

Global Project Teams: A Practitioner's Guide to the 5 Competencies Needed for Success

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Abstract

Today's global organizations operate in a complex, fast-paced and unsure business environment. Much of today's work requires cross-functional and transnational coordination, knowledge transfer and decision-making. Many new initiatives in global firms are assigned to temporary global project teams. This article discusses the five competencies necessary for the success of a global project team: project planning, technical project management, team effectiveness, cross-cultural proficiency, and stakeholder communication.

In 2000 Airbus launched its most ambitious project ever, the A380. The A380 is envisioned to hold more than 800 passengers in the world's largest superjumbo jet. Airbus created a consortium of existing companies from France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom with manufacturing facilities in sixteen sites. Although Airbus attempted to bring senior management together at one location, the planning and manufacturing were done at the decentralized sites.

The A380 was the most complex plane ever designed by Airbus. It contains 330 miles of wire, over 100,000 wires and over 40,000 connectors. The wiring harnesses produced in the German plant failed to fit properly when installed into the aircraft frame in France.

The central problem was determined to be caused by the decision of the two remote design groups in France and Germany to use two different versions of the computer aided design software. These were later determined to be incompatible. The senior leadership team knew of the two different versions being used but failed to reach a decision to use one version. Considerable differences in corporate culture and management styles among

the leadership team from the four countries derailed the ability to make a unified decision on software tools. The A380 launch was delayed over two years and its development costs nearly doubled from the original budget.^{1, 2, 3}

The Nature of Work Today

Today's global organizations operate in a complex, fast-paced and unsure business environment. Much of today's work requires cross-functional and transnational coordination, knowledge transfer and decision-making. Many new initiatives in global firms are assigned to temporary global project teams or virtual global project teams.⁴

Members of these global project teams are assembled from varied organizations around the globe and consist of professionals with differing skills, experience, cultures and functional specialties. The work load involved with these global project teams is typically a 'temporary additional responsibility' in addition to the team member's regular, full-time accountabilities.

These projects are frequently called by many names-global projects, virtual projects, strategic initiatives, strategic projects, etc.

Global Projects: Poor Record of Achievement

Projects can be classified as successful, challenged or failed.⁵ Recent surveys indicate the rate of successful global projects, defined as on time and on budget with all features and functions specified, average between 29% and 62%.^{6, 7, 8} The challenged projects, those that were delivered late, over budget and/or with fewer than the required features and functions, average from 22% to 52%. Those projects that failed, defined as cancelled prior to completion or delivered unused, average between 16% and 19%.

The Cost of Poor Project Leadership

Project cost overruns, due to poor project leadership, have had a profound impact on companies. One recent study of 1,471 IT projects found the average global project cost overrun was 27%.⁹ One in six projects had a cost overrun of 200%! The 2016 PMI survey revealed that 47% of global projects exceeded their original budgets with an average cost overrun of 12%.¹⁰

Recent estimates on the worldwide economic impact of IT project failure range from \$3 trillion to \$6.8 trillion annually!^{11, 12} That's \$250 billion to \$500 billion per month!!!

Primary Causes of Global Project Failure

Global projects failing to fully meet all objectives and requirements have multiple causes.^{13, 14, 15} These primary causes can be grouped under five competencies:

- Project Planning
- Technical Project Management
- Team Effectiveness
- Cross-Cultural Proficiency
- Stakeholder Communication

What is The Root Cause for Global Project Failures?

Why do so many global projects fail, are late, have cost overruns and/or only deliver part of the objectives? I believe the cause of this poor performance is due to the assignment of global project leaders with inadequate training or limited experience in these five skills categories.

