

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A culture of collaboration drives the Nexus project management group.

TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION



“We believe we are one team with the client. We have your best interests in mind and are focused on making you successful.”

-Melena Huller, Senior Project Director at Nexus Engineering Group

Teamwork and collaboration are critical to project success at Nexus. The firm believes in creating an environment that fosters a well-connected, highly collaborative internal team. This allows Nexus to take a more flexible approach that results in better ideas and, therefore, solutions tailored to each client’s business need.

This approach extends to how Nexus thinks about its relationship with its clients.

“We see ourselves as an extension of the client’s team, giving us skin in the game,” says Melena Huller, Senior Project Director at Nexus and the leader of the project management team. “We internalize our client’s problems and then work to find solutions.”

Huller is responsible for reinforcing a winning culture among the project management team, the engineering team, and Nexus’s clients. Her emphasis on teamwork stems from three decades of experience in engineering consulting and is in line with the Nexus vision.

“Melena’s technical and project skills combined with her ability to work effectively with clients and Nexus team members is incredible,” says Jeff Herzog, President & Co-Founder of Nexus. “She leads by example and is critical to our success.”

FROM DRAFTING TABLE TO DIRECTOR

When it came time to select a career path, Huller considered going into the medical field but ultimately chose to attend a technical school. She enrolled in Hickock Technical Institute where she learned to draft blueprints by hand.

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Her training led to her first job at an engineering consulting firm. Though she started doing hand drawings on mylar, her skills proved useful when the company began adopting CAD technology. Huller learned to use CAD and quickly developed the ability to train others.

“I believe you shouldn’t be afraid to ask questions and to ask for opportunities,” Huller says. “I contribute most of my success to continuously looking for opportunities to improve the process, then being proactive in finding the solution.”

This attitude has brought her many opportunities, such as working on smart piping and instrumentation diagrams in the 90s, an exciting technology that eventually led to 3D piping and modeling. She also took the lead on standardizing procedures for her department, taking note of what worked and what didn’t.

Building on her success, Huller decided to go back to school to earn her engineering degree. Even though she was working full time and raising a family, she began attending Cleveland State University in the evenings, ultimately earning her degree in 2005. With her degree in hand and a strong background in multidisciplinary engineering, Huller took on a project engineering role where she worked with clients in the refining and chemical industries.

She quickly began to see opportunities to improve how firms approached project management, especially when it came to how the project and engineering teams interacted. Huller finally got that opportunity when she joined Nexus to help start its engineering & design business.

“I wanted to be part of creating a new and improved work process and culture,” she says. “Nexus gave me that opportunity.”

Promotion from Project Manager to Project Director followed fairly quickly as she developed strong internal and external relationships. Huller also decided to get her PMP certification to better understand industry practices and uniquely apply them to Nexus’s work process.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Leveraging insight from her past experience, Huller broke the traditional norms in order to develop a best-in-class project management team at Nexus.

Having seen technical and project management teams be adversarial in the past, Huller wanted to create a one-team approach. She started by developing and hiring project managers (PMs) who shared a similar attitude.

“I wanted PMs that would get into the trenches with their technical counterparts,” she says. “My

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belief is that PMs should remove roadblocks, be the facilitator between the client and the team. I encourage them to be S.O.C.I.A.L: sincere, open, collaborative, interested, authentic, and likable.”

PROJECT SUCCESS

Open lines of communication, transparency, and responsiveness foster trust among the Nexus team. This allows for streamlining collaboration and problem-solving to unlock new ways of thinking and efficiency, all of which leads to better results for the client.

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Nexus project managers are responsible for keeping communication lines open between the team and the client. Being open, transparent, and extremely responsive to any and all needs fosters trust among the entire team, streamlining collaboration and problem-solving to unlock new ways of thinking. It also increases efficiency, all of which lead to better results for the client.

High levels of trust internally and externally also result in a better experience for the client. Because everyone is up to speed on the project, the entire team is available to quickly answer questions and help solve problems.

SUMMARY

This approach has been highly effective and is ideal for the plant-driven projects in which Nexus specializes. Strong teamwork built on a foundation of trust allows projects to be run with fewer levels of management—creating a project management system that is “fit-for-purpose.”

“We do hundreds of projects every year,” says Herzog. “Our ability to work effectively on multiple teams is essential to the firm’s success.”

The other key ingredient for a successful project is a strong relationship with the client.

“We look to develop long-term relationships with our clients so we can better understand how the designs we deliver today will impact their operations in the future,” says Huller. “A strong project management process is an important component in developing that relationship.”

To learn more about project management services at Nexus and other capabilities, visit www.nexusegroup.com

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