

# **Project Management Communication Tools**

**By William Dow, PMP & Bruce Taylor**

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2015

**ISBN 978-0-9858695-2-6**

**Dow Publishing LLC  
1210 N 42nd Place  
Renton, WA 98056**

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# Chapter 4

## Exploring Foreign and Virtual Communications

### **IN THIS CHAPTER**

- ◆ Preparing and Planning for Project Communications in Foreign Countries
- ◆ Business Travel
- ◆ Learning Virtual Communication

Whether you are negotiating a project budget or listening to a team member's problems, you must always be an effective communicator, regardless of the situation. Effective communication is a mandatory skill set when traveling and working in different countries. In today's work environment, project managers travel for assignments all over the world. When traveling abroad, learn about the culture and customs of the country where you will be working so that you can effectively communicate with foreign team members.

# Preparing and Planning for Project Communications in Foreign Countries

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If you travel to another country for work, it is important that you spend time learning about that country's religions, cultures, and customs. There are many different customs across many countries, so read about the country you are going to work in prior to traveling. You do not want to get into a situation that is acceptable in your country, but unacceptable elsewhere. For example, in a Muslim country, you do not sit with your legs crossed and the soles of your shoes showing. Be aware of these types of common everyday situations that are problematic in a foreign country. You should be overly aware of your environment and sensitive to your surroundings so you know what is acceptable, or not, in that country.

When projects are short on staff and project managers cannot find local resources, they often look abroad for talented individuals. When you hire team members in a different country, those new team members must also be aware of the different customs of the country in which they are doing work. Team members must also prepare to work abroad. In some cases, new team members might continue to work in their home country, but they are part of a team in a different country. Those team members need to understand the other country's culture. For example, if a group of individuals from China are working on a team that is based in the Canada, the team in China should understand Canadian customs, and the team from Canada should understand the customs relevant to China—especially if people are traveling between the two countries.

As project manager, make sure your team members learn the customs and cultural differences of the new team members. It is time well spent to let team members take time away from their current tasks to learn about the cultural differences of their newest team members. It not only helps the current team members accept the new team members, but it also helps overall morale and teamwork. If each team member learns the different customs, you will have a strong team and the new team members will feel accepted.

Occasionally, you may need to work in a foreign country where the two countries (your home country) and the other country are hostile. If that is the case, you need to be extremely careful and alert to the environment and political unrest of the country. Work closely with your company advisors on security, country protocols, and other procedures to ensure your safety in the new environment.

# Business Travel

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If you are lucky enough to win a project management assignment on a foreign project, we advise you to learn the customs and cultures of the country you will be visiting prior to traveling there. By doing so, you learn how to act so that you avoid offending anyone.

## Preparation

Preparation time varies from person to person. Use the amount of time you are going to be in the country as a guide for preparation. A weeklong trip requires a lot less preparation than someone staying in a foreign country for months or years. Usually, if you are assigned to a long-term project in a foreign country, your company will give you enough time to prepare. Your company should cover expenses related to relocating (for example, visa processing fees). If your project assignment is longer than a year, you might consider taking a class in the country's language to help you communicate with your new team members. The new team members will appreciate your extra effort learning their language.

## Dual-language business cards

In most countries, exchanging business cards during the first meeting shows good business manners. It is best to carry business cards printed (front and back) in English and the language of the country you are visiting. If you receive a business card from your foreign counterpart in Japan, for example, make sure to review it; otherwise, it is considered rude and bad manners to immediately put it in your pocket. It is acceptable to ask questions or make comments about the business card after you have reviewed it.

### Tip

*Even though English is the international business language, getting business cards made in dual languages is a great idea for anyone working in a multinational company. Even if you are at home and staff from your international office visits you, it is a nice gesture to hand out your dual language card.*

Many times, international airlines can arrange to have these cards printed and ready for you when you arrive. It is important when visiting Japan or China that you have dual language business cards. This is a standard practice for these cultures.

