

# Does your next project need a Champion?

BY PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGE - 8 October 2024 - 4 MINS READ

In the dynamic world of project management, having a dedicated champion to steer initiatives can be a game-changer. This individual or team serves as the project's ambassador, continually advocating its importance even through turbulent times. However, whilst the advantages of a project champion are clear, it is equally important to assess the potential disadvantages to determine if this role is right for your next project.

## Positives

### Encouraging internal buy-in:

At the heart of every successful project lies a strong foundation of internal buy-in. A project champion plays a pivotal role in fostering and encouraging this buy-in, acting to engage stakeholders, address concerns, and, in the case of the implementation of a new solution, publicise and facilitate early use. Their passion and advocacy should be responsible for inspiring others and driving momentum and commitment.

### Central point of contact:

In the midst of the change and uncertainty of a new project, having a reliable single point of contact can make all the difference. A project champion serves as a figure of guidance, offering support, answering questions, and providing direction to those navigating the intricacies of the project. They ensure that everyone is on the same page and moving in the right direction.

### Training facilitation:

A project champion can smooth the transition to a new system by facilitating training and knowledge transfer. Through their involvement with a project, including their own reception of training from an external resource, they have the expertise and knowledge to pass on to the rest of the team, eliminating external training. By investing in education and skill development, the project champion lays the groundwork for long-term success.

### Cost savings:

The above three factors can all play into the end budget and spend of a project. If there is internal buy-in, the project will be deemed a success. If the central point of contact is utilised appropriately, the chance of unforeseen expenditures can be minimised. If training is facilitated in-house rather than externally, there is a significant cost saving. Ultimately, a champion can play a crucial role in maximising the project's return on investment.

## Negatives

### Lack of redundancy:

Dependence on a champion creates a single point of failure within the project team. Placing too much emphasis on a single person's expertise or availability can create vulnerabilities. If the champion leaves the organisation or becomes unavailable, it can greatly disrupt the project's momentum. Without a backup in place, organisations risk being left in a vulnerable position, scrambling to fill the void left by the champion's absence.

### Assumed internal buy-in:

Having a champion can create the perception that internal buy-in has already been achieved. However, relying solely on a champion to secure buy-in can be a risky strategy. It is essential to recognise that buy-in is an ongoing process that requires continuous nurturing and reinforcement. Therefore, if there is a project team rather than a single champion, the involvement of multiple people results in automatic buy-in from them all.

### Limited knowledge distribution:

Over-reliance on a champion for information and direction can lead to a lack of knowledge distribution within the organisation. Team members may become dependent on the champion for guidance rather than developing their own understanding of the project's goals and objectives. This can hinder collaboration and innovation as team members may feel less empowered to contribute their ideas and expertise.

While having a champion can provide numerous benefits to a project, it is important to approach this role with a clear understanding of both its advantages and disadvantages.

With the right approach, a champion can be a powerful ally in navigating the complexities of project management and driving meaningful change within an organisation.