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University

Global Project Management

Lecture 9

PMG 661

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing



Collaborative environments need to be available on global projects to facilitate the sharing of information about the project and the products. The project manager can create the project management plan with the participation of team members in all locations, and keep all its documents in a shared workspace.

Knowledge Sharing

The team members can organize review cycles for design documents, keeping different versions and a history of the changes. Project-related information, like the global project binder, can be maintained in shared tables or spreadsheets, allowing the owners of tasks, issues and risks to keep their information accurate in real time and accessible to all stakeholders.

Knowledge Sharing



Another form of collaboration goes beyond formal documentation, by collecting knowledge in an informal manner, through discussion groups, web links and project announcements.

Knowledge Sharing



Originated from the BBS (Bulletin Board Systems) and newsgroups, and using a similar language and structure to chat rooms, discussion boards have the advantage of keeping discussions stored in a shared place and allowing the stakeholders to search for information at any time during the project. Global project offices can establish procedures to archive the knowledge base so that it can serve as a basis for future projects.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



International companies need to consider different software solutions to satisfy all their knowledge-sharing requirements and the main objective of the evaluation phase is to guarantee a good integration level among the different collaborative tools, which might also be combined with e-mail, web conferencing and calendar systems.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



Proprietary software can force companies to use a complete suite of tools from the same supplier and sometimes these are not the best options available. Global organisations might consider the use of open solutions for better integration and a wider choice of complementary packages.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



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The first requirement for knowledge-sharing suites is a good system for document collaboration, which allows different team members to checkout, update documents, submit them for review, and publish a final version. The software must recognise all document types: text editors, spreadsheets, presentations, design schemas, program sources, blueprints and other files applicable to the different projects in your company.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing

The usual knowledge management activities must be performed as easily in the knowledge-sharing software as in older file sharing systems: that is, to look for a specific document, to edit it and to save a new version. The creation of historic versions, back-ups, archiving and indexing must be performed smoothly by the software with little or no human intervention. Complex or time-consuming activities may inhibit the use of the collaborative environment.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



A second requirement for knowledge-sharing software is the management of discussion groups. The project office or project manager can create various groups, according to the categories of information and the types of stakeholders exchanging information (for example, environmental aspects, engineering standards, technical discussions, marketing strategies, sales forecasts, and so on).

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



The project team members can create discussion threads, one for every topic of interest: technical or environmental discussions, suggestions to improve the quality or reduce the cost of the project deliverables, informal conversations that may reveal potential risks, opportunities or issues.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



When analysing the efficiency of the tool to manage the discussions, think about how intuitive it would be for any project stakeholders to write new discussion threads, to be informed about threads created by other people, to detect which replies were given to specific threads and to search for information in all threads.

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



Project announcements are an additional and important feature, since global project teams cannot have wallboards to share personal events (like birthdays and marriages), project matters (new project members, important milestones, decisions, changes), external events that may affect the project

Evaluating technologies for knowledge sharing



(press releases, environmental reports, changes in the organizational structure) and project metrics (for example, important deviations on cost, schedule, quality and customer satisfaction). The announcement board must allow the posting of text, pictures and hyperlinks to project documents with detailed information on the topics being published.

Evaluating the existing knowledge-sharing solutions



When the organization or project already deploys knowledge-sharing solutions for collaboration among distant team members, a survey (see example in Table below) can identify the simplicity of use and compliance with the requirements identified in the section above. In this survey, you can confirm if other team members share your impression, by comparing the results with the mind map.

Table 19.1 Survey to identify efficiency of existing knowledge sharing suites

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is always easy and quick to publish information about the project				
It is always easy and quick to create and update the project documents				
It is always easy and quick to find the project documents and information				
All team members consistently publish up-to-date information and documents about the project tasks under their responsibility				
I know how to instruct a new colleague to obtain access to the knowledge-sharing system				
I consider it important to share personal events, external information and the evolution of the project metrics with the project team members and other stakeholders				
I find it easy to share personal events, external information and the evolution of the project metrics with the project team members and other stakeholders, using the knowledge-sharing suite				
General comments about the knowledge-sharing suite				
Suggestions on how to improve the knowledge-sharing technology				

Implementing a new knowledge-sharing solution



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After all the different components are selected, validated and integrated, a pilot implementation is recommended to identify how the stakeholders are using the different functions and to determine the best approach to deploy the knowledge-sharing suite into all global projects.

Implementing a new knowledge-sharing solution



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This approach is also recommended when some components are being added or updated in the existing knowledge-sharing suite. At the end of the pilot phase, the evaluation survey can be announced to all the participants, identifying if the implementation can proceed to other projects or locations in the same organization, or even extended to partner companies. Depending on the survey results, a second pilot phase can be organized to correct important gaps between the requirements and the solution in place.

Defining procedures for knowledge-sharing set-up



All global project stakeholders must know how to prepare their computers to access the knowledge-sharing systems (for example, by installing client software or plug-ins), how to obtain access to the applications (for example, by requesting user identifications, passwords or access rights) and how to use all the basic knowledge-sharing functions.

Defining procedures for knowledge-sharing set-up



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The structure of the documentation must show how the various applications are integrated, how to publish the information and how to search for it. You can use the checklist in Table below opposite to produce and publish the documentation to help all project stakeholders accessing and using the knowledge-sharing suite.

Table 19.2 Checklist: documentation and procedures for knowledge sharing

	Information available	In electronic format	Published	Accessible by all locations
How to request access to the knowledge-sharing solution				
How to request installation of desktop software required by the knowledge-sharing solution				
How to access the knowledge-sharing software				
How to find and publish project information				
How to find and publish project documents				
How to create a new discussion group				
How to post new threads or topics on the discussion groups				
How to search for information on the discussion groups				
How to use pictures or hyperlinks in the project announcements				
How to lock files, to avoid other people changing them at the same time as you				
How to create online lists and tables that allow the update of information items by various team members at the same time				
How to finish the session				
How to request support				

Evaluating the implementation

Some time after implementing the new technology components, preparing and publishing the documentation and announcing the new solution to all project team members, you may evaluate the improvements and detect if corrections are required by deploying the same assessment survey (Table above) and comparing the new results with the initial findings.

Evaluating the implementation



A new implementation cycle can start to correct problems or to improve the quality of the knowledge-sharing tools and the documentation.

Resources:

Global Project Management

Communication, Collaboration and Management Across Borders

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