

# Ethics Toolkit Overview for PMI Practitioners

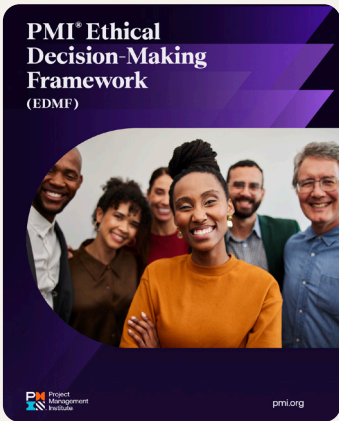


Ethics is about making the best possible decisions concerning people, resources, and the environment. Ethical choices diminish risk, drive positive results, increase trust, determine long-term success, and build reputations. Strong leadership is dependent on ethical choices. This PMI Practitioner Ethics Toolkit includes a rich set of resources to assist PMI Practitioners in understanding, identifying, and proactively managing ethical issues.



## Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

PMI members have determined that honesty, responsibility, respect, and fairness are the values that drive ethical conduct for the project management profession. The PMI Code applies those values to the real-life practice of project management, where the best outcome is the most ethical one. All PMI members, volunteers, certification holders and certification applicants must comply with the Code.



## Ethical Decision-Making Framework

The Ethical Decision-Making Framework (“EDMF”) is a practical resource that guides you toward ethical choices and accountability. Use this framework to navigate ethical dilemmas.



## Thoughts From Our CEO

Hear what our President and CEO, Pierre Le Manh, has to say about ‘Ethics in Project Management’.



**Below is a summary and overview of the key components of the Ethics Toolkit.**

### **Ethics Self-Assessment**

This thought-provoking assessment helps you increase self-awareness of ethical perspectives, knowledge, and understanding, supports any project team in increasing its internal functionality and improving its current dynamic, and creates opportunities for alignment of ethical behavior within the team and promotion of an ethical culture.

### **Team Ethics Assessment**

This tool is designed to help project management practitioners increase self-awareness on ethical perspective, knowledge and understanding, support any project team in increasing their internal functionality and improving their current dynamic, and to create opportunities for alignment of ethical behavior within the team and promotion of an ethical culture. Search on YouTube for “PMI Ethics in Project Management Toolkit: Team Ethics Assessment” for a supporting video on this topic.

### **Project Bully Identification**

Normal workplace conflict or bullying? This tool helps you distinguish a competitive, ill-mannered, or challenging personality from a workplace bully. Search on YouTube for, “PMI Ethics in Project Management Toolkit: Project Bully Identification”, for a supporting video on this topic.

# Ethics Toolkit Self-Assessment

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## Introduction

PMI members and credential holders, as a condition of their status, agree to abide by the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. The Code provides an overall standard of behavior and includes specific standards to guide project managers in their professional relationships.

Based on the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, the Ethics Self-Assessment tool is intended for personal use and to assist the user in thinking about their own ethics-related leadership and actions. It should not be returned to PMI, nor should it be used as a tool for evaluating the ethical behavior of others.

A user can choose to begin assessing their ethical behaviors at any time. The initial assessment will help any practitioner understand the current state of their personal ethics, which then provides the information necessary to build a stronger personal ethics for the future. Ongoing assessments and re-evaluations will help the user to commit to sustaining ongoing and continuous ethics improvement. This ethics assessment tool is an excellent way to measure the overall health of one's individual ethics and plan for improvements.

### **The Ethics Self-Assessment can help you identify:**

- Areas in which you are on strong ethical ground.
- Areas that you may wish to examine, including the basis for your responses.
- Opportunities for further reflection.

# Instructions for the Use of the Ethics Self-Assessment Tool

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We hope you find this tool thought-provoking and useful in your reflection on applying the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct to your everyday activities. You are to be commended for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this assessment. There is no pressure or time limit for completing this assessment, so please consider your answers thoughtfully and carefully and make comments and notes as you progress.

If you uncover “red flags” where your responses are not compatible with the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, you should use it as an opportunity to enhance your ethical practice and leadership by developing a specific action plan. You can use the template provided with the self-assessment or use one of your own creation.

# Leadership

01. I take courageous, consistent and appropriate management actions to overcome barriers to achieving my organization's mission.

