Good execution of a project through consensus instead of leadership

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1 Question

How can a project be well executed through consensus instead of leadership?

2 Answer

To properly execute a project without a leader that makes important decisions, time is one of the most critical components. Without enough time, decisions are not consensus but decisions made by the individuals available at the time the decision is required. It is also important not to rush things as it will simply lead to bigger and bigger mistakes happening more and more quickly. At one point a few or many team members will realize they've moved too far too fast and many of the necessary pieces are missing, which makes the work they've done so far either irrelevant or of low value.

The team members also need to know each other well enough to know their strengths and weaknesses. Without this knowledge, weaknesses are often ignored because they are the weaknesses of everyone.

Decisions need to be reviewed regularly to ensure consistency. Since there is no single leader that keeps the project in their head and wants to see it to completion, it is necessary to ensure that the work that is planned and executed is consistent towards a common vision. Not doing so can lead the team to work on features that go in opposite directions, features that are not aligned with the users the project targets. Acceptable moments to review those decisions are during the planning sessions and the review/demo sessions.

Team members should often work in pairs with a different individual in the team to ensure that their understanding of the project gets discussed with different individuals with different positions. This avoids working with the same person that shares your opinion of the work to be done, while some other individuals may completely disagree with this opinion. Surfacing such differences of opinion early in the development process is critical since it can lead to work that is not aligned with the project.

Overall, we want to reduce as much as possible the time between the moment an individual or group of individuals have an incorrect understanding of the project's goals and the correction of their understanding.

3 Reference

- Asynchronous Communication: The Real Reason Remote Workers Are More Productive