobs – even those jobs that they didn't want!

Our management team was given the unenviable task of creating lists of employees who would be laid off in the coming months, if we didn't see significant economic improvement.

There was, of course, a lot of shuffling and reorganization of resources in order to set up and streamline necessary processes, and to lay the foundation for what the new organization would look like going forward. One such reorganization placed me in the position of reporting to a new boss.

Over the next few weeks and months, it became clear that we had very distinct differences in our leadership and communication styles. And, it became clear that I wasn't going to win this battle – things weren't going to go my way.

We were all struggling to make ourselves as valuable as we could, in order to preserve our status in the organization and to validate our positions – lest we be “downsized.”

*It was as if  
twenty-five  
years of  
contributions  
had been  
dismissed*

One day, as I was getting ready to head to lunch, I received a phone call to meet my boss in one of the small conference rooms. This didn't particularly trouble me, because we had been meeting frequently over the last 6-8 weeks.

As we sat there, the feeling of discomfort became palpable. I knew something was about to happen, but wasn't sure exactly what. It wouldn't be long before the bomb was dropped.

My boss began to describe for me all the ways I was falling short of her expectations – even though I knew in my heart that my team was actually one of the most productive in the organization, our numbers bearing out that fact.

Then I heard the words that would forever change the way I viewed my job, and would effectively seal my fate in the organization.

“Quite frankly, I'm having a hard time seeing how you add any value whatsoever to this department or this organization.”

It was as if 25+ years of hard work, an exemplary work record, and multiple service awards for my contributions had been summarily dismissed. No, they were crushed.

Sit with that for just a moment.

Obviously, it was time for me to leave. Fortunately, I had already embarked on my “exit strategy” when I made the decision more than a year earlier that I would go back to school to become a professional coach. That decision would serve me well, when just six months later I was laid off.

Why do I even tell you this story?

Certainly not to make anyone feel sorry for me! In fact, that time was one of the pivotal moments in my life. Like all of us, I was faced with some major decisions and uncertainty about



*This is my  
opportunity to  
make a  
difference*

my future. I summoned all my strength, courage, and initiative, and took that leap into the unknown. I now find myself excited and grateful every single day to do the work I've chosen. I want *you* to feel the same way about the work you do.

I also want to help you understand why I've chosen to take my considerable coaching skills and work in an area that in the end seemed to bring me such pain and disappointment.

My belief is that if I can prevent even one manager from ever inflicting the pain that was visited upon me, then my life and work will have meaning, purpose.

I want to bring change to organizations in the way they assemble, lead, and support their teams. I want people to feel significant in the work they do, to be engaged and energized rather than drained and disappointed.

This is my opportunity to make a difference.

<sup>1</sup> A 2010 study conducted by Blessing-White discovered that fewer than 1 in 3 of the nation's workforce were actively engaged in their work and organizations, and only 61% said they planned to remain with their organizations for the next 12 months despite a challenging economy.

*“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” – Stephen Covey*

## What Do You Know About People?

Maybe a better question is, “What do you *think* you know about people?”

How often do you find yourself asking, “Why did they just say/do that?” Wouldn’t it be great if you had the insights into human behavior that would help you better understand and connect with the people in your life?

In general, we human beings are very judgmental. Think about it. The first time you meet someone new; you tend to size them up. Who is this person? What are they about? What do I need to know about them? etc.

***“I love working on projects. It’s the people I can do without.” – Quote from a Project Manager***

That quote is from someone I actually worked with. That is, *before* we began to work together. (You know, just to be clear.) It’s my belief he no longer feels that way. But it’s very instructive when it comes to facing some of the challenges that many Project Managers and their teams are up against.

What would happen if we could remove the judgment, and simply become curious?

When it comes to building and sustaining our relationships in the workplace, this may very well be one of the most important skills you ever develop. When you replace judgment with curiosity, you remove the barriers to communication and true understanding.

People can be complicated. I know, I have an amazing grasp of the obvious. But often we attempt to categorize people and their behaviors so that we can have some sense of certainty about them – where they’re coming from, or their motivations. It helps us to deal with some of the uncertainties of working with others, and allows us to focus on the work rather than the person.

*Arm yourself  
with the most  
effective,  
leading edge  
tools and  
strategies*

Of course, this strategy of putting people in a mental box has many perils and shortfalls; not the least of which is being categorically wrong about the person we may be sizing up.

But who among us has the time to become a psychologist and invest hundreds or even thousands of hours in learning the intricacies of human behavior? We're all so busy with our day-to-day routines and work that sometimes it seems as though we barely have the time to breathe, let alone devote countless hours to the study of human behavior.

You don't have to become a psychologist in order to be a better leader. But it would help for you to become what I call a "practical psychologist." Arm yourself with the most effective, leading edge tools and strategies and use those to propel your leadership skills to a whole new level.

That is the purpose for this e-book – to give you an introduction to those tools and strategies.

*“As a man  
thinketh in his  
heart, so is he.”  
– The Book of  
Proverbs*

## What Do You Know About Yourself?

We all think we know ourselves. Heck, I know I thought that...

