

Chapter

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Global Project Management

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Global Project Management

Lecture 6

Selection of International Human Resources

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On some occasions, the allocation of people to the project team will be based on the availability of resources, and the influence of key stakeholders or partner companies. The project managers may evaluate the previous experience of the team members on global projects, organizing training and coaching to avoid clashes between different personalities and cultures, avoiding negative conflicts and increasing the productivity and team spirit.

the selection of the project team will be one of the first responsibilities of a project manager, consisting of internal or external recruitment based on the project needs.

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Technical skills and specializations are not the only elements to consider when evaluating potential team members to work on global projects. Previous research on project management identified that team members must have a set of 'global skills' to work effectively on global projects (Majchrzak and Malhotra, 2003; Turetken and Jain, 2004). These global skills involve the ability to work remotely and openness to other company and country cultures, being summarized as follows:

Global communication – the ability to communicate over distance (or the willingness to develop such competence) is an important factor in determining which team members will be effective on global projects, since most of the communications with the project manager and colleague team members will be made over distance.

Good listening skills are an example of this ability, like rephrasing the sentences being said to confirm understanding (reflective listening) and showing a true interest in the topic being presented by the speaker, by asking more questions and clarifying meanings (active listening).

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Global experience – some team members will have already worked in different countries, on other global projects or with other team members over distance. These people will tend to require less coaching on the communication skills, and may also bring new ideas on how to improve the existing tools and procedures, based on their previous experiences.

Global thinking – the team members involved in creative tasks will usually need to consider different cultural or geographic standpoints when identifying risks, preparing quality assessments or when designing the deliverables. These team members will like the intellectual stimulation and the diverse opinions from a cross-cultural environment and might also provide coaching on global creativity to less experienced colleagues during brainstorming sessions.

Culture awareness – the team members that are familiar with the organizational and country cultures involved in the project may also have fewer requirements for training and coaching, and are less likely to generate conflicts. They tend to feel more comfortable than other people when working with a mix of different ethics, standards, policies or working practices.

Technical capabilities – people who have proven capabilities on the use of office suites and other software tools will tend to learn quickly how to deploy and use the collaborative tools . The team members who demonstrate a very good understanding of these tools might then be very useful in providing coaching and training to other team members.

Self-discipline – people working in different locations to the project managers must have a working discipline that allows them to work independently, with a reduced need for supervision. They must also be willing to work according to the established processes, rules and responsibilities. When little is known about the self-discipline of a team member, frequent monitoring must occur at the beginning to ensure that the rules are being followed correctly, with corrective actions taken in the case of deviation.

High personal confidence – the team members will work effectively over distance when they are confident that their skills and capabilities allow them to act independently on their work packages or activities. The project manager or a senior specialist must compensate low levels of confidence by using a formal method of coaching or mentoring.

Tolerance for ambiguity – some degree of ambiguity is often present in global projects, despite all efforts from the project manager and the team members to define clear roles and responsibilities and detailed work packages.

The global team members must know how to resolve the problems created by this uncertainty, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities, patiently investigating the reasons for the lack of definition, volunteering to participate on the activity execution and suggesting corrective actions to avoid impact on the project.

Self-motivation – some people are naturally motivated, according to their career orientation, relocation aspiration and working preferences. These team members will tend to collaborate for the success of the project, with a reduced need for detailed supervision, and without requiring specific motivation instruments. When some key team members are lacking motivation, a specific process can be deployed.

Self-efficacy – the team members that show a good performance track record, by completing their actions on time with the expected quality level or providing reasonable explanations for deviations, will increase the trust from remote project managers, coordinators or colleagues.

When the performance is not within the expected limits, the project managers or coordinators might perform a follow-up of the deliverables, and work together with the team members to correct the deviations and avoid future occurrences of the same problem.

Good organization – the team members who have good organization skills will thrive on global projects. They usually establish a prioritized 'to-do' list linked to the project schedule and issues log, organize their time to perform the activities on the global projects without conflicts with daily or local activities and inform the project manager in case of potential deviations, risks or issues.

Global project managers must provide coaching on organisation skills to team members that are not performing some of the actions above, to improve their productivity and avoid impacts on the project.

Concentration – team members working away from the main company building (home workers or people located in small satellite offices) must have a higher level of concentration to avoid disruption from other colleagues or family members. Otherwise, they may require coaching from another remote colleague or the project manager on possible alternatives to increase their level of participation in the project activities. Some situations might require that these team members move to a different location for the duration of the project.

