**What differentiates the best program managers from the best project managers**

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I have recently read an interesting article from the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) PMO Leadership Council about what differentiates the best program managers from the best project managers. CEB’s preliminary research shows some of the key areas where the best *program managers* differ from the best *project managers*:

1. **They Possess Business Knowledge at the Organizational Level**: They see their work in the larger organizational context, are able to [connect projects to broader organizational goals](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/ResearchAndTools/Abstract.aspx?cid=100229676&s=insight) and grasp the key performance indicators of business partners.
2. **They Play to Team Strengths:** [Assigning the right people to the right tasks](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/ResearchAndTools/Abstract.aspx?cid=100033300&s=insight) in day-to-day project operations is a hallmark of the best program managers in addition to creating a motivating environment and clearly communicating objectives
3. **They Are Savvy Project Advocates:** Strong [stakeholder partnership](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/Topics/Abstract.aspx?cid=100246862&s=insight) is a characteristic shared by effective project and program managers. The ability to effectively communicate and interact with senior leaders, drive consensus among parties, and build trust with stakeholders is critical to achieving business outcomes. The best program managers are savvy project advocates that can effectively navigate organizational politics to secure necessary project resources.
4. **They Don’t See Process at Static:** A threshold level of process knowledge is necessary for all project management professionals, In addition the best program managers demonstrate a desire and ability to [continuously improve](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/Topics/Abstract.aspx?cid=100247019&s=insight) established processes, not just execute them.
5. **They Use Judgment to Effectively Tailor Methodology:** The best project and program managers deploy their judgment in a myriad of ways (e.g., [escalation timing](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/ResearchAndTools/Abstract.aspx?cid=100136900&s=insight), [tailoring communications](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/ResearchAndTools/Abstract.aspx?cid=100157884&s=insight)), but it is effective [tailoring of methodology](https://www.pmo.executiveboard.com/Members/Topics/Abstract.aspx?cid=100247014&s=insight) to suit project needs where the best program managers stand out. They don’t see methodology as a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather as a customizable tool to facilitate their work.

This is in line with a key theme at the PMI Australian Conference this year – paradigm shift in program and project management skills. Leadership, strategic and business management skills are skills required in the next generation of Program and Project managers and not just technical skills. A Program or project manager is no longer ‘just a project manager’ but a Business Consultant, Trusted Advisor and Change Agent.