

# Management of offshore teams-web based tools: project

[Business](#), [Decision Making](#)



Management of offshore teams-Web based tools: Project Management is the art and science of planning and leading projects. Project management is even tougher than project development these days. Technical skills - though important - are not enough for effective, multicultural teamwork. In Offshore projects different developers from different regions of world combine to give a single output. Every region has own cultures and communications gap which effects on the development. Management of these projects is quite tough than managing the projects being developed in a common software house.

To address these gaps and issues different web based models and tools are presented. An openly accessible web-based communication model for multicultural teams (comMCT) was developed which consists of four modules i. e structural, functional, organizational and interpersonal aspects.

Else than the model there are number of tools used for the project management. Those tools are mostly web based which allows the offshore team to register and resolve the communication issues. Asana is one of the tools which is explained in the work below. These models and tools are expected to enhance learner's knowledge, practice and reflection on communication issues and contribute to more effective and satisfied offshore teams.

Introduction: Multicultural communication is a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or how culture affects communication. It is used to describe the wide range of communication processes and problems that naturally appear within

an organization or social context made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds.

Intercultural communication is sometimes used synonymously with cross-cultural communication. We all communicate with others all the time. No matter how well we think we understand each other, communication is not easy. Any moment that we're dealing with people different from ourselves, the likelihood is that they carry a similar list of hopes and fears in their back pocket. Culture is often at the root of communication challenges.

Our culture influences how we approach problems, and how we participate in groups and in communities. When we participate in groups we are often surprised at how differently people approach their work together. Our culture influences how we approach problems, and how we participate in groups and in communities. When we participate in groups we are often surprised at how differently people approach their work together. The problems are obvious: Peoples from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds must find ways of understanding and agreeing with each other, and they must develop and respect their own identities. Both large and small businesses often have a global reach. If you have foreign clients, purchase raw materials abroad or lead tours internationally, cultural differences and communication problems can cause misunderstandings that harm your company's bottom line. Success of a project when developed by an offshore provider is largely dependant on the way the project is remotely managed from the client's side.

If you hope to make a project successful with very little input from your end as a customer, it is unlikely that the project will achieve success in the long term. The basic reason is very simple: you know your business requirements best. Software services companies working in another part of the world can only develop a solution based on the input provided by you. Fairly large projects have a dedicated project manager who interacts with the multicultural team and acts as a virtual bridge between the business and the software developers. If your project does not have dedicated personnel for it, there is no need to despair. To compensate for this shortcoming, and, generally, improve communication in diverse teams, an openly accessible web-based communication model for multicultural teams (comMCT) has been developed as part of a doctoral dissertation of one of the authors. The model is partitioned into four modules clustering structural, functional, organizational, and interpersonal/behavioral aspects of communication. It systematically describes technical, cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal features of multicultural communication that have been found through a systematic literature review and structured interviews with 20 international project-management professionals .

Thus, the comMCT model captures - in structured and accessible form - the wisdom of hundreds of scientific articles. Moreover, it complements the scientific findings by recent statements from experienced project managers. Once implemented, comMCT was evaluated in an expert evaluation study, in which 15 international project managers estimated the applicability of the model for their professional practice and for novice users.

Project Management Study: SPM Phases: There are different schools of thought about the number of phases during a project. Some claim there are 3 phases, others say it's 5. At the base of it, the PMBOK points-out that the number of phases is determined by the project team and type of project. Project management is solely based on the idea that a project goes through a number of phases characterized by a distinct set of activities or tasks that take the project from conception to conclusion. Projects are big and small, with constraints like cost, time and resources. As projects become more complex, it's important to structure and define projects throughout the entire life-cycle.

That way, you won't get lost in the hustle and bustle. One way to organize a project is to sort it into 5 phases and here they

are.

The 5 Phases of a Project

§ Project Initiation Phase - a project is formally started, named and defined at a broad level during this phase. Project sponsors and other important stakeholders due diligently decide whether or not to commit to a project. Depending on the nature of the project, feasibility studies are conducted.

Or, as it may require, in an IT project - requirement gathering and analysis are performed in this phase. In the construction industry a project charter is completed in this phase.

§ Project Planning Phase - a project management plan is developed comprehensively of individual plans for - cost, scope, duration, quality, communication, risk and resources. Some of the important activities that mark this phase are - making WBS, development of schedule, milestone charts, GANTT charts, estimating and reserving resources, planning

dates and modes of communication with stakeholders based on milestones, deadlines and important deliveries.

