



Global Project Management

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Outline the difference between a traditional project and an international project
- ✓ Describe the challenges involved in managing international projects
- ✓ Discuss the conflict management procedures for global projects
- ✓ Assess the communication techniques used in global projects

Global Project Management

In traditional projects a large majority of the team members work in a single location for the same organization. However, *distributed projects* involve team members working in many locations. These projects can be called *international projects* when they include people located across country borders. *Virtual projects* are composed of team members who are dispersed geographically and work in different organizations. While working on virtual projects, project managers may face specific challenges as they need to balance different company cultures, interests and working practices, since most communications occur over a distance. Collaboration between people of different countries, cultures and languages is required for international projects, sometimes with the added complexity of the locations being spread over various time zones.

Global Projects

This unit addresses the combined challenges of international, distributed and virtual projects, being mainly dedicated to *global projects*, which include people from different organizations working in various countries across the globe. There are a number of challenges involved in managing global projects. These are as follows:

Number of different organizations – Project team members may work for a single department in one company, for multiple departments, or even for multiple companies. Project managers must adapt their people and leadership skills to the multiple procedures, organizational cultures, and policies.

Number of distant locations – The project team may be in multiple locations, in different rooms, or in a single room. Face-to-face meetings can be easily organized, and the positive influence of body language and social interaction on efficiency is clear when all stakeholders are in geographical locations close at hand. The team members are located in at least two different countries in global projects. When the distance between the team members is such that travel is required for physical contact, the use of phone and video conferencing becomes essential, requiring the application of communication strategies to ensure a high level of effectiveness.

Country cultures—Beyond organizational culture, the traditions and customs of different nations and regions can bring more diversity to the work environment, improving the collective creativity and reducing the group thinking. Motivation is often increased as many people prefer to work in cross-cultural environments because of the rich information exchange. Nevertheless, this diversity can sometimes be the source of misunderstandings and conflicts, and project managers must apply some basic practices and rules to take advantage of the cross-cultural communication, and to avoid its pitfalls.

Time zones –The whole project team can be based in the same location or in different locations in the same time zone. At the other extreme, there are project teams with members in completely different time zones. This makes it difficult (or impossible) to organize meetings in common office hours. The effect is twofold. Program and project managers can use the different working times to their advantage by creating a 'follow-the-sun' implementation, reducing the duration of sequential tasks by a half or a third of the time. When there is low overlapping of working hours, the procedures and communication rules must be precisely defined among people in 'complementary' time zones. On the other hand, they may be important when the exchange of simple information takes a week to complete, instead of a single day. To reduce the probability of these problems occurring, global organizations can implement standard communication rules and templates across locations.

Different languages –International companies usually establish a common language for the exchange of information, although the way people communicate is highly dependent on their own native language. For example, if the common language is English, the effectiveness of communication by most non-English speakers will be limited by their knowledge of English vocabulary and expressions, and often by their ability to make analogies and tell stories or understand jokes. On the other hand, native English speakers will need to limit their vocabulary to essential words and clear sentences, carefully confirming that their foreign colleagues have understood their ideas.

Examples of global projects

- 1) **A pharmaceutical project** –The project team members come from a partnership of eight organizations and are working in six locations (the headquarters in France, two laboratories in Germany, two quality assurance teams in England, and one development team in South Africa); the team is composed of people speaking three different native languages (French, English and German). There are four different country cultures, and the total difference in time zones is one hour in summer (GMT+1 for England and GMT+2 for the other countries). There are stakeholders from another two organizations in different locations in addition to the team members (one environmental agency in Switzerland and the European Commission in Belgium), increasing the number of different countries to six, without changes in the number of time zones or languages.
- 2) **A software development project** –The project team members are working in four companies in different locations (one development team in Curitiba, Brazil; the software company in London, England; and two development teams in Bangalore and Mumbai, India), with team members speaking four different native languages (English, Portuguese, Brazilian Kannada and Tamil), all with different levels of fluency in English. There are three different country cultures, and the total

difference in time zones is 8h30 in summer (GMT+5:30 for India and GMT-3 for Brazil). There are stakeholders from another three locations in addition to the team members (three pilot customers in South Africa, USA, and Australia), elevating the time zone difference to 17 hours (GMT-8 for San Francisco, USA, to GMT+10 for Sydney, Australia) and the number of different countries to six.

An organizational change project – The project team members from two organizations (one consulting company and the main corporation) work in 14 company offices in ten countries, speaking eight different native languages. The total difference in time zones is 14 hours in summer (from Melbourne, Australia, to New York, USA). In this case, all the stakeholders are in the same locations as the project team members.

