In the last few decades, companies have diversified across their national borders in pursuit of new markets and access to cheaper material and labor resources. In order to achieve high productivity in the new global economy, companies realized over time that cost-cutting strategies must be coupled with efforts to understand different cultural settings when conducting business across national borders. Balancing must-meet financial targets brought about by globalization, while coping with culturally diverse business contexts has become a driver of high productivity, which contributes to companies’ successes.

The objective of this thesis is to explore cross-border project management practices at a business process outsourcing firm (henceforth BPO) located in the United States and India. BPOs such as Company X oversee their client’s non-core business tasks (e.g. payroll, customer service), allowing their clients to focus on core business activities. Specifically, this thesis asked how United States and India-based managers cope with cultural influences on project management at Company X.
To this end, literature by cultural and institutional scholars such as Edgar Schein, Richard W. Scott and others were used to understand what culture is and its impact on management styles in organizations world over. Considering what the experts say about the importance of culture in relation to global business provided the foundation for this exploratory study.

In order to understand how cultural influences are dealt with at Company X, this thesis provided a descriptive study using grounded theory methodology to guide the data collection and analysis process. Employing the grounded theory method ensured that the narrative about Company X emerged solely from the research situation and the senior managers responses. This enabled a thorough understanding of the different values, meanings and perceptions of project management at play between the United States and India-based managers.

This thesis found that Company X’s senior managers were coping with each others cultural differences but not actively fostering a strong understanding of each others management styles and factors that influenced those styles. The project management process was in motion but with a number of obstacles along the way. This indicates that in order to create a smooth cross-border project management process while satisfying clients, managers must understand the importance of culture. This thesis points to the value of understanding cultural influences in order
to build strategy that deals with and incorporates different cultures’ management practices in the cross-border project management process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Thesis is for:

Gita and Ramesh Samtani, who quite literally showed me the world. This thesis is the product of your unconditional love and encouragement.

Dianne and Terry Brake, from whom I have learned so much. You have given me strength, so much love and a home away from home.

Chaitra Gokul and Alok Bhide, who, even after this, continue to be my best friends.

I would like to thank:

Dr. Linda Garcia and Dr. Laura Leets for their guidance and encouragement through this process.

Company X’s U.S. and India-based managers, who helped me create this study. Thank You for your time and input.

Dr. Jeffrey Peck, for being a wonderful teacher and mentor.

Sandra Leann Bunch and Kazuya Kurihara, who made colloquium such an enriching experience.

Karen Roberts McNamara, Mahvish Khan Andrea Bedoya, Crystal Costa, Mary Katherine Ciccodicola (Chico), Kay Martinez, Dan Gerasimowicz and John Marullo who have made these two years so precious and absolutely unforgettable.
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction ....................................................................................1

Chapter 2. Literature Review ............................................................................9
  2.1 Culture Defined ..................................................................................11
  2.2: Culture and the Organization ..........................................................16
  2.3: Culture in the Global Market ............................................................26
  2.4: Cultural Diversity in Cross-Border Project Management Teams .................32
  2.5 Why is this study different? .................................................................39

Chapter 3. Methodology .................................................................................41
  3.1 Method: Grounded Theory .................................................................42
  3.2 Methodology Specifics: Grounded Theory ............................................47
    3.2.1 Design Specifics: Survey ............................................................49
  3.3 Methodology Specifics Continued: Grounded Theory .........................55
  3.4 Problems and Limitations: Grounded Theory Method .......................58

Chapter 4. Results ..........................................................................................61
  4.1 Key Participants in Project Management ..............................................63
  4.2 The Input and Output Model: Creating Alignment across Borders ..........66
  4.3 Different Cultural Contexts: Understanding Cross-Border Project Management ..........................................................74
    4.3.1 Theme 1: Ground Realities and Local Culture .........................74
    4.3.2 Theme 2: Focused-Approach Versus Broad-Management Approaches ..........................................................80
    4.3.3 Theme 3: Effective Teams: Ownership and Accountability ............85

Chapter 5. Conclusion ....................................................................................91

Appendix 1 98
  Survey Responses .....................................................................................98

Appendix 2 134
  Interview with Manager 2 .........................................................................134
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter 2. Literature Review .................................................................................. 9
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model of Lagerlof and Linton’s Notion of Culture ............... 14
Figure 2.2 The Levels of Organizational Culture ..................................................... 20
Figure 2.3 Four Approaches to Managing Cultural Diversity in Cross-Border Interactions .................................................................................................. 34

Chapter 4. Results .................................................................................................... 61
Figure 4.1 Relationship between Key Players in Company X’s Project Management Process .................................................................................................... 64
Figure 4.2 Conceptual Model of the Project Management Process at Company X .............................................................................................................. 67
Figure 4.3 Input-Output Model in Different Cultural Contexts ............................ 69
Chapter 1. Introduction

The last few decades have seen an increase in the number of companies that have established subsidiaries in different locations world over. Marked increases in foreign direct investment (FDI)\(^1\), the reduction of trade barriers between countries and enhanced technology that enables information sharing steered the advent of a “new global economy” (Jones, 2005). This emerging economy set the stage for companies to expand their operations, globalizing their domestic enterprises to larger corporations operating across multiple countries. In just over 30 years, the presence of multinational companies have (henceforth MNC) increased significantly from 7,258 in 1969 to over 63,000 MNCs in 2000 (Drucker, 2005). As the number of MNCs has increased, their motivations for expanding to new location have also changed.

Initially, companies sought after international locations for the material resources they provided; ones that were unavailable to them in their domestic locales. Additionally, unlike the case of their national markets, other factors of production, such as labor, were available at lower costs in certain locations abroad. As a result, companies were able to gain competitive advantages over their domestic rivals, given

---

\(^1\) “…the distinctive aspect of direct investment is the intent to control. As a consequence, governments define foreign direct investment (FDI) as the controlling ownership of assets by foreign private individuals or firms.” (Kogut, 1998, p. 161)
the increased economies of scale and reduced costs that international markets afforded them (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992; Kogut, 1998).

This emerging global economy motivated companies to expand their operations in order to serve a wider range of markets. Companies now sought to invest in these international markets, establishing themselves there rather than simply utilizing international resources for their domestic markets. To enhance and maintain their competitive advantage, the subsequent step that companies took was to expand their reach, aiming for higher efficiency and lower costs (Stopford, 1998). In so doing, MNC’s managers began to think of their companies as a network of interconnected subsidiaries to be guided by a global mindset informing global strategy, rather than a parent company expanding their operations. In response to this, managers have had to clearly define their role, focusing on overseeing core business activities in order to be efficient and match their clients’ needs in increasingly competitive markets (Harland, Knight, Lamming & Walker, 2005, p. 834).

During the last decade in particular, business process outsourcers have capitalized both on the competitive environment facing firms and the efficiency expected of managers in this environment (Deavers, 1997). Efficiency, competitiveness and value are no longer solely defined by the cost-cutting mechanisms cross-border companies devise. While cutting costs are important, MNCs also gain
value by allowing their management to focus on a small number of core activities which are refined and executed successfully for their clients. Business Process Outsourcing companies (henceforth BPO) provide ways for their clients to cut costs by having access to expertise, human capital, technology and economies of scale that the client may not necessarily have. Outsourcing thus provides a “leverage that is not available to a company’s internal departments” (Zhu, Hsu, Lillie, 2001, p. 374). Moreover, BPOs oversee the ‘non-core’ activities of their clients, allowing them (the clients) to focus on core business activities. Not surprisingly, Garter Research forecasted that the market for BPO worldwide would increase from $119 billion in 2000 to $234 billion in 2005.

Such developments have led to a shift in the way projects are planned, established and executed. With the presence of BPOs, companies have had to learn how to integrate another piece into their company and manage that relationship (May, 1998). Moreover, with the onset of globalization, companies’ subsidiaries, their outsourcers and managers have become outwardly more connected with one another. This increased connectivity has changed not only the face of global business but the strategies associated with achieving success in such an environment. It is rare to see just a single set of managers guiding a project management process. With resources, expertise, clients and even management being dispersed globally, managers must
“reframe the boundaries of their world…of space, time, scope, structure, geography and function…” (Rhinesmith, 1996, as cited in Harris & Moran, 2000). In essence, local project management has been replaced by project management on a global scale.

Despite these new developments, ‘culture’ and ‘cultural awareness’ have not always been factors that organizations have considered to be an integral part of cross-border project management approaches. As management teams work towards superior financial goals, culture has often been ignored as a step necessary to achieve efficient coordination between managers and long-term success for the company at large. Parent companies have, in the past and continue to dictate the style of management that their managers in subsidiaries are expected follow, in the same way they have dictated the financial strategy. This by and large disregards the subsidiaries’ managers’ backgrounds and methods of interaction and coordination that are specific to their culture. As companies become more global in their organizational structure, they call for management methods to also take on new dimensions.

This lack of attention to culture is problematic. Even though managers based in different subsidiaries the world over work toward the same overarching general goals; better products, sound customer relationships and higher profits, their approaches may be significantly different. Given the different types of organizational structures emerging, (global companies, their multiple subsidiaries, and their outsourcers) project
management teams may fail to understand these significantly different approaches and the implicit reasons behind them. This lack of understanding lays ground for potential friction between management teams. In turn, this is said to have the potential to affect the overall efficiency of the team which impacts the project itself (Rad & Levin, 2003).

On one level ‘globalization’ and increased connectivity has broadened the scope of project management. Organizations and their managers have the potential to create and work toward larger goals and higher profits. However, with such potential for growth, many companies are also faced with the challenge of recognizing the presence, values, and practices in other parts of the world (House & Javidan, 2004). In this age of interconnectedness, as economic barriers to conduct business have significantly decreased, cultural challenges are likely to loom large. This raises questions about the best way to deal with negotiating cultural differences in cross-border project management teams. This thesis addresses how cultural differences are negotiated in cross-border project management teams. In particular it asks how United States and India-based managers at a business process outsourcing firm (henceforth Company X) cope with cultural influences to project management approaches.