Reduced social interaction – the remote team members will also have less opportunity for social contact with the project manager and other stakeholders working on the same project. When social interaction is an important element that motivates specific team members, they might develop new relationships with local colleagues working in the same location but on other projects, or consider a temporary relocation to another office that contains a group of project team members.

Openness and flexibility – the team members who are open to working with people from other cultures and located in different countries will enjoy the experience of participating in a global project. They may even help to identify, avoid or resolve conflicts between other team members. Intercultural training is required for the team members who show resistance or discomfort when working with diverse cultures

Professionals who occupy program or project management positions need to master most of the global skills identified previously, in order to provide coaching and mentoring to the distributed team members. In addition, they must have a specific set of skills for effective coordination, monitoring and control of the project work packages over distance. These skills are covered in detail by other chapters of this book, and can be summarised as:

- understanding of the cultural differences and ability to build on them to improve the teamwork, creativity and innovation levels;
- proven leadership when working with virtual team members;
- trustworthiness ;
- openness to understand and manage conflicts involving different cultures;

- coaching and mentoring of remote team members;
- excellent communication skills and techniques;
- experience in coordinating meetings using audio, video and web conferencing;
- familiarity with knowledge sharing and PMS tools.

The level of global skills required will depend on their functions and the types of project structure:

- Project managers in centralised structures – these project managers must develop a high level of global skills, as most of their activities involve communication crossing country borders – including project monitoring, coaching, conflict management and team leadership.

- Local coordinators working on distributed projects – the local coordinators can spend most of their time coordinating the team members at their locations, but a certain amount of communication with other coordinators and the project manager might happen across borders.

- Functional coordinators on distributed projects – these functions will need a higher level of global skills, as most of their activities will involve team members in other locations.

- Project managers on distributed projects – these functions will require good global skills, to perform the management of the project coordinators and the monitoring and control of their work packages.
- Project managers working in round-the-clock structures – they will need excellent skills for asynchronous communication and an excellent discipline to deploy and follow processes.

- Project managers working on global project networks – as well as all the skills from the above categories, these professionals will need to understand and accept different company cultures, processes and tools.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The recruitment process starts with the preparation of a job description. The job description outlines the major responsibilities of each team member or project manager, the specification of the professional experience and skills required by their roles, the potential sources of candidates, reporting positions, salary and grade levels. For global projects, the job description can also specify one or more desired locations.

INTERNAL RECRUITMENT

When the job description is ready, you can start looking inside your company to fill the position. The ideal candidates can be in one of the desired locations, or in a different country. When the ideal candidates are not based in the desired location, you have two options. You may redesign your project structure, and appoint the persons to work on your project remotely.

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In this case, you might revisit the global skills required in the original job position and identify if the candidates have the required skills or are in a position to acquire them during the initial project phases. Local employees can bring advantages to the project when an acute cultural understanding or local knowledge is important for their functions, or when their personal networks and relations with local stakeholders can bring benefits to the project.

EXTERNAL RECRUITMENT

Keegan and Turner (2000) identified that most companies prefer to recruit people via 'headhunting' agencies, personal contacts or local universities. Online business-oriented networking sites are helping project managers to expand their network of contacts beyond their cities and companies, and are allowing them to recruit people through recommendation of peers around the globe.

These networking platforms have various levels of affiliation in different countries and some provide the user with a choice of languages, which is especially useful for global projects.

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEWS

After identifying the potential candidates, you must start the interviewing process. The first step is to prepare the interviews, not only to allow a fair comparison between the candidates, but also because some interviews may be performed over the telephone or using video conferencing. Like other meetings over distance, effective interviews require good preparation.

Example of a job description

Table 12.1 **Example of a job description**

Job title	Global project manager
Major responsibilities	Manage a global outsourcing project (budget of 4 Mio Euros) with 40–50 team members distributed across two European countries and one corporate office in Asia
Experience required	5–10 years experience in global program and project management
Ideal skills	• Excellent project management skills (must possess PMP qualification or IPMA level B) • Excellent meeting management skills • Good presentation skills
Global skills	The candidate must possess global communication skills; demonstrate self-confidence, discipline, good organisation and cultural awareness. The ideal candidate will have lived and worked in different countries, and speak fluent English and French
Job location	Nyon, Switzerland
Availability	• The candidate must be available to adapt their working hours to other time zones, when meeting with team members in South-America and Asia. • The position requires frequent travel (2 weeks per month), including many long-distance trips to Asia and South-America

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Resources:

Global Project Management

Communication, Collaboration and Management Across Borders

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