Global projects' and programs' requirements

The methods, tools and processes assembled in the existing project management bodies of knowledge are applicable to most types of projects, be they traditional, global or virtual. However, what are the specific needs of global programs and project managers that lead to the need for specific methods and techniques?

A project manager may ask him/herself the following questions when managing a global project:

Global Team Management

- How can I develop leadership skills that will be effective for team members in other locations?
- How can I manage conflicts among team members working in different locations (time zones)?
- How can I establish trust among virtual team members, particularly when they work for different organizations?
- How can I provide coaching to project managers and coordinators located away from me?
- How can I perform team-building activities when the budget does not authorize all team members to be in the same location during the project initiation phase?
- How can I learn to deal with different cultures, allowing other team members to thrive in a multicultural team?

Communication across Borders

- How can I adapt my company templates for meetings over a distance?
- How can I ensure more efficient and shorter meetings over a distance?
- How can I conduct special meetings, such as coaching, brainstorming and knowledge transfers, over a distance?

- How can I track the project deliverables and tasks assigned to people located in other countries, and avoid misunderstandings created by the different languages?

Global Organisations

- What is the best way to structure the project team?
- How might my organization adapt its structure and culture to thrive as a global company?
- What types of professionals work well over a distance, and how do I select them?

Collaborative Tools

- Which tools can I employ to control and coordinate virtual teams working on my projects and programs?
- Which tools can my company deploy to enhance communication in global environments?
- How might my company deploy these tools at all organizational levels?
- Which tools can I use to improve the quality of communication between program and project managers to enable me to monitor the milestones without creating administrative overheads?
- How do I foster the adoption of these tools?

Global Projects Knowledge Areas

Global Teams

This part presents strategies to manage global project stakeholders by understanding the differences in language, culture and time zones and identifying how to transform these differences from challenges into opportunities.

One of the main challenges of team management across the globe is the fact that most practices and concepts are dependent on the different cultures and personalities involved.

Cross-Cultural Collaboration

‘Our own culture is like water to a fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe through it.’

(Trompenaars, 2005)

‘Culture (...) is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. (...) The “mind” stands for the head, heart and hands – that is, for thinking, feeling, and acting, with consequences for beliefs, attitudes and skills. (...) Culture in this sense includes values: systems of values are a core element of culture.’ (Hofstede, 2001)

Project managers must understand personalities and human nature in order to select team members, assign correct responsibilities and roles, and perform stakeholder analysis. In addition to this, *global* project managers need to recognize how the different beliefs, attitudes, basic assumptions and values, and behavioural norms can influence the collaboration between team members from multiple countries, and to learn how to adapt their leadership style to the different cultures involved in the project.

Global Project Leadership

Project Management and Leadership

Project managers make use of proven practices to monitor important elements such as cost, scope, time, quality and risks, and to plan project activities. Project managers can develop strong leadership skills to compensate for the lack of formal authority (when the project team members are subordinated to a functional manager or are part of a different organization) and expert power (when they manage projects outside their main knowledge domains). *Program* managers usually have a stronger need to develop and make use of good leadership skills to motivate, inspire and provide coaching to the project managers and coordinators.

Global Leadership

Each dimension of global projects adds a series of leadership challenges. Some of these challenges, together with strategies that can help you to surmount the global barriers, are listed below:

Number of different organizations – Team members working for different organizations can have competing interests and hidden agendas. Good leaders keep their eyes and minds open for the different perspectives. They aim to identify and reconcile the various factors of motivation.

Number of distant locations – As there will be fewer opportunities for informal discussions and team events, the geographical distances can be barriers to relationship building.

Leaders will need to structure the project vision in creative ways to communicate it equally across all the locations.

Different languages – Team members with different native languages may have imprecise interpretations of or may not completely understand sentences in foreign languages. Good global leaders may find local allies to translate the project vision and constantly communicate it and reinforce it to the local teams, using local languages and expressions.

Country cultures – People coming from different countries may have diverse priorities, various sources of motivation, and dissimilar values and ethics. Good leaders must consider all these factors and the cultural dimensions to motivate, align, and inspire the global team members.

Time zones –The development of motivation and relationship building without a ‘sharedtime’ can be extremely difficult and frustrating for project managers. Few people will feel motivated or inspired by someone they rarely meet. The team members may tend to ignore the asynchronous communication or keep it as a low priority. Global leaders must plan for shared time, travel to meet the team members during key activities, organize co-located team events, and coach key team members to function as local leaders during all project phases.

The next sections review the leadership activities in more detail, providing recommendations to global project managers.