Company X is headquartered in the United States with 5 operation centers based in India. Company X was chosen for analysis for two reasons. The first and most basic is that project management is coordinated at such a distance between managers
based in the United States and those based in India. This reason alone makes Company X a significant choice to see how project management is conducted between managers with different backgrounds and cultures whose contact is limited to virtual platforms of communication. The second and more significant reason behind picking Company X is that BPOs coordinate and maintain the quality of another organization’s processes in vastly different geographical, business and cultural settings. Moreover, Company X’s clients include large, successful corporations such as 5 of the top U.S. Banks and 4 of the top U.S credit card issuers. Such companies have built successful businesses using management techniques that are particular to their culture and the setting they operate in (the U.S.) Now, these companies are expecting the same, if not higher quality services to their clients, being coordinated through centers in India with little control over the way the business processes are managed. Therefore in effect, Company X’s U.S. based managers must cater to their clients concerns, in addition to coordinating and coping with different resources, capabilities and managers with different backgrounds. Do the U.S.-based managers, with pressure from such established clients, insist that project management be carried out in a particular way? Conversely, do the India-based managers manage differently? Because such questions could be asked of Company X’s cross-border management, it was a conscious choice as a case study and
to ask the question of how the U.S and India-based managers cope with cultural influences to project management.

To answer the question posed in this thesis, I will gather data by administering an open-ended survey to United States and India-based senior managers at Company X. In addition to this I have conducted interviews with selected managers to gain more insight on the answers they provided in their survey. The thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter two will review the literature about cross-border management. More specifically, this chapter will consider what experts say about the importance of culture in relation to global business, documenting how culture has become an integral part of expanding business organizational structures. Furthermore, this chapter will establish why it is important for cross-border project management teams to manage, understand and accommodate different cultural backgrounds when involved in a project across borders. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to document and clarify the terms used throughout this thesis as well as provide the bases for the questions posed to the U.S. and India-based managers at Company X.

Chapter three will address the methodology used to gather the data, discussing the significance and bases for raising the questions asked in the survey. Furthermore, this chapter will also examine questions posed during interviews and their contribution to answering the research question.
Chapter four will summarize the answers and comments provided in the survey, and during interviews, in the light of the literature presented in chapter two, and the research question posed in chapter one. In particular, it will discuss whether the managers are aware of and coping with the different cultural influences that are present during project coordination between the United States and India. Moreover, this chapter will describe how these managers deal with cultural differences to project management approaches.

Chapter five provides the conclusion of the thesis. It summarizes the findings and the process by which they were arrived at. Next, it characterizes the limitations of the analysis, and suggests further approaches that might enhance it. Drawing both on the literature in the field as well as the case study, the chapter concludes by describing the gains to be made from successfully coping with intercultural issues in a business context, and—based on the case study of Company X—suggests how this might best be done.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

As the preceding chapter discussed, changes in the global economy coupled with the changing face of business organizations’ goals and structures precipitated the onset of an interconnected business environment. At first, companies born out of one nation expanded into new geographical territories to explore new markets and resources. Such companies aimed to establish subsidiaries in new locations that would cultivate and achieve the same financial and organizational goals as their parent companies. More recently, companies have taken to outsourcing their business processes so as to lower their costs.

Characterizing this interconnected environment, Thomas Friedman (2005) employed the metaphor of a “flat world,” where barriers to entering new markets have decreased, fostering a globally collaborative environment. In this seemingly ‘flat world’, globalizing forces have united the economic, technological and societal spheres of different nations as companies sought to conquer new markets and gain higher profits. The concept of “flat” may be premature, however. As companies have diversified across national borders, the underlying rubrics or ‘culture’ particular to each national society have been brought into focus. Questions have been raised about how diverse national cultures impact business organizations and their practices. While all might agree that cutting-costs, gaining higher profits and achieving efficiency are
common objectives to be achieved through globalization, the way in which people are
motivated and operate to reach such goals may differ vastly.

Based on such an understanding, some scholars argue that, precisely because
the world has become increasingly interconnected, we cannot afford to gloss over
cultural factors that generate different values, beliefs and behaviors that affect
organizational development and *modus operandi* (Geppert, Matten & Williams, 2003;
Adler, 1983). Building an understanding of the cultural factors that might affect
business interactions will help companies over time. Their strength of network
relationships with alliance partners and subsidiaries will increase, by advancing the
management practices that guide them.

It is to this end that this thesis aims to provide a descriptive analysis, exploring
how managers operating across borders in the United States and India cope with
different cultural influences on project management styles at Company X. However, to
provide a background for such a discussion, this chapter provides a literature review of
the ‘flat world’ versus ‘culture specific’ characterization of globalization and the
implications for global business managers. Literature from both sides of the debate
provide insights that suggest why culture matters and how it might influence
organizational behavior and performance. This literature review serves as a basis for
scoping the following chapters, which explore how managers based in different locales deal with diverse cultural styles in their roles as managers.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, it broadly defines culture, and how it operates in the world at large. The concept of ‘culture’ has been used to differentiate different collectives according to their unique set of values and norms. In this section, we consider what culture means and the elements it comprises. Next, the chapter characterizes how scholars have linked the concept of culture to organizations and their behavior. The chapter then looks at the extent to which the culture of business organizations is an acknowledged factor in characterizing globalization. Next, the chapter examines how cultural differences have been said to affect the process of transnational project management. In addition, it describes why Business Process Outsourcing is an appropriate case for studying how culture is managed. Finally, the chapter identifies the gaps in the literature and suggests how this thesis might contribute to reducing them.

2.1 Culture Defined

‘Culture’ has been defined as a concept that represents the way of life of groups of people (Foster, 1962). It characterizes individuals’ memberships and
presence in larger group settings, which reflect “an individual’s theory of what his fellows know, believe and mean” (Jaeger, 1986, p. 179). In keeping with this notion, anthropologist Roger Keesing emphasizes that ‘culture’ is not an individual characteristic but rather that of a group of individuals. Accordingly, in describing ‘culture’ many scholars have emphasized the common aspects of societies or communities. These scholars emphasize the collective aspect of culture, and its ability to mould and represent a group’s characteristics. Thus, for example, Taylor (1977) refers to culture as a “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society” (as cited in Miroshnik, 2002, p. 526).

While agreeing that culture has a collective aspect (Taylor, 1977; Keesing, 1974 Foster, 1962), other scholars have criticized this definition for not going far enough. According to these critics, this characterization of culture is too vague; it fails to provide a clear picture of the key elements that comprise culture. In addition, it does not account for how ‘culture’ permeates and links itself to individuals and the group at large. Equally important, it offers no description of how culture evolves to become the ‘complex whole’ postulated by Taylor in his description of culture.

Author Selma Lagerlof offers an alternative definition, which helps to link culture and individual behavior. According to her, culture is “what remains when
that which has been learned is entirely forgotten” (as cited in Usunier, 1996, p.94). Her definition suggests that individuals initially learn the elements of a culture but over time they take it for granted, and are no longer consciously aware of its presence. In this way, culture permeates individuals’ thoughts and actions linking them to the larger collective thought and action. The remnants of what has been learned and entirely forgotten, i.e. ‘culture,’ is embedded in the collective unconscious. It is via this collective unconscious that individuals share and transmit to others, aspects of the group’s culture (Linton, 1945, p. 21).

Integrating some of these ideas, Lagerlof (1996) and Linton (1945) appear to conceptualize culture as a cyclical structure of ‘learning’, ‘forgetting (or internalizing),’ ‘sharing’ and ‘transmitting.’ This conceptual model provides the missing details from Foster’s more general definition of culture.\footnote{Foster’s definition of culture: “Culture is the way of life of a group of people.”} In particular, it addresses how culture permeates individuals’ lives, creating links to – and eventually becoming part of—a group’s way of life.
Like Lagerlof and Linton (1945), other scholars have articulated a more specific view of culture, although in different terms. For instance, Kroeber and Kluckholm (1952) identified 164 definitions of culture that link the ‘explicit’ nature of culture to its journey into a more inherent ‘implicit,’ pattern of thinking, being and behaving as a group. Their conception is consistent with the cyclical conceptual structure offered by Lagerlof and Linton. Moreover, their definitions of culture and how group’s cultural patterns are formed overlap one another. Kroeber and Kluckholm (1952) call the formation of a group culture “a product of action” on the one hand, and “a conditioning element for future action” on the other (as cited in Miroshnik, 2002, p. 526). This ‘product of action’ is equivalent to what Lagerlof (1996) and Linton (1945) say is ‘transmitted’ and ‘learned’ by individuals. Likewise, the ‘conditioning element
for future action’ is what Lagerlof (1996) and Linton (1945) characterize as ‘forgotten’ and ‘shared’ providing the basis for a group’s inherent or embedded pattern of culture. Thus, all four scholars conceive of ‘culture’ as something that permeates and embeds itself, influencing groups as it is clarified by the cyclical notion of ‘learning,’ ‘forgetting,’ ‘sharing’ and ‘transmitting.’

This cyclical notion suggests that the agents and subjects of culture constantly and dynamically create cultural patterns as they interact (Salk & Brannen, 2000; Schein, 1985). Daniel R. Denison (1996) agrees, arguing that “social context is regarded as both the medium and the outcome of social interaction” (p. 635). Because societies, nations, and the world at large are in a state of constant change, individuals within groups learn, internalize, share and transmit a constantly evolving culture that implicitly guides them in their surrounding environment. Building on this literature, we can define culture as “the unique pattern of shared assumptions, values, and norms that shape the socialization, symbols, language, narratives and practices of a group of people” (Jackson & Schuler, 2003, p. 131).

Having recognized the group nature of culture, we can understand why the world itself is comprised of many diverse cultures, at varying levels of aggregation. At the same time, it is important to recognize that individual membership is not necessarily limited to a single group. As D. R. Denison (1996) points out, culture’s
impact on individuals is situationally determined. Individuals may be influenced by multiple overlapping cultures. And membership in different, constantly evolving groups provides a variety of cultural influences that become a salient part of individuals’ values and behaviors (Jackson & Schuler, 2003). Recognizing that individuals are subject to both national as well as organizational cultures, the following section considers what we know about the relationship between the two. In particular, it looks at how national cultural factors might influence organizations’ operating environments.

2.2: Culture and the Organization

According to Daniel R. Denison (1996) culture’s impact on individuals’ behavior is situationally determined. Because organizations were initially born, situated and managed by people within a single nation – individuals’ ‘culture’ was influenced by their national surroundings. Describing this situation, scholars have argued that “[culture] is imported into the organization through the membership” (Smircich, 1983, p. 343). Much of this literature focuses on how national cultures influence organizational culture.

A national culture provides societal members with a common pattern of values and beliefs that shape their practices and behaviors (Dennison, 1996). In turn, the
national context influences organizational member’s attitudes, experiences and actions. These common attitudes and actions mold the culture present within the organization. This ‘organizational culture’ represents visions and values that are common to organizational members (Weatherly & Beach, 1996). The expected behaviors and norms that arise out of a common culture in turn leads to routinized, ritualized or internalized patterns of action and behavior in the organization (Smircich, 1983).