## Culture

Learning the cultural differences between your country and the foreign country is important. Familiarize yourself with basic cultural traits, such as hand gestures, street signs, tipping, and specific rules for women in Middle Eastern countries. Most project managers need flexibility and cultural adaptation before considering work aboard, and you won't be any different. You and your team members traveling abroad for the first time will be surprised by how much business manners, customs, religion, dietary practices, humor, and dress can vary dramatically from country to country. Be alert and observant about the local customs. A quick way for you to become familiar with the country you are visiting is buying a travel guide for that country. Or, borrow one from a friend or coworker who already lives there.

Understanding cultural differences contributes to a successful experience when working in a foreign country. A lack of familiarity with etiquette, social customs, and cultural norms that the country practices can hurt your credibility with local team members—to the point where they don't want to work with you at all. If you arrive and make some major cultural blunder, it could affect the team's overall morale and put you in an awkward position that could take a long time to correct.

It is important to have knowledge of the culture, management attitudes, and customs before traveling abroad. Do your research, read books, get training, and read personal interviews to learn as much as possible about the culture.

### **Greetings**

Traditional greetings may include a handshake, a hug, a nose rub, a kiss on the cheek, placing the hands in praying position, or various other gestures. When cultural lines cross, something as simple as a greeting can be misunderstood between two people and cause issues. You need to be fully aware of the country's accepted form of greeting or it could lead to awkward encounters with your foreign stakeholders.

### **Gifts**

Gift giving is a common custom in China, for example. When you are traveling to China, expect to bring a gift for your host. The gift should be from your home country, or even better, your local area. It does not have to be expensive, just thoughtful. Failure to bring a gift is an insult in some countries; whereas, in other countries, presenting or offering a gift is akin to bribing someone. In sharp contrast, exchanging gifts in Germany is rare and is not usually an appropriate thing to do. Gift giving is not a normal custom in Belgium or the United Kingdom either, although in both countries, flowers and wine are suitable gifts when invited into someone's home. Again, know the customs of the country in which you are going to work.

### **Significance of gestures**

A misunderstanding over gestures is a common event in intercultural communication. Misinterpreting a gesture can lead to a big laugh or it could lead to working through issues and social embarrassment for you. Be careful when using body movements or gestures to convey specific messages because gestures that are common in some cultures may not be common in other cultures and you could end up offending someone. For example:

- Putting your hands on your hips in some cultures indicates a challenge or a combative attitude.
- Crossing your arms in front of someone signals that you disagree or are skeptical of them.

### **Negotiating styles**

Project negotiation is a complex process even between parties from the same nation. It is even more complicated in international transactions due to potential misunderstandings that stem from cultural and language differences. It is essential to understand the importance of rank in the other country, to know who the decision makers are, and to be familiar with working styles. It is also important to understand the nature of agreements in the culture. That way, when you are negotiating agreements, you will have a better understanding of how everything fits together.

### **Differences in business styles**

Pay attention to different styles in accomplishing a project's objective. In some countries, team members are direct, and in others, they are much more laid-back and not aggressive. In Germany, for example, project team members are serious and generally get right down to business when they are working; there is little to no small talk, which could interrupt project performance. Many Germans take the work environment seriously and keep work at a professional level.

## **Discovering etiquette**

Use the following tips as a guide for some of the popular countries for business travel. Your next assignment could be in any one of these countries, so think about how to prepare for that next major move. As you can imagine, though, every situation is different and the following tips may not work in every situation. Be aware and adapt these tips to each situation, as it occurs.

### **Note**

*Not all countries are listed here, just some to guide you in preparing for your travels.*

## **United States of America (U.S.)**

Acceptable in most cases:

- In general, tipping is not included in the bill or tariff—adding an additional 15 percent tip is considered average.
- When in a crowd, always stand up when the national anthem is played, and if you are wearing a hat, remove it during the anthem.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- Americans tend to be proud of their country, so do not disrespect it or make disparaging comments.
- Slang is unacceptable in business and project communications.