The strategies and practices depend on the project type, size and duration, organizational and country cultures, and even on the different personalities involved. However, to overcome these challenges and increase the commitment from the team members located in other countries, there are some broad recommendations for leadership competencies and activities.

The suggestions below must be evaluated according to the situations and projects in which you are involved, and can be a starting point when you acquire and develop your project team:

- Set clear goals and directions at the project outset, with participation from key team members in different locations.
- Together with the key team members, develop a strategy to achieve the project objectives, and make sure that all or most team members agree on its feasibility. This is a good opportunity to gather representatives from every country in the same location for a few days and develop a good team spirit.
- Build a vision that serves the interests of the main stakeholders and that can be translated into the achievement of the project objectives. This is done by considering the cultural dimensions of the stakeholders involved in the project and adapting the description of the vision to their trends on long-term orientation and human-nature relationships.
- Provide appropriate and timely feedback to all suggestions and remarks and align them to the project objectives. This will show your team members that you are open to their ideas.
- Communicate the goals, vision and directions equally to all project team members, local and distant. Obtain buy-in by asking for their feedback and suggestions on how to improve the project strategy and how to achieve the objectives.
- Empower the team by nominating coordinators for complex knowledge domains, by delegating the control of important work packages, and by developing leaders in distant locations. Suggest the organization of meetings to build a detailed plan and distribute work packages to these coordinators. Attend the first meetings and provide coaching on leadership to the local coordinators.
- Build trust from the beginning and maintain a high level of trust until project closure.

- Foster social interactions outside the project tasks, creating a strong personal relationship through face-to-face contacts and understanding of cultural values, communication norms and business ethics.
- Build an informal network among all project coordinators and make sure their behaviour remains consistent with the project strategies and vision during the whole project. This will facilitate the negotiations and conflict management processes and will foster innovation and cooperation.
- Create a team environment that allows the work experience to be rewarding and enjoyable. Team members should learn to respect and understand different cultures and have positive attitudes to conflict resolution.
- To reduce the feeling of isolation of global project team members located in remote offices, organize face-to-face team-building exercises.
- Consider the 'power-distance' cultural dimension as a starting point to understand which leadership behaviour you will apply to new team members from different countries: supportive, directive, participative or achievement-oriented.
- The availability of task-related information will increase the job satisfaction and commitment level. Foster the use of communications technologies for teamwork including people from various locations.
- During the whole project and on all occasions, act with consistency and integrity with regard to the project vision and strategy. The communication of the vision and strategy will only increase commitment when they are synchronized with the actions of the project manager. Inspire the team by providing guidance and always being available, locally or remotely. Praise team members with positive attitudes and motivate others to follow their examples.

Motivation

Motivation can be defined as an individual process that provides direction and energy to perform a determined task or adopt a specific behaviour. In project management, the *direction* needs to lead the tasks performed toward the project vision, mission and goals, following predetermined strategies, and the *energy* must ensure that the team members complete their tasks on time. Each individual might initiate a self-motivation process by understanding how the task can satisfy personal or professional needs, suit expectations and beliefs, and invoke positive emotions. The task of motivating other project team members may be more difficult, as you need to understand their needs, expectations and beliefs, and what 'makes them tick'. You need to pay special attention to their behaviour and carefully evaluate their reactions and emotions through verbal and non-verbal cues.

A good starting point from which to pre-empt the possible values and beliefs of people you seldom meet face-to-face is the cultural dimensions. Local coordinators and one-to-one telephone discussions can help you to obtain individual feedback from each key team member and monitor their emotions and reactions. You might compare these feedback elements to the original assumptions and adapt your attitude and leadership style.

Becoming a Good Global Leader

The main characteristics of a good leader are valid for most countries and cultures. When adapting common recommendations from the literature on leadership and motivation to global project management, the following suggestions appear:

use the synchronous and asynchronous communication tools to lead, coach and support the team members, independently of their origin, location, gender and hierarchical position;

- foster a positive and flexible culture, respecting the country differences and making the team members see the benefit of this diversity to the project;
- behave as a partner, not a 'boss', mainly when working with people from smaller power distance countries;
- nurture creativity and innovation in team members from different locations by deploying online and asynchronous brainstorming tools;
- search for cohesive solutions, adapting your negotiation skills to the different cultures involved in the conflicts and discussions.

Trust Building

Trust is at the heart of global team management. You might follow the steps described in this chapter to evaluate your needs and increase trust among the team members, project managers and coordinators, and other stakeholders:

- establish trust in the initial phases of the project;
- determine the weak communication channels in your project team;
- identify the level of trust required;
- maintain trust during the project implementation;
- build on this trust to create a healthy and collaborative environment for future projects.

