

# "The Palm Approach of Project Management"

## An Innovative Approach Inspired by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Unique Vision and Leadership

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**Abstract.** "The Palm Approach of Project Management" - the novel Project Management approach we are introducing in this paper - is designed to show how to make use of unbounded human capabilities to get over large challenges in order to successfully and creatively manage unique innovative projects in normal and harsh conditions. The approach is inspired by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Unique Vision and Leadership, and is structured in the shape of a Palm tree whose roots are three resources and three pillars, and whose fruits refer to its motivation engine, essence, and processes, which are man-centered and based on human creativity.

**Keywords:** H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum., Dubai, Project Management, Palm Approach of Project Management, Vision, Leadership

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional approaches of project management involve the utilization of certain notions and practices which revolves around providing an answer to the following questions:

- Why the project is undertaken?
- How the project can be managed?
- Who is managing the project?
- What are the fields of study and the points of interest of the project?

These approaches have provided satisfying results while managing standard projects. A standard project can be defined as a project while the accomplishment of a predetermined result is fulfilled within the set deadlines and using the available resources.

Challenging projects in harsh conditions, like the ones of the Arabian Peninsula, require unique management approaches. Dubai has provided an exceptional success sample which has been leading in several areas through many successful projects. The success of Dubai projects isn't a coincidence.

It is based on unique Project Management approaches, which are developed and executed by magnificent people.

In this paper, we will propose a novel Project Management approach designed to achieve outstanding results in severe conditions. The approach is inspired by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Vision and Leadership, and the unprecedented success he has achieved in Dubai. We will provide required details on the approach, and will suggest ways of certification, generalization, and standardization.

## 2. THE PALM APPROACH OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The novel Project Management approach: "The Palm Approach of Project Management" (PAPM) suggested in this paper is called Palm because of two reasons:

- The approach structure has a Palm-like shape
- The Palm is a symbol of challenge, patience, and perseverance in the Arabian Peninsula where the unique success of Dubai is taking place

The approach not only reflects the transformation of extremely challenging projects into outstanding successes, but it describes as well, and more importantly, how these challenging projects are designed and how the energy to accomplish them is derived.

### a. Motivation

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*"All people have an ocean of achievement inside themselves just waiting to escape"*

*H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum*

Standard Project Management approaches gather experiences and standardize them in structured tools. Consequently, that assumes the projects are ready to be managed, and the project manager is a user of some preestablished tools. **That means the standard Project Management instruments aren't, in general, designed to help generating uncommon projects and don't use uncommon mechanisms.**

Our aim is to introduce a Project Management approach which makes use of the uncommon and the great energy and potentials people in general, and project managers in particular, have to, first, design projects with promising prospects, and, second, to utilize innovation to deliver projects provided they have the necessary will and perseverance.

As a result, the reasons why the novel approach was suggested can be split into the following main two categories:

- The projects: design a strong and robust approach capable of managing first-of-their-kind projects regardless of their complexity and the conditions where they are implemented.
- The project management: encourage innovation and creativity in the management process.

#### b. Description

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*"We are living proof that when human beings have the courage and commitment to transform a dream into reality, there is nothing that can stop them"*

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H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

The Palm approach has the unique characteristic of being **Man-Centered**: it doesn't look only at what a person can do or, even, what he/she actually did. It focuses rather on the human being himself: it considers him/her **the center of focus, the key to success, and the energy of accomplishment**. It draws a distinction between the drivers (Roots) and the results (Fruits). This can be further clarified as follows:

- **Roots**: it focuses on the human factor and identifies its distinguished characteristics.
- **Fruits**: it focuses on what men are able to accomplish once a certain number of criteria are met.

### 3. Structure of PAPM

It has been mentioned above the PAPM has the structure of a Palm. Indeed, the PAPM has roots and fruits which are split, each, to two subcategories. The structure aims to describe what a project manager needs, and what the conditions he/she needs to meet to obtain outstanding results.