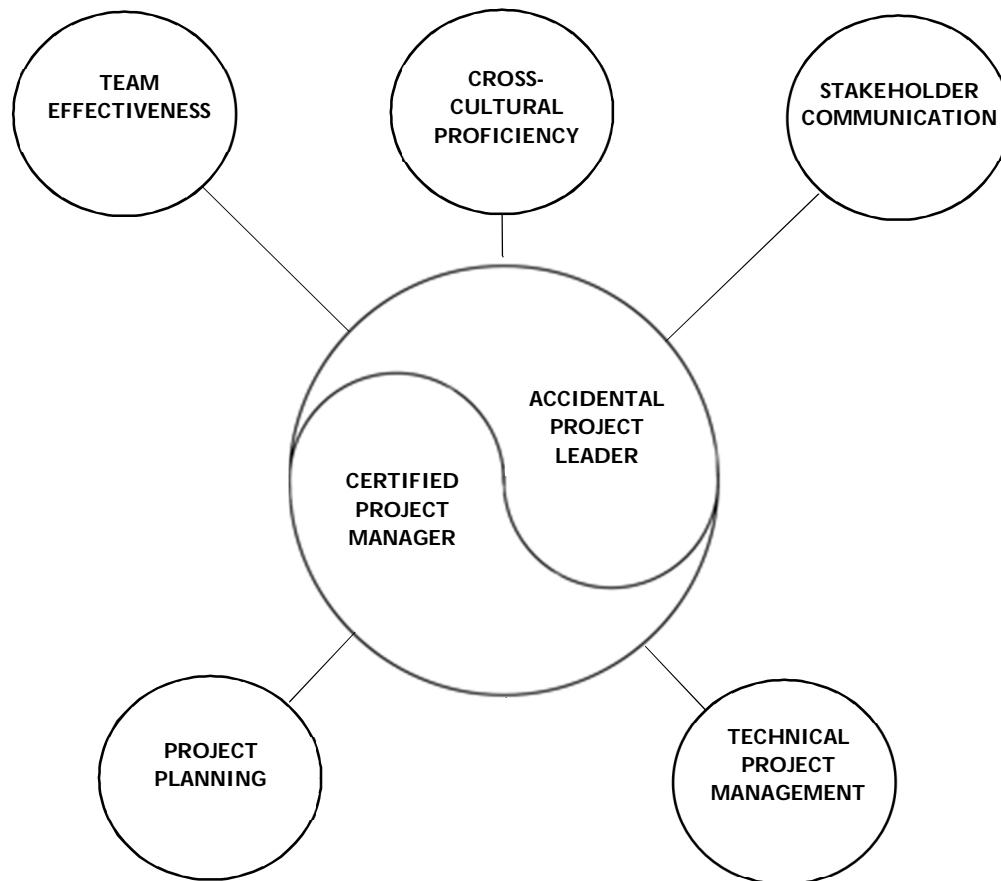
Two Types of Project Team Leaders

Certified Project Managers. About half of the leaders chosen to head global project teams have formal training certification in Technical Project Management skills and Project Planning Skills.¹⁶ These leaders are frequently referred to as “Certified Project Managers” (CPM). These CPMs have expertise in project planning skills and project management software. Many CPMs have received limited training in Team Effectiveness skills, Cross-Cultural skills and Stakeholder Communication skills.

Accidental Project Managers. About half of those selected to head global project teams are picked from the professional and/or management ranks within the company. They are chosen because of their leadership skills/and or their functional expertise. These project leaders are sometimes referred to as “Accidental Project Leaders” (APL).¹⁷ Few accidental project leaders have been certified in Project Planning or Technical Project Management. Accidental project leaders have a varying degree of experience and training in Team Effectiveness Skills, Cross-Cultural Skills and Stakeholder Communication Skills.

Global project team success can be significantly improved when both an accidental project leader and a certified project manager are assigned to the same global project. Each bring differing strengths and experience to the team. Executive Sponsors and Steering Committees should evaluate both the APL and the CPM to determine if they need additional training any of the five skills areas.

Figure 1. Global Project Team: Competencies for Success



Leading without Formal Authority

Both of these types of global project team leaders must achieve their objectives without formal authority. The people assigned to work on the team do not report to them directly. In most cases, the team members have full-time responsibilities that may take preference versus project responsibilities. The project leader must be able to rally workers assigned to projects and to excite their peers toward achieving a common project goal.

