



Adapting Management Styles to Accommodate Different Cultures

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Agenda

Welcome and Introduction

Objectives and Disclaimer

Swiss-German, Italian, Japan, West African, Russia, India,
American

Conclusions/Wrap Up

Welcome and Introduction

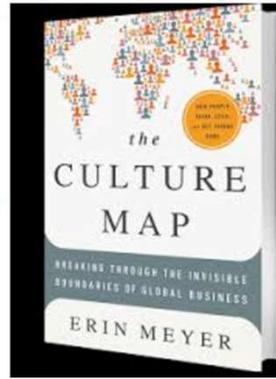
- American (& recently Swiss) telecom project manager, living in Switzerland since 1999
- VP of Communications for PMI-Switzerland since 2010 (Natalia Santisi was one of the volunteers in our team)
- I have worked in a global-team environment since 2005, and it is upon this experience that most of what I say today is based

Objectives and Disclaimer

- What I say today will be generalizations based upon rather limited experience. Time is too limited for something more intelligent.
- I am trying to be humorous as well as thought-provoking (while realizing that probably both objectives frequently get lost in translation)
- When I work with people from other countries and cultures, we always share in common the following:
 - College educated
 - Telecom professional, usually in, or near, the technical engineering (IT and Networks), working on software development projects
 - Office workers where Marketing gets the *posh* real estate and IT is located *somewhere really inconvenient*
- I know „culture“ is complex and multi-faceted. What I say will make it appear to you that I think culture is something simple.
- Plus, I am American.

Further Reading and Tip

„Culture Map“ – Erin Meyer (www.erinmeyer.com)



„PM Masterclass“ – 11 March 2017 (Saturday) Zürich
(www.pmi-switzerland.ch)

Waseem Hussain : „How to Lead Your Team in India“

What I do

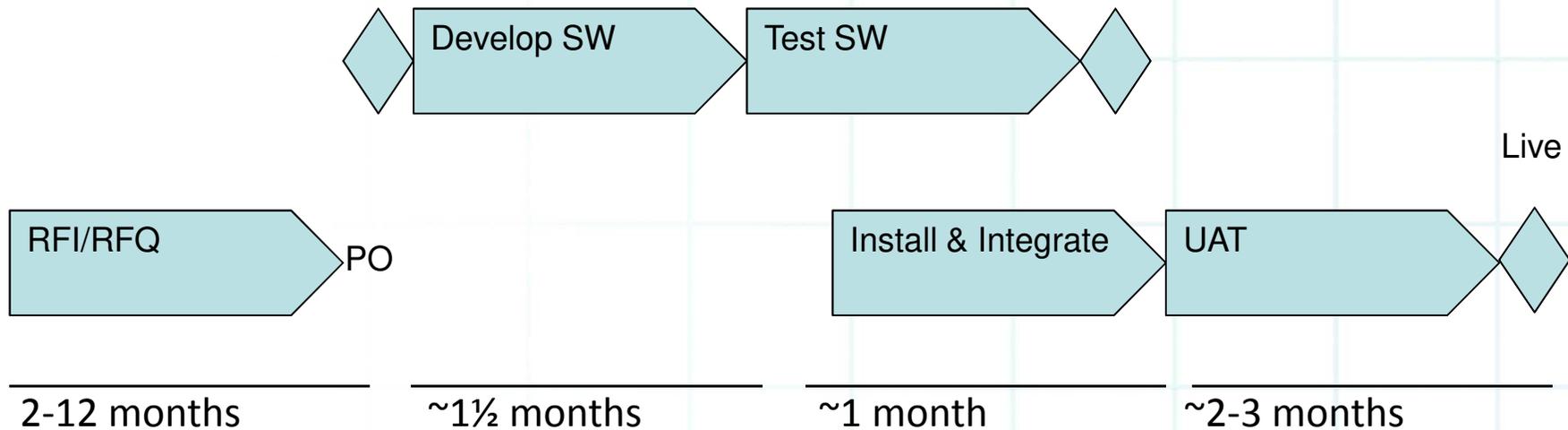
- We develop value-added services software and sell this as products to mobile operators
- Our products require knowledge of communication protocols, software development lifecycles, handset and SIM card functionality, and network signaling
- Our project teams are globally diverse:
 - PL in Switzerland
 - Sales from France
 - Engineer from Côte d'Ivoire
 - Customer in Saudi Arabia
 - Developer in India