Identifying the Level of Trust Required

Not all global programs need the same level of trust, as a different set of practices may need to be deployed depending on each situation. The main variables that can impact the level of trust required by global projects are listed below. You can use them to evaluate how much effort you need to put in place to develop trust between the key project stakeholders:

Project complexity –The project scope, budget and risk level can add to the complexity of programs and projects. Increasing the level of trust among the stakeholders may be a good contingency to reduce the likelihood of risks.

Number of different locations –The more geographical locations involved in a project, the greater the need for trust development. For team members in the same location, sharing working and leisure time, trust establishment can be a natural process. Remote team members have fewer opportunities for informal conversations and sharing activities out of the office. These activities must be stimulated in team-building exercises in order to build trust.

Project schedule –Projects that have more than one critical path and many parallel activities will require more trust among team members to attain the cooperation level needed to achieve the milestones. Global projects will have increased levels of risks when these parallel activities are performed by team members working across borders and when the dependencies among activities require communication between people in different timezones.

Number of different organizations –Differences in organizational cultures, priorities and interests may damage the trust between suppliers, partners and customers. In many cases, the rules must be clearly formalized at a very early stage and followed strictly during the execution of project activities. Companies working in partnerships need to agree at an early stage on their roles and responsibilities for control and information sharing. They must ensure that all stakeholders involved in the project understand and respect these agreements.

Number of different cultures –A natural barrier to people trusting one another is the number of different cultural values and norms. These hurdles can be reduced or eliminated through exercises and brainstorming involving teams from different cultures, and through cultural awareness training.

Number of new relations –Trust develops over time, based on successful shared experiences. When a group of people have never worked together in previous projects, the trust development must start from the beginning, taking more time to mature.

Conflict Resolution

Many projects involve conflict created by resource availability and by different priorities on costs, time, scope and quality. Conflict management can be seen as a process that begins when two or more parties have different viewpoints on the same topic, hindering or improving the project performance. The deployment of solid communication techniques and collaborative tools can reduce the occurrence of conflict due to misunderstandings and facilitate the resolution process.

Global Sources of Conflict

The characteristics of global projects (organizations, multiple locations, languages, time zones and cultures) can contribute to the generation of conflicts. Here are some examples:

The likelihood of diverse standpoints on risk acceptance and conflicting criteria for change approval and customer satisfaction can be increased due to cultural differences among stakeholders. Different behaviours when coping with change can also create conflicts.

Different native languages can generate misunderstandings, and the challenge of addressing personal concerns in another language is higher.

Conflicts can be created by incompatible views from different companies and locations on the distribution of work, power and responsibilities. Some countries may fight to keep strategic job functions, while companies charging daily rates may struggle to gain ownership of the tasks requiring more resources. To influence the strategies of projects involving organizational change may be the aim of most organizational functions.

Stakeholders in different locations with asynchronous hours may have different understandings on the respect for work-life balance and on acceptable times for meetings.

In some countries, employees prefer to have a sandwich in the office during lunchtime and go home earlier, while people from other countries opt for a two-hour lunch break and stay in the office longer.

Companies working as partners during the execution of highly specialized tasks may have different views on the costs to be charged to the customer, the strategies and techniques to be deployed, and on the time required to accomplish them.

Individuals working in foreign locations may suffer from ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the evaluation of their behaviours and working style according to local norms and standards. This usually tends to be unfavourable. The local team may consider the visitor naïve or impolite simply because their values are different. A large group of foreigners working in another country, on the other hand, may form the same impression of the local workers, who will not act according to the same set of beliefs and values.

The project manager will need to be aware of the situations above and always foster discussions to identify potential reasons for conflicts, obtain a common understanding on the diverging topics and motivate constructive discussions. The above list can be completed with other situations specific to each company. These must be improved during lessons-learned sessions and used as a reference during risk identification exercises.

Conflict Management Steps

The risk mitigation strategy may be to manage the conflicts and obtain an agreement among all parties when the project team has identified potential conflict situations as threats to the project. The steps below are general guidelines that can be used to adapt your current conflict management practices to global projects:

Act as a Mediator — Show integrity, transparency and cultural understanding, ensuring that your main interest is to resolve the conflict in the best possible way for all parties involved. Cultural differences among stakeholders require more openness from all parties if the reasons for conflicts are to

be understood and common ground found. Foster this openness with team-building activities, mainly when face-to-face contact is possible.

Question the Situation –Obtain information about the threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of the different standpoints from all parties involved. Structure the information you have collected in a format that allows easy comparisons, and be ready to use online conferencing tools to share it with people in other locations. You might organize onlinebrainstorming sessions or send questionnaires to stakeholders distributed around the globe.