A plan for managing identified and unidentified risks is determined as this may affect aspects of a project later on. Risk management planning includes: risk identification and analysis, risk mitigation approaches, and risk response planning.

§ Project Execution Phase - a project deliverable is developed and completed, adhering to a mapped-out plan. A lot of tasks during this phase capture project metrics through tasks like status meetings and project status updates, other status reports, human resource needs and performance reports. An important phase as it will help you understand whether your project will be a success or failure.

§ Project Monitoring and Control Phase - occurring at the same time as the execution phase, this one mostly deals with measuring the project performance and progression in accordance to the project plan. Scope verification and control occur to check and monitor for scope creep, change control to track and manage changes to project requirement.

Calculating key performance indicators for cost and time are done to measure the degree of variation, if any, and in which case corrective measures are determined and suggested to keep a project on track. To prevent project failure, consider why projects are likely to fail and the ways to prevent failure.

§ Project Closure Phase - A project is formally closed.

It includes a series of important tasks such as delivering the product, relieving resources, reward and recognition to the team members and

formal termination of contractors in case they were employed on the project. SPM: Complex projects are always fraught with a variety of risks ranging from scope risk to cost overruns. One of the main duties of a project manager is to manage these risks and prevent them from ruining the project. In this post, I will cover the major risks involved in a typical project. 1. Scope Risk: This risk includes changes in scope caused by the following factors: § Scope creep - the project grows in complexity as clients add to the requirements and developers start gold plating. § Integration issues § Hardware & Software defects § Change in dependencies 2. Scheduling Risk: There are a number of reasons why the project might not proceed in the way you scheduled.

These include unexpected delays at an external vendor, natural factors, errors in estimation and delays in acquisition of parts. For instance, the test team cannot begin the work until the developers finish their milestone deliverables and a delay in those can cause cascading delays. To reduce scheduling risks use tools such as a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and RACI matrix (Responsibilities, Accountabilities, Consulting and Information) and Gantt charts to help you in scheduling.

3. Resource Risk: This risk mainly arises from outsourcing and personnel related issues. A big project might involve dozens or even hundreds of employees and it is essential to manage the attrition issues and leaving of key personnel. Bringing in a new worker at a later stage in the project can significantly slow down the project.

Apart from attrition, there is a skill related risk too. For instance, if the project requires a lot of website front end work and your team doesn't have a designer skilled in HTML/CSS, you could face unexpected delays there.

Another source of the risk includes lack of availability of funds. This could happen if you are relying on an external source of funding (such as a client who pays per milestone) and the client suddenly faces a cash crunch. 4.

**Technology Risk:** This risk includes delays arising out of software & hardware defects or the failure of an underlying service or a platform. For instance, halfway through the project you might realize the cloud service provider you are using doesn't satisfy your performance benchmarks. Apart from this, there could be issues in the platform used to build your software or a software update of a critical tool that no longer supports some of your functions.

**Using a Project Management Tool to Help Mitigate Risk?** Many of the risks mentioned above could be minimized or eliminated by implementing robust project management tracking and communication through the many online tools now available. We are trying to provide a web-based tool that establishes an iterative approach to overcome the difficulties in Multicultural Communication. **Web-based tool: Asana:** Asana is software project management tool. Asana is a web and mobile application designed to help teams track their work. It was founded in 2008 by Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz and ex-engineer Justin Rosenstein, who both worked on improving the productivity of employees at Facebook. Asana is a web based



application which provides ease to manage the projects. It helps to keep track of team. It has multiple functionalities.

It provides platform to get all team at same place. It has feature of team conversation where any member of team can text and keep in touch with others. It also provide the calendar where events can be added a reminder gets set. Pros Dustin Moskovitz, the co-founder of Facebook, also designed Asana.

True to the aesthetic and simplicity of the most popular social network, Asana is an intuitive task-management system that works best for teams seeking real-time interaction. Asana allows its users to visualize their goals, track their time, assign priority to their tasks, and get updates on the project right in the program. It also has a calendar function to graph the team's tasks right onto the dashboard.

In addition, over the past year, it's added an Android app, the ability to convert a task to a project, conversations, and dashboards. It's been beefing up—last year, its biggest con was that it didn't have enough features.

