

The framework: change management and five categories

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There are many literary sources that make recommendations on virtual teams, virtual projects and international management. They cover a significant amount of knowledge on virtual projects but do not address all the challenges and recommendations for global projects.

Organizations may need to adapt their cultures, procedures and technological environment when moving from co-located to virtual and global project management¹. Some authors argue that project managers and team members also need to change the way they communicate and interact with each other².

Organizational change principles might be used to obtain participation in the change process and increase the acceptance of the new working dynamics from all stakeholders. This suggests the usage of basic organizational change variables to analyze the literature and form a basic model for best practice: people, tasks, structure and technology³.

The Global Project Management Framework⁴ suggests good practices required for global projects, grouped into discrete knowledge areas

- Global teams: the knowledge on people management can cover the stakeholder management challenges and recommendations for global projects.
- Global communication: the project management tasks that suffer more from the dispersion of stakeholders are those associated with communication (meetings and one-to-one discussions).
- Global organizations: the knowledge area that will contain all recommendations on organizational structure for successful global projects.
- The vast amount of knowledge in the technology area, available in the literature, can be grouped into two different categories⁴. At first there are many recommendations for the evaluation and deployment of hardware and software to facilitate communication over distance, covering the central implementation of the collaborative tools within the company and their installation and setup by project managers and team members. One example is the 'identification of basic criteria for evaluating products and services for virtual teams or globally dispersed projects'⁵.
- The second category of technical knowledge describes the usage of effective collaborative techniques in order to achieve efficiency, with practical recommendations to be followed when employing the tools. For example, the establishment of common rules and tips for e-mails⁶.

These five knowledge areas are interdependent, thus a more effective implementation would be expected by following a holistic approach.

The framework is explained in details on the book (Binder, 2007), and throughout this website. A forum was created to allow a structured exchange of knowledge on the topic, aiming to fill the framework with experiences coming from different countries and domain areas.

Notes:

1 - Goncalves, 2005, p.355; Pauleen and Rajasingham, 2004, p.274

2 - Staples, Wong and Cameron, 2004, pp.170 & 175; Pauleen and Rajasingham, 2004, p.275

3 - Clark, 1972, pp.26-30

4 - Mullins, 1996, p.87

5 - Goncalves, 2005, pp.185-198

6 - McMahon, 2001, p.139; Fisher and Fisher, 2001, pp.171-179

Sources:

Binder, J. (2007) 'Global Project Management: Communication, Collaboration and Management Across Borders' (Gower, UK)

Clark, P.A. (1972) 'Action Research & Organizational Change' (Harper & Row, London, UK)

Fisher K. and Fisher M. (2001) 'The Distance Manager' (McGraw-Hill, USA)

Goncalves, M. (2005), 'Managing virtual projects' (McGraw-Hill, USA)

McMahon, P. (2001) 'Virtual project management software solutions for today and the future' (CRC Press LLC, USA)

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Staples, D. S., Wong, I. K., Cameron, A. F. (2004) 'Best practices for virtual team effectiveness' in Pauleen D. J. (Ed) Virtual teams: Projects, protocols and processes (Idea Group Publishing, London, UK)