Project Planning

Project team leaders frequently spend little time on team development and planning. They devote most of their time to project execution. Effective leaders know that they need to spend as much time as is necessary in the pre-kick-off period to attract the right people, conduct training as needed and to create a high performing team environment. Leaders can expect to receive

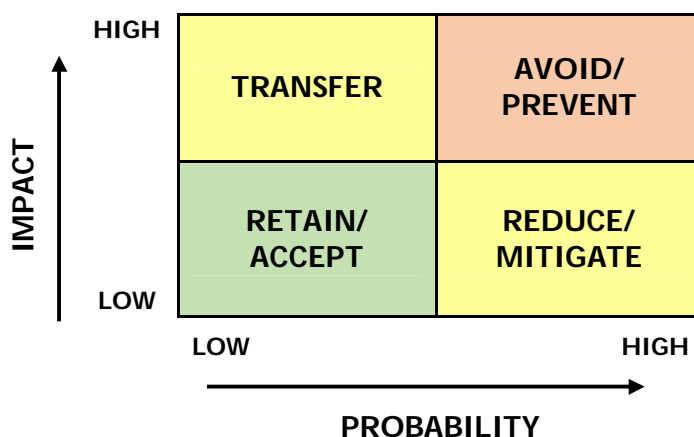
significant pressure to 'start the project.' They need to gain executive sponsor and steering committee support to resist starting until the team is ready.

Alignment with a Strategic Initiative. What problem or opportunity is the global project trying to address? Is this problem or opportunity clearly identified as a major strategic initiative in the organization's strategic plan or operating plan? The more closely aligned the project is with one of these major initiatives-the more likely it will receive proper funding, appointment of key team personnel, executive support and end-user implementation.

Complexity and Duration. During the project initiation period, it is important for the project team leader to determine the complexity of the project and the projected length to completion. The more complex and the longer the development time of the project-the greater the likelihood for cost overages, failure or delayed completion. Seek guidance in obtaining approval to have complex projects broken up into several smaller, shorter duration projects with different leaders and teams.

Risk. Risk analysis should be conducted in the early part of the planning phase of the project. All risks need to be documented and classified. Many corporations have dedicated personnel (usually in manufacturing and in IT) that specialize in evaluating the degree of risk. Include these people on your team or arrange for them to do a risk audit. The degree of risk is determined based upon the probability of an adverse event occurring and its potential degree of negative impact. A plan needs to be developed to: prevent, accept, reduce, plan a contingency for or transfer each risk.

Figure 2. Strategic Options for Risk



SMART Objectives/Deliverables. Ensure that the project's objective(s) align with a strategic initiative and that the deliverable(s) meets the need. Objective(s) should be developed using SMART: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic and Time-limited. It is important to reconfirm the objective(s) and the deliverable(s) with key stakeholders (Executive Sponsor, Steering Committee, Customers and end users). I recommend this be done: 1) every 6 months, 2) when annual Strategic and Operating plans are revised and 3) when key stakeholder personnel change.

Costs and Timelines. Create Milestones in the plan. Each milestone should contain both cost and timeline goals. Evaluate progress when each milestone is achieved. Determine how to improve costs and reduce time if the milestone targets are not met.

Scope and Scope Creep. Scope clearly identifies what will be included and what will not be included in the project. Objectives/deliverable may change over time due to changes in the internal or external environment, technological changes or factors not realized in the initial planning of the project. All changes in scope must be written in a project plan addendum and indicate the impact on deliverables, costs, timelines, risk, etc. Impacted stakeholders must review, approve and sign the change order.

Project Charter. The project charter is a one-page summary of the project plan. It explains the Business Case (business need) and the Proposed Solution (project description). It includes the project scope, project vision statement, value proposition, assumptions, critical success factors, constraints, high level time and cost estimates. The Project Charter is carried by all global project team members and referred to when addressing stakeholders.

Project Plan. Creating a detailed project plan is enhanced by the specialized skills of a certified PPM.