From a cognitive, psychological perspective, such ‘routines’ result from a process whereby particular patterns of thought and response to certain stimuli are prompted regularly due to the larger cultural expectations present (Dickson, BeShears & Gupta, 2004, p.77). Because routines become internalized over time and are made more efficient, members of an organization become unconscious of them. As Martin Kilduff (1992) notes, “deployment of routines are relatively automatic to the extent that group members share a common fund of assumptions and experiences” (p. 135). This ‘common fund of assumptions and experiences’ emerges from the larger national context in which the organization and its members are situated. Managers in organizations look at culture as the “interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influences a group’s responses to its environment” (Miroshnik, 2002, p. 526). Thus, the collective cultural systems of a national society³ directly influence systems of

---
³ ‘The collective cultural systems of national society’ can also be called ‘national culture.’
“behavior, practices and values that characterize organizations in society” (Dickson et al., 2004, p.77).

Geert Hofstede (1980) pioneered efforts to understand the influence of national culture by creating a framework of 4 (later 5) dimensions of culture that he compared across more than 70 countries. In this study, he conceptualized national culture as “implicit; core; systematically causal; territorially unique; and shared” (McSweeney, 2002, p. 91). For him, national culture is common, embedded, deterministic and unique to people depending on the nation from which they originate (McSweeny, 2002, p. 92). According to Hofstede (1991), national societies impart values to people that become embedded in society, creating a national culture.

In a later work, however, Hofstede proposed an alternative way of viewing organizational cultures, arguing that they were reflected by differences in management practices (Jackson & Schuler, 2003). His use of two different measures to gauge how national culture influences members of a nation (through values) and organizational culture influences members of an organization (through management practices) (Dickson et al., 2004; Miroshnik, 2002) was subject to considerable criticism. Scholars in the field questioned why national cultures where studied in terms of values, while organizational cultures, which stemmed directly from their national surroundings, were studied according to their practices (Dickson et al., 2004; Miroshnik, 2002). Dickson,
BeShears and Gupta (2004) noted that, while Hofstede’s conceptualization of organizational culture focused on practices, it failed to explain the underlying mechanisms that generated those practices. They complained that while ‘practices’ may be indicative of the larger national culture from which they emerge, they do not necessarily reveal organizational members’ values and how they reflect societal values (Dickson et al., 2004; Jaeger, 1986). They argued that Hofstede overlooked an aspect crucial to understanding organizational culture when he argued that “practices are the roots of organizational culture rather than the values” (Miroshnik, 2002, p. 539).

In contrast to Hofstede, scholars such as Victoria Miroshnik (2002) have identified values as being crucial in shaping the practices and cultures in organizations. They say that, “combinations of values create ‘codes of behavior’ which influence the future and the expected behavior of the members of society if they want to belong to the main stream” (Miroshnik, 2002, p. 539). Thus, understanding what a group of people value—that is to say, the ‘codes of behavior’ that govern the organization, will lead to a better understanding of organizational practices.

Similarly, reacting to Hofstede’s conception of organizational culture, Edgar Schein (1988) called for ‘culture’ to be analyzed in levels. Scholars such as Schein (1988) and Miroshnik (2002) aim to distinguish “the manifest from the latent” levels of culture that permeate the organization (Schein, 1988, p. 2). Level one is core
assumptions, which reflect the “deepest level of culture” (Schein, 1988, p. 2). Next, at the intermediate level, are values and beliefs, followed by practices and norms at the surface level. The figure below illustrates the levels of organizational culture as described by Schein (1998, p. 9a).

**Figure 2.2: The Levels of Organizational Culture**

![Figure 2.2: The Levels of Organizational Culture](image)

Source: (Schein, 1988)

Although Schein’s levels of culture—from core assumptions to visible practices—are interrelated, (Jaeger, 1986) it is important to distinguish “between the overt, surface manifestations of culture such as artifacts, structures, symbols, ritual, or
practices and the underlying assumptions of values that those manifestations exemplify” (Denison, 1996, p. 6). While recognizing practices and norms, scholars such as Schein (1988) and Denison (1996) suggest that, when thinking about organizations, it is especially important to recognize the deeper, taken-for-granted assumptions that usually remain unquestioned and unrevealed. These are considered to be the “powerful and stable forces operating in organizations” (Schein, 1996, p. 231).

As Schein (1988, 1996) points out, it is these shared assumptions that point to what in the larger external culture influences organizations and their members. As he notes, organizational cultures are created by experiences that the organizations’ members experience as a group. These experiences occur, back grounded and influenced by the larger societal context. They influence the core assumptions and values of members. These assumptions are thus considered integral parts of an organization, which can be taught to newer members of the organization, resulting in the smooth flowing of an organization as it adapts to the situation (national culture) in which it is embedded.

Despite calls to study the deep, unconscious assumptions people hold, scholars have found that it is difficult for individuals to even acknowledge these. As noted earlier, these assumptions have been long internalized in groups’ cultures. This makes it difficult for people to ponder the origins of such assumptions or why they are held.
As a result, scholars such as Denison (1996) contend that uncovering the intermediate level of culture (what people value and believe in) can also provide valuable information allowing organizations to understand what cultural influences motivate their behavior and practices.

Other scholars turn to different methods to understand organizational culture. For instance, scholars who study institutions in society use a somewhat different method to conceptualize the social context and culture that influence organizations. Both the cultural and institutional research approaches acknowledge that organizational culture is influenced by the broader societal culture. In contrast to cultural researchers, who focus more on the level of culture to understand how a particular organization operates, institutional theorists focus primarily on the characteristics of institutions particular to the national environment within which an organization functions. Accordingly, cultural scholars such as Schein (1988) view underlying assumptions as the ultimate source of organizational culture, whereas institutional scholars cite agencies such as the government, law, courts and public opinion as a source of the assumptions, values and practices that represent organizational culture (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Kostova, 1999). Scott and Meyer (1991) propose that institutional agencies “have the power to formulate or influence rules and regulations or to promulgate norms and standards governing organizational practice” (as cited in
Because of this, individuals may not perceive that organizational practices stem from institutionalized practices but, “view such practices as valued ends in themselves” (Dickson et al., 2004, p. 82). However, such practices contribute to organizational culture by means of what organizational members consider valuable to the operation of the organization.

Institutional scholars have created frameworks that detail the characteristics of institutions in national environments, which Scott and Meyer (1991) suggest influence organizational cultures. W. Richard Scott (1995) and Tatiana Kostova (1999) characterize the institutional environment by distinguishing between its ‘regulatory,’ ‘cognitive’ and ‘normative’ aspects. The regulatory aspect consists of the laws and rules that endorse particular behaviors and discourage others. The cognitive aspect consists of the “cognitive elements [that] constitute that nature of reality and the frames through with which meaning is made” (Scott, 1995, p. 40). These are influences from the larger social environment. The normative aspect addresses the “prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimensions into social life” (Scott, 1995, p. 37).

Institutional analysis appears to provide a background for cultural analysis of organizational culture. While the cognitive and normative components overlap with cultural accounts of how societal culture impacts organizational culture, the regulatory component is specific to institutional theorists’ arguments. To this end, institutional
theorists contend that the fundamental principle in institutional theory is ‘isomorphism,’ that is, organizations must conform to first to regulatory, then to cognitive and normative institutionalized beliefs and practices (Dickson et al., 2004, p. 84). Organizations will consciously follow the example of other organizations that have already conformed to the institutional environment in order to align themselves with the collective organizational culture (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). By conforming to these institutionalized practices the organization confirms that it is has aligned itself with the collective norms and values of the larger national society in which it operates.

The larger national culture or institutional environment is extremely relevant to organizations due to the legitimacy it gains in and outside of the organization. By aligning themselves with the larger collective values and norms, organizations gain external and internal stability. To this end, organizational members’ mould their organizational culture to value elements that are legitimated by society at large. These efforts encourage individuals to enact appropriate actions by situating them “within a comprehensible meaningful world” (Scott, 1991, p. 169). In doing so, members

---

4 “Legitimacy concerns the problem of ‘explaining or justifying the social order in such a way as to make institutional arrangement subjectively plausible’ ” (Scott, 1991, p. 169).

5 “In modern societies the elements of rationalized formal structure are deeply ingrained in, and reflect widespread understanding of social reality. Many of the positions, politics, programs and procedures of modern organizations are enforced by public opinion, by the view of important constituents, by knowledge legitimated through the educational system, by social prestige, by the laws, and by the definitions of negligence and prudence used by the courts. Such elements of formal structure are manifestations of institutional rules which function as highly rationalized myths that are binding on particular organizations” (Meyer and Rowan, 1991, p. 44).
maintain cooperativeness between one another, leading to a cohesive organizational structure in the institutional environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Scott 1995). Because of this legitimacy that organizations gain, Meyer and Rowan argue that culture should no longer be seen as a concept that is recognized solely for its impact on social structures. It should, however be recognized as an element that influences the meaning attributed to these social structures. Therefore, organizations that exist within the larger institutional environment are not only influenced by them, but also create values, norms and practices that increase “the legitimacy of its operations in the eyes of participants and constituents (Scott, 1991, p.169). For this reason, Scott (1991) contends that culture is not merely “some amorphous notion of a collective consciousness, but is recognized as constituting its own objective reality – albeit a socially constructed reality” (p. 168)

Employing both institutional theory and cultural theory we can understand how national cultures influence organizational cultures, giving meaning to routines over time. Building on this approach, we can expand our horizons beyond a national perspective to envision how organizational cultures evolve in the context of a global environment. Hence the following section asks what role national cultures play in a seemingly converging business world.
2.3: Culture in the Global Market

Chapter 1 recounted the resource, market and cost-cutting needs that prompted firms to invest in countries overseas. For more than 30 years, firms have sought to gain competitive advantage by expanding their operations to subsidiaries located in different countries. The reduction of trade barriers, increased foreign direct investment (FDI) and technological capabilities helped to spawn the global economy (Jones, 2005). As the global economy expanded, firms began to invest in cross-border alliances (Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000, p. 123). The need to invest abroad arose from the numerous advantages that global markets’ provided as compared to home markets, such as, lower labor costs and ample resources at lower costs. With lower costs and heightened economies of scale, companies were able to gain significant competitive advantage over rival firms. In turn, increased success prompted firms to expand operations so as to capture wider, international client markets (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1992).