It's been well documented that our brains are the most amazing computers on the planet. And if that is so, then why aren't we living more fulfilling lives, working in more rewarding jobs, and enjoying more abundant relationships? I mean, certainly we know that we can have and enjoy more in our lives, right? It's not that we aren't intelligent.

It's just that we've been conditioned.

Conditioned by life, by our parents, by friends, by teachers – even by *ourselves*!

How many times do you ask yourself, “Why did I just say/do that?” It happens to all of us at one time or another. The problem is, when we ask that question we really don't tend to have a good answer.

Oh sure, you can say you were angry or hurt or some other reason. But how true is that? When we ask a question like that, our brain has to find an answer. And in the absence of “the right answer” our brain does something wonderful. It makes one up!

Wouldn't it be far better if we already *knew* why we do the things we do?

When we observe others we tend to be judgmental as I noted earlier. That happens especially when we don't understand their motivations or intentions. But we are far more judgmental of ourselves most of the time.

Think about the last time you made a mistake. What was the language that you heard inside your own head? Chances are if you're like most people, it wasn't very positive or uplifting. We

*It's time for a  
new way to lead  
and relate to  
yourself and  
your teams*

tend to be far harder on ourselves than we are on others. But that doesn't really serve us in moving beyond our mistakes, learning, and growing. Just the opposite, in fact. We will tend to ruminate on our mistakes and continue to beat ourselves up long after the fact.

In fact, we tend to say things to ourselves that we would never allow another person to say. It's the internal critic, the saboteur; whatever word you wish to call it. It's the enemy within. And it keeps us in an ineffective pattern of blaming ourselves when things go wrong, and not growing from the experience. It serves to ingrain the pattern.

The longer we hold onto these thoughts, the truer they become in our minds.

It's time for a new beginning. A new set of thoughts and patterns. A new way to lead and relate to yourself and your teams. Not only is it possible, it is *essential* to your sustained success.

*"Eighty percent  
of life's  
satisfaction  
comes from  
meaningful  
relationships."  
– Brian Tracy*

## The Quality of Your Relationships

One of my core beliefs is that the quality of your life is in large part related to the quality of your relationships. Relationships can be a tricky subject for many of us – especially when we're talking about our work relationships. And, if you think for even a moment that you're *not* in a relationship with the people you work with, then I think we've identified the first stumbling block to your sustained success!

Think about the quality of the relationships in your life today. What are they like? Do you feel connected and committed or are they mostly superficial and lacking deep connection? The thing is, the way you show up in your personal relationships is the same way you show up in your working relationships. Truthfully, all relationships are the same – the same dynamics apply. The only thing that changes is the level of intimacy.

Research in the field of positive psychology<sup>2</sup> shows that the one experience that increases happiness in the long term more than anything else is the quality and quantity of our social connections. On the whole, people tend to thrive in an environment of quality social connections. I'll touch on this in more detail later.

When it comes to the relationships in your life, what types of people do you feel most connected to? What qualities do they possess? How do you tend to interact?

What about the people you tend to not like or connect with? What qualities and/or behaviors do they tend to display?

Now, through that lens of relationship, can you clearly see where your challenges lie in the workplace and with your teams?

Wouldn't it be great if there were a better way to be in relationship with the people you work with? What if there was a solid foundation on which you can build sustainable relationships

*Every thought,  
decision, and  
action is done  
to meet a need*

that increase engagement, improve productivity, and drive to greater overall success? That's what this e-book was written to do!

<sup>2</sup>Positive psychology is a recent branch of psychology whose purpose was summed up in 1998 by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: "We believe that a psychology of positive human functioning will arise, which achieves a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving individuals, families, and communities." Positive psychologists seek "to find and nurture genius and talent" and "to make normal life more fulfilling", rather than merely treating mental illness.

## **The Six Drivers of Human Behavior**

Ultimately, every thought, decision, and action is done to meet a need. The question is whether we're meeting that need in a focused, conscious way or in a reactive, unconscious way.

What would you say if I told you that the most common reason for project failure is your team's unmet needs? What am I talking about? My team's *needs*? Are we talking about resources here? More time, money, information, etc.?

Actually, it's not about resources; it's about you being more resourceful. I'm talking about your team's intrinsic needs – the same needs that all of us have.

These tools and strategies also apply to others in your organization. You've certainly got to consider the stakeholders, executive sponsors, and other upstream relationships. This book will help you manage and improve your relationships in all areas.

The foundation of these strategies is what is known as Human Needs Psychology<sup>3</sup>.

Human Needs Psychology asserts that all people have the same 6 Basic Human Needs. Regardless of race, background, education, gender, or any other environmental factors, we all share these same needs. These are not just wants or desires, but *profound* needs that motivate every choice we make – either consciously or unconsciously.

*We all want to  
feel safe, avoid  
pain, and feel  
comfortable  
in our  
environment*

We each prioritize our own needs differently and will use different strategies to meet them. We can meet our needs in positive ways that are good for us and the people around us, or in negative ways that are not good for us or for others.

From the perspective of a leader, when you can understand and know what your team members really need, you limit or even eliminate conflict and open up a whole new level of understanding and communication between you and the other person.