Appoint a Third-Party Arbitrator –This should be done when the program or project manager needs to defend the interests of one organization involved in the divergences, or when he/she is part of theconflict.

Usually the arbitrator will come from an independent body trusted by the project sponsorand the main stakeholders with an interest in the results of the conflict negotiation.

Assess the Situation –Evaluate the conflict through the lenses of the project objectivesand the business strategies, with participation from ‘neutral’ stakeholders as well asthose involved in the source of the conflict. This can remove the negative emotion, depersonalize the situation, and focus on the desired outcome. Consider asking people fromdifferent countries and companies to participate in the process. Suggest that they voice their opinions and concerns privately to avoid emotional discussions or sensitive matters.

Define the Strategy – Prepare your arguments and anticipate the reactions from different participants using the information collected in the previous steps, defining the best approach for the conflict situation.

Prepare the Discussion –Define the communication media to be used during thediscussions and negotiations. You should avoid audio conferencing, as verbal agreements maygenerate misunderstandings after the meeting has finished. Prefer to have online meetingsor even face-to-face discussions when the decision involves people with different personalities and cultures, andwhen it is important to theproject. Decide whoneeds to take part in the discussion, sending the meeting invitations and organizing thelogistics. Before the discussion,spendsome time building rapport with the key participants.

Start the Discussion –Introduce the reason for the conflict, the participants, the main differences on standpoints, and the importance and impact of the decision for the project. Reinforce the project goals, mission and objectives that are relevant to the discussion. Share your opinions on the cultural dimensions with the parties involved in the conflict situation, helping them to understand the reasons for the differences in their viewpoints.

Resolve the Situation – Start with the points on which you can reach an easy consensus when there are many items to be resolved. This increases the collaboration and trust level, and then addresses the ‘problem areas’ afterwards.

Document and Communicate the Situation –All parties must agree on a written statement of the decisions. Share a document that summarizes the key decision areas by web conferencing or video, and request a verbal agreement from all parties. Distribute the outcome to the key stakeholders and other participants, and ask for a written reply stating their agreement or comments.

Document the Lessons Learned –Summarize your learning during this conflict situation for future use: the methods, the reasons, the positive and negative strategies and consequences.

Coaching Over Distance

By adopting a ‘coaching’ style and encouraging them to think for themselves, global project managers can improve the performance of distant team members. The increase in self-confidence and performance can reduce the need for monitoring and control, and the project manager can then monitor the work packages at a higher level. The coaching style is also beneficial when the project manager appoints local coordinators. Groups of work packages performed by a local team will be the responsibility of these local coordinators.

Global coaching principles

1. The coach usually masters the project management tools, techniques and methodologies, or has expert knowledge. However, the coaches may know more about their local language, culture and working practices. The coaching process can then be a knowledge exchange. This will increase the confidence level of the coaches.
2. The coach might use advanced skills of questioning, listening and reflection to stimulate the coaches to think about the actions to be taken, and in order to learn more about the local practices and the unique characteristics of the local project team.
3. The coach might ask questions to learn the opinion of the coaches on the project management knowledge being transferred. He/she can then assess whether the general skills are applicable to that local team. Local adaptations are sometimes required to allow the project management practices to fit into the cultural, social, technological or economic situations of individual countries and companies.
4. In order to complete the project deliverables, the coach might motivate and guide the project managers and coordinators to use their local knowledge allied to project management skills.
5. In order to identify specific behaviours and their consequences for the communication with the various stakeholders, the project manager must observe the coaches objectively and from their cultural perspectives. The coach must prefer to raise the coaches’ awareness of their feelings.

when performing the coordination of their activities, and of the reactions of other stakeholders. Part of the coaching activities will consist of making clear links between these behaviours and their results, making people understand the consequences of their actions for people from other cultures.

Global Communication

Program and project managers spend most of their time communicating. In traditional project teams, the project manager is usually recognized as the one moving from one meeting room to another, rushing to the team members' desks to obtain information on the project activities and building informal networks around the coffee machine or during lunch breaks. Many project managers enjoy the contact with people and feel at ease performing these coordination activities. The communication flows naturally, the tasks are carried out and the projects are completed.

Stakeholders and Communication Channels

In most projects, the project manager can increase the chances of success by correctly managing the stakeholders' expectations, needs and influence. The level of commitment of key stakeholders will determine the success or failure of certain projects and will have an important social, political, economic or environmental impact. Knowing the stakeholders' expectations and requirements is fundamental to defining the quality standards and requirements for the project and the products or services to be delivered.