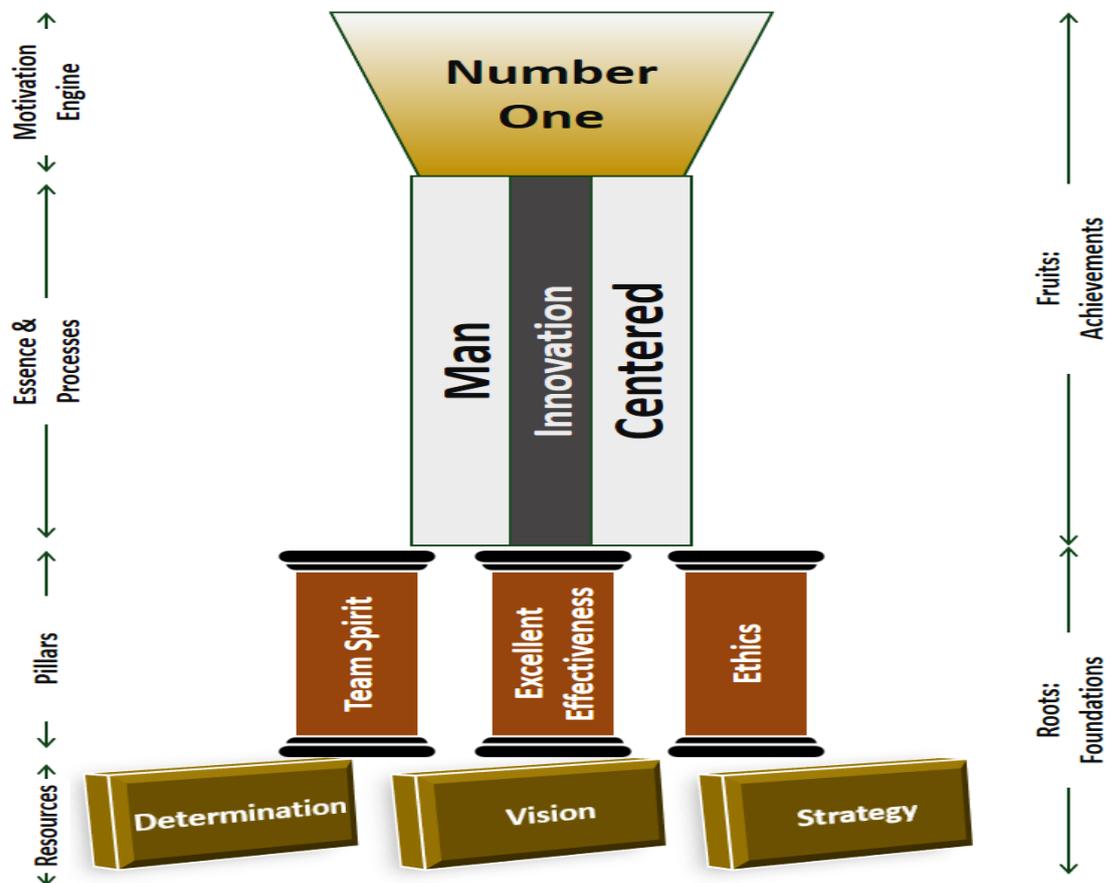
The "roots" include two components, each one of them has three elements as follows:

1. **Resources**: Determination, Vision, And Strategy
2. **Pillars**: Team Spirit, Excellent Effectiveness, Ethics

Similarly, the "fruits" include two components, each one of them has one element as follows:

1. **Essence & Processes**: Man-Centered (Essence), Processes (Innovation)
2. **Motivation Engine**: Number One

The structure of PAPM is presented in **Figure 1**:



**Figure 1: PAM Project Management Approach Structure**

The four components of PAM are described in the following sub-sections:

**a. Resources**

*“Determination, strategy and vision for the future are our real resources in the quest for excellence and success”*

*H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum*

PAM has three resources. They describe what a project manager requires to excel and succeed, and have to be made available throughout the Project Management course. The resources are like a source of power that generates the necessary energy which enables project managers to overcome challenges and reach the highest degrees of accomplishment.

PAM has the following resources:

- **Determination:** as PAM is man-centered, PAM project managers must be determined and must not be susceptible to hesitation.