The author held an executive marketing position within a Global 500 firm that had recently moved its headquarters to the eastern United States. Prior, headquarters functions were split and existed in the middle of the United States, Sweden, United Kingdom and Italy! Less than half of the Global Product Director or positions that had been moved to the new headquarters location were filled with employees from the 4 prior locations. Additional Global Product Directors were hired to fill the vacancies. Those newly hired represented experience from 12 competing companies in the same category. Each of the companies that the Global Product Directors came from had a different corporate template for developing Strategic Product Plans. The author was assigned as the Executive Sponsor to create a new Strategic Product Plan template based upon the best-in-class ideas from each company. A key challenge was to gain support from all directors to embrace and support the new template design. The author created 12 project teams.

Each team, consisting of about 3-4 global product directors, was tasked with designing a different section of the plan. After each section was completed, each global project team presented their suggestions to the other 11 teams and made modifications until all directors were satisfied. The teams utilized SMART objectives. Risk was minimized by involving all product directors that would use the end deliverable.

P&G realized they needed a new ordering, shipping and billing software solution and work process to replace the 20 year old system in use. The new system would serve 18,000 daily orders shipping to 150,000 retailers covering North America, Europe and 150 plus export markets. Pre-kickoff planning, risk management and stakeholder involvement were key to the success of the project. The Steering Committee consisted of 3 regional presidents and all of P&G's 14 business unit presidents. The Steering Committee played a very active role and met routinely. Team members were assigned for over 50 countries. Over 50% of the total time of the project was spent in the preparation phase prior to the kick-off meeting. The completed project was launched in 2012 resulting in improved shipping times and customer satisfaction.¹⁸

Technical Project Management

Utilize project management practices and tools for metrics tracking. As indicated earlier, many of the causes of global project failure can be attributed to the failure to properly establish customer requirements, budgets, timelines and team member responsibilities. Technology plays a vital role in monitoring checkpoints and in measuring compliance with the guidelines established. Projects are 2.5 times more successful when proven project management practices and tools are used.¹⁹

Communication Technologies. Newer technologies are available to enable disparate team members to interact using the best available communication tools.²⁰ Choosing the right communication tool varies with the type of interaction required.

Agile/Waterfall Methodologies. Incorporate agile or waterfall methodologies in all global projects. Agile methodologies incorporate the development of small sections of a project which are reviewed by customers and used to determine the next steps in the project development.^{21, 22, 23} Team members can then respond quickly and effectively to customer reviews of the completed small sections. Waterfall methodology is a sequential design process. Once a step is completed, developers move on to the next step. They cannot go back to a previous step and change it. Waterfall methodologies stress meticulous record keeping and clients have exact knowledge of what to expect. The whole product is only tested at the end.

The Second West-East Gas Pipeline (WEPII) is the world's longest natural gas pipeline. It stretches 8,600 km from Xinjiang, China to the Asia-China Gas Pipeline and provides 30 billion cubic meters of gas to 15 Chinese provinces and regions. The project team consisted of members who spoke Cantonese, Putonghua and English. Stakeholders included over 30 authorities. The global project team kept tight control on the scope, timeline and budget and utilized the waterfall methodology. The project was completed in 2013 and it finished on time with no environmental damage.²⁴

Cloud Computing. Establishment of cloud-based platforms that centralize management information into a single controllable space to enable all stakeholders to track progress.²⁵

The author was assigned as the Executive Sponsor for the development of the company's business knowledge portal that would integrate multiple data sources and make them available globally to selected employees in 60 countries. The program was named WWIN-Worldwide Intelligence Network. Agile techniques were employed during development. After the I.T. infrastructure delivery system was completed, each data resource was carefully introduced, tested, revised and approved by end-users before moving to the next data source. Ideas and improvements were accepted from the end users and incorporated with the development of each additional data source.

Team Effectiveness

Roles, Responsibilities and Team Selection. The project team leader needs to establish a list of the skill sets needed to achieve each of the plan's goals/deliverables. Team members need the skills, personal motivation and capacity to be productive on the team. He/she must coordinate with the Executive sponsor to ensure the team members have, or are trained with, the required skill(s).²⁶ This is a challenge. On many teams, the team members are selected by the end users and other stakeholders before the skills matrix is developed.