## **Belgium**

Acceptable in most cases:

- Greeting someone with three kisses on the cheek, alternating from one cheek to the other. This is also a custom in France and Greece.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- Yawning, sneezing, or blowing your nose in the presence of others.
- Placing your hands in your pockets while talking to someone—by doing this, you are showing a lack of interest.
- Pointing your index finger at somebody. Pointing in most European countries is impolite and frowned on. If you need to point at something, simply gesture in that direction, usually a nod of the head will work.

## **China**

Acceptable in most cases:

- Address a person using their family name. For example, use “Mr. Li” rather than “Raymond Li”. In business, it is traditional to call an Asian person by their surname along with their title, such as, “Director Li” or “Doctor Li”.
- Look at the business card from your Asian business associate and note the name and position in the company that this person holds. This is important in China. When putting away the business card, always put it in a front pocket, not a rear pocket. It is an insult to put a business card in your back pocket. If possible, remember to take or receive the business card with both hands.
- Start all business meetings with small talk and avoid getting into the business topic too early.
- Always bring a gift to your host.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- Even though you start meetings with small talk, do not become too friendly too fast. The Asian culture frowns on quick informality.
- Do not be boastful and overbearing. A simple nod, or better yet, a slight bow and an occasional mild handshake are all proper greeting protocols during introductions.

## **France**

Acceptable in most cases:

- For business communications, such as email or letters, use a formal and businesslike format.
- Avoid calling your business associates' personal phone (home or cell) for business-related topics. If you must make the call, make it before 9:00 P.M.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- Arriving late for meetings.
- Using first names during a business meeting. The French are proud of their culture and want a formal business atmosphere. Even if you are a friend, you should still use their last name and title (for example, "Director Brisard").
- In a dinner or meeting environment, delay business discussions until the small talk is finished. Jumping right into business discussions is considered rude.
- A man should never ask a woman what she did over the weekend.

### **Germany**

Acceptable in most cases:

- Always knock before opening a closed door, regardless of the door.
- Always be punctual whether attending a business meeting or a dinner. It is rude to be late to almost any engagement.
- Minimize small talk in business situations.
- Always use the title and family name of your local team members.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- When meeting someone, shaking his or her hand with your other hand in your pocket.
- Being late for a business meeting.

### **Italy**

Acceptable in most cases:

- When greeting each other, you may kiss each other's cheeks and offer a long handshake.
- It is acceptable to shake with both hands.
- Hire an interpreter if you are not fluent in Italian.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- Refusing repeats on your plate if offered.
- Being late for meetings or appointments is considered rude. Especially in northern Italy; they consider time the same as money.

### **Indonesia**

Acceptable in most cases:

- If you are being introduced to several people, always start with the eldest or most senior person first.
- Titles are important in Indonesia as they signify status. If you know someone's title, be sure to use it in conjunction with their name.

Unacceptable in most cases:

- Crossing your legs when you are sitting and showing the soles of your shoes.
- Women should not wear short skirts. Women should dress conservatively, ensuring that they are well covered from ankle to neck.



# Exploring Virtual Communications

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The project management profession is clearly changing by moving away from boardroom meetings and group gatherings to favoring virtual project teams at various sites around the world. Companies are allowing full- and part-time employees to work from home (home office employees) or a remote office (corporate or remote offices) in another town or state, 100 percent of the time. Many companies moved development and testing teams to offshore countries and left project management at home. Project managers, with little to no virtual team skills or any particular communication tools to help them, can find themselves managing up to 95 percent virtual team members. Project managers must figure out how to manage a virtual team on their own, which can be a tough spot for anyone. Sometimes, training is available, but that is often rare and the project manager must figure out how to manage these teams with little training. If you haven't managed a virtual team, you initially could be in for a big surprise by managing your first virtual project. Virtual team management is difficult; it is something that takes time to master. Communicating with virtual teams is difficult, so make sure to prepare when first starting to manage a virtual project.