Using effective communication to improve their commitment level, project managers must know their stakeholders, understand the communication channels between them and develop a communication strategy to align the needs and expectations of the interested parties.

Identifying the Global Key Stakeholders

Depending on the project type and on the availability of information, the global project manager may refer to different sources to identify potential stakeholders. Examples of these sources of information are as follows:

Senior management – This includes the project sponsor, the members of the steering committee, and people with a large working experience of the different organizations participating in the project. These people can identify groups of people with an interest in, or who are impacted by, the execution of the project.

Specialists – Specialized team members or external consultants usually have a deep understanding of organizations or people who may have a vested interest in the project.

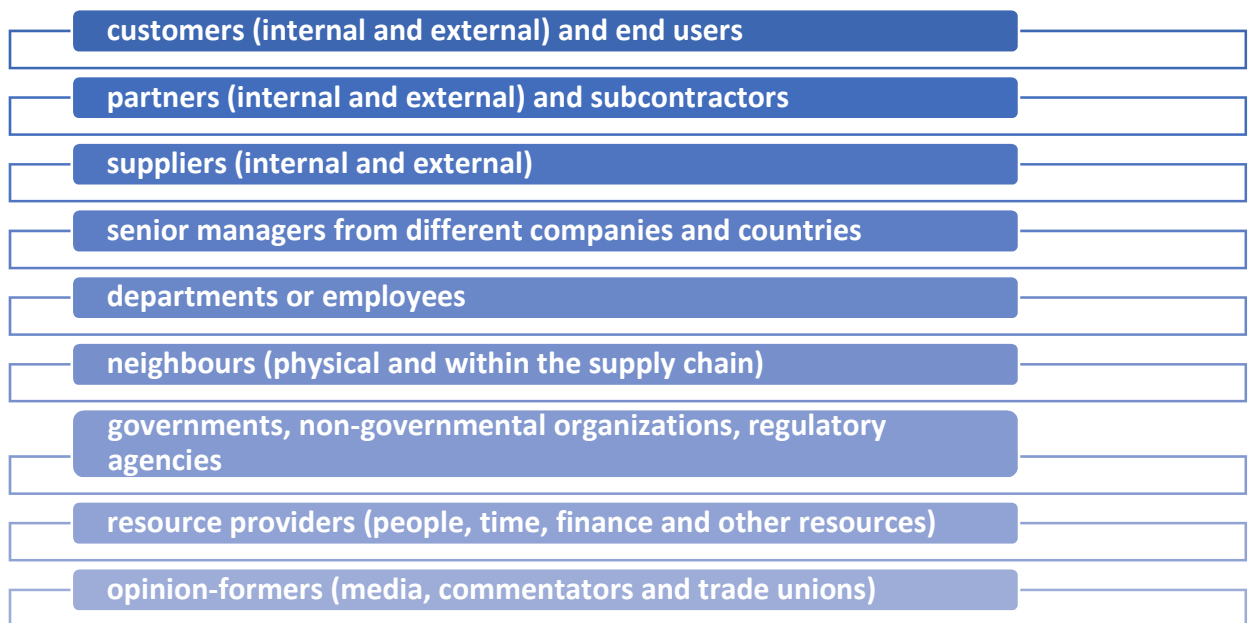
Global team members with local knowledge – Team members in different locations may know about local people or organizations interested in or constrained by the project.

Organizational charts –The map of the organizational structure from the partners, customers, suppliers, and governmental entities involved in the project can serve as a checklist to ensure the completeness of the analysis.

Documentation –This includes newspapers, press releases, research papers, specialized magazines, the Internet and books, all of which may be rich sources of information for external parties affected by or interested in the project.

Lessons learned –Success stories and failures from previous projects can provide recommendations for the stakeholders to analyze and manage.

The project manager might request that the team members located in different countries collect information from various sources and organize a brainstorming session to compile the results into a stakeholder record, around predetermined categories. Some examples are:



To cover gaps in the information sources, the project manager might stimulate creative thinking by prompting the participants with questions such as the following:

- Who will use the project deliverables?
- Who will provide resources to the project team?
- Who will need to adapt their working practices or processes during or after the project implementation?
- Who will benefit from the project outcomes?
- Will anyone lobby against the project execution?

- Who will be impacted by noise, construction, modified access routes or maintenance activities?

The Stakeholder Commitment Framework

Global project managers must understand how the proper use of different communication media over a distance and across cultural borders can trigger these changes:

From ignorance to awareness —Project managers can gain a first level of commitment by creating a project virtual room and publishing the key milestones, project information, and overall project performance. In many projects, most secondary stakeholders (low levels of power and influence) will remain at this level and receive regular project updates by e-mail or access the project virtual room when they require information.