What started out as the rapid growth of multinational firm structures to establish recognition in new markets has escalated, over time, into different types of cross-border interactions. Companies began to view international markets not just as sources of cheap labor and material resources, but also as target markets that would increase their consumer base. As a result, companies and their international
subsidiaries have developed a single global strategy for the entire firm that ensures their success (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1992). To meet clients’ needs in an efficient matter, companies have begun to focus on their core activities. Other, non-core activities are outsourced to different firms located in other international sites that provide the same services at lower costs (Hendry, 1995).

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) firms are an example of such recent cross-border interactions. Situated in countries’ markets that provide low costs, new technologies and access to cheaper labor, BPO firms help larger organizations in other countries “strengthen and maintain their position in the market place” (Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000, p. 123). These larger corporations “contract out services and activities traditionally provided in-house” (Hendry, 2005, p. 193). By outsourcing such activities, they save money and capabilities, allowing them to focus on efficiently building in-house capabilities.

The growing phenomenon of transnational business is part of a process characterized as ‘globalization.’ Globalization can be defined as:

“the process of denationalization of social interactions as a result of ongoing political deregulation, accelerated by economic (neo-) liberalization of trade and foreign direct investment, rapid technological advances in transportation and communication systems and, in the social field, increasing convergence of global cultural systems and educational models” (Geppert et al., 2003, p. 812).
Accordingly, globalization entails the ‘convergence’ of markets, technologies, and business structures. Some scholars go so far as to argue that even national cultures have converged with the onset of cross border financial and technological interdependence (Parker, 1980).

Distinguishing between financial-technological convergence and cultural convergence, John Child suggests that there are two contexts in which scholars view globalization: low and high context (as cited in Geppert et al., 2003). The ‘low-context’ perspective sees organizations structured by the markets and technology to which they are related. From this perspective, the convergence of economic, technological and organizations productions forces lead to homogenous cultures and organizations. Christopher A. Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal (1992) have labeled this low-context perspective the ‘global mentality’ insofar as managers view the world as denationalized not only in terms of their products but also with respect to the way they manage their organizations (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992; Morrison, 2000). As Child points out, the low-context perspective assumes “all human beings are common in their needs and motivational structure” (as cited in Geppert et al., 2003, p. 809).

Scholars that view convergence as taking place across financial, technological and even cultural spheres look only at macro level issues, perceiving individuals within world wide organizations to possess similar values and behavioral patterns (Maznevski
& DiStefano, 2000; Adler, 1986, p. 57). They assume that the overall organizational culture in companies headquarters and world-wide subsidiaries override the influence of different national cultures. They predict that, as the network of firms increases in scope, they are shaped less by their national environments and more by a ‘flat’ global culture.

Alternatively the high-context perspective values the presence of national contexts, culture, and the institutions associated with them. It claims that organizational structures are not denationalized; to the contrary, they are strongly influenced by national culture, education and legal systems (Geppert et all., 2003, p. 813). Moreover, this influence persists as firms diversify their operations and move to other countries. Thus, in today’s world, managers must pay attention to the similarities and differences between their home environments and that of their new host’s environment, focusing on the impact those differences will have on their day-to-day management activities.

Richard Denison (1996) noted that surrounding environments influence an organization’s culture and its day-to-day activities within a subsidiary or the headquarters of a firm. To a large extent therefore, the “cultural basis of [the] rituals in the core values of a particular society is often quite explicit” (Kilduff, 1992, p. 139).

Because each nation’s environment is different, manager’s located in different nations’
routine practices are also different (Denison, 1996; Kilduff, 1992; Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000). While the cultural basis of such practices is explicit, members embedded within a particular society and cultural context may not be conscious of their culture until they encounter a different one (Schein, 1996). To this end, researchers have shown that a standardized, universal management method is infective as individuals from different backgrounds have different experiences, expectations and values that influence the way they “[cooperate], [manage] conflicts, [accept] authority or simple communication” (Chevrier, 2003, p. 142).

Noting that standardized management methods have not benefited organizational performance, Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn (1999) suggest that there is significant potential for firms to gain competitive advantage if they understand the various cultural contexts at play. Despite the fact the organizations expand to build bigger empires in industries in which they have experience, these industries operate very differently in different countries. Different countries embody different cultural contexts and different business operating environments. For instance, a pharmaceutical manufacturing company based in the United States will have different operating procedures and will be managed differently than a plant based in China. Due to such differences between countries, firms that expand their operations globally must
understand the critical importance of the culture, the business environment and management styles particular to that environment.

While Child distinguishes between the high context perspective and the low-context perspective, he acknowledges the need to integrate both when discussing facets of ‘globalization.’ He calls the high-low context integration the ‘dialectical influence of globalization in organizations’ (as cited in Geppert et al., 2003, p. 810). According to Child, companies must be aware of the need to unite when it comes to markets and technology, recognizing the strong impact that national contexts have on the global economic and technological strategies that firms create. Specifically, Geppert, Matten and Williams (2003) note that, “within the global group, the national peculiarities [should be] used in ways in which they best contribute to the over-arching corporate goals” (p. 821). Fons Trompenaars (1997) best captures Child’s dialectal reasoning in the following statement:

“As markets globalize, the need for standardization in organizational design, systems and procedures increases. Yet, managers are also under pressure to adapt their organization to the local characteristics of the market, the legislation, the fiscal regime, the socio-political system and cultural system. The balance between consistency and adaptation is essential for corporate success” (p. 3).

In keeping with this reasoning, firms must understand these national peculiarities as part of their efforts to achieve global success. Understanding different cultures will affect the global firms’ operations and project management strategies.
Local project management will need to be replaced by global management teams that interact virtually to align and achieve cross border success (Kilduff, 1992). In the following section, we will discuss the requisite strategies and typical challenges faced by cross border project management teams.

2.4: Cultural Diversity in Cross-Border Project Management Teams

Cross-border project management teams try to achieve a single outcome with members based in various geographical locations. As globalization increases, the organizational environment increases in complexity, demanding different management skills in order to attain financial success. Moreover, global project management teams consist of individuals from different backgrounds, each possessing their own assumptions, values and practical experience with respect to how to behave as a team and make collective decisions. Thus, managers must discover ways to cope with the increasing demands of new managers whose mental models of how to conduct project management may differ significantly (Rad & Levin, 2003). These differing mental models “influence what aspects of the environment people attend to and they guide the actions that people take” (Jackson & Schuler, 2003, p. 138). Overlooking these mental models and cultural differences might result in difficulties ranging from different
expectations of time, cost and ultimately project deliverables (Rad & Levin, 2003; Chevrier, 2003).

What adds to the challenge for geographically dispersed and culturally different teams are their methods of interacting across borders. Connected by technology, their communication is limited to phone conversations, video-conferencing, e-mail and message boards. These technology-mediated forms of communication are “not nearly as rich as communication in person, which doubly disadvantages multinational teams who cannot make safe within-culture assumptions about the accuracy and impact of the messages they send” (Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000, p. 197).

Studying the challenges faced by cross-border teams, scholars and management trainers have identified some common management responses to cultural differences. For instance, Victoria Miroshnik (2002) has identified three typical modes. The first is a ‘parochial’ response; management fails to recognize different cultural influences, so there is only one acceptable way to conduct project management. The second approach, which is the most common, is ‘ethnocentric.’ While acknowledging cultural diversity, managers perceive it to be a potential problem only for the team. The final, and most challenging method employed is a ‘synergistic’ one, where two project management teams co-create an agreed upon third culture that is routinized as part of the project management process (Miroshnik, 2002, p. 537). Randall Schuler and Susan
Jackson (2003) have described these possible approaches in the diagram below. They add an additional approach called ‘portfolio’ management according to which the two geographically separated teams ‘manage’ cultural influences by maintaining separate roles (Schuler and Jackson, 2003, p. 126).

Figure 2.3: Four Approaches to Managing Cultural Diversity in Cross-Border Alliances

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio</th>
<th>Blending</th>
<th>New Creation</th>
<th>Absorption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain separate cultures</td>
<td>Choose the best elements from each culture</td>
<td>Develop a new culture that fits the new organization</td>
<td>Assign legitimacy to one culture and expect assimilation by members of the other culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Figure 7.1: Four approaches to managing cultural diversity in cross-border alliances

© S. E Jackson and R.S Schuler

Source: (Jackson & Schuler, 2003)
This figure incorporates the significantly different ways that senior managers have dealt with cultural diversity in cross-border operations. The method managers chose to guide their interactions affects their alliances and the outcome of the projects very differently. For not all methods promote alignment and collaboration between two different teams. (Jackson & Schuler, 2003; Lawler III, 2003). Significantly, even though the ‘blending’ and ‘synergistic’ approaches are those most prescribed by scholars and management experts, the ‘portfolio’ and ‘absorption’ methods are more common, as well as less productive (Miroshnik, 2002).

Project management demands alignment. It is a layered process, with each step building off the success of the prior one. These steps include planning goals and objective, estimating task deadlines, results, resources, i.e. expectations of achieving planned goals and objectives, conducting meetings and making decisions, communication between the two teams and implementation/execution of the project (Klinder, 2005). Only when different project teams have a shared understanding and commitment to each level of the project management process can they avoid constant glitches along the way in order to achieve success (Rad & Levin, 2003).

To coordinate two sets of individuals to execute these steps successfully, scholars have identified a number of processes that allow firms to better account for and integrate the different cultural backgrounds at play. For example, Martha
Maznevki and Joseph DiStefano (2000) have outlined three sequential processes that firms can employ to create more effective teams. The first is ‘mapping’; in this phase team members familiarize themselves with the different cultural perspectives present and identify the effects such perspectives might have on the team. Next, teams ‘bridge’ or communicate differences so that team members can build an understanding of one another. The last stage is ‘integration’ at which point differences are resolved and different perspectives brought together to “innovate high quality approaches to the task” (p. 201).

Although most cross-cultural management practitioners and scholars agree that managing culture is a key to achieving success, efficiency and quality, many firms do not pursue this formula. As Child (2000) and Trompenaars (1997) have explained firms face a quandary; they have to balance must-meet financial targets brought about by globalization, while coping with the impact of culturally diverse management styles in reaching those goals.

Such a predicament is no where more evident than in BPO companies. Offshore BPO companies must cater to their clients’ demands while maintaining control of their cross-border alliances with their own culture, needs and demands. For example, a bank based in the United States can outsource their customer service division to a provider in India. Thus, project managers in based in India must try to
coordinate these business processes while maintaining the quality of the processes in a vastly different setting. Providers based in India and other international locations have all the ‘formal’ information needed to reduce costs and provide high quality services for their clients’ based in other locations world-wide (Krishna, Sahay & Walsham, 2004, p. 64). However, it is the shared understanding, meaning and common experiences that are integral parts of every organization, which clients and BPO providers lack.

