

Global Project Management

Communication, Collaboration and
Management Across Borders

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Preface



The need for this book

With the increasing trend for outsourcing, off-shoring and globalisation, many organisations are taking advantage of geographically distributed skills, round-the-clock operations and virtual teams. Small and medium sized businesses are linking up with major companies, forming supplier networks to deliver products and services, and customer networks of distributors, resellers and end-users. Global projects are now the operating units that establish an initial link among these cross-border networks and rely on information flows across the different partners and stakeholders.

Most projects in these global environments involve people from different companies, located in various countries. Currently, many companies struggle to obtain acceptable levels of efficiency and quality from global projects since the organisation structures and project management methodologies are not adapted to a multicultural environment, and because many project managers and team members still feel uncomfortable when they communicate over a distance. Many project managers still rely exclusively on the so-called 'hard' skills, such as planning, scheduling and controlling, to coordinate the projects. The 'soft' skills (for example, communication, understanding of cultural differences and team building) and the 'informal' project management techniques (such as networking, influencing and improvising) are essential for the success of global projects, and require special attention from organisations.

The framework described by this book is all about soft skills and informal project management, suggesting areas of knowledge that require special attention for effective global program and project management. Rather than providing 'one-size-fits-all' recommendations, the chapters of this book guide you in a quest to harvest your company's good practices, using them to develop and implement a Global Project Management Framework© in your company or project.

Intended audience

This book provides a comprehensive framework of good practices on global project management, and is primarily directed at project managers, program managers and project office members involved in the preparation and application of project management methodologies, and working on programs and projects involving different companies and locations around the globe. They can start by improving the project management and communication practices in their current portfolio of programs and projects, and later include these good practices in the company methodologies. They can also identify what types of tools can improve understanding over a distance, deploying them in their current work environment.

Senior executives can use the information in this book to understand the main challenges faced by global project managers and team members, and to identify how the deployment of tools and practices can improve the productivity of global project teams and the quality of the deliverables, while reducing travel and relocation costs. The senior board have a role model during the implementation of the framework, selecting the human resources to work on global projects, creating a project management office and providing organisational support. This book also provides various types of project structure – adapted to different needs – and some suggestions to improve the motivation of a project team that spans different locations, cultures and languages.

Finally, anyone participating in a global project as a team member or stakeholder can also find useful recommendations for smooth communication with people located in diverse countries, coming from other cultures, speaking different native languages or working in various time zones.

Academic researchers can make use of the framework presented in this book, performing new studies to investigate the impact of each chapter on the efficiency and productivity of global project teams, and to complete the Global Project Management Framework© with new developments, technologies, practices and theories.

The structure of this book

The introductory chapter presents the characteristics of global projects and programs, discusses how these peculiarities affect the work and efficiency of global project and program managers and summarises the main advantages and challenges of deploying a global team for a project or program. It presents a framework that helps global program and project managers to focus on the advantages and address the challenges of having project team members dispersed across the globe: the Global Project Management Framework©.

The chapters in Parts I to V explore in detail the five main categories of knowledge in the Global Project Management Framework©:

- Chapters 1–5 (Part I) present the core principles that allow the management of *people* across country and cultural boundaries.
- Chapters 6–10 (Part II) complement the learning on people management by presenting the *communication* strategies that facilitate the management of project team members in different countries, and make them collaborate more effectively.
- Chapters 11–15 (Part III) suggest *organisational* structures and practices that create all fundamental conditions for a good collaborative environment on global projects, and expedite the implementation of the people and communication strategies.
- Chapters 16–25 guide the development of good practices for the implementation (Part IV) and use (Part V) of the communication media and collaborative tools mentioned in the previous chapters: the *technology* that allows the management of people and the communication between stakeholders across country and cultural boundaries.

Part VI concludes the book, by presenting different strategies to adapt the recommendations according to the organisational cultures, standards, methodologies and requirements, obtaining buy-in from senior managers, project managers and project team members.

How to read the book

The book structure allows companies to understand the main domains that have an impact on the performance of global project teams, and then adapt their project management methodologies to a global environment. The sequence of the chapters aims to provide a progressive understanding of the needs and good practices. As an alternative route, project managers and team members may read each chapter independently and address specific issues to improve their efficiency on global projects. Many cross-references are provided to allow the chapters to be read in any order.

The main sources of information

There are different layers of information to consider when looking for good practices on global project management. The first and most important layer is the *experience* of other global project managers, team members and senior managers from different countries. One way to learn about this experience is to participate in networking events organised by associations such as the Project Management Institute and the British Computer Society.

The second layer is the foundation of knowledge on *project management* methods, tools, techniques and processes. This book does not redefine this set of principles, preferring to build on the information already established by existing bodies of knowledge. The main references for this book were the PMBOK® guide from the Project Management Institute, PRINCE2® from the Office of Government Commerce, the IPMA Competence Baseline (ICB) and the Gower Handbook of Project Management. However, a certain level of abstraction was adopted to allow companies using other methods and methodologies to consult this book without difficulty.

The third layer is the literature on *virtual teams and distributed project management*, which establishes the requirements and recommendations for projects involving people in different locations. The third layer is the literature on virtual teams and distributed project management, which establishes the requirements and recommendations for projects involving people in different locations. The main sources are described at the end of each part of the book.

The fourth layer is the knowledge gathered by the *intercultural studies* from Hofstede and Trompenaars, present in most chapters of this book.

Web companion

The website www.GlobalProjectManagement.org provides tools, templates and an open forum for the exchange of information related to the practices described in this book, also linking to different hardware, software and services solutions.