

Characteristics for Being a Successful Infrastructure Real Estate Consultant

Best practices and more

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Based on my 40 years of experience in infrastructure real estate, I believe there are specific characteristics which are essential for success in this field. These traits help navigate the complex and often emotionally charged landscape of infrastructure projects when dealing with affected property owners. These characteristics include kindness and compassion; courage and perseverance; active listening; and flexibility and creativity.

Kindness and Compassion

The first characteristic is incorporating kindness and compassion into your negotiation strategy with affected property owners; this can lead to better outcomes and foster long-term relationships, build trust and enhance your reputation.

Kindness in negotiations can be shown by expressing:

- **Genuine Concern:** Showing that you care for the well-being of the other party.
- **Consideration and Respect:** Be considerate, respectful and understanding in your interactions.
- **Understanding and Assistance:** Be empathetic to the other party's situation and feelings; be willing to help alleviate their concerns.

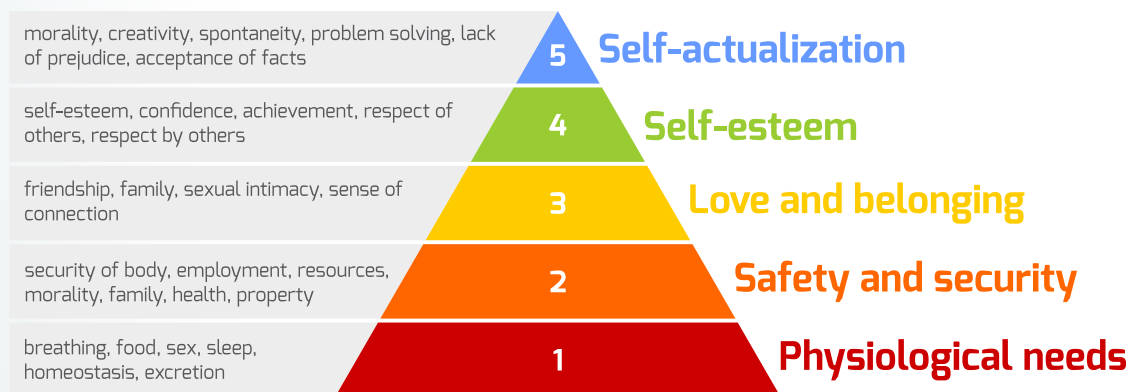
Understanding kindness and compassion ties back to our human needs. Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of a hierarchy of needs back in 1943, which suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to more advanced needs. This is described below along with examples of possibly how people could be affected by their needs in an infrastructure real estate project.

There are many benefits to practicing a kind and compassionate approaching, including:

- **Building Trust and Rapport:** Creates a safe environment where the other party feels valued and respected, leading to open and honest communication.
- **Fostering Long-Term Relationships:** Helps build strong, enduring partnerships. Parties are more likely to work with you again if they feel positively about their interactions.
- **Enhancing Reputation:** Establishes a professional reputation as a fair, trustworthy and desirable business partner.
- **Creating Win-Win Outcomes:** Encourages solutions that satisfy both parties, leading to more innovative and satisfactory outcomes.

By integrating kindness and compassion into negotiations, infrastructure real estate professionals can effectively address the emotional and practical needs of affected property owners, resulting in smoother project execution and more positive outcomes for all parties involved.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs





Courage and Perseverance

The next characteristic is courage and perseverance, as infrastructure real estate projects can be fraught with challenges requiring both.

Challenges professionals can face include:

- **Impact on Lives:** Projects can drastically affect people's lives, sometimes necessitating complete property buyouts.
- **Stress Management:** Handling interactions with affected owners, tenants and stakeholders can be distressing.
- **Bureaucratic Navigation:** Working through various bureaucratic layers and understanding regulatory frameworks is essential.

Understanding that property acquisitions can be traumatic for some people, it's important to recognize the stages of grief can apply in a taking of private property so we need to understand this and address it accordingly when discussing courage and perseverance.



Also keep in mind that when you are negotiating with affected property owners, I believe it is important to be mindful of the Supreme Court of Canada decision, Dell Holdings case which states the following... *"The expropriation of property is one of the ultimate exercises of governmental authority. To take all or part of a person's property constitutes a severe loss and a very significant interference with a citizen's private property rights. It follows that the power of an expropriating authority should be strictly construed in favor of those whose rights have been affected."* — Toronto Area Transit Operating Authority v. Dell Holdings Ltd., 1997, 1 SCR 32



As infrastructure real estate consultants, we need courage to be mindful and practice the above concept when negotiating with affected property owners.

The following perseverance and courage strategies are recommended:

- **Clear Communication:** Maintain transparency with property owners throughout the process.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Show empathy while managing emotional distress but avoid excessive sympathy.
- **Fair Compensation:** Ensure property owners receive fair compensation as per legal requirements.
- **Assistance and Support:** Provide help with relocation, financial counseling and finding alternative housing.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Adjust plans based on feedback and changing circumstances to build trust and cooperation.
- **Long-Term Planning:** Consider long-term impacts on property owners and communities, ensuring redevelopment benefits the broader community.
- **Follow-Up and Support:** Offer ongoing support post-expropriation to address lingering concerns.

Practicing courage and perseverance has many benefits including:

- Building trust and cooperation with property owners.
- Ensuring fair and transparent processes.
- Providing necessary support and reducing emotional distress.
- Facilitating smoother project execution and long-term community benefits.