**So let's take a look at our 6 Basic Human Needs...**

### ***The First Need: Certainty***

**Certainty** - We all want to feel safe, to avoid pain, and feel comfortable in our environment. Every individual needs some sense of certainty and security – knowing that our basic needs are being met. Some of the key words for certainty are **comfort, security, safety, stability, protection, and predictability.**

This need is easily the most powerful drive in us, when left unchecked. Think about how you feel when faced with a situation that creates *uncertainty*. Do you become anxious, nervous, or outright fearful?

We can meet our need for certainty by going to a specific school and majoring in a particular subject, in order to acquire the skills that will land the job we aspire to.

We can become a person obsessed with controlling our environment to make sure there are no surprises or unexpected problems. Does the term “control freak” come to mind?

Or, we can meet the need for certainty by living in a one-bedroom apartment, collecting welfare and rarely leaving. The strategy is dependent on the decisions that each of us makes –



*Think of your  
brain as a  
prediction  
machine*

either in our conscious minds or through unconscious reactions based on our past patterns of behavior and conditioning. It comes down many times to our own “comfort zone.”

The thing that’s important to know is that it looks different to everyone.

Our brains are literally wired to seek certainty. As David Rock notes in his book, *Your Brain at Work*, “Think of your brain as a prediction machine. Massive neuronal resources are devoted to predicting what will happen each moment.”

We don’t just hear or see what is going on around us, we hear, see, and predict what should come *next*. The brain is attempting to identify patterns in everything we hear, see, and experience in order to relate those things back to something familiar. It compares stored memories with the present moment, and makes predictions based on what is happening right now. It’s almost as if our brains are addicted to certainty. And in a way, that is true.

We even experience a sense of reward when our need for certainty is being met, and we experience fear, anxiety, or even worse when our need for certainty is not met. Even a little ambiguity can create a strong emotional response. That’s because uncertainty, to the brain, feels like a threat to your life.

When I made the decision to become a professional coach, I had some specific criteria in mind for meeting my need for certainty. I wanted to aspire to the highest levels of the profession, gaining the necessary certifications and accreditation along the way. I researched the schools that I could attend, making sure they had rigorous programs that were accredited by the International Coach Federation.

I signed up for the training and enrolled all the way through the certification process. I also mapped out the path I would take to build my coaching business. I did all these things to meet my need for certainty. And, once met, I was able to move forward and not be faced with the fear that typically arises when we feel uncertain about our future or ourselves.

*Are your  
strategies  
merely  
obtainable or  
are they  
sustainable?*

What is the result of the strategies you're using? Do you feel more certain or more uncertain? Do those strategies create a sense of purpose or fear?

The need for certainty generally shows up as fear. It's about the unknown. And we all, at some level, have apprehension when it comes to uncertainty in our lives. Do you know someone you would consider to be a control freak? Clearly that person places a very high value on certainty in their life!

Think about how the need for certainty can impact you at work. In fact, if you're a Project Manager then your entire career is built on change. When working with your teams, how does your need for certainty affect how you show up? Do you tend to micromanage or do you give your teams what they need to succeed and then get out of the way?

When you are facing change on a daily basis, it's imperative for you to draw upon your ability to *create* certainty in yourself, and to communicate that certainty to your project teams, stakeholders, and management team.

You need to decide whether your strategy for meeting the need for certainty, and all your other needs, is merely "obtainable" – easy to get in the short term, but not good for you or the people around you in the long term.

Or, is your strategy "sustainable" – good for you and those around you? The choice is always available to you.

Think about it. What are your strategies for meeting your need for certainty? Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What are some of the ways that I use to get the feeling of certainty?
2. Do I try to control my environment and things outside of myself?

*“Strengths lie  
in differences,  
not in  
similarities.” –  
Stephen Covey*

3. Do I focus on what I fear or what I value?
4. Do I focus on my future or my past?

### ***The Second Need: Uncertainty***

**Uncertainty or Variety** – We need variety and challenges that will exercise our intellectual, emotional and physical range. Everyone needs some variety in their life. Key words for variety are **fear, instability, change, chaos, entertainment, suspense, surprise, conflict, and crisis.**

In many ways, our level of happiness in life is directly related to how much uncertainty we can accept in our life.

So many times in work and life, the situations we face are unfamiliar, and we experience levels of uncertainty. That, in itself, is not a problem. The problem comes when that uncertainty drives us to act in ways that feed our fears. Left unchecked, as I noted above, the feeling of uncertainty can create a powerful emotional response that literally prevents us from making quality decisions.

This is something I’ve worked on in myself for several years now. Recently, I’ve taken this to another level in my life. I started doing yoga. Now, let me tell you that in terms of overall flexibility, I am about as limber as a tabletop. I have had to learn to embrace that feeling of discomfort, of not knowing, of being confused and even struggling at times. And, it is helping me to grow in ways I couldn’t have anticipated.

What are you doing in *your* life to embrace more uncertainty and to learn to be okay with the feeling of not knowing? Where are you adding more new experiences that stretch you emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually?