Motivation. There is an 'I' in Team. All motivation is personal. People do things for their reasons-not ours. Team members want to know "What's in it for me?" Team leaders do not motivate. Leaders need to ask each team member "What do you want to personally get out of the project." Project team leaders need to help each team member achieve their personal wants/needs as well as achieve the project's deliverables. They must inspire the team members to understand how the project adds significant value to the organization.

Training and Turnover. Team leaders need to assess what skills training may be needed for selected team members before the start of work. Budget

allocation and Executive Sponsor/Steering Committee/end user support must be obtained. The leader must resist the pressure to start the project until after all training has been scheduled or completed. This is very difficult.

Team Working Environment. The global project team leader needs to create a team working environment that is safe, encouraging, personally rewarding and culturally-sensitive. This includes creating consensus within the team to determine how the team will: make decisions, conduct meetings, develop hierarchy and authority, deadline interpretation, conflict resolution, communication process, rewards, recognition and celebration, etc. Conduct during meetings is enforced by the team members-not the leader. This action helps to build trust and build motivation.

Trust. Team members that trust one another are not afraid to openly discuss difficult issues and make decisions.²⁷ They are not afraid to question or challenge one another because they are all focused on arriving at the best solution.

Mutual Accountability. A high performing team holds itself accountable for achieving results. It does not feel accountable to the leader-but rather to each other. There is a feeling that 'only the team succeeds or fails-not individuals on the team.' High performing teams govern themselves.

Project Vision Statement. The project vision statement is developed by the team members and is intended to inspire and motivate the team. The team project vision statement creates a common purpose for all team members and it must be understood and strongly supported by all team members. Its intended audience is internal-for team members only. The project vision statement contains 3 short points: 1) a specific date/year/time when the deliverable will be completed, 2) briefly describes what the project will be and how it supports a specific strategic imperative found in the business/functional operating plan and 3) how the team will create this deliverable. Average length is 2-3 sentences.

Project Value Proposition. A value proposition is a clear and concise statement that summarizes why a customer should use the deliverable of the project. It should be developed by the team and is a short statement that answers three questions: 1) What is the deliverable? 2) What is its advantage over what we have today? and 3) What value (benefit) does it provide? Average length is 2-3 sentences.

Focus on Deliverables. In high performing teams, team members are focused on what is best for the team and not on their individual needs or desires. The deliverables need to be fully understood and supported by each team member. The team must understand how the deliverable(s) support a key strategic initiative.

Global Project Teams: Competencies for Success

Rewards, Recognition and Celebrations. Teams that successfully overcome obstacles and achieve milestones need to have fun and celebrate these interim achievements. Providing rewards, recognition and celebration builds trust and confidence. It provides motivation for the team members to stay focused on the next milestone challenge in the plan. The leader enables the team to decide what, how and when these rewards, recognition and celebrations will be recognized. The team leader's role is to gain executive sponsor and steering committee approval of this rewards, recognition and celebration plan.²⁸

Kick-off Meeting. The kick-off meeting is the most important meeting during the life of the project. The purpose of the kick-off meeting should be to excite interest in the project and enable team members to gain a deep understanding of how the deliverables add value and align with a critical need of the company. It is a time for team members to get to know one another and to understand each person's skills, roles and responsibilities. It is a time to gain consensus on the team working environment which will make each person feel safe to engage in group discussions. It is the time to begin to develop trust and to motivate the team. Leaders need to ensure that time and financial resources are available to enable all team members to attend in person. Unfortunately, many kick-off meetings consist of hours of boring descriptions of project objectives, costs, timelines etc. with participants leaving feeling overwhelmed and burdened with added work. Little, if any, time is devoted to team building.

