
PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Leading Virtual Project Teams***

Author: **Margaret R. Lee, PhD, PMP**

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Reviewer: ***Bob Dragoon, PMP***

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Leading Virtual Project Teams provides tools and techniques to improve communication and project outcomes with diverse teammates that rarely see each other. The author adapts a theory of leadership and communication into practical application for improved success of virtual teams. Tables used throughout the book enforce key concepts with excellent examples. The book has 5 chapters:

- i. Overview
- ii. e-Leadership for Projects
- iii. Enhancing Virtual Project Communications
- iv. Cultural Communication Issues and Effective e-Leadership
- v. Virtual Project Competencies

Dr. Lee has a doctorate in organization and management/project management and operates a consulting practice, LEE Consultants. Her company is a Registered Education Provider for the Project Management Institute. She has a seat on the editorial boards of *International Journal of Project Management* and *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*.

The book gets off to a slow start, laying groundwork of historical team management and terminology. The first two chapters expose Dr. Lee's writing style of lengthy sentences, prolonged paragraphs, and definition overload. If not fully engaged, these chapters could discourage a reader's interest in finishing the book.

The book grows in significance and value in Chapters 3 & 4. Dr. Lee's discussion of the 6 Dimensions of Culture is new and thought provoking. She has excellent examples of applying these dimensions in global communities, and never strays from core discussion of virtual gaps.

For example, cultures differ in their sense of time. Monochronic cultures (like United States and Switzerland) view time as finite and tangible. In these countries, project milestones tend to be clearly defined dates with little room for change. However, Polychronic cultures (like Latin America and Asia) view time as flowing, holistic and fluid. In these countries, project milestones are more like suggestions, where shifting dates are embraced. Dr. Lee suggests teammates with temporal differences need different forms of communication to prevent misunderstanding of schedules.

Chapter 5 hits a home run. It adds the concept of virtual competency, with clearly stated e-leadership skills to navigate cross-cultural differences. For example, some of the most common requests for virtual team managers are Coordination (not control), Accessibility, Right information (without overload), Feedback, Fairness (not favoritism), Decisiveness, Honesty (not manipulation), and Respect (not paternalism). Dr. Lee argues that Project Managers with these skills can greatly enhance project outcomes.

Chapter 5 also introduces the “Trust Log” for virtual teams. Individuals can identify trust factors (listening, keeping commitments, sharing information), and then track their situations and consequences during the project. Using Trust Logs can improve team cohesion and reduce the risk of undermining trust.

This book has the most relevance for teams with global teammates. For these teams, Dr. Lee offers specific advice to close the gaps in communication, motivation and behavior. If you need to know how to retain excellent staff and keep them motivated in distant communities, then Chapter 5 is meant for you.

Conclusion

The book will stay in my personal library. It is a good reference and reminder of the complexities, challenges, and opportunities for e-Leadership in virtual environments.

Leading Virtual Project Teams, by Margaret R. Lee, PhD, PMP, published by CRC Press, ISBN 978-1-4665-7688-9; \$69.95 USD; 191pages, hard cover. More information at <http://www.crcpress.com/product/isbn/9781466576889>

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Bob Dragoon received his PMP credential in May, 2010. He is currently a Sr. Program Consultant at Agfa Healthcare, a global company headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. His virtual home office in Oregon was a prime motivation to read and review this book.