*Have you ever  
rented a movie  
that you've  
already seen?*

Have you ever found yourself renting a movie that you've already seen? Get a life! Actually, there's a good reason for it (other than what you may think). You are *certain* that you'll like it, and on some level you're hoping you've forgotten enough about it to get some *variety*.

When you stop to think about it, most of life is uncertain. We never know what might happen from one moment to the next. Most of the time, we're okay with that. Sometimes, however, we write the story before it happens. We think about and focus on the worst thing that can happen, and in the process hamper our ability to respond effectively to the situation.

One of our goals should be to learn to accept more uncertainty in our lives – especially uncertainty in the workplace.

Think about some of the ways you meet your need for uncertainty or variety. Then ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I go for the easily obtainable emotional variety provided by alcohol or drugs or other mood altering substances?
2. Do I hold onto my problems, fears, and anxieties to give myself some emotional uncertainty?
3. Do I worry about things that may or may not happen?

### ***The Third Need: Significance***

**Significance** – Every person needs to feel important, needed, and special; we want to feel worthy of attention. Significance comes primarily from comparing ourselves to others, and we question our superiority or inferiority. Key words for significance include **pride, perfection, evaluation, discipline, competition, achievement, performance, and rejection.**

*Significance is  
a major driver  
of social  
behaviors*

The need for significance is a major driver of our social behaviors. People will go to great lengths to protect their sense of significance or status within an organization. When we perceive an increase in our level of status, through a promotion or some other public acknowledgement, it is actually more rewarding than receiving a pay increase. Conversely, when we sense our significance is threatened or reduced, it can literally feel like a threat to our survival.

One way to feel significant is to tear everybody else down. Do you know people like that? I worked with a client who had a reputation for being difficult to work with. This would show up in behaviors like hijacking meetings and telling the people in the room why their ideas were terrible – and then proceed to illuminate the room in the glow of his masterful plans to save the project. The bottom line is that no one wanted to work with this person, and ultimately he found himself on the outside looking in when high visibility projects came up.

Now, you might read that and think the person in question was some sort of jerk. The truth is, he was far from it. In fact, when not at work this person was incredibly likeable and was a real giver in the community. We discovered that his need for significance was not being met effectively in the workplace. And placed in an environment where he felt insignificant, he would find very undesirable ways to meet that need. I see it happen all the time. ***We step all over our values, in order to meet our needs.***

Significance is, of course, relative. But we tend to create a “pecking order” in our brains of the people surrounding us. However, when we are constantly comparing ourselves to others, we cut off the possibility of forming deep connections with them.

Now, you may not have that issue. Great. But, you could have the opposite one. “I’m not as good as the other people here.” I’ve seen that one play out, too. And I’m sure you’ve probably known someone like this in your life. Either way, it serves to cut us off from others and effectively drives a wedge between people.

*“The desire to increase status drives people to achieve incredible feats of human endurance.” – David Rock*

Some people gain significance by having a big problem – a problem so big that they can’t resolve it on their own or one that causes people to take notice. Maybe you know someone like this, too. No matter what problem or challenge you may have, they’ll tell you how their problem is bigger. Again, it doesn’t have to make sense. It just needs to meet the need. And so many of us find these negative vehicles for meeting our needs.

In fact, the need for significance is the single biggest contributor to conflict that I’ve encountered on the teams I’ve worked with. When a person has a high driving need for significance and it’s not being met in positive, sustainable ways, it tends to lead to counterproductive behaviors that have a tremendously negative impact on the rest of the team.

Those behaviors can include hijacking meetings, putting other team members down, comparing themselves to others, and generally disrupting things to be significant – making themselves more important than the team. Sometimes, these people will even sabotage the project!

How you handle a situation like this can impact the overall morale of the team, and affect the success of your project or your organization.

***“The desire to increase status drives people to achieve incredible feats of human endurance. And the drive for status is behind many of society’s greatest achievements and some of its worst examples of needless destruction.” – David Rock, Your Brain at Work***

What if you met your need for significance through giving to others or doing great work? How might that impact your life? Think about the ways that you are currently meeting your need for significance. And then ask yourself if there is a better way.

Ask yourself:

1. How am I meeting my need for significance?

*The need for  
love and  
connection is  
considered a  
survival need*

2. Do I value significance more than the relationships I have with others?
3. Do I compare myself to others on a regular basis?
4. Do I think I need to be perfect in everything I do?
5. Do I create or hold onto problems in order to create a sense of significance?
4. What is the cost to me for holding onto these problems or using these strategies?

### ***The Fourth Need: Love/Connection***

**Love/Connection** – The fourth need is to experience love and connection with others. Everyone needs to feel connection with other human beings, and everyone strives for relationships that give them love. Some of the key words for love and connection are **togetherness, unity, teamwork, warmth, and desire.**

Human beings are wired for love and connection. And, it's more important in the workplace than we've previously believed.

In fact, love and connection is so powerful that it is considered a survival need. The feeling of being disconnected and alone can be devastating.

In a surprising series of studies, scientists have discovered that the same part of the human brain that is triggered by hunger and thirst – our most basic survival needs – is the same part of the brain that is triggered by feelings of loneliness and disconnection. Inside the brain, the loss of a relationship or feelings of isolation can literally feel as if we're going to die.