- **Vision:** the determination helps to implement what has been decided by a preestablished vision. The vision development is a creative process which requires project managers and leaders to have this crucial quality in their toolbox.
- **Strategy:** the strategy insures the delineation of the vision into actions, which will require determination to be implemented.

All in all, a PAPM project manager needs a vision, a strategy, and a strong determination in order to get involved in Project Management.

#### b. Pillars

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*"Try to achieve the impossible and direct your people to ways of achieving it"*

*"A true leader does not derive power from his position, but from his ethics, from people's love for him, and from his knowledge, education and excellence in his field of work"*

*"Most people talk; we do things. They plan; we achieve. They hesitate; we move ahead"*

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*H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum*

For any project to be qualified as a PAPM, three pillars are essential. These are the gateway between available resources and high expectations within a man-centered context. In fact, a determined project manager with a strategy and a vision needs to be able to influence his context and get people committed with him/her. Besides, he/she needs to be result-centered while maintaining and ensuring highest standards of quality and excellence. Moreover, it goes without saying a person who is committed to PAPM and aspires to manage challenging project - which requires creativity and commitment - needs to comply by ethics and values.

The three PAPM pillars are described as follows:

- **Team Spirit:** PAPM is centered on human factor, but it requires a person who is able to "direct his people" towards the ultimate objectives he/she is targeting: the PAPM team is precisely this group of committed people. The source of this person's capability isn't derived from his/her "position", it is rather derived from its ethics, knowledge, determination, and accomplishments on the field. **H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum is the perfect illustration.**
- **Excellent Effectiveness:** PAPM requires accomplishments in the field. The "determination" within the established "strategy" must be translated into permanent advancements and achievements in the "field of work". The lack of permanent advancement in the field is not forgiven for lack of means or difficulties of implementation, a **PAPM project manager has to continuously deliver excellent work in the field towards his/her vision in line with the predetermined strategy.**
- **Ethics:** the PAPM project manager requires strong faith and determination to face and overcome challenges. We quote H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum: "No matter how big the challenges, strong faith, determination and resolve will overcome them". Therefore, ethics are a natural attitude one must adopt in the context of PAPM.

c. **Essence & Processes**

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*"An easy life does not make men, nor does it build nations. Challenges make men, and it is these men who build nations"*

*"From crisis emerge men determined to succeed"*

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*H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum*

The most significant characteristic of PAPM is being concentrated on the human factor. It doesn't not consider people as a component in a framework, no matter how important it is; it consider them **the reason for the existence of projects, and a necessary and sufficient condition for their success**. This attribute is what we called "the essence of PAPM".

Unlike a number of common Project Management approaches, PAPM doesn't dictate the processes to follow, it rather lets them to the creativity and the innovation of people. Furthermore, PAPM can be implemented in unprecedented project. Hence, creativity is indispensable. In facts, the management of many innovative projects in Dubai required unique processes for their implementation. For instance, the challenges related to construction material lift during the construction of Burj Khalifa (tallest structure in the world), and the stability of Infinity Tower (tallest building in the world with a twist of 90 degrees) under the thrust of the wind.

d. **Motivation Engine**

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*"Dubai will never settle for anything less than first place, I want Dubai to be number one"*

*"I want Dubai to be number one. Not in the region, but in the world. Number one in everything: high education, health, and housing"*

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*H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum*

PAPM is a unique approach, implemented by unique people, and can be of a significant interest in unique challenging conditions. This approach is inspired by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Visions and Leadership, which are converted into true reality in Dubai's unrivaled successes in many fields. The achievements of his Highness in the middle of desert are driven by a strong will. This is a unique driver H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum has designed, spread, and converted into one of the most dynamic, developed, and rapidly developing cities in the world. The driver is a true **Motivation Engine and Generator**: this is the undiscussable and unchangeable will of being the Number One, the leader, on a global level.