By integrating these strategies and understanding the emotional journey of affected property owners, infrastructure real estate consultants can demonstrate the necessary courage and perseverance to handle the complex challenges of their projects effectively.

Active Listening

The next characteristic is active listening, which is vital for avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings, boosting productivity and enhancing relationships. It ensures that people feel heard and understood, which is particularly important in infrastructure real estate.

Active listening is a critical skill in infrastructure real estate, where negotiations, community interactions and stakeholder engagements are common. By actively listening, real estate professionals can effectively navigate complex scenarios, avoid conflicts and build strong, trusting relationships.

By practicing active listening, you can avoid conflicts. Active listening will lead you to determine concerns early, and you can identify potential issues and address them before they become significant problems.

Understanding the root cause for concern will allow you to take appropriate actions to defuse tensions and find amicable solutions. Active listening can also lead to building relationships. When you demonstrate genuine interest and truly listen, it fosters trust and respect — key components in building and maintaining strong relationships. This also enhances collaboration because stakeholders feel heard and understood and are more willing to work together toward common goals.

The following are recommended techniques for effective active listening:

- **Be Silent and Pause:** This allows time for speakers to think and respond without interruption. It also shows respect for their input and allows them to fully express their thoughts. Silence can encourage the speaker to continue sharing more information, leading to a deeper understanding of their perspective.
- **Reflect and Clarify:** A good way to practice this is to paraphrase and summarize what you've heard in your own words, which will ensure understanding and show that you are engaged. Asking open-ended questions will encourage the speaker to elaborate on their points (e.g., "Can you tell me more about your concerns regarding the project timeline?"). And if something is unclear, ask for clarification. This not only helps in understanding but also demonstrates that you are paying attention.

Let's apply a practical example to this.

Scenario: A government agency is planning to build a new highway that will affect several residential properties. The property owners are concerned about noise, environmental impact and property values.

Active Listening Application:

- **Initial Meetings:** Host community meetings to gather input from affected property owners. Use active listening techniques to understand their concerns fully.
- **Reflecting Concerns:** Paraphrase the property owners' concerns during the meetings to show that you understand their issues. For example, "I hear that you are worried about the noise levels during construction. Can you tell me more about how you think this might impact your daily life?"
- **Clarifying Solutions:** Ask clarifying questions to explore possible solutions, such as, "What specific measures would you like to see implemented to mitigate the noise?"
- **Follow-Up:** After the meetings, follow up with detailed plans on how the agency will address the concerns. This could include sound barriers, green spaces and property value protection measures.

By applying active listening, the government agency can address property owners' concerns more effectively, reducing opposition and fostering a collaborative atmosphere.

There are many benefits to active listening, including:

- **Enhanced Understanding:** Gain a deeper understanding of concerns, needs and expectations.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Address potential conflicts early and find mutually acceptable solutions.
- **Stronger Relationships:** Build trust and respect, leading to more effective collaborations.
- **Better Decision-Making:** Make informed decisions based on a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives.
- **Increased Cooperation:** Encourage stakeholders to work together towards common goals, improving project outcomes.

Active listening not only helps in understanding and resolving issues but also in building lasting relationships based on trust and mutual respect, which is crucial for successful infrastructure real estate projects.

Flexibility and Creativity

Being flexible and creative is another crucial characteristic in infrastructure real estate. Projects often face unforeseen challenges and changing circumstances.

You can practice flexibility by:

- **Adapting Plans:** Adjust strategies and plans based on new information and feedback.
- **Building Trust:** Demonstrates a willingness to collaborate and find common ground, fostering trust and cooperation.

Implementing creativity will lead to:

- **Innovative Solutions:** Develop solutions that meet the needs of both the project and the affected parties.
- **Problem-Solving:** Use creative problem-solving techniques to overcome obstacles and achieve project goals.

An example could be where a government agency needs to acquire a historical property for a new infrastructure project, such as a light-rail transit project. The property owner is reluctant to sell because of the historical and sentimental value attached to the building. In this instance, instead of demolishing the historical property, the government proposed an adaptive reuse plan where the exterior of the building is preserved and integrated into the design of the new transit station. This respects the historical significance while meeting the infrastructure needs.

There are many benefits to remaining flexibility and implementing creativity including:

- **Enhanced Project Outcomes:** By adapting and innovating, projects can meet both their goals and the needs of affected parties.
- **Improved Relationships:** Flexibility and creativity demonstrate a commitment to collaboration, fostering stronger relationships with stakeholders.
- **Reduced Conflict:** Creative solutions can address concerns more effectively, reducing opposition and facilitating smoother project execution.
- **Increased Efficiency:** Flexibility allows for quicker adaptation to new circumstances, minimizing delays and cost overruns.
- **Cultural and Community Preservation:** Creative approaches can preserve cultural and historical assets, enhancing community support and maintaining heritage.

By being flexible and creative, infrastructure real estate professionals can navigate complex scenarios, address diverse stakeholder needs and achieve successful project outcomes while maintaining positive relationships and community support.

Conclusion

Success in infrastructure real estate requires a blend of kindness, compassion, courage, perseverance, active listening, flexibility and creativity. These characteristics not only help navigate the complexities of the field but also build strong, trusting relationships with property owners and stakeholders. By embodying these traits, you can achieve better outcomes and make a positive impact on the communities you serve. 🌟



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