## **Case Study - A real-world project communication lesson**

*A software development company wanted to find out if it was practical to develop a software system by working around the clock across three different countries, in different time zones. It appeared there were only two choices: work three teams in three shifts (first shift, second shift, and third shift), 24-hours a day in one location; or work three teams located strategically around the world, each working only the first shift.*

*The objective of the project was to develop a software system in less than half the normal time it would take to develop the software with a single onshore project team. Senior management decided to experiment by using a global project and created three virtual teams to fulfill that objective.*

*Here is how the virtual teams worked together: the team in the United States developed their portion of the software during their eight-hour shift. Near the end of the shift, they documented what they had accomplished that day. Then, they sent all of the files and documentation for the project to the team in Japan. The two teams would communicate and establish what the Japanese team would accomplish during their shift. At the end of the shift in Japan, those team members repeated the process of documenting the day's work, and then submitted the work to the European team. At the end of the shift in Europe, that team communicated back to the U.S. team on the progress. The U.S. team then took over, working on the remaining tasks. This process continued until the project was finished. It turned out to be a successful project, and the three teams produced the software system in half the time of a single U.S.-based team. The team used the different time zones around the world to their advantage, and to the project's advantage. Using teams in three different countries, the project ended and completed a total of 24-hours a day worth of work, compared to the standard 8 hours worked in the United States and most other countries—passing the project files and information from one team to another continued to keep the project progressing every day.*

*It became immediately obvious when the teams first started the process that it was critical that communications were concise and accurate for two reasons. The workers needed to communicate the technical information between teams in a way that everyone could understand—in a way that would allow the project work to continue when that team handed over the files to the other team. Additionally, the communications had to be in different languages. The language barrier was especially challenging when translating the work from Japanese to English.*

*A benefit often missed by using the three time-zone scenario was that overtime payouts were limited because team members handed the work off to the next team at the end of the working day. Thus, overtime payout was reduced in three different countries.*

## **Communicating with the virtual project team**

Working with project teams can be challenging, but working with virtual teams is even more challenging. The challenging aspects of virtual teams come in all areas of the project. Challenges include communication challenges (such as time zones), language barriers, resource challenges (do they have the right skills to work in virtual environment) and cost challenges (fluctuating exchange rates). Different religious holidays in different countries also can become an issue. Some of these issues are common to all project managers, so they are not specific to virtual project management. However, these issues magnify tremendously with virtual teams. Communication with virtual teams is an important concern for project managers. The language barrier has a huge impact on the project team. Sometimes language issues takes months to resolve, or in some cases you may need to hire an interpreter to communicate between the two countries. After communications barriers are resolved, the project communications should become easier.

### **Virtual communicating methods**

There are many different methods to communicate effectively with virtual project teams. These methods include:

- Telephone
- Weekly telephone conference calls
- Site visits
- Online conferences or video conferences
- Email and written communications, such as faxes or letters
- Shared company websites, such as Microsoft SharePoint® sites
- Shared applications where project status information is stored and updated (for example, a project server)
- Instant messaging
- Online communication tools, such as Microsoft Skype®
- Online collaboration tools
- File transfer software
- Document control systems

As you gain work experience with virtual project teams, you gain different communication skills and knowledge and will quickly be communicating effectively in this difficult environment. The more time you work with virtual teams the better you become, and you will discover your own methods for working with virtual teams.

## **Managing virtual project teams**

Like working with onsite project teams, managing virtual project teams is often challenging. Actually, managing virtual project teams is usually much more challenging than managing onsite teams. Onsite teams don't have the same issues as virtual teams. The difference is that you can readily help onsite teams resolve issues as they arise; whereas, virtual teams must wait for you to become available. With virtual teams, these issues can last for days or months, often negatively impacting the project.

The following tips and techniques can help you manage virtual project teams:

- **Conduct a kick-off meeting.** At the beginning of a virtual project, you should hold a project kick-off meeting. This meeting may be the first time that some members have a chance to meet each other. In the kickoff meeting, you are responsible for defining the project's scope, goals, and objectives, and to get the team's approval before the meeting finishes. A strong project manager (meeting leader) can accomplish this goal with all team members. This may be the last time some team members meet each other.