Cons Asana does not allow offline use. In addition, reviewers feel that “sometimes it is not intuitive enough to find something,” and list a number of frustrating conversations with Asana's seemingly lacking customer service. A.

Genesis of the comMCT Model: The comMCT model was developed as part of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Vienna 6. The model captures essential knowledge for communicating effectively in MCTs, and provides a web-application to make this knowledge available in a systematic,

structured, and comprehensive way 19. Its contents draws upon a systematic, qualitative literature study 7 followed up by a qualitative field study 8 aiming to explore features of communication in multicultural teams.

In the literature review, a total of 159 studies on cultural differences, the effects of diversity on teams, and the dynamics of multicultural teams were analyzed. In the field study, expert interviews with 21 experienced project managers were conducted and analyzed through a qualitative content analysis 8. The field study's target group consisted of project management professionals who have been working or had worked as project managers in MCTs for five or more years, have managed at least two MCTs, and preferably hold a project management certificate. Finally, to approve the concept, the comMCT model was validated employing a structured, web-based qualitative survey among 15 project management experts 6, 8-9. The major findings of that survey are summarized in Section IV and related to students' evaluations in the Discussion section. B.

The Structure of the Model: As illustrated in Figure 1, the comMCT model considers the team as the central element that functions flexibly within the classical project boundaries of scope, time and budget. The arrows in the Figure indicate that the team is influenced by the project and organizational culture and reciprocally influences these cultures. The penetrating field of communication is clustered into four modules, reflecting the structural, functional, organizational, and interpersonal/behavioral aspects of communication.

Each module encompasses several elements addressing technical, cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal features required for effective communication in multicultural teams. Particular emphasis is given to exposing both benefits and disadvantages/risks of MCTs. The structural module includes the following seven elements: effective communication plan, open communication structure, an interconnected communication system, adequate communication procedures/processes, suitable technical environment, ad-hoc calls with preparation, and using the right communication tools. The model provides three kinds of details for each element: definition/explanation, benefits/function, and which advantages/opportunities - assigned with the MCTs - are to be utilized, or which disadvantages/risks are to be overcome through the related element and how.

Fig. 1. The structure of the com MCT model. The functional module addresses features such as effective goal and rule setting, work/time planning, monitoring, controlling, decision making, and ensuring sufficient participation, all with a particular emphasis on the multicultural composition of the team. Examples of features of the organizational module are effective team building, training, task-sharing, role and responsibility assignment, external support and, importantly, employing an adequate leadership style. The vital interpersonal/behavioral module includes features such as forming a shared vision, sharpening soft-skills, shared attitudes and values, and several qualities articulated by the Person-Centered Approach 10, 13 such as empathic understanding and respectful, genuine sharing. Overall, the

model is designed to provide an encompassing and ubiquitously accessible resource for novice managers and team members, and to serve as a checklist for experienced professionals who may want to expand their communicative repertoire in multicultural teams 19. Visit (<http://www.3mpati.com/comMCTv2/index.php>) for a web-based presentation of the comMCT model and refer to 19 for a detailed description.

III. EXPERT-EVALUATION STUDY OF COMMXT: A. Research Setting, Participants, and Methods: In 2015-2016, a qualitative online survey with 15 experienced international project managers stemming from 8 different countries was conducted 9. This study served as a proof of concept and aimed at gaining insights about the users' perception of the comMCT model with regard to seven core criteria: completeness, structure, language, redundancy, understandability, originality, and usefulness for the professionals as well as for novice users. In order to elicit interviewees' experience and knowledge systematically and thoroughly, a structured questionnaire with open questions and closed, Likert-scale questions was employed for and made accessible via the comMCT website: <http://demo.moreit.com.tr/anket/index.php/438667/lang-en>.

The questionnaire was used as a main source for the data analysis. The interviewees' responses to the closed Likert scale questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics and participants' responses to the open questions were systematically analyzed.

B.

Limitations: The evaluation study is limited due to the number of participants. Nevertheless, it provides insight into comMCT's usability for project management professionals. It also provides promising results regarding the envisaged applicability of comMCT as an educational resource for novice users. Still, the experts' estimates regarding the applicability of comMCT for novice users and students require future research and validation. The two case studies in Section V address this educational concern within the framework of person-centered education.