The author was employed in a Global 500 company that merged with another Global 500 company. The author was on a 2 year assignment working as a senior executive in the I.T. division. His 20 prior years were within sales and marketing. This 2 year assignment was designed to evaluate his ability to lead a functional organization unfamiliar to his past. The author was assigned to lead the task force to integrate all I.T. systems for all functions, divisions and countries. The assignment was given 4 months to create a plan for the integration of all corporate I.T. systems. The author took the role of Executive Sponsor and created 13 global project teams devoted to specific functional areas and divisional areas of the companies. Team Leaders were chosen from both companies to co-lead each of the 13 global project teams. Careful attention was paid to the above 11 dimensions of Team Effectiveness. All 13 teams delivered their integration solution plans on time!

Cross-Cultural Proficiency

Culture. Culture can be defined as the assumptions, values, beliefs, attitudes, customs, practices, arts and other products of human thought and

work that characterize the people of a given society. Culture explains how we behave, interact and make decisions with each other and within groups.²⁹

Cross-cultural Risk. Misunderstandings and miscommunication arise because people have differing values and expectations. They do not always communicate (verbally and nonverbally) what the other team member is expecting or may have different ways of communicating. Cross-cultural misunderstandings can endanger team cohesiveness and trust. Developing an appreciation of, and sensitivity for, cultural differences within the team is essential. Global project teams, geographically dispersed, are characterized by team members with different first languages as well as unique norms, beliefs and behaviors. Leaders and team members must not only understand these cultural differences-they must embrace this diversity as a strength.³⁰

National Culture, Professional Culture, Corporate Culture and Team Culture. Each member of the team is influenced by their national culture, the culture found within their functional specialty and the unique culture of their organization. The headquarters culture may be very different than the company culture found in other geographic locations. Leaders need to recognize these differences and learn to look at team issues through the differing 'lens' of each team member.

Avoid Cultural Bias. A person's own culture conditions how she or he reacts to different behavior or values. People tend to unconsciously assume that project team members in other countries experience the world as they do. They view their own culture as the norm. Cultural bias can become a significant barrier to successful project team interpersonal communication and trust.

Communicating Across Cultures. Project team leaders and team members must develop a willingness to learn, and create openness and respect for the differences in how team members communicate. Leaders need to know how to encourage active participation from all team members. In person communication consists of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Email, teleconferencing and videoconferencing add a further level of complexity and risk. Knowledge of the cultural significance or potential for misunderstandings needs to be clarified within the team. Language proficiency may vary among teammates.

Cross-Cultural Proficiency Training. Cross-cultural training must focus on behavioral modification-not the transfer of facts about different cultures and nations.³¹ The training must focus on teaching team members how to create effective communication and decision making within the team. The Project team leader and executive sponsor need to determine the degree of need for cross-cultural proficiency training for the team and to allocate sufficient time

Global Project Teams: Competencies for Success

and financial resources to enable the proper training for all team members. In my experience, this is rarely done or even thought about.

The author attended his first international meeting in Spain. The meeting was conducted by low level executives from the United States who had little to no international experience. Participants came from 11 countries in Europe, Asia and Canada. The author was based in Canada at the time and attended as a 'guest.' The American hosts demanded that the hotel serve all meals at normal American times. Lunch at noon. Dinner at 6 PM. The chef and staff were highly insulted, refused to change the service hours and went on strike! The local company country executive was mortified but developed a compromise solution for serving times that pleased no one. The local company country manager quit the company 6 months later!

Stakeholder Communication

Stakeholder Analysis and Management. Failure of proper stakeholder analysis and management are major causes of project failure. Stakeholders include all individuals who impact, or are impacted by the outcomes of the project. Stakeholders can be organized into one of four groups: decision makers, contributors, recipients or gate keepers.

Communication with Stakeholders. The project team leader must have a full understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder. She/he needs to develop a plan to determine the frequency and what information needs to be shared with each type of stakeholder and which are required to make approval decisions on costs, timelines, human resources, deliverable specifications, user acceptance, training, etc.

Table 1. Project Stakeholders

| Decision Makers | Recipients | Contributors | Gate Keepers |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Sponsor• Steering Committee• End User Executive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer Decision-Maker• Business Unit End-Users | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Team Members• Subject Matter Experts• Alliance Partners• Suppliers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governments• Regulatory Agencies |

Executive Sponsor. The Executive Sponsor is responsible for gaining final approval on resources and budget. She/he is usually the visible and vocal champion for the project and is the final decision maker. The project leader

needs to work closely with the Executive Sponsor and meet with him/her frequently.