### Tip

*If you do not have strong meeting skills, consider hiring a motivational speaker to help bring project team members together.*

- **Build a rapport and establish trust.** Another aspect of people management is building rapport and trust with each team member, which is twice as hard with virtual teams. Establish a strong rapport early in the project's life cycle by ensuring that you establish a relationship with each team member. Put in face time and bond with your team members to form relationships. You might need to periodically conduct onsite visits to accomplish this. Rapport and trust is a two-way street; people must earn the trust by others. Trust that your team members will deliver their respective tasks on time.
- **Create good team dynamics.** In virtual environments, setting up a buddy system is a good idea. When the team spans multiple locations, each team member needs the psychology, morale, and technical support from at least one other person. Establishing a buddy system provides virtual team members a person they can contact when they need help. This partnership between two or more team members creates a buy-in and ownership for the tasks assigned to the project. Having a buddy system provides someone for each member to contact and collaborate. Buddy systems are also valuable to onsite teams, but in a virtual environment, they become a need.
- **Meet in person.** When working in a virtual environment, the team is spread out and does not often meet face-to-face, if ever. Therefore, as a project manager, you must decide how to meet and continue to build the rapport among team members. As the bond with your team increases, the dedication increases. You become even more committed to your team, and therefore, to the project. It is a win-win for everyone. Allocate enough budget and time in the schedule to allow face-to-face meetings. We recommend ensuring that virtual team members show up, in person, to important project meetings so that they gain a connection to the local project team and feel like they are important to the project. It is a great morale booster to virtual team members because you are telling them that they are important enough to the project to attend the meeting.

### Tip

*Ensure there is budget for virtual team members' travel and expenses. If applicable, have them visit the main office for important meetings.*

- **Keep tasks short for early success.** From the beginning of the project, create short project tasks to allow easy tracking and performance reporting. The advantage to virtual team members is that they know exactly what to do, how long it will take, when it is due, and what to deliver. Working and reporting on five short tasks is easier than reporting on one or two long tasks. The short task technique keeps team members motivated to complete tasks.
- **Ensure each team member has enough work.** In a virtual environment, you can feel like you are unclear on what tasks the team members are working on because they are not physically present. This sometimes creates worry and concern for you because you do not know if you are getting the maximum productivity out of your team members. To ensure motivation and ownership from team members, continually ensure that your project team members have enough work to do. If, in the rare case, they don't have enough work to do, point out how valuable it is to offer help to other team members. Your role is to stay on top of your team members' work assignments, regardless of their location, to ensure productivity and motivation toward the project.

- **Give team members more responsibility.** Determining how much work each virtual team member can perform can be tough—especially if you are not working closely with them on a daily basis. It is a best practice to visit the virtual team’s location whenever possible to observe their current workload. Nothing is more productive than face-to-face communication with your team to help keep them motivated. During onsite visits, if you find they are lacking work tasks, you can assign more responsibility to the team. This gives them the confidence that they are a valuable part of the team, and it is a great way to keep them engaged and excited about the project.

## Motivating virtual project teams

Motivating project teams, either virtual or local, can be challenging, but it can also be fun and rewarding. You must treat both the onsite team and the virtual team members equally.

Use the following events and activities to celebrate and show your appreciation towards your team:

- **Hold morale events.** Create a project environment that includes regular morale-boosting events. Morale events are great pick-me-up events where team members get together to relax and chat about nonbusiness-related topics and get to know each other. Typical morale events include team lunches or after-work drinks. Other events include outings such as miniature golf, attending sporting events, or other fun outings. These events are successful when many team members participate and share their experiences and personalities outside the office. These types of events are critical to larger teams on longer-term projects. When team members work together for long periods and never get to spend quality non-work time together, more personality conflicts arise on the project. Holding the occasional morale event, regardless of the cost, can do wonders toward the success of the project.
- **Recognize and reward people.** If your company has a reward and recognition program, use it whenever possible. If the company does not have a formal program, create or write up rewards for your project team members. Even a simple thank you email can go a long way. It is surprising how far a certificate, toy, or marketing gadget given to a hardworking team member goes toward building morale and a great working relationship. A low-cost reward system pays off in the end for you and your project.
- **Create fun.** It is your responsibility to create fun on the project. Instill a fun environment, but also keep the project team focused to deliver a successful project. There are many ways to have fun on a project, from giving gifts at status meetings, holding morale events, and keeping the environment light and motivating.
- **Monetary rewards and pay raises.** Some team members are motivated by monetary rewards, so you could offer money, gift cards, or a pay raise to a team member, either at the beginning or during the project.