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

02. I place community benefit over my personal gain.

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

03. I strive to be a role model for ethical behavior.

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

04. My statements and actions are consistent with professional ethical standards, including the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

05. My statements and actions are honest even when circumstances would allow me to confuse the issues.

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

06. I advocate ethical decision making by the board, management team and other staff.

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

07. I use an ethical approach to conflict.

Almost Never    Occasionally    Usually    Always    N/A

08. I initiate and encourage discussion of the ethical aspects of management and financial issues.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

09. I promptly and candidly explain to internal and external stakeholders negative economic trends and encourage appropriate action.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

10. I use my authority solely to fulfill my responsibilities and not for self-interest or to further the interests of family, friends or associates.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

11. When an ethical conflict confronts my organization or me, I am successful in finding an effective resolution process and ensure it is followed.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

12. I demonstrate respect for my colleagues, superiors and staff.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

13. I demonstrate my organization's vision, mission and value statements in my actions.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

14. I make timely decisions rather than delaying them to avoid difficult or politically risky choices.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

15. I seek the advice of an internal ethics committee when making ethically challenging decisions.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

16. My personal expense reports are accurate and are only billed to the appropriate organization(s).

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

17. I openly support establishing and monitoring internal mechanisms (e.g., an ethics committee or program) to support ethical decision-making.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

18. I thoughtfully consider decisions when making a promise on behalf of the organization to a person or a group of people.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

## Community

19. I promote community member relations improvement as a guiding goal of my organization and as a cornerstone of my effort behalf of my organization.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

20. I personally devote time to developing solutions to community problems.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

21. I participate in and encourage my management team to devote personal time to community service.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

## Clients

22. I use a client-oriented approach to project management.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

23. I respect the practices and customs of the diverse clients while maintaining the organization's mission.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

24. I promote document confidentiality and do not tolerate breaches of this confidentiality.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

## Colleagues and Employeess

25. I foster discussions about ethical concerns when they arise.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

26. I maintain confidences entrusted to me.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

27. I demonstrate through personal actions and organizational policies, a zero tolerance for any form of harassment.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

28. I encourage discussions about and advocate for the implementation of the organization's code of ethics and value statements.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

29. I fulfill the promises I make.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

30. I am respectful of views different from mine.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

31. I am respectful of individuals who differ from me in ethnicity, gender, education or job position.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

32. I convey negative news promptly and openly, not allowing employees or others to be misled.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

33. I expect and hold staff accountable for adherence to our organization's ethical standards (e.g., performance reviews).

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

34. I demonstrate that incompetent supervision is not tolerated and make timely decisions regarding marginally performing managers

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

35. I ensure adherence to ethics-related policies and practices affecting all staff.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

36. I am sensitive to employees who have ethical concerns and facilitate resolution of these concerns.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

37. I encourage the use of organizational mechanisms (e.g., an ethics committee or program) and other ethics resources to address ethical issues.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

38. I act quickly and decisively when employees are not treated fairly in their relationships with other employees.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

39. I assign staff only to official duties and do not ask them to assist me with work on behalf of my family, friends, or associates.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

40. I hold all staff and business partners accountable for compliance with professional standards, including ethical behavior.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

41. I am mindful of the importance of avoiding even the appearance of wrongdoing, conflict of interest, or interference with free competition.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

42. I personally disclose, and expect my peers to disclose, any possible conflicts of interests before pursuing or entering into relationships with potential business partners.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

43. I promote familiarity and compliance with organizational policies governing relationships with suppliers.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

44. I set an example for others in my organization by not accepting personal gifts from suppliers.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

**Board** (to be considered only if you are member in the board of your local PMI Chapter)

45. I have a routine system in place for board members to make full disclosure and reveal potential conflicts of interest.				
<input type="radio"/> Almost Never	<input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Usually	<input type="radio"/> Always	<input type="radio"/> N/A
46. I ensure that reports to the board, my own or others', appropriately convey risks of decisions or proposed projects.				
<input type="radio"/> Almost Never	<input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Usually	<input type="radio"/> Always	<input type="radio"/> N/A
47. I work to keep the board focused on ethical issues of importance to the organization, community and other stakeholders.				
<input type="radio"/> Almost Never	<input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Usually	<input type="radio"/> Always	<input type="radio"/> N/A
48. I promote board discussion of resource allocation issues, particularly those where organizational and community interests may appear to be incompatible.				
<input type="radio"/> Almost Never	<input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Usually	<input type="radio"/> Always	<input type="radio"/> N/A
49. I keep the board appropriately informed about issues of alleged financial malfeasance, malpractice, and potential litigious situations involving employees.				
<input type="radio"/> Almost Never	<input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Usually	<input type="radio"/> Always	<input type="radio"/> N/A