4. **PAPM versus Standard Project Management Approaches**

An outstanding success in challenging conditions deserve to be used to learn lessons and create knowledge. The PAPM is a try in that sense. In this section, we conduct a comparison between PAPM and standard project management approaches which are commonly utilized and implemented. The comparison covers several aspects of Project Management, and isn't exhaustive. It is summarized in the following table:

Aspect	PAPM	Standard Project Management Approaches
<b>Processes</b>	Based on the innovation and the creativity of committed people	Detailed as steps, based on previous experiences in Project Management
<b>People</b>	Committed, creative, skilled people around a visionary leader committed to excellence	Skilled people following preestablished management approaches
<b>Quality</b>	Targets the highest quality levels, the quality defines and drives the method, and is founded on excellence	the quality is defined by the project RFP and conditions
<b>Team</b>	People gathered by a strong determination and faith, led by a forward-looking committed person	People selected according to the project required set of skills
<b>Accountability</b>	Based on ethics	Hierarchy-related, based on the alignment with rules and regulations
<b>Human factor</b>	Man-centered	People are a key success factor, among others
<b>Training</b>	Requires field work and involvement	Can be obtained through only trainings and certifications

**Table 1: Comparison between PAPM and Standard Project Management Approaches**

**5. Prospects for Dubai as a *Project Management Hub***

Dubai is one of the most dynamic cities where many megaprojects have been implemented. For instance, we cite several the leading ongoing Dubai projects and their budgets:

Project <sup>1</sup>	World ranking	Cost
<b>Dubailand</b>	World's largest Retail and Entertainment World	64.3 Billion USD
<b>Arabian Canal</b>	World's largest man-made canal	50 Billion USD
<b>Al Maktoum International Airport</b>	World's largest airport	80 Billion USD
<b>Dubai marina</b>	World's largest man-made marina	Multiple billions of USD, different phases
<b>Palm Jumeirah</b>	World's largest man-made island	12.3 Billion USD
<b>Dubai Maritime City</b>	World's first purpose-built maritime center	0.8 Billion USD

<sup>1</sup> List of development projects in Dubai, wikipedia

Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Crossing	World's longest arch bridge	0.7 Billion USD
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**Table 2: Leading ongoing Dubai projects and their budgets**

One can infer two characteristics about Dubai projects:

- Leading worldwide (Number One)
- Involving the required budgets to ensure highest standard of quality

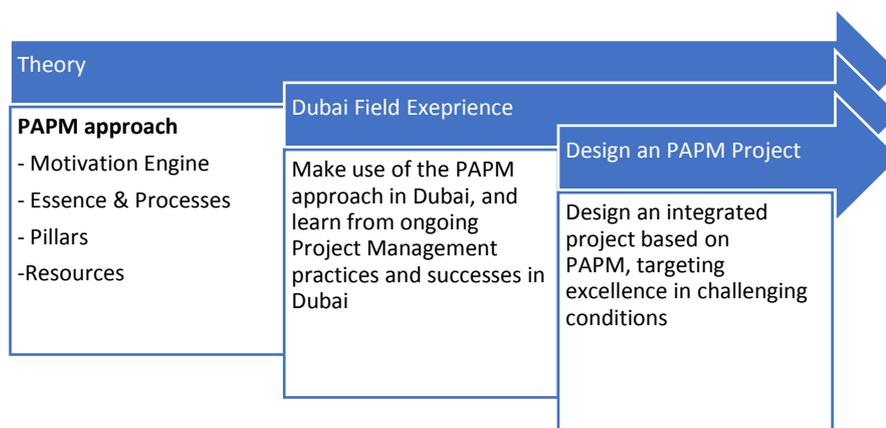
The PAMP Project Management approach suggests a description of the Project Management practices and attitudes behind the unique success of Dubai. **The objective of this work isn't limited to only describing how the success of unique projects in Dubai is reached, but it aims to pave the way towards a more ambitious target: make of Dubai a Project Management Hub.** Indeed, Dubai has all the ingredients to globally lead in project management with many successful prominent projects, and we suggest the **generalization of PAMP and making it available to practitioners to be the first step in this operation.** Therefore, we suggest the main components of a possible certification system in the following sections.

