

Project Management of a Global Team

The world is getting smaller. Well, it isn't physically getting smaller but that is one way of saying that global communications have become so fast paced that the world is really one community in a lot of ways. With the advent of the internet, email, instant messaging and VOIP, it is entirely possible to do business with trading partners around the globe without ever leaving your office.

For many businesses who are on the cutting edge of new business paradigms, the concept of a geographically isolated business is becoming obsolete. It is entirely possible to put together a business consortium or a project team made of subject matter experts spread across all time zones and from around the world. In fact, this kind of decentralized management of business projects is becoming more of the norm than the exception in the twenty first century business environment.

So just as those in marketing, product development and investments have already learned how to maximize a project team that is separated by hundreds or thousands of miles, the project manager must also adapt the project management methodology to accommodate a similar approach to getting business done.

Conventional project management is a systematic approach to taking a project from scope to implementation that has proven successful in thousands of companies. We have no reason to abandon this well developed methodology. But as new business paradigms come to play, we have to adapt even a standard methodology like project management to fit the way business is done in this century.

Communications is the key to any successful project. This is the challenge of utilizing a team from across a great geographical divide. It is entirely possible you may execute the entire project with team members you never see. So to facilitate frequent and up to date communications, we must exploit the technology we have at our disposal such as...

\$ Blogs, wiccis and shared working environments. Group sharing environments on the web are becoming more and more common. By setting up a tool set on line in which team members can post status reports, leave emails, update the project management software, file expense reports and stay in touch with each other, you facilitate the kind of communication that keeps the team moving forward successfully. Blogs, private message boards and wiccis are also excellent means by which an ongoing "conversation" can be carried out between team members that anyone can check into and get caught up with the content of what has been done and what is being planned for the project.

\$ Controlled email trees. As the project manager, email is an obvious way to quickly stay in touch with team members. However, it can get chaotic trying to keep up on fast moving email trees. That may be a good reason to trap all emails trees within your online project management software so the contributions

of everyone on the team can be captured for further review.

§ IM staff meetings. IM can be expanded so it doesn't just bring in two participants. You can schedule your weekly staff meetings using an IM conference room and capture the entire proceedings in the IM log thus assuring yourself that nothing that was said will "fall through the cracks."

By becoming adept at using cyberspace as the primary "location" of your project team's interaction, you can literally create a team of highly specialized talent that can be located from anywhere in the world. This vastly expands your ability to tap the best minds for your work and to streamline the project management process. It will take time to get used to and there will be some missteps along the way. But if you can conquer global team management using internet tools, it will be a valuable skill for successfully executing global projects for your business.

PPPPP 645