Teams originating from two different locations assign different values, meanings and ultimately different practices to project management. In essence, aligning the so-called ‘informal’ aspects leads to efficient organizational and project management (Hendry, 1995; Krishna et al., 2004). Clients and providers have cultivated different management styles due to their environments and backgrounds which, if not managed, could lead to severe losses. Because BPO companies are an extension of their clients’ organization, project management and coordination of services has become a key concern.

With increased awareness of the adverse impact of not managing the ‘informal’ aspects of the business, most companies that outsource business processes do so only if the BPO provider has a U.S.-based outpost that understands the client’s needs and ways of doing business. These U.S.-based outposts are responsible for project
management and coordination services with their colleagues based in other locations (Coward, 2003, p. 5). Clients in the U.S. are careful to pick BPO firms that match their own project management strategy, reducing the risks that arise from different methods: “for these companies, it was more important that the provider conform to whatever processes they have been using” (Coward, 2003, p. 7).

Careful selection of outsourcing firms by U.S. clients suggests that outsourcing firms must not only satisfy their clients’ end goals (quality business processes at a lower cost) but must also do so in a way their clients want. In doing so, it denies culturally particular practices and stipulates that despite being embedded in a different environment, providers must conform to western business practices (Coward, 2003; Linder, Brooks & Sawyer, 2004). In Christopher Cowards (2003) study of U.S.-based companies that outsource, he reports that most respondents said “that they looked for a provider who’s management is trained and adept at conducting business using Western business practices and norms” (p. 8). Therefore, BPO clients are not concerned about the rules that govern their providers’ organizational environments so long as it adheres to their perceptions of what is the right and wrong way of conducting business.

While culture is extremely relevant in this industry it appears that organizations are interested in “[getting] outsourcing provider executives to live and breathe their values” rather than understand and accommodate cultural influences, building a
synergy of project management styles (Linder, Brooks & Sawyer, 2004, p. 37). It is for this reason that studying senior managers at the U.S-based outpost and those at the India-based location makes for an interesting case study.

2.5 Why is this study different?

Most studies of the field of cross-cultural management take a prescriptive approach, emphasizing only why culture is important and the downsides to not managing it. Moreover, a number of these studies set out to ‘measure’ culture rather than understand how it permeates into organizations and the influences it has on aspects of management (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988; Schein, 1996). Also, most questionnaires present in such studies implicitly convey business values and practices that are particular to the United States (Chevrier, 2003). In contrast, there have been only a handful of studies that describe “actual strategies that leaders of multinational teams actually use to manage cross-cultural differences” (Chevrier, 2003, p. 5). This thesis focuses on studying this question of ‘how’ managers ‘manage’ cultural influences in an environment so constrained by financial goals, stringent time limits and dominated by western business practices.

An additional limitation of the literature is that, most cross-cultural studies have tried to study hundreds of organizations at a time so that they could produce aggregate
and generalizable results. However, as emphasized in this discussion, culture is particular to groups of people and their environment. For this reason, as scholars such as Denison (1996) have argued, there needs to be more individual case studies. As he (Denison, 1996) says, such studies need to place “the individual in the social system in which he participates and note how his attitudes and goals change with changes in the relations he experiences” (p. 21).

This thesis responds to this call, examining how U.S. and India-based project managers at a BPO company cope with cultural influences on project management conducted between the U.S. and India. This study notes individuals’ attitudes, experiences and goals in relation to the cross-border project management process at this BPO company. The following section details the methodology used to guide the study.
Chapter 3. Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to explore ‘how’ United States and India-based managers manage cultural differences that arise during project management. In order to fulfill this purpose, I conducted a qualitative study comprising of surveys and interviews. A qualitative study provided me with stories and accounts that were rich in personal details describing the experiences of project managers. Also, in the process of encouraging managers to reveal their different experiences, I became more familiar with them and their daily activities. Such interactions helped to bridge the distance between myself (the researcher) and the managers. It also allowed me to gain a more thorough understanding of their work environments. With a quantitative analysis I could not have gained the insights that allowed me to describe and analyze how the managers at Company X operate.

The information generated through the qualitative study of these will be presented in the form of a narrative. This narrative will describe, and then interpret, how the senior managers at Company X negotiate their ways through different cultural influences that emerge during the project management process. This methodology can best be described as a ‘grounded theory’ approach, because the narrative emerges directly from the data and the research situation with no influence from other outside

---

6 “In order to increase their understanding of human behavior, sociologists must become, not more detached from, but more involved with the phenomena of the empirical social world” (Filstead, 1970, p.2).
theories or data. The following section of this chapter defines grounded theory. I then
detail how I conducted my research using this method. Next, I discuss the significance
and basis for asking the survey and interview questions. Finally, I will characterize the
problems or limitations I faced while conducting my research.

3.1 Method: Grounded Theory

A grounded theory method calls for ‘theory’ to emerge out of the process of
collecting and analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1975; Charmaz, 2001; Dick, 2005).
Grounded theory is inductive7 in its approach, beginning with an observation of a
research situation, ultimately resulting in a “systematic discovery of the theory from
the data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1975, p. 3). In an essay on grounded theory, Kathy
Charmaz (2001) provides strategies for employing Barney Glaser and Anselm
Strauss’s grounded theory methodology in research studies. Charmaz (2001) suggests
that researchers start with individual case studies or experiences from which more
abstract categories develop in order to explain patterns and relationships in the data.
The theory thus emerges out of each piece of data that is revealed to the researcher.

7 “The primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from
the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by
structured methodologies” Thomas, 2003, p. 2)
Because the theory emerges from the data being collected, researchers can ensure that the theory is actually relevant to what happens in the research situation. Rather than allowing outside theories to influence the study, and thereby perhaps prejudice it in inappropriate ways, grounded theory methodology forces researchers to rely on their particular research situation and the data they can derive from it. Glaser (1975) notes that by employing grounded theory methods, the researcher can aim to “discover the theory implicit in the data” (p. 3). In this way, grounded theory empowers researchers to look at underlying meanings of behavior, conversation and interactions among each other. In doing so, researchers can study view points that are not explicit or even openly acknowledged by their respondents. Kathy Charmaz (2001) notes that grounded theory methods encourage deep analysis of a research scenario, which can be used as a method for theory generating studies as well as descriptive studies such as this one.

Grounded theory methods consist of a series of organized steps to discover and make use of the research situation and the qualitative data found. Borrowing from Glaser and Strauss (1975) and Charmaz (2001), the systematic steps of the grounded theory method are: (i) to be involved in both data collection and analysis simultaneously, (ii) create codes and categories from the data, not from preconceived hypothesis, (iii) writing memo’s to explain categories, comparing data, (iv) theoretical
sampling\(^8\), (v) conducting the literature review at a later stage (Glaser & Strauss, 1975; Charmaz, 2001 ; Dick, 2005)

Each stage of this process contributes to the creation of the larger narrative that describes, assesses and identifies patterns and links in the research situation. I will briefly highlight what is entailed in each stage before I discuss how I administered each stage in this study. Stage 1, data collection and analysis, is the first stage during which the researcher orients him/herself with the research situation. While collecting data (through surveys/interviews) the researcher begins to identify themes, which will later demand more research as they become part of the larger narrative or theory construction.

Stage 2 comprises of creating categories, codes or themes that result from the analysis of the data in Stage 1. This stage is crucial because it allows the researcher to begin to identify patterns, meanings or links from which to organize the larger narrative of the study. These codes or categories arise from the data itself not from outside sources or theories by other researchers. In fact, this data and categories will arise from the researcher’s interaction with the research subjects through the survey questions and interviews.

\(^8\) Theoretical Sampling means “collecting more data to clarify your ideas and to plan how to fit them together. Here, you go back and sample for the purpose of developing your emerging theory, not for increasing the generalizability of your results” (Charmaz, 2001, Pg 349).
Glaser, Strauss (1975) and Charmaz (2001) suggest that, to build these categories, researchers study each line of data, coding it by the themes, actions or events that are represented in it. Looking at the material in such detail encourages the researcher to view the data in different ways. Such close analysis will enable researchers to interpret respondents’ behaviors and meanings at a deeper level while forming more questions to ask respondents (Charmaz, 2001, p. 342).

For the researcher to process and assimilate different respondents’ perspectives, the researcher must constantly compare respondent’s experiences and the codes and categories that emerge from the surveys and interviews (Dick, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1975). Constant comparison encourages the researcher to analyze each piece of incoming data immediately before looking at others. Each respondent’s data will provide the researcher with a new perspective; identify emerging patterns or even new meanings, which can be investigated further. Through this process, the researcher begins to envision a theory or a narrative that links respondents and the categories that emerge from the data they provide.

In the third stage, the researcher creates memos by taking notes at all points during the data collection, comparison and analysis process. Recording thoughts, accounts of interviews, and interpretations of survey responses helps to conduct a thorough analysis. Memo-writing encourages researchers to constantly think of their
research topic, their respondents, and the data they collect. Therefore, memo-writing at different stages creates more detailed categories, which spurs [researchers] to start digging into implicit, unstated and condensed meanings” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 347). Memo-writing also results in researchers asking more questions in order to piece together a narrative.

The process of gathering more information in order to piece together themes and categories leads to Stage 4 - theoretical sampling. At this stage the researcher returns to the pool of respondents and “[samples] for the purpose of developing [the] emerging theory, not for the generalizability of [the] results” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 349). At this stage, researchers can select particular respondents from which to obtain additional information rather than interviewing the whole group. Theoretical sampling helps the researcher clarify themes by asking for more detailed accounts from certain respondents. As patterns emerge, so will variations among respondents. Obtaining different kinds of information will allow the researcher to incorporate the varied perspectives of respondents’, their behaviors, and the research situation. This method results in a more rigorous exploration of the research situation.

Stage 5 of the grounded theory method calls for the literature review to be conducted as it becomes relevant to the data. Glaser (1975) recommends reading around the topic, leaving literature most pertinent to the research situation to be read at
a later stage. Glaser (1975) and Dick (2005) point out that the reading may influence the researcher’s interpretation of the data and the categories that form the final narrative.

It is important to note that each of these five stages must be treated as ongoing processes that occur during the crafting of an emergent narrative. Each stage ties into the others, forcing researchers to constantly interact, analyze and reflect on their research situation, the research participants and the emerging data. The following section details how each stage was incorporated in this study.