What I do

- Sicap (www.sicap.com)



What I do



- Our project teams are small (2 Installation engineers, 5 sw developers, 1 Marketing Sales, 1 Technical Sales, 1 SysAdmin, 1 PL + same from the customer side)
- Our projects are short (less than one-year), but intense

Swiss German

Before

- One can expect to need help occasionally for particular situations
- All people value a bit of brainstorming both as innovative problem-solving as well as team-building
- Sometimes you need to go *around* the process to get the job done

After

- This is an irrational request for special treatment for something that was anyway due to poor planning
- This is wasted time being spent with people who are unqualified to solve a problem which they anyway have not spent time to really understand
- No, you don't.

Swiss German

- Show that you have a plan, and a structured communication method (weekly team meetings, meeting minutes, advanced planning, etc.)
- *Start and end absolutely on time! The person who arrives late to a meeting is showing he does not have himself under control*
- Expect resistance if you have an emergency.
- Expect a lot of complaints that things are *completely unclear* whenever meticulous procedural aspects were not adhered to.
- Expect, too, that their commitment will get done, *no need to follow up!*
- Documentation is absolutely mandatory.
- Spontaneity, or the appearance thereof, is not to be trusted.
- Poor planning and surprises are equal to spontaneity.
- Finally, do not expect blind obedience to the person in charge.

Italian (Northern)

Before

- A plan is valuable for planning resources, meeting key stakeholders' objectives, and measuring progress
- Communication should be regular, thorough, and planned in advance
- Problems may occur, but we solve them and then move on
- Sometimes you need to go *around* the process to get the job done

After

- There is a plan. And then there is the work to be done. Stakeholder objectives can be met through regular discussion and progress can be measured mostly by whether or not a problem exists.
- Communication occurs whenever and however needed, thank you.
- It may frequently be necessary to remind that person that this current problem could have been avoided had an earlier problem not occurred which that person had caused
- How else?
You can focus on the process once the work is done.

Italian (Northern)

- Expect to be flexible. Plans may be more useful for team-bonding than for preparing for project execution.
- *Team bonding is important!*
- Expect quick reaction/action if an emergency appears (unforeseeable situations are accepted as somehow a little more normal than by Swiss Germans).
- Having a problem is not such a big deal, but show reaction to solve!
- Things become friendly quickly after feeling unfriendly.
- Schedule regular calls, but keep them shorter than planned, expect to cover only the most pressing issues, and expect to have “part one” and “part two” style follow-up.
- Don't expect support during :
 - Religious Holidays
 - Ferragosto
 - Lunch
- In a nutshell, more frequent but shorter communication. Quick alignments on top issues. If timeline is important, then learn what the real objectives/motivations are because priorities and plans may easily shift
- Try to have at least one personable individual on the team to make up for the others

Japanese

Before

- Invite the team members to ask all questions that they need.
- Transparency and objectivity are admirable qualities. Say “No,” when you need to, but do so in a polite way. No need to be rude or blunt
- If we can agree on the general idea first, we can address the details later

After

- Asking questions can often be almost embarrassing. Consider that not all questions are getting presented upfront.
- Answering “no” to a question is really very rude. In fact, it is also rude to ask a question to which “no” may have to be the answer. You are putting the person answering the question in an embarrassing position.
- Not really.

Japanese

- *Start meetings absolutely on time! Deliver items absolutely on the day you promise!*
- Expect time overrun discussing details of all things. Add a buffer to your Outlook Calendar for you and your team members to ensure you all remain available to have thorough discussions.
- Add buffer to your delivery estimates to ensure that you don't miss your own commitment "I will deliver by Friday, possibly sooner," was useful
- Keeping a running Skype chat dialog was very useful.
- Be 200% more respectful than what you might normally be:
"I am very sorry that I have to report a software bug to you. I hope you understand, and that you can forgive me."
- Expect to work weekends and late evenings to show your commitment is equal to theirs.
- Written communication is very important and should be formal.
- Expect blind obedience to the person in charge
- Finally, expect to get (almost very) drunk one evening.



West African (Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon)

Every day has 12 hours of sunlight and there are one, maybe two, seasons a year. Food is plentiful year-round. Reflect on this for a second.

We have all heard it said: Europe has clocks. Africa has time.

