

“Mission success first” approach and the collaborations in the organization project environment through improvement of cross-corporate relationships during the project phases^{1, 2}

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1. Introduction

To build trust with someone works next to you is easy. This challenge is even bigger when you have teams collaborating from various locations. Teams in different time-zones, cultural differences, and of course often, the language barrier. Improving collaboration between these teams becomes a real challenge with the growth of the number and complexity of the projects. The relations in the cross-corporate environment during the project and remote/virtual teams^{3, 4}, in particular, is essential for project execution success. A key element in this relationship is the approach “Mission Success First” as the main ingredient for the fulfillment.

Many organizations using teams working all over the world. In most of the projects, they perform that’s a great thing and brings a lot of benefits to the project and the organization itself. Also,

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² Research on Topic “**Improving Cross-Corporate Relations during the Project**” from the Pilot Qualification Program “**Approved Consultant/Educator for Project Business Management**” by Oliver F. Lehmann

³ **team** – a small number of people with complementary skills committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach, for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. / Katzenbach & Smith definition (1994)

⁴ **remote team** – a group of people who are not located in the same place and/or have a different time zone and working hours and very often from a diverse culture.

when these teams collaborate successfully, the project can add a global perspective to the options for success, but the distance can also mean problems.

All projects performed under remote team’s collaboration face most of the time the same issues. But these issues can also help you and your organization to build a proper method in remote team collaboration and partnership lead by the common goal – mission success first!

2. How the concept has changed over time

In the beginning, the cross-corporate practice was not so popular and using a remote team was more for small, unimportant and often not related to any project tasks. The collaboration was narrow to contract-payment relationships, never engaged to company objectives and most of the times never using the same team for a new task. This was the usual relationship build on nothing except money and end once the payment was made.

Now the situation is completely different. Organizations looking for ways to improve this communication with remote teams on a daily basis. They are trying to engage them in every possible way in order to use them as a valuable resource not only for task performance but also for complete and more often a complex project under cross-corporate environment.

The meaning of virtual/remote team nowadays is a synonym of colleagues located in some place far from us but aligned as much as we do to our common goals and believes and mostly join to our main objective – Mission Success First!

3. Ways for cross-corporate collaboration improvement

✓ Watch the time zone ⁵



The PM ⁶ needs always watch on time zones and respect our remote team's time off. This is crucial for cross-office collaboration. It may look easy but missing a track of time zones is one of the most common issues for remote teams managing. If there is a task that needs to perform or respond to client’s feedback or conference call, always consider what time zone remote teams are in and how this will reflect on their further actions.

Also, always need to use a digital tool like an online calendar to track your meetings. Try to establish a system with your remote team this will gives to the PM real-time information which one of the members is available or not.

⁵ Images credits: <https://www.freepik.com/vectorjuiceImagestack>

⁶ PM – Project manager

Do not insist for something which is not in priority and at the same time is outside the remote team business hours. A system which will notify every member when he/she is available outside business hours will be very useful.

✓ **Engage team members into department activities**



One of the big challenges is and probably always will be - how do we manage teams in different locations? If two of the remote teams in two different locations set for a remote meeting, it will be a good move from PM side to bring in a member from a different team and location. The cross-meeting of different teams from different locations will help for a better understanding between teams and organizations and smoother work process. For instance, if the development team is working on a new product/service, bring in someone from the design

team for side view and feedback. This member is more likely to give the missing piece or to look into the new product/service in a new perspective that was never even considered. Another benefit of cross-meetings is that designer's team will have a better understanding of the developed product/service, goals and can bring the development team's work culture and benefits into their own team.

✓ **Management system in real-time**



For a successful collaboration between PM, the remote teams and organization departments a proper online management system I needed. A virtual board where everything can be managed and viewed from every involved stakeholder in a real-time work environment. Integration with email and chat programs is a must in order to get a smooth communication process.

The reason to have this kind of management system is pretty obvious. It's the transparency in the work process and task flow. If PM has many private tasks or assignments to specific teams/people, then a lot of the creative and organization power will remain unused. The main information, issues, and key tasks should be visible for everyone.

✓ **Set collaboration standards!**



One of the PM's main goals is to set standards which everyone understands. Set of rules were to be the new stuff, where to find an old one and so on. The management system should do this requirement, but it is also a good option to have an additional storage solution (e.g. Dropbox).

This way the PM will establish a consistent, central place for document meetings and important files. This also needs to be a real-time source, where can manage multiple versions of information. Other examples of standards:

- using a common language, in public as well as private one-on-one chats;
- call or video conference on a different language than your local, need to be in private to avoid distracting;
- avoiding the creation of multiple versions of files. If you use multiple versions, after all, make sure they are labeled correctly and delete/archive any unnecessary files;
- communication management. For answers to simple questions use chat client. For more complex questions as well as reports or any work-related updates need to be requested via email;

✓ **“Each member counts” strategy**



This is a strategy that can be used all the time in different situations and projects. This is a way to get an insight view of the remote teams because of the fact that PM is not there.