**a. PAMP Certification**

PAMP is a Project Management approach which is centered on the human factor. As a consequence, the determination and the strong will are two natural conditions in this context. We suggest three components, which should be the foundation of a possible certification system of PAMP, which we hope to be based in Dubai:

1. Theoretical training on PAMP components and context
2. Field experience in Dubai, in line with PAMP objectives and driver
3. Design a project for Dubai, in line with Dubai vision and the “number one” aspiration and achievements

Therefore, like the PAMP approach, the suggested PAMP certification system is **innovative and first-of-its-kind.** We illustrate it in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: PAMP Certification**

**b. Dubai opportunities: great men, for unique Project Management learning**

PAPM certification will be a first step to design, formalize, and then subsequently generalize a unique Project Management based on one of the most significant human successes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The PAPM learning combined with field experience in Dubai should be life-changing for any interested and committed individual. With the ongoing and the planned projects, which are designed, driven, and managed by devoted individuals, the PAPM approach can be fully understood and experienced provided a strong will and determination.

**6. PAPM & Mathematics**

We conclude our model by providing a **mathematical representation of PAPM**. The mathematical representation we are providing includes two main components:

- The mathematical representation
- A suggestion of a mathematical model, and an application in an active field in Dubai: **Tourism**

**a. Mathematical formalism of PAPM**

We mathematically represent PAPM through the following formalism:

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$$\text{Objective} = \text{PAPM}(\text{Resources})$$

$$\text{PAPM} = \text{Pillars} + \text{Essence} + \text{Processes}$$

$$\text{Objective} = \text{Motivation Engine}$$

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**b. Suggestion of a mathematical model**

**i. Field of Application**

The field of our study is tourism, which is one of the most active and promising field in Dubai where Dubai demonstrates its excellence and global leadership: it is the sixth most visited city in the world<sup>2</sup> in 2017.

**ii. Data:**

We show the evolution of the number of international visitors in Dubai in the last four years in Figure 3.

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<sup>2</sup>Gulfnews News Website

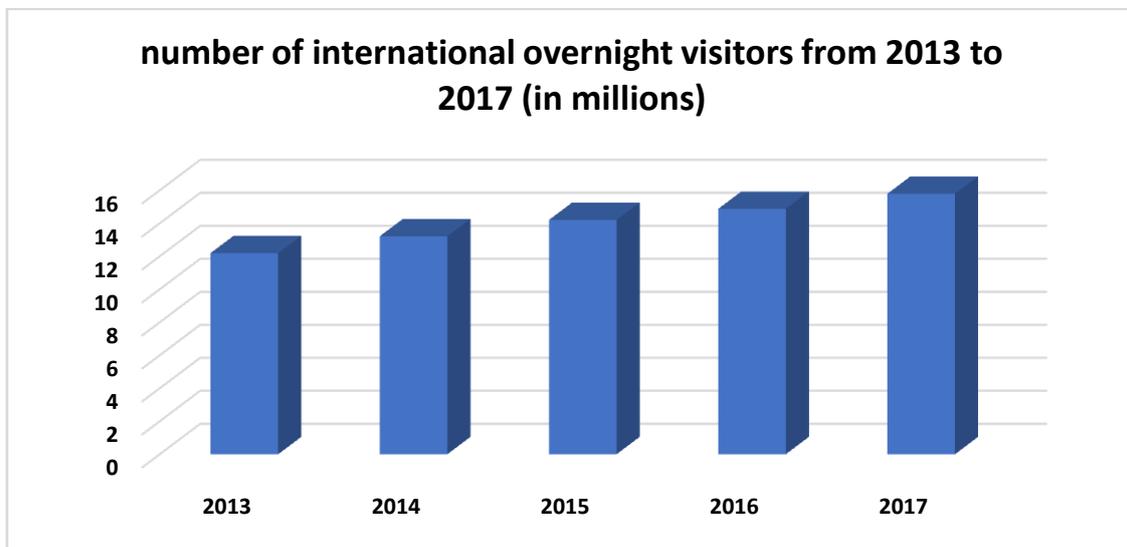


Figure 3: Number of international overnight visitors

From the Figure 3 we infer the growth rates from a year to another and we represent them in Figure 4.