3.2 Methodology Specifics: Grounded Theory

In July of 2004, I worked as an Intern under the Director of Marketing at Company X. I was placed at the headquarters in Pennsylvania. The U.S.-based managers were frequently in contact with the India-based managers over e-mail, phone and video-conferences. Even though I did not interact with the India-based managers, nor was I involved in that part of the business operations, I noticed that the senior managers based in the U.S. regularly coordinated activities with India-based managers. This observation prompted me to think about project management across borders. In particular, I became interested in the possible cultural differences that differentiate
managers based in different part of the world, and how management teams deal with such differences.

Company X’s senior U.S and India-based managers became the focal point of my thesis project. I wanted to understand how managers accommodate cultural influences in their project management styles. My first task was to gather stories and accounts about project management from all the senior managers based in the U.S. and in India. Due to the geographical distance between the participants and myself, the most convenient way of gathering this information was to administer over the internet a short, open-ended survey questionnaire.

I created a model of my survey and submitted it to the Institutional Review Board for approval. I also provided an informed consent document that explained the purpose of the study to the participants. In this document I explained how the information they provided would be used in the study. I stressed that all the participants’ identities would remain confidential. In the final study, I would identify each participant by a number.

The survey was administered using Survey Monkey, a survey tool on the internet. The survey was administered to 9 senior managers at Company X. Six of these managers were India-based managers and three were U.S.-based managers. The survey was originally intended to be administered over a two week period from
January 15th to February 1st but a number of managers asked for more time. Eight out of the nine managers responded to the survey and the last response was received mid-February.

The Survey Monkey tool facilitated my use of grounded theory methods. Each of the manager’s survey responses was accessible separately, so that I could collect and analyze each set of data immediately. I could also compare managers’ responses, a process integral to data analysis. This survey fulfilled Stage 1 of the grounded theory process. As I analyzed each manager’s response, I identified prevalent themes which I compared to each incoming survey response. Below I describe how the open ended survey questionnaire was created and how the questions relate to this study.

3.2.1 Design Specifics: Survey

As discussed in the previous chapter, managers from different regions of the world, based in two separate locations, may have different ways of ‘managing’ or coordinating projects (Hofstede, 1983; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). I questioned how these managers located in different locations coordinated the project management process influenced by their different backgrounds and cultures.
The survey design was motivated by this thought process. Through the survey I aimed to discover and compare how the Indian-based and U.S. based managers dealt with different phases of the project management process, coping with different cultural influences. My first task was to define what is entailed in project management, and what constitutes its key phases. After reading some literature on the project management process, I used Bernie Klinder’s (2005) guide to project management, which focuses on 6 main phases. These are:

(i) Planning goals and objective.

(ii) Forming expectations of achieving goals and objectives.

(iii) Conducting meetings and making decisions.

(iv) Communication between the two teams.

(v) Expectations for establishing and running the project.

(vi) Implementation and execution of the project.

In developing the survey, I assigned one question to each phase, asking how the India-based and U.S.-based managers accomplished that particular phase. Both managers received the same format of the survey. The only difference was that the questions were addressed to respondents about the other team, i.e. the U.S.-based managers were asked about difference they experienced when planning goals and objectives in comparison to the India-based managers and vice-versa.
The survey contained two sections. In the first section, I solicited managers’ background information, such as their job description and whether they were working in their country of origin. I also asked what methods of communication they used to communicate with managers based in other locations. These questions were designed to help me better understand the research situation and the company structure.

In the next section, I asked open-ended questions about project management experiences. The first six questions in this section asked about each of the six phases of project management. The seventh question asked the managers to add any extra comments, thoughts, or opinions that might have not been addressed in the first six questions.

In the first question I asked managers to think of a time when the other set of managers planned goals and objectives differently from themselves. From this question, I hoped to obtain insights about how a respondent and his/her team set goals as well as how the other managers differed. I also expected to learn how both sets of managers coped with the situation and what they did to resolve any differences. In addition, I hoped that managers would provide insights as to why they thought such differences between the managers existed. This information was needed to understand the cultural differences at play and what each set of managers valued when setting goals and objectives.
In the second question, I asked if the respondent and his/her group of managers had experienced any differences in expectations. I specifically asked for differences related to such things as meeting timeframes, allocating people and resources, and perceptions of quality control. I anticipated that the answers to this question would allow me to understand what factors motivated the respondent’s expectations and the basis for them. In addition, I hoped to understand how different managers prioritized their expectations and whether there was a difference in this regard between U.S and India-based managers. This question was intended to provide insight as to how - if at all- both sets of managers accommodated different cultural differences when they cropped up.

In the next question I asked managers how they would plan to improve the meeting and decision making process had they been given the chance. I also asked why these changes were important to the respondent. First, I aimed to get a sense of the current decision making process. Next, I sought to understand why the current process was not ideal in the respondents’ minds. Obtaining this information would permit me to identify factors that were important to different managers during meetings and decision making. Moreover, I hoped to understand how the managers negotiated with other managers’ backgrounds and management styles.
The fourth question addressed possible difficulties in communicating an idea or an aspect of a project with the other set of managers. The managers were asked to recall a time when such difficulties presented themselves. I sought to find out how managers align their thought processes in order to coordinate activities during the project management process. If managers’ on both sides claimed that there were difficulties in communication, I would be able to identify particular issues on which they differed and how they had been resolved. Also, by means of this question, I hoped to understand the inherent thought process that drives both sets of managers’ project management styles.

In the next question I asked both U.S and India-based managers if they thought the U.S.-based managers expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time. I wanted to distinguish if, and how, the U.S.-based managers have dealt with conducting business in a new environment. I would also gain insight as to how U.S and India-based managers’ roles in the project management have changed over time. I hoped to learn if managers in both locations had learnt to bridge the geographical and cultural differences between themselves. If managers’ had learnt to cope with such differences I wanted to know how their expectations for running projects had changed.
In the last question, I asked each set of managers whether they were ever concerned with the way the other set of managers wanted a project to be implemented or executed. As in the case of the first three questions, I wanted to obtain information on what the managers valued most at this phase of project management. Apart from this, asking managers’ this question would allow me to understand what each set of managers thought about the other sets’ approach to execution. I would also be able to learn if managers had managed to create an understanding among each other of how projects are to be implemented.

Underlying all the questions is my interest in identifying basic thought processes, and approaches to management that would allow me to build comparisons between the U.S. and India-based managers. Each question encourages managers to tell a story that would give me a sense of each manager’s beliefs and practices in the larger management setting of Company X. After analyzing each question I could better judge if and how managers deal with cultural influences during different phases of the project management process.

As discussed in the last section, administering these questions using the Survey Monkey tool permitted me to collect and analyze the data simultaneously. I carried out Stage 1 of the grounded theory method as I received each survey response, constantly
comparing the themes that emerged from each respondent’s answers. The following section details how I fulfilled the next stages of the grounded theory method.

3.3 Methodology Specifics Continued: Grounded Theory

After receiving the survey responses, I coded each line of data, picking out broad themes that emerged from the respondent’s answers. I began to create categories and detail them based on the experiences revealed by different respondents. As these categories emerged, I made sure to compare respondents’ points of views. This enabled me to begin piecing together a narrative, describing how managers at Company X cope with cultural influences. These categories will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

As themes and categories emerged from the data, I wrote memo’s to record my personal responses and observations to each piece of incoming data. This step helped me to link patterns that emerged from the data. By taking in-depth notes I was able to account for significant changes in my personal analysis of the respondents. In addition, I identified which managers I would contact to clarify details and to conduct more detailed interviews with.

I proceeded to theoretically sample the pool of respondents. I picked 4 managers with whom to conduct 30 minute in-depth interviews. I conducted these
interviews with two U.S.-based managers and two India-based managers. Two of the four managers were not based in their country of origin, which enabled me to obtain a range of opinions and experiences. I conducted these interviews over seven days in the first week of March. I interviewed the managers over the phone and recorded the conversations on a tape recorder9. While interviewing the managers I had to be careful to refer to issues they brought up in their survey, asking them for more information or to clarify their statements. The interview was semi-structured and informal in approach. My primary concern was to avoid ‘loaded questions’ that might influence the respondents answers to me. During the interview I tried to balance my role as a researcher and a former intern. Being familiar with the managers helped me to have candid conversations with them, but I actively tried to maintain my objectivity while conducting the interview.

In order to be objective, I noted down key words and took notes during the interview. This motivated me to continue asking questions as the respondents spoke. I later compared these notes to the ones I took after listening to the interviews repeatedly. As I interviewed each manager I made sure to compare their responses, mentally piecing together themes and categories as I had done with the survey responses. I also wrote memo’s immediately after each interview, recording the

---

9 The transcribed conversations will be attached at the end of this study in the Appendix Section.
respondent’s tone and different emotions (frustration, confusion) that became apparent during the interview.

After the interviews, I began the process of piecing together the themes, codes and categories that emerged from the surveys and the interviews. The next chapter will organize these themes into a narrative that describes and analyzes how India and U.S.-based managers cope with cultural differences during project management.

The last stage of the grounded theory method calls for the literature review to be conducted after the data collection. As noted above, Glaser (1975) recommends reading around the literature that is directly pertinent to the researcher’s study. Reading directly related literature might influence the researchers’ codes and note-taking. In this study, I designed the survey and sent it to the senior managers before I began conducting the literature review. Due to time constraints on this thesis, I had to conduct the literature review as the last few survey responses were coming in. However, in order to remain fair to the grounded theory method, my literature review discussed literature that only formed the basis for my study to be conducted. In the review, I highlighted why culture is an integral part of management practices and why it is important to understand the role it plays. To this end, I emphasized gaps in the current literature, citing it as prescriptive rather than an attempt to understand the day-to-day
realities of managers engaged in virtual project management. I stressed that my study was descriptive in its approach.

Because I took a descriptive approach, one that is different from a number of existing prescriptive studies, the literature review did not influence my mindset while analyzing the data. Charmaz (2001), however rightly points out that “any observer’s worldview, disciplinary assumptions, theoretical proclivities and research interests will influence his or her observations and emerging categories” (p. 337). Despite the inevitability of such influences, I tried to be aware at each stage to check that my categories and codes emerged entirely from the data I received.