Once you have completed the assessment questionnaire, go back and examine those items not marked as “Always”. Using the development plan template on the next page (or one of your own creation), begin establishing mechanisms and timelines for self-improvement to increase your ethical stance and behavior.

# Personal Ethics Development Plan

Using your responses to the self-assessment questionnaire above, work to identify and address areas of opportunity for improvement. Consider those statements answered with “almost never” or “occasionally” and even when the answer was “usually”.

## Step 01

Transfer those statements that you want to work on into the first.

## Step 02

Transfer the respective current frequency into the second.

## Step 03

Define a goal frequency in the third column.

## Step 04

Reflect about the actions to take and establish realistic timeframes.

Personal Ethics Development Plan				
Ethical Behavior I want to work on	Current Frequency	Goal Frequency	Action Steps	Timeframe
i.e. “03. I strive to be a role model for ethical behavior”	Occasionally	Monthly	Discuss the PMI Code of Ethics with a peer or with a PMI chapter colleague	Within 6 months

## Tips and Recommendations

- Establish realistic targets, continue to be motivated!
- Choose 1-3 activities to work on at a time. Focus, and establish priorities.
- Review the plan periodically and monitor your progress.

# Project Teams Ethical Assessment



# Introduction

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Project teams are frequently confronted with potential ethical issues. The changing composition of teams, aggressive timelines, pressure of high expectations, culture, values, personality, skill set and expertise, potential conflicts of interest, and often blurred boundaries between the organization's and the project's authority create environments where ethical issues are relegated to a lower priority.

**The Project Team Ethics Assessment is designed to help project management practitioners. Its main purposes are:**

- to increase self-awareness on ethical perspective, knowledge and understanding.
- to support any project team in increasing their internal functionality and improving their current dynamic.
- to create opportunities for alignment of ethical behavior within the team and promotion of an ethical culture.

## Description of the Tool

The tool consists of a series of statements referring to team ethical knowledge, behavior, practices and performance. The statements can be answered with: “almost never,” “occasionally,” “usually,” “always” or “N/A” (not applicable). Although the assessment can be conducted by an internal facilitator (the project manager), the engagement of an external assessment facilitator for the process should be considered. It consists of four major steps:

1. The assessment components (information about purpose, procedure and use of outcomes) are prepared.
2. Each team member completes the assessment sheet individually and anonymously, selecting one of the given answers.
3. The facilitator collects the individual assessments and proceeds to an assessment summary, highlighting the team’s strengths, challenges and disagreements.
4. In a team meeting, the results of the assessment are presented, the outcomes discussed and conclusions and next steps defined. Based on the results of the assessment, the team sets up an action plan, aiming at the improvement of the team’s ethical performance.

If a project has a longer duration, this process can be repeated to review the changes if considered necessary or convenient.

### The potential outcomes of conducting this assessment are:

(1) assess ethical knowledge of the team members; (2) identify knowledge gaps and learning needs for individuals and the team; (3) identify gaps and various alternative actions required; and (4) identify areas of immediate attention (short term) and plans for further implementation (long term).

This tool allows the main stakeholders of a project team, sponsor, team leader and team members to become aware of possible ethical issues the team might face and take preventive actions in timely manner.



## Instructions for the Use of the Team Ethics Self-Assessment Tool

The Team Ethics Assessment tool can be used by any project team, no matter the industry or the project they are involved in. Before taking this assessment, we encourage you to review PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, any similar code that is recognized by your company, and any document you signed when you accepted your position with the company or when assigned to the team.

### Steps in using the tool:

#### Step 01

The project manager organizes a meeting with the team. The objectives and the expected results of applying the Project Team Ethics Assessment are presented and discussed. The facilitator is introduced to the team (if different than the project manager).