Steering Committee. The steering committee consists of management representatives from the key units accountable for project control and oversight. They approve scope, cost, timeline and deliverable changes. It is usually difficult to get the steering committee together because of conflicting schedules. Agreement must be made on the frequency of review meetings. Getting steering committee members to attend regularly scheduled meetings is essential but very difficult.

Customer Decision-Makers. Project leaders need to conduct formal reviews with customer decision-makers after each milestone is achieved and whenever there is a change in personnel among customer decision-makers. The longer the length of development, the greater the risk that one or more key customer decision-maker personnel may change positions or leave the company. When this happens, it is critical that the project leader reconfirm the need for the deliverable and the commitment of usage of the deliverable with the new customer decision-maker. Some project leaders focus too heavily on building the deliverable and may overlook the importance of regular meetings with customer decision-makers.

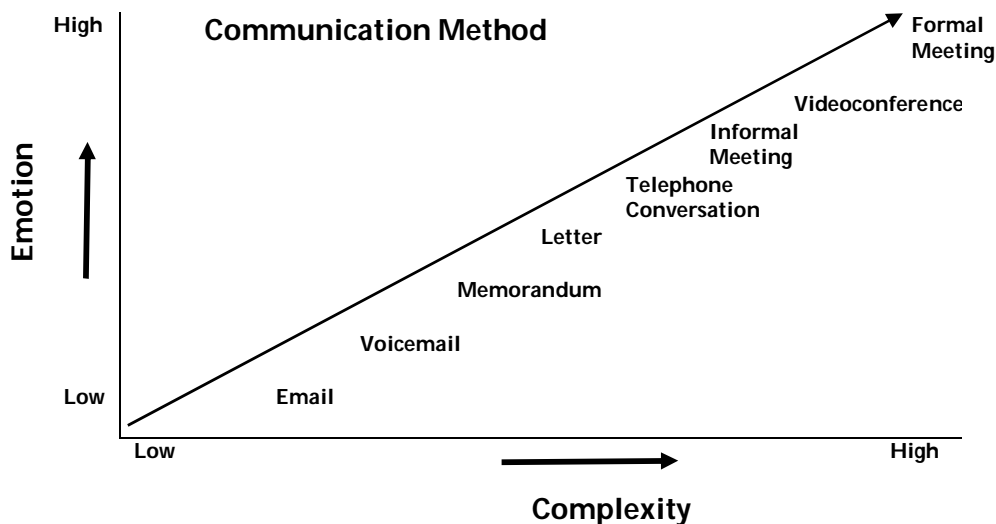
Communication Tools. Project leaders today have a wealth of available technologies to use in communication within the team and with external stakeholders. Matching the best technological solution to the needed type of communication can be troublesome. The leader needs to evaluate the degree of complexity and the emotional level of the topic in choosing the best communication tool.^{32, 33, 34}

Testing, Training, Implementation and Transfer. The project is not complete until the customer decision-maker and the end-users say it is. Once the deliverable is completed, team members are eager to conclude their involvement with the project and refocus their efforts on their primary job responsibilities. The project team leader needs to continue to maintain morale and focus with all team members and guide them through the last phase of end-user testing, training, implementation and final transfer. This phase usually involves some degree of fine-tuning with the deliverable.

The author proposed the development of a global business solution that would facilitate the exchange of value-adding knowledge between workers in geographically diverse locations in support of decision making. Executive Management of the Global 500 corporation enthusiastically approved the project and the author was assigned as the Executive Sponsor. The Worldwide Intelligence Network (WWIN) Project took 18 months to complete. He enacted all of the above competencies and the project was completed on time and on budget and delivered all of the functions

promised. He had received early support from all required stakeholders. About a third of the way through project completion, new corporate heads of Legal and Finance were hired from external sources. All business units (corporate headquarters and over 40 country units) were delighted with the functionality of the program. The Executive Sponsor (author) was shocked when the new heads of Legal and Finance found objection to WWIN for legal and security concerns and were successful in having the project cancelled. The author failed to meet and gain the support of the new Legal and Finance heads. He learned the importance of continually monitoring key stakeholders throughout the project development and ensuring each is continued understanding and support.