Have you ever felt sorry for yourself? If you're like most people, then the answer is yes. But think about this for a moment – when you throw a “pity party,” who are you connecting with?

*“Teamwork is so important that it is virtually impossible for you to reach the heights of your capabilities or make the money that you want without becoming very good at it.” – Brian Tracy*

Yourself, of course! Again, not a sustainable model for meeting the need, but in the short term it’s certainly obtainable.

The truth about the working world today is that most jobs require us to have the ability to collaborate and get along with others in order to succeed. But what I’ve found is that for many of those who have highly developed mental systems built around logic and analysis, the uncertainty and chaos of dealing with people can be almost overwhelming.

If you want to be a better Project Manager and want your teams to meet the project objectives and bring your projects in on-time and on-budget, then one of the most effective ways to do that is to create connection with them.

I’m not talking about becoming best buddies with them, but when you seek to create a connection and treat people with dignity and respect, it increases their sense of purpose and they are much more likely to commit to the project and to each other. Who are you more likely to support – someone you barely know or know only on a professional level, or someone with whom you’ve formed a connection?

I know, sometimes I lob an easy one at you. But it’s only because I want you to realize you already have many of the answers you need to form more effective teams. You just need to remember that you know it.

There are a lot of ways to build connection, including icebreakers, bringing in a coach to work with the team, or even just having an afternoon where you have lunch together and go bowling as your project kickoff. It can look different but should be done in a way that encourages everyone to engage with each other, and get to know their team.

Now, whenever I bring up this topic, I always get a few people saying things like, “We don’t have the time or money to engage in those things.”



*When we stop  
growing,  
we die*

But believe me when I say you don't have the time or money to *NOT* do these things!

Conservative estimates of ROI for activities like this range anywhere from 150% to 350% in terms of leveraging stronger team performance right from the start, and gaining commitment to the project and its goals. Think about how much time and money your companies have lost due to lack of engagement and commitment to your projects.

How do you meet your need for love and connection?

- Do I get it by giving, receiving, or both?
- What do I do in order to receive from others?
- How do I give love to others?
- Do I find myself giving in order to get something in return?

Those first 4 needs – Certainty, Uncertainty/Variety, Significance, and Love/Connection – are the needs of the personality, or basic survival needs. We must meet those needs before we engage in seeking to meet the last 2 needs, which are more related to spiritual needs or the needs of fulfillment.

### ***The Fifth Need: Growth***

**Growth** – When we stop growing we die. It's a biological imperative in nature; and in human beings we seek to grow intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. Some people will satisfy their need for growth by reading new books or taking classes. Others might challenge themselves by taking on new initiatives. Key words indicating growth are **development, inspiration, challenge, and learning**.

*“It is amazing  
how much  
people get done  
if they don’t  
worry about  
who gets the  
credit.” –  
Swahili  
Proverb*

One of the things I’ve learned in my many years of working with people, is that we are *most happy* when we feel as though we’re making progress in our lives.

Growth equals progress.

Find ways in your projects to help people feel their need for growth is being met. Give them new challenges and help them to learn and grow. Provide them with opportunities to make progress in their work. And seek the same for yourself!

Ask yourself:

- How am I meeting my need for growth?
- Do I consider myself a lifelong learner?
- Do I seek out new challenges and opportunities to stretch and grow myself emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually?

### ***The Sixth Need: Contribution***

**Contribution** – This is about going beyond one’s own needs in order to make a contribution beyond yourself, and to give to others. It is essential to feelings of fulfillment and happiness. This can manifest itself in the workplace through mentoring programs and training that seeks to improve the individual in meaningful ways. Some key words are **giving, mentoring, generous, and helpful**.

When we contribute, it tends to meet all our other needs in a positive, sustainable way. And, when we truly contribute to the project, the team, and the organization, it doesn’t matter who gets the credit for success. The whole team shares in that success!

*“How can I contribute in positive ways today?”*

For me, contribution is really the pinnacle of our existence. We are living to our potential when we are contributing in positive ways to the world around us.

Think about this for a moment – What would happen if you came to work every day asking the question, “How can I contribute to my team and my organization in positive ways today?”

Maybe even more importantly, what would happen to performance if everyone on your team came to work asking, “How can I contribute today?”

Ask yourself:

- How am I meeting my need for contribution?
- Am I giving of my time, talent, and treasure for the good of others?
- What happens to my problems when I’m giving to others?
- Where in my life can I seek to contribute more?

<sup>3</sup>*Human Needs Psychology is a process for explaining human behavior that was first proposed by Anthony Robbins based on his interventions with more than 3 million people around the world. The premise is that we all have patterns of behavior, and once understood, those behaviors can be changed to produce positive results.*

## **Your Top Two Driving Needs**

We all have things in our lives that we would like to change. Habits that don’t serve us. Patterns of behavior that we would like to change, but we don’t know how. The first step is awareness.

We have to become aware of why we do the things we do if we are to have any hope of changing them. This applies to all areas of life, but especially to the ways that we interact with others, our habitual patterns of behavior, the beliefs that drive us. When we try to change

*List your 6  
needs in their  
order of  
importance in  
your life*

these things with discipline alone, it typically doesn't last because we haven't addressed the underlying needs.