West African (Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon)

- We adapted our payment schedule to more frequent, smaller segments
- Expect unforeseen delays due, in part, to unstable infrastructure.
- Try to have someone onsite, face-to-face with the customer as frequently as possible.
- Offer sessions to share knowledge and align on objectives.
- Probably the person(s) you are working with on a peer level has a very different relationship to, and perspective of, his own society than you do with your own.
- You may be peers professionally, but they probably have more household servants than you do.

Russian

Before

- “No one is really going to read page 267 of that document!”
- “So far we have about 150 open points. By Friday, we will have an updated status about the ten highest priority ones.”
- “But we need to spend 100% of our time until Friday focusing on the top ten highest priority!”
- “I need to inform our management before I can give you an answer”
- Project Leaders have lots of authority to act on behalf of their stakeholders

After

- “Please explain. Page 267 seems to contradict what is stated on page 13.”
- “No. Provide also a status of the other 140 open points. In fact, provide the status for everything tomorrow.”
- You clearly intend to ignore 140 items, and until Friday you are doing nothing.
- “Then I want to be talking to your management.”
- No. There is another man somewhere who has this authority. And you probably do not want to meet him.

Russian

- Provide regular *evidence* that all issues are recognized and not being ignored
- If you have authority, then demonstrate it!
- Power that is not exercised ceases to be power.
- Expect a well-developed hierarchy. Possibly no one in the project team does the work, and equally possible no one in the project team is making the decisions.
- Documentation is absolutely mandatory.
- Ambiguity does not translate well.
- Lots of little phone calls.
- Lots of little updates.
- Written communication and documentation carries a lot of weight. If this is not your strong point, then think about how you will fulfil this expectation
- These are the guys on your team you give the task to to produce weekly reports with graphics, and to provide detailed RCA of every issue

Indian

Before

- The caste system will have some pervasive influence in the way of working
- Modern technology will help us to work together
- Sometimes you need to go *around* the process to get the job done
- Beware of prejudice

After

- Not in any way that is worth noting. All offices have embedded social dynamics.
- To a point. It is necessary to spend time in the beginning being in-person to establish the team
- ...Process?
- Definitely. Look for it in your non-Indian team mates.

Indian

- Unless otherwise given explicit instructions, the answer you will receive to a question you have asked will be the answer you are perceived to be desiring to hear.
- Ask the same question, two or three different ways, in different settings. You will know in your gut when you get the “real” answer
- *The desire to avoid causing embarrassment or discomfort is very high!*
- Create a mood which will allow for stated commitments to be qualified.
- Communicate through an onsite person-in-charge.
- Expect to do plenty of follow-up with the person-in-charge to verify that the priorities are understood. *Example: 4 x weekly calls; twice to review status of highest priority items, and twice to review overall portfolio. Short, but effective.*
- Do not be surprised if there is firm resistance to “spontaneous authority.”
- Onsite experience will not only provide in-person bonding, but will also allow for evaluation of the environment: difficult commutes, continual distractions, working conditions.



American

Before

- We take great pride in our professionalism and our ability to respond quickly
- When asked to choose between free time, and more money, go for more money!
- Don't come to me with problems, come to me with solutions!

Now

- It is okay to have a life outside of work too! "I need it by yesterday" is not a real request, it is just pressure
- That is plain crazy.
- It sounds a bit risky.

American

- These people feel time pressure all the time, for no real reason.
- *They are constantly under pressure to deliver, then they are under pressure to relax!*
- The person who arrives 10 minutes late to a meeting is the person you need.
- They come across as superficial, but probably they have lived in many different places growing up, with activities covering great distances and family spread across more than one timezone. Individual independence and rapid assimilation is both a source of national pride as well as a physical requirement.
- Expect to be asked for decisions and solutions, even if you feel unqualified
- Commitments are little contracts between the requestor and the one doing the work; the one doing the work knows he had better deliver!
- Failure to deliver as promised = not to be trusted. That said, 80% is usually enough. 100% is probably too much.
- This is the person on your team if you have a lot of organizational uncertainty
- If you have an American customer, try to avoid “problems not solutions” as this can appear to be making excuses
- You will simply never understand his choices in clothes, coffee, or eating habits. The gulf is simply too wide.

Lessons Learned

- Be prepared internally to adapt your planning!
- And try working from their location
- If you sense stress, then try to understand the source; what is the environment like over there?
- In the end, where projects are concerned, everyone is looking for the same outcome, just differing on how to get there.

QUESTIONS?