Figure 3. Choosing the Best Communication Method



Adapted from: Martinelli, R. Rahschulte, T., & Waddell, J. (2010). *Leading Global Project Teams: The New Leadership Challenge*. Oshawa, Ontario, Canada: Multi-Media.

The Special Case of Virtual Teams

Recent studies show that virtual teams have typical success rates of less than 30%. This increase in failure rates is a result of the increased complexity of virtual global teams.³⁵ This added complexity means that virtual global project team leaders need to more clearly create defined structures, procedures and processes to create and maintain trust and high performance.³⁶

Virtual global project team leaders need to address all of the above leadership challenges plus the following:

Time Zones. Multiple time zones present added challenges to virtual global project leaders.³⁷ Leaders need to understand the impact of scheduling meetings with varying time zones. I always tried to schedule teleconference and videoconferences at 5 am Eastern time. This equates to 10 am in the UK, 11 am in France, and 6 pm in China and 7 pm in Japan the next day! With calls to Asia only, I would schedule these in the evening in the Eastern US. This enabled my Asian colleagues to take the call in the morning during normal business hours. These displays of sensitivity and caring build trust and are motivational to distant team members.

Holidays, Vacation Periods, Local Regulatory Issues and Customs. Global virtual project team leaders need to have access to a global calendar which includes all local country holidays. Planning meetings around these important dates is challenging as they are many and varied by location. Leaders need to be sensitive and understand when people from differing countries take extended vacation breaks. They will not be available during these times. Asking them to join may be considered culturally incorrect. Certain countries regulate 'normal business hours' and these need to be respected. In some culture and family situations, it is difficult to conduct business from home via teleconference or videoconference. These situations need to be explored and resolved.

Lack of Personal Interaction and Isolation. The absence of face-to-face communication and lack of social interaction can negatively impact trust and team effectiveness. Remote participants can become bored and lose focus during meetings. Think of the conference calls you have been part of where you can hear someone typing on their computer because they forgot to push the mute button!

Personal Communication and Language Skills. Language takes five dimensions: 1) writing, 2) reading, 3) speaking, 4) listening and 5) non-verbal. Remember that members of the virtual team may have the company's business language as a second or third language and may possess differing levels of comprehension with each of the five dimensions of language. What is the business language of the firm? It is frequently English. Remember that American, British, Australian and other forms of English are different. Keep communication simple. Avoid jargon. Avoid humor. Tone and meaning are difficult to interpret. Keep sentences short.³⁸

Technology. The rate of technological innovation and adoption of new communication tools continues to increase around the globe. Virtual teams employ email, teleconferencing and videoconferencing as their main means of communication. The leader must understand the level of technology available at each team member's location, its compatibility with other technologies, and the level of local IT support available.

Project Success: Remember the 5 Competencies

Most global projects either fail or partially fail. Project Planning, Technical Project Management, Team Effectiveness, Cross-Cultural Proficiency and Stakeholder Communication are the essential competencies of project leaders needed for project success.

Greater emphasis needs to be devoted to the selection and training in the above competencies with accidental project managers, certified project managers and team members to improve project performance outcomes.

Suggested Readings

Leading Global Projects for Professional and Accidental Project Leaders
Robert T. Moran and William E. Youngdahl

Leading Global Project Teams: The New Leadership Challenge
Russ Artinelli, Tim Rahshulte and Jim Waddell

The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization
Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
Patrick Lencioni

Virtual Teams: Mastering Communication and Collaboration in the Digital Age
Terri R. Kurtzberg

Leading Effective Virtual Teams: Overcoming Time and Distance to Achieve Exceptional Results
Nancy M. Settle-Murphy

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