For all of us, two of these six needs will be more important than the rest. These are called your driving needs; meaning these two needs will serve as the filter for every decision you make and every action you take.

Consider your six basic needs. Now, list those needs in the order of importance to you. There is no right or wrong here. It's about understanding yourself and what drives you, why you do the things you do.

If you find yourself unsure of how to answer, then look at your life from what I call an operational perspective. How do you handle change? What are some of your behavioral patterns? How controlling are you of your environment? Do you have many deep, meaningful relationships? Do you seek ways to contribute to others on a consistent basis? Look for clues about your needs and their priority by the way you live your life. Remember that we all have each of these six needs, and none of them are bad or undesirable.

List your six needs in the order of importance in your life:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

*Your top two  
needs will filter  
all your  
decisions and  
actions*

Ask yourself:

- What are my top two needs?
- How do they determine the course of my life and work?
- What has to happen for me to feel that my top needs are being met?
- What are my primary strategies for meeting my needs? Are they merely obtainable, or are they sustainable?
- Do I value certainty and significance over love and contribution?
- How does that affect my relationships?

When we can clearly identify our top two needs, we can learn more about what effectively drives many of our decisions and behaviors. And then we can make better decisions about which of those behaviors we wish to keep and which ones we'd like to change.

Now that you have an idea of how you've prioritized your needs, and you know your top two driving needs, compare that to what you know about yourself. How do these needs impact your decisions? What about your relationships? How do they affect how you show up at work and interact with the people on your teams?

## Transform Yourself

When I look back on my previous career and think of how I was living and working, I can clearly see that what drove me – my primary needs – were the need for *certainty* and *significance*. And the cost to me personally was considerable.

My need for certainty would cause me to seek “safe” situations, or situations I could control in one way or another. In fact, when I sum up my feelings about that part of my life, I would have to say that I lived a very small, controlled, safe life.

To some of you, that might sound just fine. It was not.

There were so many times I felt I wanted to push myself, challenge myself to try something radically different or out of my comfort zone, and I wouldn't. In fact, I used to say to friends, “I hope I never lose this job. It's the only thing I know.” What a bunch of BS (belief systems)! But that's exactly what we say to ourselves to convince us to *not* push the envelope. Play it safe. We condition ourselves to stay small, and in so doing we eliminate the possibility of truly living to our full potential.

It's a fear-based response to the world around us and it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of scarcity, lack, and disappointment.

The need for significance, as I previously noted, had me comparing myself to others in multiple situations. And of course in my own mind, I never measured up. I always seemed to come up short.

There were other drawbacks to this high need for significance as well. Because the fear of losing status is so strong, I found myself not taking on challenges or new activities unless I knew

*It's called  
reaching the  
threshold level  
of pain*

I could succeed. Failure was not an option. In my own mind, any perceived failure would result in the immediate loss of my job, my reputation, and my self-esteem – or worse.

The issue was that there were many other things I *could have* done if I would only get out of my own way and simply take action.

So what changed for me?

The first thing was that I realized it was all my own doing; my own thoughts and actions were keeping me from having the impact that I truly wanted to have on my company, team, family, and friends – and on the world.

What I finally realized was that the pain of staying where I was had become greater than the fear of changing. It's called reaching the *threshold* level of pain. It's the level of pain that can motivate us to make massive changes in life. It's not essential to the desire to change, but for many of us, it is the only thing that truly moves us to get out of our own way and live the life we've always wanted.

I knew I had to change my strategies or I was going to continue to suffer.

In which areas of your life and work are you at a threshold? Are you even willing to admit it, or do you tell yourself, "It's not so bad. I can continue to live this way," or some variable of that statement? If there are areas of your life and leadership that you want to change, then the first step is that you must be honest with yourself.

And then, you have to take action.

Today, I am very clear about my needs and my strategies for meeting them. I can tell you that my top two needs today are contribution and love. And, I'm confident that if you ask anyone who knows me, they will agree that is how I live my life.

*Ultimately the  
only person you  
can change is  
YOU*

I wake up every day asking the question, “How can I contribute to the people in my life today? My clients? My family? My team at work?” That question guides me to make decisions that are in the best interest of all of those people, not just for me.

I live in alignment with my core values, and that allows me to contribute on a higher level than I’ve ever done before. It helps me to meet all six of my human needs on a very high level, and to live a life that is gratifying, exciting, and incredibly fulfilling.

What about your leadership? How about in your relationships? Where are you holding yourself back? Where are you playing it safe instead of stretching yourself? What is the cost to you? Your team? Your family?

Are *you* ready to transform yourself?

Let’s go back to your primary or driving needs. Did you answer the questions in that section? What did you learn about yourself? What are your top two driving needs? What are your primary strategies for meeting those needs? Think about how those needs and strategies impact your decisions, your relationships, and your life. If you’re not getting what you want, then maybe a change in strategy is needed.

Think about the areas of your life and work that aren’t working for you right now. What would have to change in order for you to feel that your life is more in alignment with your core values?