#### Step 02

Each team member completes the assessment individually and anonymously by assigning an answer for each of the 24 statements: “almost never,” “occasionally,” “usually,” “always” or “N/A” (not applicable). Check only one answer for each of the statements.

#### Step 03

The assessment facilitator anonymously collects all participants’ assessments and completes the Team Ethics Assessment Summary. Each assessment corresponds to a column, and the assessment facilitator transfers information to the sheet assigning the following values: always (=4); usually (=3); occasionally (=2); and almost never (=1) from the received assessments.

Once all the assessments are summarized on the Team Ethics Assessment Summary, the facilitator selects:

**First, two statements with the highest variance (disagreements)**

**Then, two statements with the highest score (strengths)**

- If more than two statements have the same high score, the facilitator selects the ones that, in their opinion, will bring more value to the coming meeting.

**Finally, two statements with the lowest scores (challenges)**

- If one or both of the statements with the lowest scores are already included in the disagreements list, then the second worst is selected.
- If more than two statements have the same low score, the facilitator selects the ones that, in their opinion, need to be addressed in the coming meeting.

## Step 04

The project manager calls a meeting with the assessment facilitator and all team members to discuss the six selected statements and how to address them, including any received anonymous comment.

### **During the meeting, a plan should be developed in order to:**

- Increase the team's strengths, perform even better, and leverage them
- Proactively address the team's challenges, and work to solve them as quickly as possible
- Understand the team's disagreements, and have the whole team aligned Review previous evaluations (if applicable) and take corrective action where action plans are not effective from data collected
- Review previous evaluations (if applicable) and take corrective action where action plans are not effective from data collected.

## **Recommendations**

If the circumstances allow, it is highly recommended that the team make use of an external facilitator to avoid potential conflicts of interest or roles.

It is recommended that the assessment facilitator ensures consensus among team members about the outcomes, and that the plan is clear and shared via a set of appropriately detailed minutes.

The recommended frequency of applying the tool is at the beginning of the project, during the forming/ storming stage of the team (as it would help with setting the norms) and once again, later in the project to check the alignment and be able to take corrective actions if necessary.

01. Team values are defined at the project level and aligned with organizational values.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

02. There are trainings/induction into team/organizational values, and a code of conduct is given to all team members.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

03. Ethical aspects/indicators are included in the performance evaluations (control mechanism) of team members.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

04. There are correction mechanisms (processes and procedures) in place to manage dysfunctional relationships within the team.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

05. The team has a structure in place (person or committee with clearly defined roles and responsibilities) where team members are encouraged to address ethical issues.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

06. If ethical behavior is in question, there is a safe environment for debates and open dialogue.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

07. Team members have discussions about possible conflicts of interest due the project context (business owner, client, sponsor, project manager, specific roles in the team, etc.).

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

08. Team members use their authority solely to fulfill their responsibilities and not for self-interest or to further the interest of family, friends or associates.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

09. Team members demonstrate respect for their colleagues, superiors and staff.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

10. Ethical concerns are openly discussed in the team, and time is devoted for developing appropriate solutions.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

11. Team members fulfill the promises they make to colleagues.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

12. Team members act quickly and decisively when colleagues are not treated fairly.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

13. Deviations from the team/organizational values and code of conduct are allowed only in special situations.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

14. Team members accept only those assignments that are consistent with their background, experience, skills and qualifications.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

15. When errors or omissions are made, team members take ownership and make corrections promptly.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

16. Team members accept accountability for any issues resulting from their errors or omissions and any resulting consequences.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

17. Team members inform themselves and uphold the policies, rules, regulations and laws that govern their work.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

18. Team members conduct themselves in a professional manner, even when it is not reciprocated.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

19. Team members do not act in an abusive manner toward others.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

20. Team members demonstrate transparency in their decision-making process.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

21. Team members make commitments and promises, implied or explicit, in good faith.

Almost Never     Occasionally     Usually     Always     N/A

22. Team members strive to create an environment in which others feel safe to tell the truth.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

23. The team members' statements and actions are honest even when the circumstances would allow them to confuse the issues.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

24. There is respect for the views of others.

- |                                    |                                    |                               |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Almost Never | <input type="radio"/> Occasionally | <input type="radio"/> Usually | <input type="radio"/> Always | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

Any anonymous comments:

# Ethics Toolkit Project Bully Identification



# Introduction

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Bullying in the workplace is a significant global problem that ignores the borders of culture, nationality, gender, class, age, or other traditional distinction. It not only causes harm to those in the target zone of the bullies but also has enormous negative impacts on the workplace culture.

