

Do I Allow my Directs to Own their Projects?

THE RED PILL EXECUTIVE WORKBOOK

CHAPTER 3



WORKBOOK INTRODUCTION

Now you know our secret... You know that there is a Red Pill way and a blue pill way. You might have had a feeling all along that something like this was true. Maybe you've butted up against blue pill thinking and wondered why it was so hard to drive projects that succeed by the "Iron Triangle" measures. Perhaps knowing that a Red Pill approach exists was novel and inspiring to you. Either way, after reading the book, the next question becomes, How do I navigate my own Red Pill journey? This workbook can serve as a guide, prompt valuable reflection, support your own and your team's Red Pill development, and drive Red Pill conversations and practices.

You'll find exercises and tools to help you think through Red Pill operations in relation to:

- Yourself
- Your Team
- Your Organization

Leverage the Workbook

Roll up your sleeves and dive into this work. This exercise will do very little if you skim over it. Think deeply, write down your thoughts, be brutally honest in your assessments, make Red Pill choices and learn from the results.

Make the workbook work for you. This chapter is part of a larger series, you can download the full workbook here: <https://www.thinkconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Red-Pill-Full-Workbook.pdf>. The work is not meant to be completed sequentially. Use the tools in the order that makes sense for you, your starting point, and your journey.

Re-use the tools and exercises. This exercise can and should be used more than once. Assess and reassess over time. Use the completed exercise as a reference point to measure growth and adoption or as justification for making new choices.

Enlist others. Gain valuable insights by having colleagues, peers or subordinates complete part or all of a tool/exercise. Use the workbook to develop Red Pill thinking in others.

DO I ALLOW MY DIRECTS TO OWN THEIR PROJECTS?

To learn more about these concepts, review Chapter 3: Taking Off the Gloves.

*An operator who is not emotionally connected to their projects is only going through the motions.
- The Red Pill Executive*

Introduction

You've read about your role as a Red Pill Operator. You are Rocky's Mickey, you're the seasoned mentor who has the street smarts to lead your trainee to victory, despite the odds. You're training wolf pups to become kick-butt operators, and you must enable your directs to own their projects. Let's examine how you do that.

1

Start by identifying your most recent Strategic Initiative. Provide examples of how you empowered your directs to fulfill their role.

Examples:

- Provided clarity on the role of each player involved using the 3-sided table
- Clearly articulated the desired project outcome in terms of fidelity in the true value potential
- Delegated responsibility to directs to gain control
- Created an environment where there are no secrets
- Provided P&L responsibility to my directs

When you cultivate teams of operators to act effectively in almost any situation, your company's management team or PMO will learn to respect decisions and methods that drive toward the true value potential of such initiatives.

2

The Wolf represents your Red Pill Operator of the future. Identify three traits displayed by The Wolf that you'd like to see in your directs when they own the project.

Examples:

- Dispassionate, despite others around him freaking-out
- Uses direct language, but isn't rude
- Committed
- Tests for risks
- Takes control
- Owns the problem
- Identifies himself as solving problems
- Focuses the team

1.

2.

3.

When you develop your wolf pack, you become Marcellus, calling in your best Red Pill directs to handle tough situations and trusting them to take care of business.

3

We discussed the importance of your Red Pill directs being emotionally connected to their projects in order to develop ownership. What are some potential barriers to your directs developing an emotional connection?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

An operator who is not emotionally connected to his/her project is only going through the motions. It becomes easy for them to think that they are doing all that they are responsible for and lay potential failure on others. Maintaining a high level of ownership takes care and feeding and often results from a responsibility to others. This isn't easy sometimes and they may need trust that they can confide openly and honestly with peers or you.

Examples:

- **Unrealistic expectations:** They setup conditions where you cannot win
- **Accountability without authority:** People cannot be accountable without the authority to make changes
- **Lack of accountability:** When this is part of organizational culture, there is little difference between success and failure
- **Teams do not commit to anything:** They always find a way to need something from someone else
- **Lack of team comradery:** This results in isolation and an inability to collaborate
- **Inconsistent performance:** This often results from lack of experience and skill, which lowers expectations for everyone
- **Personal/professional risk to taking on a difficult project:** This occurs when your directs don't feel that they have a safety net or proper levels or support, especially on high-risk projects

4

Keeping the barriers you listed above in mind, how can you enable your team to own their projects?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

By pushing Jules and Vincent a second time, The Wolf made them consider possibilities they might have overlooked. This wasn't a challenge levied against them, it was a way to make sure everyone was working from the same standards. In that sense, it was collaborative and laid the groundwork for additional planning. Note that when someone feels danger and uncertainty about a project, only specific training and support will help them stop and assess. With more danger and/or unknowns, there will be a natural tendency to fill in the blanks with things that align with one's personality. This is where you find safety in numbers. Where being able to openly and honestly expose concerns can result in far better decision making.

Examples:

- Develop conditions where the team becomes accountable to each other.
- Improve training opportunities; raise performance expectations across the team.
- Standardize on methodologies that foster rapid immersion & control.
- Provide 1:1 coaching; push and test for ownership; work to maintain a winning scenario.
- Use team building exercises to develop comradery.
- Provide stress management exercises.
- Assign reading; develop the team's ability to use a common vocabulary, metaphors and shorthand.

Key Takeaway

Ownership is a key ingredient for project success. The three-sided table helps clarify where ownership lies for maximum efficiency and effectiveness: Red Pill Operators own the desired outcome, Red Pill PMs own the process (but not the outcome) and Red Pill teams own their piece of the project. What's not so apparent is the role that Red Pill Operators play in helping their directs be emotionally connected to the project. By staying in tune with what might prevent your directs from taking ownership and then working to reduce or remove those barriers, you set yourself and the entire team up for success. Investing in coaching and training your directs pays dividends over time... it's a gift that keeps on giving.

EXERCISE CREATED BY:



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Dan is a senior consultant focused on the application of technology to business functions. He has 27 years' experience leading teams and completing technical projects in complex and demanding environments. Prior to joining Think, Dan served 21 years in the Australian Army, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2014. Dan is PMP and ITILv3 qualified and holds three degrees: Masters in Project Management, Masters in Strategy and Management, and Bachelor of Arts in Information Technology.