- What must happen for you to feel that you’re contributing to the people around you?
- What must happen in order for you to feel love?
- What must happen in order for you to grow and make progress in your life?



*How can you  
bring out more  
of your ability  
to influence  
others?*

The only person who can change you is YOU. I can teach you all the tools and strategies to become a more effective leader in your life. But you have to implement those strategies; you have to do the heavy lifting.

But make no mistake, becoming more skillful with people requires more than just knowledge, tools, and strategies or adopting a set of concepts. It requires embodying a different way of *being*. That takes practice... and a lot of it. I can help people do that efficiently and reliably. In fact, I've spent the last 7 years building my reputation and becoming one of the best in the world at doing exactly that.

By learning to make conscious decisions and take control of how you're prioritizing and meeting your own needs, you can literally change the course and quality of your life. And, in so doing, you can change the course and quality of the lives around you.

## **Transform Your Teams**

Of course, if you want to transform your teams, it stands to reason that you must first transform yourself. Every relationship is a system, and within that system if one part changes, then the other parts must respond. When it comes to transforming your teams, few things are as effective as leading by example.

The best leaders do this. They do not ask their teams to do anything that they themselves are unwilling to do. Leadership requires the ability to *influence*. How can you bring out more of your ability to influence others as you lead your project teams and facilitate change?

When you think about the best leaders you've worked with, what are some of the characteristics they possess that drew you to them? How did they make you feel?

*Understanding  
The Human  
Factor Formula  
will give you  
the leverage  
you need to  
create a higher  
level of  
engagement*

Many times when working with Project Managers and teams, I notice that change tends to be “forced” on people. I hear things like, “We have to do it this way. We don’t have a choice,” or “They (the infamous ‘they’) said we need to do this.”

Sometimes when working with individuals, leaders will use what they might call “constructive feedback” as a method for initiating change. The problem with that strategy is it can trigger an *away from* response as the person can feel their status or significance is being threatened. Once that happens, the effectiveness of the feedback becomes nullified. It can lead to defensive behavior, lack of engagement, and it becomes a negative experience rather than what was intended.

This type of feedback tends to focus on the problem instead of the solution. It creates an emotional response that inhibits our ability to actually work on finding a solution. When we focus on the solution, we are seeking something that we want instead of avoiding something we don’t want.

As a coach, one of the things I’m trained to do is help people find their own solutions from what they already know. As a Project Manager, it’s an essential ingredient in developing self-sufficient and effective teams. If you are always solving your team’s problems, then they’re not growing.

And, believe me, they’ll notice and will tend to disengage. People want to have more autonomy in their work. They want to feel as though they’re making at least some decisions and have a say in how they accomplish their work. They want to know that they’re valued and have a significant role to play.

As a Project Manager, you can certainly use the tools we discussed above in a number of ways to have a positive impact on your teams. If you can find ways to meet several of those needs at the same time, you can create a foundation that supports your team’s growth and improves their performance.

*It takes effort  
and practice to  
learn these  
strategies*

Understanding the Human Factor Formula will give you the leverage you need to create a higher level of engagement, and lead your teams to greater levels of success.

When you can meet two of a person's needs in positive ways, you create a connection. When you meet four of their needs, it's a bond. When you can find ways to meet all six of a person's needs in positive ways, they will never want to leave you. Depending on the type of relationship you're in with that person, you've either made a loyal team member or friend or partner for life.

**Let me illustrate a quick example of how you can meet the needs of your teams.**

Be clear in your expectations and provide the information your people need to succeed (meet their need for certainty). Let them know that you appreciate their work and notice when they're doing things well (increasing their sense of significance). Provide them with opportunities to stretch themselves professionally and give them new challenges (meeting their need for variety/uncertainty and their need for growth). And, let them know that they're part of something that is bigger than just them – a cause for others to rally behind (contribution). By doing these things and supporting your team's needs, you create an environment that will lead to sustainable success for them, for your organization, and for you.

You are already a leader. Now, it's time to take that leadership to the next level. The fact that you've taken the time to read through this e-book tells me that you are committed to finding new ways to engage your teams, grow your own levels of knowledge and understanding, and become a transformational leader in your organization and your life. And, it takes more than knowledge and understanding to create meaningful, lasting change. It takes developing new skills, competencies, and personal capacities.

I congratulate you for making the commitment to yourself and to playing a bigger game in your life!

*Sign up for a  
FREE 1-Hour  
Strategy  
Session*

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## It Takes Practice

Like anything else in life, it takes effort and practice to learn these new strategies and to develop what I refer to as an “extraordinary psychology.” If we want to become better leaders, then we must be willing to let go of our past, release the habits and patterns that do not serve us, and work to build and reinforce those new patterns that will support us as we grow.

And, one of the most important skills we can learn is that of being in relationship with others. As I have told many audiences over the last few years, all relationships are the same; the only thing that changes is the level of intimacy.

### ***Here's The Next Step...***

If you've taken the time to read all the way to this part of the e-book, then you are more than simply “interested” in becoming a better leader of people and learning the most effective tools and strategies available for transforming your project management skills. You're *committed* to your own growth and mastery.