## Communicating consistently

Sending regular and timely project communications is a necessity for every project manager. The need is greater for project team members working in a virtual environment. There are some virtual team members who need added communications from you. They may feel that the more connections they have with you, the better they are connected to the project. These individuals need that extra hand-holding and connection with you. Look at the tools and processes you are using to ensure that virtual team members are receiving the information they need. One of the main areas you should look for is inconsistency when sending out project information to your virtual team members, such as the project status report. For example, team leads typically send weekly status reports for their area. However, if the team lead is inconsistent in sending their information, say they send it monthly instead of weekly, it is difficult for you to stay on top of that area. Therefore, make sure you can report updated project information in the weekly project status report so that virtual team members and everyone else is getting the latest project status information.

## Case Study - A virtual project team member conflict scenario

*A virtual project team member felt that his project manager was nagging him too much about project status information. He decided to stop communicating with the project manager. He stopped answering emails, stopped attending status meetings, and no longer filled out status reports. He believed that if he stopped communicating, he could spend more time on his work and get his tasks done without interruptions. Meanwhile, the project manager told him that this was unacceptable behavior and that he was affecting the progress of the project. The team member and project manager agreed on the following project principals, and it looked like the issue was resolved. First, the project manager could call the team member at any time during working hours and the team member would answer. The project manager would allow the team member to come into the office when he wanted to, but he had to come in three days a week, minimum, until this issue was back to normal. The project manager would also let the team member respond to emails only during a limited window during the day. This helped the team member feel like he could perform his tasks and not have to spend time responding to the project manager, let alone anyone else asking him questions and taking time away from his tasks. This scenario went on for about a week, and the team member went back to his old tricks. The project manager then notified upper management and asked to remove the team member from the project. After continuing communications with the team member and stressing that his behavior was unacceptable, the project manager could no longer work with the team member. Upper management advised the project manager and the team member was removed from the project.*

### Establishing communication guidelines

We suggest that you develop guidelines for virtual project team members. If guidelines had been in place before the project began, the case study we just covered would not have happened. Look to your project management offices or to specific company policies, if applicable, to decide if there are any virtual project team member guidelines or procedures already in place. If there are, use those policies whenever possible. If there are no policies in place, we recommend the following as a starting point for your project:

- **Establish work hours.** The work hours of a virtual team member are the standard working hours of the company. These hours normally include an eight-hour day with the weekends off. If both parties agree, they can change these hours. Being offsite does not guarantee any extra “away” time from the regular office responsibilities.
- **Create home office infrastructure.** Virtual team members should have company-standard computers that are loaded with the company image of software products. The home office should be a separate location, away from any distractions for the team member to be able to work effectively. A virtual team member cannot have a standard dial-up connection as their only source of connecting to the Internet.
- **Require progress and status reporting.** A team member working virtually will follow the same requirements as onsite team members and must report, at a minimum, project progress and status once a week. This could include completing status reports, one-on-one communications, newsletters, or completing online status information, such as updating the project’s schedule.

#### Note

*Establish and document firm guidelines to set the virtual team members’ expectations for communication, infrastructure, work hours, and progress reporting. These expectations are set as policies, not guidelines, and ensure that virtual team members follow them when working offsite. The project manager requires the virtual team member to sign and approve these polices*

*before starting in this virtual work position. If someone does not sign the agreement, he or she should not be eligible to work remotely.*