Understanding —By organizing local meetings in key locations, visiting key stakeholders at project onset, and broadcasting regular updates during project execution, project managers can create a good level of understanding on the project.

Involvement —The key team members must be involved in the planning phase and in the preparation of important project components, such as the schedule and risk log. The project manager must continue involving these team members in all important steps, when the main changes occur and in problem-solving activities.

Support —By fostering debates and brainstorming over distance for strategic discussions, the project team can obtain the support of key stakeholders. Senior stakeholders can be invited to provide suggestions and steering on important decisions and to give feedback on the project communication strategy.

Commitment —The consistent involvement of the project stakeholders in informal discussions and meetings will develop a high level of commitment during project execution, simplifying the monitoring and control activities of the project manager. Once the trust between the project manager and the stakeholders is established, the commitment is often carried over to other projects as well.

Global Communication Strategy

The early development of a good communication strategy can reduce misunderstandings between stakeholders from different countries and company cultures communicating over a distance. The main interested parties must work together to create the project communications management plan and define this strategy. The communication strategy can be prepared by:

identifying the types of information to be communicated

determining how the communication will effectively take place

gathering the communication requirements from key stakeholders

Global Communication Techniques

Collecting Information from the Global Team Members

During project execution, these systems can help the project office members and the project manager, and also in collecting project information:

- providing a central place where project team members can store all project documentation;
- allowing the use of electronic forms, where the project team members will enter information on project milestones and deliverables in a structured and standardized format;
- providing databases that will store this information and will be available for queries from different stakeholders;
- integrating with other office software suites, and prompting team members to enter information on due actions, issues and risk items.

Distributing information to the global stakeholders

Project managers or project office administrators can use software packages to structure and summarize the project performance data in formats that include spreadsheets, graphics and colour-coded presentations.

Level 1 – overall status: The actual status and the evolution of the main relevant project performance items over time are presented in one web page. This will satisfy the requirements of stakeholders who need to have an understanding of the project progress, but who are not interested in detailed information.

Level 2 – detailed analysis and list of additional references: More explanation will be required for a complete understanding of the charts and acronyms depending on the audience.

Level 3 – detailed information: The final level of information will be the documents that were used as a basis when producing the summaries on the previous levels. For example, auditors might access the spreadsheets used to calculate the Earned Value Analysis indices and the project cost

documentation in order to review the data, validate the formulae and understand the reasons for deviations.

Selection of International Human Resources

The allocation of people to the project team, on some occasions, will be based on the availability of resources and the influence of key stakeholders or partner companies. The project managers may evaluate the previous experience of the team members on global projects, organizing coaching and training to avoid clashes between different personalities and cultures, increasing the productivity and team spirit and avoiding negative conflicts.

Global Team Members' Skills

When evaluating potential team members to work on global projects, technical skills and specializations are not the only elements to consider. Previous research on project management identified that team members must have a set of 'global skills' to work effectively on global projects. These global skills involve the ability to work remotely and openness to other company and country cultures, being summarized as follows:

Global Communication – Since most of the communications with the project manager and colleague team members will be made over a distance, the ability to communicate over a distance (or the willingness to develop such competence) is an important factor in determining which team members will be effective in global projects. Good listening skills are an example of this ability, such as rephrasing sentences in order to confirm understanding (reflective listening), showing a true interest in the topic being presented by the speaker, clarifying meanings (active listening) and asking more questions.

Global thinking – The team members involved in creative tasks will usually need to consider different cultural or geographic standpoints when identifying risks, preparing quality assessments or when designing the deliverables.

Global experience – Some team members will already have worked in different countries, on other global projects or with other team members over a distance. Depending on their previous experiences, these people will tend to require less coaching on the communication skills and may also bring new ideas on how to improve the existing tools and procedures.

Technical capabilities – People who have proven capabilities in the use of office suites and other software tools will tend to learn quickly how to deploy and use the collaborative tools. Those team members who demonstrate a very good understanding of these tools might then be very useful in providing training and coaching to other team members.

Culture Awareness – The team members who are familiar with the organizational and country cultures involved in the project are less likely to generate conflicts and may also have fewer

requirements for training and coaching. They tend to feel more comfortable than other people when working with a mix of different standards, ethics, policies or working practices.

Self-discipline –People working in different locations for the project managers must have a working discipline that allows them to work independently, with a reduced need for supervision. When little is known about the self-discipline of a team member, frequent monitoring must occur at the beginning to ensure that the rules are being followed correctly, with corrective actions taken in the case of deviation. They must also be willing to work according to the established processes, rules and responsibilities.