In the highly competitive, results-driven world of project management, there is a lot of stress, pressure to perform, competition and team interaction. It is an environment that is bully-prone. Bullying in project management is a prevalent problem globally. Bullying can be as harmful in the workplace and for projects as it is in schools, causing well-understood emotional and physical impacts, plus an extensive list of challenges for employees and their organizations. Bullies prevent work from getting done, causing chaos, confusion, and a loss of focus.

Productivity, performance, creativity, and team spirit deteriorate. The harm bullies can cause has a direct impact on projects and project managers. If there is a bully operating in a project, the impact on the project team can be toxic, which inevitably has negative impacts for the team members and the project. For every short-term result that a bully achieves, there is a list of longer-term negative business and project impacts that far outweigh any temporary benefits.

Bullies adopt a leadership style that drives predominantly through dominance, fear, and negative reinforcement. Employees have no choice but to do as their leader says. The bullying model creates a workplace and project culture where employees feel vulnerable, anxious, and uncertain. All too commonly, project practitioners that choose this model embrace disrespectful behavior. They motivate by threat, humiliation, and exerting power over others.

The results can be diabolical for the project, the team members, and for the practitioner. Given all these reasons how bullies derail projects, it is clear that project managers need to take direct and proactive action to prevent, manage and eliminate all bullying on projects. Many project managers acknowledge they lack the skills and tools to properly identify a workplace bully from a difficult workplace conflict from bullying – they are totally different issues requiring different response strategies. Fortunately, there are many sources of information and tools available to assist project managers, starting with this assessment tool designed to help identify bullies.

The key to coping with a project bully is to first be able to identify the person as a bully. This tool helps project managers distinguish a competitive, ill-mannered, or challenging personality from a workplace bully. If managers, human resources personnel, and senior level executives take initiative in addressing bullying early on, much larger financial, ethical, legal, stakeholder, and project problems will be avoided. Eventually, it is our hope that these initiatives will lead to wider support for zero tolerance for bullying in the workplace regardless of circumstance, societal norm, or jurisdiction.

# Instructions for the Use of the Project Bully Tool



This tool is designed to help you first evaluate the types of challenging behaviors you are facing. Using a series of questions and identified characteristics and behaviors of bullying versus normal workplace behavior, the user will work through the application of the tool to their challenging situation.

The questions encourage you to assess not only the behaviors but also the workplace context and the situations where the behaviors are used. They also help you self-assess and identify if you might be properly interpreting the behaviors. It can frequently be challenging to answer these questions in an objective way when you are in the midst of the frustrations caused by the environment. Try to find a sympathetic colleague to help walk through this tool with you or approach it in the morning after some rest.

At the end of the exercise, the users should be comfortable that they have properly identified the nature of the problem, the types of behaviors they are witnessing and whether they are dealing with a workplace bully.

## **The assessment consists of 10 questions about behaviors, workplace culture, and context.**

- Answer each of the questions as honestly and accurately as you can. Details are helpful and there is no right or wrong answer. It is normal to feel stressed or find this process uncomfortable; dealing with unpleasant conflict or a bully is never easy.
- Once all the questions have been answered, review the definition of bullying and the information about typical bully behaviors. This will assist in the evaluation of your responses.
- Applying the background information to each answer, take time to review the responses, and make notes of whether any of your answers align with any of the bullying behaviors.
- Identify which of the answers may raise “red flags;” reflect and reassure yourself that you have been as objective as possible. Use a trusted mentor or unbiased advisor to help you.
- If you have identified that you are facing a project bully, there is further information including webinars, white papers, articles, and action plans for coping with a workplace bully on <http://www.projectmanagement.com>. Of particular assistance are some references at the end of this document.