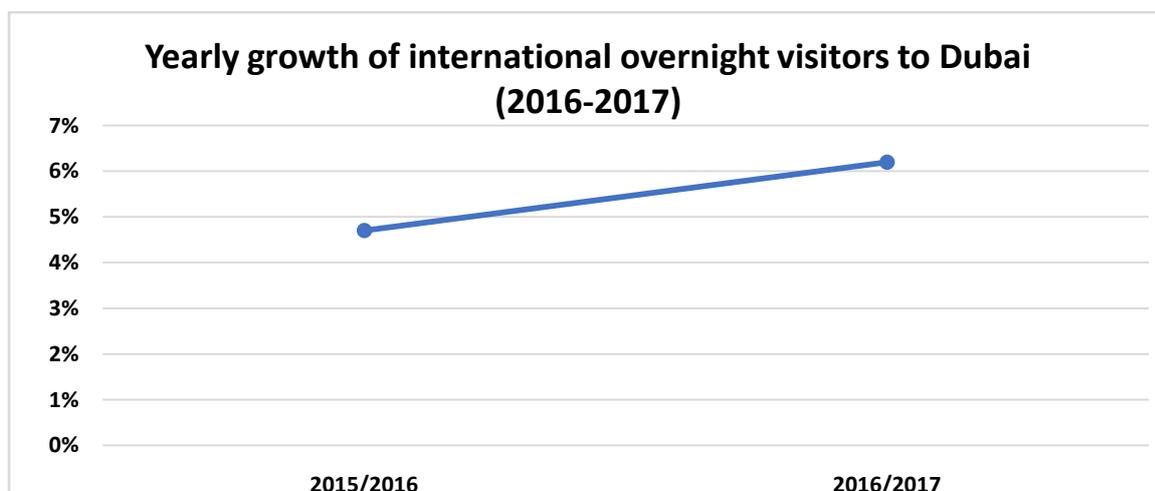


Figure 4: Yearly growth of international overnight visitors to Dubai

In line with the "number one" Dubai motivation engine, the yearly growth of international overnight visitors has jumped from 4.7% to 6.2% between 2015 and 2017. The target set by Dubai for 2020<sup>3</sup> is 20 million, which is equivalent to a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.2% (a total growth rate of 27%). **This is 130% of the 2016/2017 growth rate: this can be considered as a motivation engine of a Dubai project which can be managed through PAPM.**

The PAPM motivation engine can be represented mathematically as follows:

<sup>3</sup>Arabianbusiness Website

$$\text{Objective} = \text{Motivation Engine} = A$$

Where  $A$  is the targeted growth rate of Dubai visitors, which is given by the following formula:

$$A = 8.2\%$$

We assume the Essence & Processes, and the motivation engine (PAPM fruits) are included in the definition of  $A$ .

iii. **Pillars:**

$$\text{Team Spirit} = TS$$

$$\text{Excellent Effectiveness} = EE$$

$$\text{Ethics} = ET$$

The PAPM motivation engine can be mathematically modeled through PAPM pillars as follows:

$$A = TS + EE + ET$$

We assume an even distribution<sup>4</sup> among  $TS$ ,  $EE$ , and  $ET$ . Therefore:

$$TS = EE = ET = 33\% \times A = 2.7\%$$

All the pillars ( $TS$ ,  $EE$ , and  $ET$ ) are based on the human factor; PAPM resources: determination towards a vision guided by predetermined strategy.

**The mathematical model we suggested can be further improved to more precisely match PAPM context and aspiration, provided sufficient and granular data is available.**

7. **Conclusion**

We quote H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum: "Time is limited and the dream is boundless; therefore, I am always in a hurry", and "We must look forward and anticipate the future so that our country leads globally". **The target of his Highness is global, the objective is to be number one, and the work is unceasing.** The vision, the determination, and the personality of his Highness made of Dubai a true success case in Project Management, PAPM is a try in this context to capture the structure of a unique Project Management approach built and implemented in Dubai. The main strength of PAPM lies in two components:

- Based on an actual outstanding success
- Being indeed already implemented in extremely harsh conditions

Besides, the chief characteristic of PAPM is being **man-centered**. PAPM is intended to be a first step in learning from Project Management achievements in Dubai, and to encourage Project Management practitioners to contribute to these successes in Dubai open and welcoming environment.

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<sup>4</sup> The even distribution can be improved provided more data is available