On the other hand, the members of these teams have limited English skills and surveys are a perfect way to talk with them, because they are not under pressure to answer straight away and can use any translation tool. Surveys are mostly with open answers - not with

selections from answers and this way responses can push their creativity and decision capabilities with open, honest answers.

The "what if" part of the survey gives them members the option to demonstrate their creative thinking and also the PM can get insights into the work process and both sides partnership development. This is more of a project-based survey. Members have the freedom to show their skills in a situation where they are theoretically decision takers. After a project with more specific requirements or more complex development, PM can initiate this kind of survey to see the

team's point of view about the way this project was executed. The "what if" represent a plan B, where PM and teams can also learn lessons and techniques for a future project with similar issues. The "how might" survey is, in general, the way PM and teams work. This is kind of questions like - can we do something better; can we change some parts of the process; do we need anything new; do we need any new skills to learn and all this according to the team only. The "how might" gives them the ability to make suggestions for improving the work process and communication.

✓ Video / phone-based collaboration



Sometimes it makes more sense to make a short video call or even just a normal phone call in order to be more productive contact. This is for sure the better communication method to avoid endless scrolling in some long chat log which sometimes can include even month discussions! Also, video or phone communication method is recommended especially when the project is near an important milestone or need to achieve some important agreement. An

important part of this method is the face to face contact where you can see or hear the emotions on the other side which is not possible in a simple chat window.

The selection of the tools for video meeting is essential in order to achieve the best possible results. The good combination of hardware and software designed for both small and big team meetings are a must. But remember if the problem that you need to overcome can be solved with the writing of short email, this need to be your step one. Organizing remote teams' meetings is often time-consuming, discussions sometimes take longer than expected and because of this, they are just not worth it.

4. Enlarge the discussions, go outside the box

Simon Sinek ⁷ said once "Humans are social animals". He points this out in an interview for his book *Together is better: A little book of inspiration* ⁸. A key element of collaboration is friendship and creating of social groups. Groups where you can chat about the news at lunch, or boost ideas back and forth with your desk neighbor or colleague who works on the same department or floor. This brings huge value to your mental activity and gives you a different angle for your obstacles.

⁷ **Simon Sinek** - Speaker and author of multiple best-selling books including *Start With Why*, *Leaders Eat Last*, *Together is Better*, and *Find Your Why*.

⁸ **"Together is better: A little book of inspiration"** by Simon Sinek (2016) Portfolio; 2nd edition (September 13, 2016) - ISBN: 978-1591847854;

Unlike office relationships, It’s impossible to duplicate the office environment in the collaboration process with remote teams. But you can give a try by discussing last football game, music news, different events, and even family life /but carefully/.

Discover and share the diversity you have with your remote team members, having in mind to be careful about the various sense of humor across cultures. It will be really interesting to see your colleagues' social media profiles, where they live, neighborhoods, and places around the world.

In case you overload the remote team with a lot of work or discuss, will be good if you break the routine with something fun, GIF or video. Promote this practice across the other offices and remote location and of course, don’t allow this to turn into a massive disruption.

5. What will bring to your organization this improvement?

Probably the biggest benefit of this collaboration improvement and relationships development for your organization will be the increased productivity. The new managing tools on the market allow remote teams to be in the project processes like they are in the same location as the local teams. Tools like video calls, emails, phone, instant messages...

Also, the remote workers are keener to exceed the 40 hours work week if they are aligned to the main goal – Mission Success First and are more creative and innovative if they participate from their own location. This remote collaboration brings money savings to the organization from different utility and staff bills.

Another improvement will be the level of quality of your project execution. Having access to different platforms where you can search and hire remote teams means better recruitment opportunities for the organization. Selection from the top-qualified candidates around the world for a project if your organization have the ability and will to managing remote teams. There is no need to limit recruiting process only to people who are willing to relocate and those able to make the daily commute. Instead, focus on hiring the top qualified candidates without worrying about any geographic restrictions.

6. Conclusion

Successful collaboration and relationships between teams in cross-corporate project environment require trust! This is a key factor, which you don't need to explain, but it is an essential point from where you need to start the building of the common goal – Mission Success First.

It’s a must-try new thing in order to push the development of your organization. Most of these things you will come up with might have a good, positive short-term or even long-term effect over both local and virtual/remote teams. It’s needless to say that the idea will be well accepted

if it came from within the team/s. The development and implementation of new strategies on that matter are encouraged.

After all, there isn't the only way to improve cross-corporate relationships and collaboration, but everything comes down to trust. Trust your colleagues to treat you and other team members with respect. Trust that your remote teams work hard over the tasks you have assigned to them and keep the deadline in this matter. Trust everyone to work responsibly and in benefit for the organization

With a good planning and some virtual/remote teams working online tools your organization will have access to one high valued service with unlimited recruit options and can turn you into a global organization with teams working hard for your success and located worldwide!

About the Author



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Stanimir Sotirov is an experienced Project Manager with vast IT experience. 15+ years of initiating and delivering sustained results across a wide range of areas like SaaS software, digital marketing, freelance management, e-commerce. Skills include team and department management, analytical thinking and creative problem-solving. Project Business Foundation board member and PMI Volunteer. He can be contacted at stanimir@sotirov.cc