# The Project Bully Identification Assessment

To determine if you are dealing with a bullying problem here are the questions to answer:

- 01 What are the challenging behaviors you are experiencing? Write them down in a list and be specific. This question is designed to help you sort out the various challenging behaviors and conflicts you are seeing. By listing them, you often begin to see patterns and may see an escalation in the severity and negative impact of the behaviors taking place over time.
- 02 Is the behavior happening repetitively (as opposed to a single event)? It is essential to assess whether you are dealing with a single event vs. many events – bullying is typically repetitive.
- 03 Is the behavior disrespectful? Write down why. Bullying is, by its nature, disrespectful. Often in a moment of objective analysis, you will be able to assess whether the behavior is disrespectful or simply someone having very strongly opposed views or someone who doesn't communicate well. You may find that the core of the problem is poor conflict management.
- 04 Is the behavior deliberate? If so, explain how. Bullies act with purpose and intent; they aren't reacting in the moment. To assess whether you are dealing with a bully, it is important to evaluate whether you see a pattern of deliberateness to their behavior.
- 05 Is the alleged bully targeting more than you? Are there others who are being treated the same? Bullies usually target one or a couple of people as opposed to everyone. If they are acting badly with everyone, you may be confronted with a person who has social engagement and communication problems. They may be rude, aggressive, or defensive with everyone and lack emotional intelligence. This is different from bullying.
- 06 Are the behaviors benefiting the alleged bully? If so, write down how. Bullies do not act for someone else's benefit. If they are attacking someone, it is important to link their action to benefits that they are deriving from them. Often, when you step back and assess, you can see a calculated effort by the bully to eliminate or harm someone that they feel is a threat.
- 07 Is the essence of your conflict a difference of opinion? If so, write down why. Differences of opinion are an everyday occurrence in our projects. They are important as they help us problem-solve by evaluating different options. However, the way we manage divergent opinions often creates conflict. Conflict is the root of many work and project-related challenges.

Most of us handle conflict poorly and are afraid to deal with it. This question helps you assess whether the true source of the problem is differences of opinion or bullying.

06

Are you being provided with feedback that you might not like but that is fair and constructive? Explain your answer. Similar to the previous question, project and teamwork challenges us and can be stressful. We always need feedback about areas that we can work on but it is not always easy to hear that we need to improve.

As long as that feedback is fair and constructive then the person delivering the feedback is not a bully. You may find that you are feeling angry, hurt, or unhappy about the feedback itself and turning your emotions against the person who delivered the feedback. As we noted earlier, this assessment process is designed to root out the cause of the problem and sometimes we are contributing to the problem. It takes stepping back and evaluation to help sort things out.

07

Is the problem related to a performance issue (i.e., a performance review)? If so, are the actions being taken reasonable and aligned with your organization's performance management program? Performance management is part of all workplaces. Each organization has its own processes and metrics to manage performance. If the problem relates to your performance, similar to the previous two questions, it is helpful to dissect the conflict to assess whether it is legitimate or not. We may not like the result of the performance management but as long as it is reasonable and defensible, it is not bullying.

Does the situation involve a decision related to management (i.e., resource allocation, solving budget problems, project scale reduction, and scheduling decisions which increase workload)?

If so, is that decision defensible? Does the decision align with organizational goals and your workplace reality? Our projects constantly change, and many decisions related to them are outside of our control. For example, the executive team may decide that another project has become more important or for strategic reasons, that your project's budget or scope has to be cut.

These decisions related to management are easy to take personally and have many impacts for our projects. It is important to objectively assess them; as long as they are defensible and aligned with broader organizational strategies and goals, they are not bullying. You may not like the decisions but if you step back, you may find that you are not being personally attacked. Instead, your organization has selected to choose an alternate route that impacts your work.



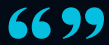
## Next Steps: Analysis of Responses to the Assessment Questionnaire

With your answers in hand, we can begin to analyze the problem.

### Steps 1 of 2

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For questions 1 to 6, the following information should help you determine if your situation aligns with the definition of workplace bullying and the common behaviors associated with it.



**Workplace bullying is defined by “repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more employees of an employer: abusive conduct that is either verbal abuse; or behaviors which are threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; or work sabotage, in some combination.” \***

It is important to distinguish the inappropriate, one-time acts of someone who is under a great deal of pressure, having a particularly (and unusually) bad day, or handles a disagreement poorly from those of a bully. These are single events for which the perpetrator quickly and sincerely apologizes. They understand they have offended and are accountable. A bully’s actions, on the other hand, are repetitive, intentional, and deviant. They deflect accountability and cannot be reasoned with.

