**FAQs**

**Leading in a Matrixed Organization**

1. How do you use influence vs. formal authority to get things done?

“In order to be comfortable with accountability without control, leaders need the skills to build alliances, influence without authority and get things done through others.  It’s completely normal in complex organizations for people not to have control over all the resources they need to achieve their objectives. The trick here is to develop suitable overlapping accountabilities so that people feel accountable for the end to end delivery of the product or service, not just for hitting their own narrow local numbers.”

<https://www.global-integration.com/blog/dealing-with-disadvantages-matrix-organization/>

**“Organizations need to establish three types of accountability:** organizational, team, and individual accountability, and ensure that organizational accountability takes precedence over team, while team accountability takes precedence over individual.”

<https://www.matrixmanagementinstitute.com/blog/fresh-look-accountability/>

1. How not to lose yourself – collaboration while retaining relevancy and leadership potential?

It is important that each employee knows that they are ultimately accountable for their own work which, combined with clear objectives, allows employees to take ownership of what they are doing and stay engaged.

“The importance of regular discussions to reclarify expectations as work demands change is compounded in matrix organizations. And highly engaged employees thrive in a system where everyone is accountable for his or her work.”

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/revisiting-the-matrix-organization>

1. How to deal with resource scarcity and competing interests?

Since all interests should align with the larger organizational strategy, it is important to understand how competing interests fit into the larger organizational strategy. Healthy competition should exist between teams in matrix organizations, but not to the detriment of any of the other teams. By understanding that competing interests are actually common interests in achieving the larger company strategy, teams should be able to see how sharing limited resources in the best interests of everyone since all teams should be aligned in achieving the companies larger goals.

1. How do you stay focused in such a matrixed organization?

In Mckinsey’s article “Revisiting The Matrix Organization” referenced below, staying focused and achieving results is accomplished by removing ambiguity and clearly communicating the business vision and mission.

“Given the importance of role clarity and accountability to organizational health and, ultimately, performance, addressing the role ambiguity that pervades matrixed companies is a critical priority for their leaders, who should help employees by continually setting clear expectations aligned with the direction of the business. “

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/revisiting-the-matrix-organization>

1. How to make it energetic? How do you keep speed/agility and responsiveness?

The best way to achieve this is to have autonomy in the organization. To ensure that employees are trusted to make decisions within their areas of responsibility and that they don’t need to have to have a tedious “clearing procedure” for each and every decision.

“This impossible clearing procedure represented, in our view, a failure of delegation, not of the matrix. One needs to ask why the functional specialists could not be trusted to act on the spot in regard to most product decisions in ways that would be consistent with the general guidelines of their functional departments? Either the specialists were poorly selected, too inexperienced and badly informed, or their superiors were lacking in a workable degree of trust of one another. Regardless, this problem, and its prevention and treatment, needs to be addressed directly without making a scapegoat of the matrix.”

Problems of Matrix Organizations, [Stanley M. Davis](https://hbr.org/search?term=stanley%20m.%20davis),j [Paul R. Lawrence](https://hbr.org/search?term=paul%20r.%20lawrence), Harvard Business Review, From the May 1978 Issue

1. How do you make others interested in your interests? What if I want control?

As mentioned above, personal interests and team interests should all be aligned with the organizational vision and mission. If interests can be communicated and put in terms of their alignment with the company vision and mission, then it should not be difficult to get others to see that these interests are in fact common interests in achieving the company objectives. With respect to individual control, it is not appropriate to expect to have full control in a matrix organization. “The best way to ensure that power struggles do not undermine the matrix is to make managers on the power axes aware that to win power absolutely is to lose it ultimately. These managers need to see that the total victory of one dimension only ends the balance, finishes the duality of command, and destroys the matrix. They must see this sharing of power as an underlying principle, before and during all of the ensuing and inevitable power struggles.”

Problems of Matrix Organizations, [Stanley M. Davis](https://hbr.org/search?term=stanley%20m.%20davis),j [Paul R. Lawrence](https://hbr.org/search?term=paul%20r.%20lawrence), Harvard Business Review, From the May 1978 Issue

1. How does Lean and Six Sigma affect these structures?

Lean Six Sigma programs which aim to reduce waste and variation wouldn’t be directly affected by a Matrix Organization, although Lean Six Sigma tools such as Stakeholder Analysis, Communication Plans, and overall a structured approach to problem solving could be great tools for leaders in a Matrix Organization to leverage. These Lean Six Sigma tools could help leaders to better understand stakeholders, and drive decision making and progress toward a common goal. The collaborative aspects that matrix organizational structures promote, could similarly support Lean Six Sigma projects which typically emphasize cross-functional involvement as a means to gain buy-in and ensure project success.