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The personality traits of successful project teams: Identifying project management team member personality characteristics

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The topic of project management success is critical to all organizations as failure wastes all levels of organizational resources. The United States has launched a healthcare modernization program to help decrease the cost of healthcare (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009). The decision to reduce the cost of medical care requires the adoption of new technologies and the success of these implementations is dependent upon successful project outcomes. Many IT projects suffer failures that are not clearly explained. The assumptions of the project management community are that competence and knowledge are the most important ingredients in success. However, the continued failure of technically complex projects suggests there may be other factors influencing successful outcomes. The goal of this study is to identify specific personality traits that support project success. The personality traits well recognized in behavioral psychology are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. These are better known as the Big Five personality traits. The literature cites conscientiousness as an important factor in achieving project success. This study examined the relationship of each of the Big Five personality traits to project success factors of on time, desired quality achieved, and within budget. The results of this study were surprising in that the personality trait of conscientiousness was not strongly supported as a project success factor. The evidence of the study identified the personality traits of neuroticism and agreeableness as strongly significant in achieving or undermining project success. The personality trait of neuroticism was found to be strongly negative in the interactions with all project components and other personality traits. This research provides information to help in project management team selection and opens several doors for further research.

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Page 92