3.4 Problems and Limitations: Grounded Theory Method

Due to time constraints and geographical distance between myself and the senior managers, my research was conducted at a distance using the Survey Monkey tool and phone conversations. Despite gathering valuable stories and insights from managers using these methods, the study might have benefited from my observing the managers interact during phone or video-conferences. Direct observation would have contributed to the study, bringing in yet another perspective.
Another difficulty that I faced was balancing my role as the researcher and my familiarity with the senior managers. Despite my familiarity with some of the managers, I tried to maintain my role as the ‘outsider’ in order to view the data objectively. As I collected and analyzed data, I had to be careful to code the data based solely on the respondents’ stories. Data emerges not only from the respondents but also from the researcher’s interaction with them. Acknowledging and being aware of this interaction at all stages made my analysis and memo-writing a little more complicated than it would have been with respondents that were completely unfamiliar to me.

Despite these slight difficulties, grounded theory method permitted me to grasp how project management is negotiated at Company X across cultures and borders. As a researcher this theoretical approach forced me to be reflective at every stage of the data collection, analysis and final reporting stage. Toward the end of the literature review in Chapter two I aimed to respond to calls from cultural theorists to understand individuals place in the social systems in which they partake. Conducting a qualitative study, using grounded theory enabled me to fulfill this purpose. The research I conducted culminated in a narrative that described not only ‘how’ cultural differences are negotiated in Company X, but also the underlying attitudes, goals and motivations.

10 “Finally the utilization of the “outsider” role allows for a maintenance of objectivity that would be weakened if roles other than this one were attempted” (Filstead, 1975, p. 83).
that the U.S. and India-based managers bring to the project management process. The
next chapter presents the findings from the surveys and interviews administered to the
U.S. and India-based managers at Company X.
Chapter 4. Results

Based on the information gathered from the senior managers at Company X, this chapter will discuss whether the managers are aware of cultural influences on project management. To this end, this chapter will describe how the managers cope with such influences during cross-border project coordination between the United States and India. In this chapter, I will first describe different participants’ roles in the project management process at Company X. Drawing on the responses from both sets of managers (U.S. and India-based), I will then create an Input-Output model. Through the use of this model I will discuss whether Company X’s senior managers appear in general to be coping with and negotiating through the various cultural influences that are present in the project management process. Next, I will discuss reoccurring themes present in managers’ responses that highlight different cultural influences present in the project management process. Finally I will end by highlighting any coping mechanisms or strategies that they have used or intend to use in the future.

Before proceeding, I will clarify a few points about the tone, nature and motivation behind writing this chapter. Even though ‘culture’ as a concept is typically assigned to a collective - for instance to a group of managers-, I noticed how deeply embedded it is in each individual’s work, communication, and thought process. Thus, it would appear to be a matter that is personal to different individuals. In conducting
research about the U.S. and India-based teams, I realized what a delicate subject I was trying to comprehend. In studying the project management process, I realized that it consisted not only of managing and coordinating business activities. It also was a process of managing two different groups of people’s underlying visions and perceptions of management.

Having realized the complexities and the personal nature of this subject, I have tried to present an un-biased narrative about the current project management process between the U.S. and India-based managers\(^\text{11}\). This narrative makes no judgments about ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ approaches to management. It merely provides a descriptive analysis of cultural influences present in project management and how senior managers cope with these as they arise.

In trying to comprehend how cultural influences are dealt with, it may seem that my research compares the India-based and U.S-based managers’ approaches to project management. However, the motivation behind this chapter is not to compare but to try and understand how cultural influences are being dealt with from both sides, in a process grounded in many different contexts and realities.

\(^{11}\) For the most part I will not identify where managers are based. However in order to illustrate certain points I might specify where a manager is based.
The following section details these different contexts and the different participants that coordinate the project management process between the United States and India.

4.1 Key Participants in Project Management

Company X is headquartered in Pennsylvania in the United States. It has five operation centers in Mumbai, India. The company provides business process outsourcing solutions to U.S. clients. The project management aspect of the business entails coordinating the launch and maintenance of clients’ business processes at one of the operation centers in Mumbai. For example, Bank A wants to outsource business processes associated with their credit card collection processes. Company X can provide these services at a lower cost using agents at their operations centers located in India. Bank A’s customers will call their collection center and will be assisted by agents working in Mumbai who guide them through their payment options.

Outsourcers such as Company X assure their clients of quality services at a decreased cost. In order to ensure high quality services, firms like Company X work closely with their clients to train them about the business so as to satisfy both the client

---

12 These operation centers are also called delivery centers. They ‘deliver’ the processes to their clients.
and the client’s customers (Bank A and its customers). Business process outsourcing calls for a deep understanding of the client’s business and business practices. At Company X, project management appears to be molded by three key players, namely the senior managers based in the U.S., senior managers based in India and Company X’s clients. Figure 1 below illustrates the dynamic between the project management participants.

**Figure 4.1: Relationship between Key Players in Company X’s Project Management Process**
As depicted in Figure 1, the U.S.-based senior managers work closely with their U.S.-based clients and their colleagues based in India. This is illustrated above in Figure 1 by the solid arrows. U.S.-based managers convey their client’s requirements to the India-based managers through regular phone calls, e-mails and video and voice conferencing software. The India-based managers on the other hand do not work as closely with clients but are given direction about clients needs mostly through the U.S.-based senior managers. The relationship between clients’ and the India-based managers is illustrated by the dotted arrow in Figure 1. The reason for this dynamic was explained by Manager 1 who noted that such a dynamic exists “due the fact that our U.S. clients want someone that understands US customers and manages the business accordingly.”

To this end, Company X’s U.S. based managers are responsible for constant alignment between the clients’ needs and the delivery of processes by the India-based managers. To achieve this, U.S and India-based managers are in constant contact using phone, e-mails and voice and video conferencing meeting software. The project management process can be characterized as the ‘point of alignment’ because it is the point at which the U.S. and India-based thought processes and management processes must unite to fulfill their clients’ needs. On the one hand, it works to match
expectations from the U.S.-based manager’s side; on the other it delivers business processes from the India-based manager’s side.

Drawing from both sets of managers’ responses, the following section conceptualizes this ‘point of alignment’, describing whether managers appear to be coping with and accommodating cultural influences to the project management process.

4.2 The Input and Output Model: Creating Alignment across Borders

After analyzing the senior managers’ responses, I created an Input-Output model (see below Figure 2) to describe the project management process as an input and output process. In Figure 2, in the ‘input’ box, the U.S.-based senior managers in conjunction with their clients shape the input in the United States. ‘Input’ involves client processes, requirements and expectations. The ‘output’ box represents the India-based senior managers who shape the output in India. ‘Output’ consists of delivering business processes, responding to requirements, and fulfilling expectations. In between the U.S. input and the India output lays the ‘project management’ box or the necessary point of alignment between the two teams. At this stage, U.S. and India-based
managers transfer ideas from the ‘input’ to tangible outsourced processes in the ‘output’ stage.

**Figure 4.2: Conceptual Model of the Project Management Process at Company X**

![Conceptual Model of the Project Management Process at Company X](image)

As I noted earlier, clients in United States prefer dealing with managers who are also based in the U.S. because U.S.-based managers understand local customers from the U.S. A number of the senior managers also felt that clients in the U.S. preferred dealing with Company X’s U.S.-based managers because the clients want the U.S. managers to “manage more like they do” (Manager 1). The Input of the project management process is therefore heavily client driven so as to meet clients’ requirements of similar performance and quality of services at a lower cost.

Since clients prefer working with U.S.-based managers at Company X, they feel that they share a common understanding of how business processes should be outsourced. Additionally, the feeling that U.S.-based managers will understand their
customers (who are also predominantly U.S.-based) suggests that there are not only shared visions, but also shared values and beliefs. Sharing visions, values and beliefs points to a common culture between the participants involved in shaping the input stage. As a result, perceptions of management methods, performance, and the quality of services are created in one context or reality – i.e. the United States. Although all the managers are not originally from the United States, they share a common understanding of conducting business in the United States. They are used to certain structures, attitudes and capabilities. Moreover, they also share a common input goal of providing the same services to clients, in a distinctly different geographical and cultural setting.

In contrast, the Output from the project management process is realized, shaped and implemented by the India-based managers. These managers also share a common understanding of business culture, one that is particular to India. Within this group, all the managers are of Indian origin except one – Manager 2. Even though Manager 2 may not have an approach to conducting business similar to that of the rest of the Indian managers, the entire group of India-based managers including Manager 2 shares a common understanding of the Indian context for conducting business. Therefore, perceptions of management methods, capabilities, attitudes and the quality of services
are influenced by and shaped in a very different business environment than that in the United States.

This conceptual input-output model helps us to appreciate how ‘inputs’ are defined in one context and the ‘outputs’ are implemented in another context. We can take the Input-Output model a step further (see Figure 3 below) to describe how the thought processes behind the Input stage (U.S.-based) and the Output stage (India-based) must overlap in order for a project to be coordinated. As Figure 3 illustrates, the processes are defined in one context (the United States) but are executed in another (India). However, in order for a project to be managed successfully, managers must create a ‘shared understanding’ of each other’s contexts. Figure 3 illustrates this.
Having realized the distinct presence of these two different contexts and cultures, I looked to see if there was in fact a shared understanding that bridged the ‘input’ and ‘output’ at the project management stage. Because the ‘input’ and ‘output’ emerge out of different contexts and cultures, a shared understanding would suggest that there was a recognition of different cultural influences that are involved in the project management process. In looking for this shared understanding, I looked for
specific ways in which the managers dealt with different cultural realities as they crossed from the ‘input’ into the ‘output’ stage.

The research data revealed that inputs from the U.S.-based managers were being transferred into deliverables by the India-based managers, but the process met with a number of obstacles along the way. Both U.S and India-based managers have distinct parts to play in the project management process but they seemed to be unable to build a common understanding of the different realities and cultural contexts in which each group of managers operate.

Describing this lack of a shared understanding, Manager 2 pointed out that when a problem of project management arises, “fire-fighting and short-term fixes” are used to resolve the issue, only for it to emerge again during another project. Thus, an effort to align U.S. and India-based managers through cross-cultural dialogue only occurs in the context of a current problem. On-going efforts that might bridge inherent cultural differences are not in evidence.

This cultural gap was brought into relief by one of the managers, who commented on disconnects between the two management teams:

“There are times that the management team in India gets disconnected from the priority of serving our clients. That being said, once [we] find out, we re-align quickly” (Manager 1).
Quick re-alignment appears to temporarily synchronize project management. But both sets of managers said that efforts to understand why a problem occurred frequently turn into heated discussions directed at blaming, or lead to reassignments of more resources to resolve the issue. Respondents also pointed to the fact that cultural alignment and dialogue did not seem to be a priority between the cross-border management teams. For instance, Manager 3, an India-based manager making a point about a lack of shared understanding said that:

“Many U.S. based Managers ignore the fact that the projects, for which the decisions are being made, are not in the U.S. and hence may require an approach difference than what would have applied for the projects within the United States.”