While each bully adopts their own form of interpersonal destruction, bullying usually includes behaviors that can be categorized into three types, as outlined below (this is a list of representative examples and is not exhaustive):

### Aggressive Communication

- Eye rolling, intentionally interrupting, shutting down conversations.
- Insulting or making offensive remarks.
- Shouting, yelling, angry outbursts.
- Going around co-workers in order to avoid communicating with them.
- Harsh finger pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking the way.
- Staring others down, giving dirty looks.
- Sending angry emails or other e-communication.
- Humiliating or ridiculing, excessive teasing.
- Spreading rumors or gossip.
- Ignoring peers when they walk by.
- Playing harsh practical jokes.
- Taunting with the use of social media.

\*1 Definition of “Workplace bullying,” Workplace Bullying Institute, accessed 7 September 2021, <http://www.workplacebullying.org>.

## Manipulation of Work

- Removing tasks imperative to job responsibilities.
- Giving unmanageable workloads & impossible deadlines.
- Arbitrarily changing tasks.
- Using employee evaluations to document supposed poor work quality and without setting goals or providing the tools needed to improve.

## Sabotaging Work

- Hinting that someone should quit, nobody likes him or her, or the boss thinks they are incompetent. Withholding pertinent information needed to do one's job effectively.
- Leaving employees out of communication loops.
- Excessive micromanagement.
- Failing to give credit or stealing credit for others' work.
- Preventing access to opportunities like promotions or raises.
- Consistently pointing out mistakes, however little or long ago they occurred.

## Summary

### Steps 2 of 2

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For questions 7 to 10, perform a self-check to ensure that the situation is more than a difficult conflict. Not every unpleasant or challenging conflict with people at work or in a project is bullying. On the contrary, conflict is a normal part of life and, as you may know too well, conflict in our pressure and deadline-filled workplaces is often normal. So, it is important to contrast normal work behavior and interaction – particularly in uncomfortable and difficult times—from bullying.

Here are some helpful examples of reasonable and regular conflicts that take place at work that would not qualify as bullying unless they also involved the behaviors noted in the definition of bullying:

#### **Respectfully expressing differences of opinion.**

Heated debates about divergent views of how to approach or resolve a challenge are normal. Sometimes they are even healthy and should be encouraged as they ensure that all opinions are considered. Challenging each other's opinions is standard behavior in competitive and high-performance team environments. Having to defend your position might be uncomfortable but it is not inappropriate unless you are being humiliated and diminished in the process.

#### **Offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behavior.**

The key word here is “constructive.” We all should have the emotional intelligence to appreciate our flaws and areas for improvement. In a positive work environment, everyone is challenged to learn, grow, and develop. In order to do that, we need to be open and accepting of helpful and reasonable feedback delivered in a respectful way. Again, we may not like it or it may make us uncomfortable, but as long as the delivery mechanism is respectful, this is not bullying.

#### **Reasonable actions related to staff performance (i.e., managing performance, taking reasonable disciplinary actions, or assigning work).**

Performance management will always be challenging. Communicating that the expectations have not been met is not easy. Yet this is still a normal requirement of all organizations and part of sound management. The important word is “reasonable.” If you feel sabotaged, gutted, or totally shocked by what you hear, consider whether there is something deeper going on. If no path for improvement or performance plan is offered this is another sign that bullying may be involved.

#### **Unpopular, yet defensible decisions related management (i.e., resource allocation, solving budget problems, project scale reduction, and scheduling decisions which increase workload).**

We easily get personally invested in our work. We lose sight of the broader strategic vision or priorities within our organizations. However, embracing change and agility is a hallmark of most successful organizations. When priorities, customer requirements, budgets, or management decisions negatively impact our work, it is easy to lash out when faced with our personal disappointment. While the decision may not be appreciated, as long as it is defensible and aligns with broader goals, we must show maturity, flexibility, and capacity to adapt. However, if the decision is flavored with revenge, manipulation, sabotage, or personal humiliation, the possibility of bullying surfaces.

## Summary

The key is to approach each situation with a reasonable, objective perspective in order to properly assess if there is bullying involved. Doing a self-check by stepping back and reflecting on the possible source of the problem helps clarify whether you are dealing with a bully or not.