High personal confidence –When they are confident that their skills and capabilities will allow them to act independently in their work packages or activities, the team members will work effectively over a distance. The project manager or a senior specialist must compensate for low levels of confidence by using a formal method of coaching or mentoring.

Self-motivation –Some people are naturally motivated, according to their career orientation, relocation aspiration and working preferences. These team members will tend to collaborate for the success of the project, with a reduced need for detailed supervision, and without requiring specific motivation instruments. When some key team members are lacking motivation, a specific process can be deployed.

Tolerance for ambiguity –Despite all efforts by the project manager and the team members to define clear roles and responsibilities and detailed work packages, some degree of ambiguity is often present in global projects. The global team members must know how to resolve the problems created by this uncertainty by patiently investigating the reasons for the lack of definition, clarifying the roles and responsibilities, volunteering to participate in the activity execution and suggesting corrective actions to avoid impact on the project.

Good organization –Those team members who have good organization skills will thrive on global projects. They usually establish a prioritized ‘to-do’ list linked to the issues log and project schedule, inform the project manager in cases of potential deviations, risks or issues and organize their time to perform the activities on the global projects without conflicts with daily or local activities. To improve their productivity and avoid impacts on the project, global project managers must provide coaching on organization skills to team members who are not performing some of the actions above.

Self-efficacy –The team members who show a good performance track record will increase the trust shown in them by remote project managers, coordinators or colleagues. They can do this by completing their actions on time with the expected quality level or providing reasonable explanations for deviations. When the performance is not within the expected limits, the project managers or coordinators might perform a follow-up of the deliverables and work together with the team members to correct the deviations and avoid future occurrences of the same problem.

Concentration –Team members working away from the main company building (home workers or people located in small satellite offices) must have a higher level of concentration to avoid disruption by other colleagues or family members. Otherwise, they may require coaching from the project manager or another remote colleague on possible alternatives to increase their level of participation in the project activities. These team members may be required to move to a different location for the duration of the project in some situations.

Reduced social interaction –The remote team members will also have less opportunity for social contact with the project manager and other stakeholders working on the same project. When social interaction is an important element that motivates specific team members, they might develop new relationships with local colleagues working in the same location but on other projects, or consider a temporary relocation to another office that contains a group of project team members.

Openness and flexibility –Those team members who are located in different countries and are open to working with people from other cultures will enjoy the experience of participating in a global project. They may even help to identify, avoid or resolve conflicts between other team members. Intercultural training is required for the team members who show resistance or discomfort when working with diverse cultures.

Global Program and Project Managers’ Skills

In order to provide coaching and mentoring to the distributed team members, professionals who occupy program or project management positions need to master most of the global skills identified previously. Additionally, they must have a specific set of skills for effective coordination, monitoring and control of the project work packages over a distance. These skills are covered in detail by other chapters of this book, and can be summarized as follows:

- proven leadership when working with virtual team members
- understanding of the cultural differences and ability to build on them to improve the teamwork,creativity and innovation levels;
- openness to understanding and managing conflicts involving different cultures
- coaching and mentoring of remote team members
- trustworthiness
- excellent communication skills and techniques
- familiarity with knowledge sharing and PMS tools
- experience in coordinating meetings using audio, video and web conferencing
- the level of global skills required will depend on their functions and the types of project structure.

Local coordinators working on distributed projects— The local coordinators may spend most of their time coordinating the team members at their locations, but a certain amount of communication with the project manager and other coordinators may occur across borders.

Project managers in centralized structures —These project managers must develop a high level of global skills, as most of their activities involve communications across country borders, including project monitoring, conflict management, coaching, and team leadership.

Project managers on distributed projects —To perform the management of the project coordinators and the monitoring and control of their work packages, these functions will require good global skills.

Functional coordinators on distributed projects —As most of their activities will involve team members in other locations, these functions will need a higher level of global skills.

Project managers working on global project networks —As well as all the skills from the above categories, these professionals will need to understand and accept different processes, company cultures, and tools.

Project managers working in round-the-clock structures —They will need excellent discipline to deploy and follow processes and excellent skills for asynchronous communication.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *David Cleland, Roland Gareis, (2006), Global Project Management Handbook: Planning, Organizing and Controlling International Projects*
- ✓ *Harold R. Kerzner, International Institute for Learning, (2010), Project Management - Best Practices: Achieving Global Excellence*
- ✓ *Jean Binder, (2007), Global Project Management: Communication, Collaboration and Management Across Borders*