## **Exploring virtual team member qualifications**

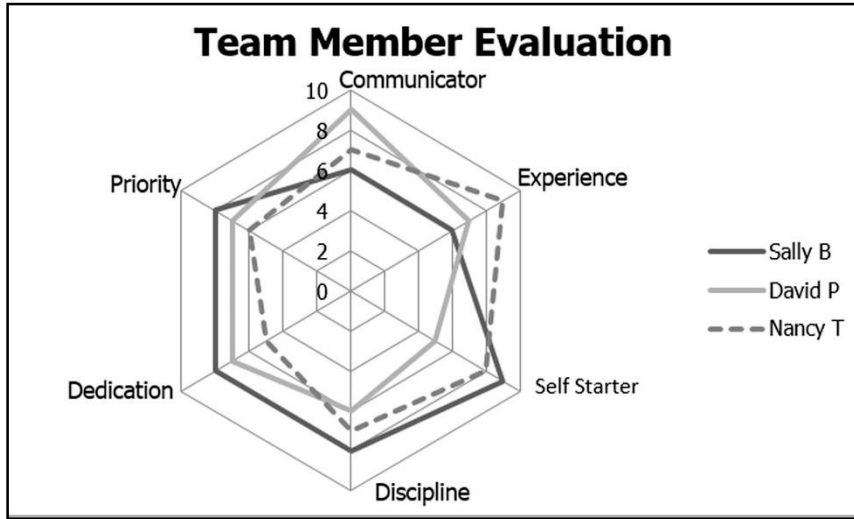
It is important to consider the qualifications and skill sets of virtual team members—especially when qualifications for virtual team members and local team members are different. If you are hiring resources for both roles, consider the qualifications for the different positions. There are six basic skills and qualities a person should have before they can work in a virtual environment. If one of these qualities is missing, the project could suffer because that individual may not pull his or her own weight and would slow down the project's progress.

A virtual team member should have the following qualities:

- **Be an excellent communicator.** The number one quality of a person in a virtual role is being a good communicator. If a virtual team member is a poor communicator, he or she is putting the project at risk.
- **Have experience with a similar project or position.** A team member who has worked on a similar project before, or worked virtually in the past, can be a great asset to the project team. If a team member is new or has little experience, starting in a virtual role could be risky.
- **Be a self-starter.** A virtual team member must be a self-starter and proactive. Someone who is a self-starter can immediately jump into their workload and perform without constant supervision. A proactive person is one who will identify problem areas and will jump to address those areas without direction or assistance from you. That person will “just do it” and take on the extra workload.
- **Have self-discipline.** A virtual team member needs a high degree of self-discipline. This person is not easily distracted and can focus on work tasks during fixed working hours.
- **Have a high-level of dedication.** A virtual team member must be highly dedicated to the project. You can test a person's dedication level during the interview process by using psychological tests and in-depth questioning about previous dedication on projects. Contact a candidate's references during the interview cycle to learn about past dedication to projects.
- **Be able to prioritize.** All virtual team members must consider the project as a high priority and focus on delivering their work. If a team member does not feel this project is a high priority or feels like he can only work at a half capacity, this is not the right fit for that person.

**Figure 4.1 — Team Member Evaluation Spider Chart** shows a spider chart that evaluates the qualifications of potential virtual team members for work on your project. In this case, you can see that Sally B has the highest level for each factor, which makes her the best fit for the project.

**Figure 4.1 — Team Member Evaluation Spider Chart**



# Summary

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In this chapter, we explored communicating with team members in foreign countries, preparing for business travel, and virtual communications.

Each area from a project management perspective is important in how successful you will be if you are working in a local environment. Rarely do project managers have the luxury of working with local and onsite team members on projects. More companies are using offshore resources in India, China, and other countries that force project managers to learn how to work with foreign teams. A savvy project manager will begin to understand the importance of communications in these environments and will quickly embrace the customers and the individual team members working in another country. The topics we covered will help you plan and prepare to work in these environments.

We also covered virtual communications and working in a virtual environment. As noted, more companies have offshore companies deliver projects. Local onshore project managers must learn to communicate with virtual teams. The topics covered in this chapter will help you prepare to work in this environment.

Finally, we covered preparing, presenting, and delivering project information and some tips and tricks for you to use. Preparing and delivering project information is a staple for all project managers, and the areas covered in this chapter will help set you up for success.