## Conclusion

At the end of this process, you should have a very good understanding of the nature of your relationship and whether you are dealing with a project bully. With that information you can now decide upon an appropriate and reasonable strategy moving forward. If your assessment results in a determination that you are confronting a bully, there are proactive and helpful actions that you can take. An action plan is helpful. Helpful resources are available on [www.projectmanagement.com](http://www.projectmanagement.com). These links to on- demand webinars about workplace bullying and coping strategies for managing bullying should help:

### **How to Prevent and Stop Workplace Bullying:**

<https://www.projectmanagement.com/videos/604629/How-to-Prevent-and-Stop-Workplace-Bullying>

### **Coping Strategies for Bullying in Project Management:**

<http://www.projectmanagement.com/videos/304214/Coping-Strategies-for-Bullying-in-Project-Management>

### **Bullying in Project Management: A Global Challenge:**

<http://www.projectmanagement.com/videos/300058/Bullying-in-Project-Management--A-Global-Challenge>

# Project Bully Identification Assessment Questionnaire

## 01 **What are the challenging behaviors you are experiencing? Write them down in a list and be specific.**

This helps sort out various behaviors and conflicts you are observing. By listing them, you may begin to identify patterns or an escalation in severity and negative impact over time.

## 02 **Is the behavior occurring repeatedly (as opposed to a single event)?**

Bullying is typically characterized by repetition. It is important to distinguish between one-time occurrences and repeated behaviors.

## 03 **Is the behavior disrespectful? Write down why.**

Bullying is inherently disrespectful. When objectively analyzing the situation, you may determine that the issue stems from poor communication or strongly opposing views rather than bullying. Sometimes the underlying issue is ineffective conflict management rather than intentional disrespect.

## 04 **Is the behavior deliberate? If so, explain how.**

If so, explain how. Bullying usually involves intent and purpose. Unlike reactions made in the moment, bullies demonstrate consistent, deliberate action.

## 05 **Is the alleged bully targeting more than you?**

Bullies often target one or a few individuals, not everyone. If the person behaves poorly with everyone, the issue may stem from poor social skills, aggression, or low emotional intelligence rather than bullying.

## 06 **Are the behaviors benefiting the alleged bully?**

The benefits that they are deriving from it. Often, when you step back and assess, you can see a calculated effort by the bully to eliminate or harm someone that they feel is a threat. If so, note how. Bullying is typically self-serving. Step back and assess whether their actions result in personal gain, such as eliminating a perceived threat or undermining someone.

## 07 **Is the essence of your conflict a difference of opinion? If so, write down why.**

Differences of opinion are normal and can be valuable for problem-solving. However, poor management of divergent views often leads to conflict. This question helps you determine whether the issue is rooted in a simple disagreement or actual bullying.

**08 Are you being provided with feedback that you might not like but that is fair and constructive? Explain your answer.**

Similar to the previous question, project and teamwork challenges us and can be stressful. Feedback—though sometimes uncomfortable—is an essential part of professional growth. If the feedback is fair, constructive, and aligned with your development, it is not bullying. Reflect carefully to separate your emotional reaction from the intent behind the feedback.

**09 Is the problem related to a performance issue (i.e., a performance review)?**

If so, are the actions being taken reasonable and aligned with your organization's performance management program? Performance management is part of all workplaces. Each organization has its own processes and metrics to manage performance. If the problem relates to your performance, similar to the previous two questions, it is helpful to dissect the conflict to assess whether it is legitimate or not. We may not like the result of the performance management but as long as it is reasonable and defensible, it is not bullying.

**10 Does the situation involve a decision related to management (i.e., resource allocation, solving budget problems, project scale reduction, and scheduling decisions that increase workload)? If so, is that decision defensible?**

**11 Does the decision align with organizational goals and your workplace reality?**

Our projects constantly change, and many decisions related to them are outside of our control. For example, the executive team may decide that another project has become more important or, for strategic reasons, that your project's budget or scope has to be cut. These decisions related to management are easy to take personally and have many impacts on our projects. It is important to objectively assess them; as long as they are defensible and aligned with broader organizational strategies and goals, they are not bullying. You may not like the decisions, but if you step back, you may find that you are not being personally attacked. Instead, your organization has selected an alternate route that impacts your work.