*“The experience of working with Kevin has been truly life changing. He has a remarkable way of bringing out the best in a person, and guiding us on the right path. Someone once told me the definition of coach is ‘a vehicle that takes important people from where they are to where they want to go.’ Kevin fits this definition perfectly, and I highly recommend him as a corporate or personal coach.” – Christopher Graham, CEO, Entrepreneur, PMP*

**Becoming an exceptional Project Manager takes effort.** It takes a lot more than simply knowing how to manage a schedule, appease stakeholders, and meet milestones and deliverables. And, I’m here to help.

My life’s purpose is to help create more effective, sustainable relationships within organizations; to literally change the face of leadership in organizations and provide you with the essential tools and strategies to become the most effective Project Manager you can be.

Connect with me. Let’s take this next step together. Let’s set you on a path to creating a more meaningful experience in your work and life.

*And I’ve got an easy way for you to do exactly that.*

### **Schedule a FREE 1-hour Strategy Session**

My gift to you as part of this e-book is a one-hour, no-cost Strategy Session with me. (That’s a value of \$497!)

Your time is valuable – to you and to me! I value my time, too. That’s why I won’t waste either of our time bringing you anything less than the very best information for building sustainable project teams and becoming an exceptional Project Manager.

- ❖ Discover how to breakthrough your specific leadership challenges
- ❖ Learn how you can implement many of the tools and strategies in this e-book in your daily life and work
- ❖ Discover how to overcome the patterns and habits that no longer serve you in becoming a powerful, thriving leader in your organization
- ❖ Learn the most powerful, innovative tools available for increasing your influence and building sustainable relationships

*“Kevin is a consummate professional with a genuine desire to help people. He doesn’t tell you what you want to hear; he tells you what you need to hear. He doesn’t just deal with superficial issues; he gets to the heart of the problem where lasting change can take place. Change is hard! Having Kevin help me along the journey has made change possible.” – Alan Easley, Logistics and Supply Chain Professional*

Everyone needs support, and we all can learn from the efforts of others. And let’s be truthful; sometimes being a Project Manager can be a frustrating, thankless job. You’re asked to take a wide variety of people, from different backgrounds, skill levels, and knowledge, sometimes with conflicting agendas or conflicting bosses, and you have absolutely no direct line authority over them. And yet, you’re being asked to get them to work together toward a common goal and to come together as a cohesive team.

Why not arm yourself with the very best methods to help you succeed?

Click below to REGISTER today for your Strategy Session. Space is limited, so don’t delay!

[Register Now](#)

### ***Say “Yes” to Your Own Growth and Mastery***

It’s safe to say that we’ve never encountered circumstances like we’re experiencing in the workplace today. Everywhere we look, *people are being asked to do more with less*. Resources are at a premium, and as Project Managers, your job has never been more challenging than it is today.

What better time than NOW to take your leadership skills to the next level?

### ***Invest in Yourself***

There is absolutely **NO RISK** in saying yes to this invitation. I am literally giving of myself in order to contribute to your growth and mastery as a Project Manager. (Remember I told you that my top driving need is Contribution.) The one thing that pays dividends on an ongoing basis is investing time in our own training and growth.

**Change is inevitable.**

**Progress is not.**

If you're honest with yourself, there are probably areas where you can improve when it comes to your relationships with your project teams. Sign up today for your free strategy session.

[Register Now](#)

This is a tremendous opportunity to take your leadership and relationship skills to the highest level, and to create the kind of committed project teams that thrive and achieve uncommon success. You have absolutely no risk. And, you have only your own success to gain.

**Become the kind of Project Manager that others look up to!**

**Sign up today! I promise you'll be glad that you did!**

## About the Author – Kevin Ciccotti



Kevin Ciccotti, CPCC, PCC, is the founder of Human Factor Formula, a company founded to help develop Project Managers and Executive Leaders within organizations, and to help them build more powerful, sustainable relationships with their teams.

He has been a student of peak performance, interpersonal communication, and human behavior for more than 25 years. He was trained at The Coaches Training Institute, the world's largest in-person coach training organization. Kevin also trained with the Robbins-Madanes Center for Strategic Intervention, founded by world-renowned human

performance expert Anthony Robbins and Psychotherapist Cloe Madanes. In 2012 he was named President of the Nevada Professional Coaches Association.

Kevin has spoken and led workshops at a number of conferences and events, including the 2011 PMI Region 7 Leadership Summit, the 2012 PMI Global Congress, the 2013 Region 1 Leadership Conference and Professional Development Conference, and numerous PMI Chapter Dinners and events across North America. He has led multiple worldwide webinars for various PMI Communities of Practice.

He has also created a daylong workshop titled the "The Human Factor in Project Management" and has taught it for various PMI Chapters, as well as for multiple corporations he has been contracted to work with as a Coach and Trainer. He is also an instructor for the University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Extended Studies, in their Project Management Program, where he teaches his workshop in a three-day classroom format.



He lives with his wife and children in Reno, Nevada, and enjoys participating in his children's many activities as well as traveling with his family. He's active in his church and community, and, when he's not otherwise engaged, he enjoys getting out for a round of golf with friends.

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