What these responses suggest is that different business contexts, “working styles and culture of the local staff” have caused disconnects, which have yet to be addressed on a strategic basis.

Like the India-based managers, the U.S.-based managers also noted significant differences in the way they approach project management. Most of the U.S.-based managers expressed concern over timeframe and accountability issues from the India-based side. Managers frequently try to resolve these issues as they pop up, but they continue to reoccur.
At Company X, there appears at present to be a passive way of solving surface level issues rather actively understanding deeper cultural differences. With greater experience in having resolved some of the immediate issues, most managers agreed that they were better acquainted with management differences now than they were a year ago. They felt their communication and dialogue had improved over time as they became used to each others’ styles. However, all managers surveyed continued to question, or were puzzled by, some of their colleagues’ business practices.

Responding to the survey and interview, each manager gave the impression that, given the chance to fully understand and build a mutual understanding, the project management process would improve in quality and productivity. One U.S.-based manager even suggested that “there needs to be more education of cultural differences that impact education” (Manager 5).

The next section explores 3 primary themes that emerged from the managers responses. As was discussed in the Methodology Chapter, these themes emerged directly from each managers survey and interview responses. I coded each line of data received from the respondents, picking out broad themes from each manager’s response. In my notes I began to list these themes and detail them with the manager’s thoughts and experiences. As I began to code multiple surveys and
make notes, a pattern began to emerge in these themes that linked manager’s thought processes and perceptions on cross-border project management. I realized that by means of these themes there was a narrative present that pointed to different deep-seated cultural influences that have caused disconnects and misalignments in project management practices.

4.3 Different Cultural Contexts: Understanding Cross-Border Project Management

4.3.1 Theme 1: Ground Realities and Local Culture

The term ‘third dimension’ was used by an India-based manager (Manager 3) to explain an aspect of project management about which he felt managers were often unaware. In his responses he noted that, while a large number of projects are driven by time and money, recognizing the ‘third dimension’ was an equally important goal in cross-boarder project management. The third dimension as defined by Manager 3 involves managing people in “a distant location in a different time zone, speaking a different language and having a very different culture.” Manager 3’s statement highlighted two key points. The first is that the organizational culture in India may be significantly different from that in the
United States. The second is that the cultural distance between the two teams may be challenging to understand when a project is coordinated between such vast geographical distances.

Due to the vast geographical distances and more importantly cultural differences, managers from one location may not be fully aware of the conditions other managers have to work with in another location. An India-based manager, one who is not of Indian origin and identifies more with business practices in the United States, held a opinion similar to that of Manager 3. Manager 2 considered micro-managing or “remote project management” to be “doomed to failure” because the U.S.-based managers are not aware or in control of what is happening on the ground, in the operation centers in India. Manager 3 spoke of past experiences where U.S. managers were concerned about one particular project whereas on the ground in India, project managers were attempting to run four simultaneous projects all of which were behind schedule.

Aside from the challenges of managing projects at a distance, a number of India-based managers felt that disconnects between the U.S. and India-based managers occur because the reality of conducting projects in India is different from what U.S.-based managers are accustomed to. For instance, Manager 4 said that running a 24 hour shift, managing employees aged 18-24, and working through the
night requires multiple competencies. He added that a huge part of the challenge on the ground in India is to make sure these young employees are transported on time from their homes located all over Mumbai to Company X’s operation centers. If 4 transportation vehicles are delayed on Mumbai’s congested roads, the India-based managers cannot start a shift on time. Manager 4 said that while U.S.-based managers cite this as bad planning, it is simply a “ground challenge” (Manager 4)\textsuperscript{13} in India.

‘Ground Challenges’ that India-based manager’s face may not be present for U.S.-based managers. Because of different environments and the challenges that emerge from them, the India-based managers feel that U.S.-based managers may not be able grasp the extent of the challenges they face in India. For instance, Manager 4 noted that in the United States managers do not have the operational challenge of picking up and dropping agents. In India, however, transportation is not as convenient as it is in the United States and therefore poses major issue with which managers must deal. Another transportation related operational challenge that India-based managers have to deal with are the lack of cost quotes or delivery

\textsuperscript{13} The term ‘ground challenge’ used by Manager 4 means the challenge of coordinating activities at the delivery centers or “on the ground” in India. Indian managers must actually execute project management plans ’on the ground’ in India. In contrast, U.S.-based managers play a larger part in the planning process.
times if there are transportation strikes or a ‘bandh’ which occur more frequently than in the United States.\(^{14}\)

Ground Challenges present themselves not only in the form of operational challenges such as transportation but also in the form organizational cultural issues. For instance, having 18-24 year old male and female employees working through the night is a new development in India. Having men and women working in such close quarters, unsupervised by their family members would not have been the norm in India a few years ago. Even today, employees parents are constantly concerned about their children and if the managers are supervising their interaction with one another. Supervising hundreds of agents at a time is a mammoth task in itself. India-based managers not only have to do this but also take their young employees families’ concerns into consideration. This presents a huge operational and cultural challenge to India-based managers, which U.S.-based managers might never have encountered or dealt with before.

India-based managers must constantly be aware of a number of variables, coming up with quick solutions should a problem threaten the planned project management process. Manager 4 said that the task of managing a U.S.-based delivery center and one in India is significantly different due to such challenges.

\(^{14}\) ‘Bandh’ is a Hindi word which means ‘closed.’ During a ‘bandh’ a large group declares a strike shutting down major areas or an entire city itself.
Unless U.S. based-managers and clients consider the realities present in India, they might perceive the India-based management to be negligent or not as pro-active as expected.

Realities-on the ground in delivery centers-such as the ones discussed above appear to have molded the nature of local organizational culture and the India-based approaches to project management. Manager 5, a U.S.-based manager said that conducting business in India requires that one deal with so many different variables and uncertainties. Adding to the list of ground challenges, Manager 5 mentioned that a lot of the times in India, people do not have access to data necessary to conduct project planning. Moreover, even if the data is available there is little guarantee that it is reliable. Due to these kinds of problems, India-based managers have become accustomed to dealing with a level of uncertainty that U.S.-based managers may not have experienced before. Manager 5 suggested that to a large degree dealing with such a vast number of uncertain variables may force India-based managers to focus only 20 per cent of their efforts on planning with 70 per cent devoted to managing execution. Due to this, their efforts are not centered on specific plans or times but rather they focus on dealing with multiple issues as they arise.
In contrast to Indian managers, U.S.-based managers are more comfortable centering their efforts on time oriented action plans than can be followed with less disruption than in India. U.S.-based managers’ management approaches, which are much more specific and task oriented, have been molded by different ground realities. Given these different ground realities and cultural influences, Company X’s perceptions of the ‘right’ way to manage project differ greatly from those in India.

One such perception that has manifested from these different ground realities has to do with meeting timeframes and deadlines for deliverables to the clients. Manager 6, a U.S.-based manager mentioned that the responsiveness to client requests in India “is not as quick as we would expect in the U.S.” Manager 6 mentioned that apart from the India-based client servicing team, all the other support functions are not as responsive as the U.S.-based managers would like. This manager was puzzled as to why India-based managers were not “as worried about meeting a deliverable for a client as the U.S. is.” Manager 6 said that in the U.S. time was a huge priority\textsuperscript{15}. To meet the deadline, the U.S. client servicing team follows up constantly with the India-based team. Manager 6 mentioned that

\textsuperscript{15} This finding is consistent with other related literature about perceptions of time in the U.S. versus India. The book India Business: Finding Opportunities in This Big Emerging Market by Aruna Chandra, Pradeep Rau and John K. Ryans, Jr. discusses how perceptions of time in these cultures are significantly different.
at times the U.S.-based managers give the India-based managers an earlier deadline in order for them to meet it by the actual deadline.

While providing an earlier deadline to India-based managers solves the surface level issue of meeting planned timeframes, it does not actively contribute to U.S. and India-based managers creating an understanding of different cultural contexts. Building this shared understanding could contribute to less conflict and heated discussions between managers. Moreover it would create a middle ground, bridging the distinctly different operating environments between the United States and India.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Focused-Approach Versus Broad-Management Approaches

The U.S. and India-based managers appear to have very different approaches to setting goals and discussing how they can be achieved. The terms ‘focused-approach’ and ‘broad-approach’ have emerged from the U.S. and India-based managers’ responses during data collection. A focused-approach involves quick discussions about the issue at hand and what can be done immediately to address the issue. The focused-approach is goal and task-oriented with efficiency and productivity being of overarching importance. Conversely, a broad-approach
involves longer discussions about the issue at hand and all other possibly related issues. In a broad-management approach building a thorough understanding of the entire scenario is of key importance. In addition, in a broad-management approach resolving a particular issue is not as important as resolving it and all other problems related to it.

The U.S. based managers tend to follow a focused approach while the India-based managers use a broad approach. For instance, Manager 6 based in the U.S. said that during meetings, India-based managers have long discussions about the goal and peripheral issues rather than simply setting a goal that will help overcome a gap. Manager 5 said that there tends to be a lot of talk about issues but the results do not show. Manager 5 recounted that:

“When there is a problem our goal is to get on a call and say here is the goal, why did it happen and what can we do to fix it. The only reason to care why it happens is so you can fix it. But in India, they are so worried about the accountability like I don’t want to be blamed for it and what the issue is and who is responsible for it – as opposed to lets figure out what went wrong and more forward.”

From this manager’s account of the situation, it is apparent that the U.S.-based managers appreciate a focused approach to problem solving rather than discussing surrounding issues. Their goal is simply to problem solve with an action plan.
Manager 6 narrated another such instance where the U.S. and India-based managers clashed on how to solve a problem. In this instance, the U.S.-based managers wanted to know what the recruiting department based in India was doing and what their results were. The U.S.-based managers wanted to see a report from the recruiting department in order to make recommendations to it on how to improve the recruitment processes. Manager 6 suggested that Recruitment tabulate how many people were interviewed, how many were hired, and how many graduated from the training program. The U.S.-based managers felt that using this approach would enable a clear presentation of the results and suggested recommendations. However, the discussion continued for a long time with departments as they argued over a number of issues. Although U.S.-based managers did get a sense of the situation in the recruitment department, they wanted specifics. Manager 6 noted that “no one [was] talking numbers, it was all general comments and that’s not going to solve anything.”

These comments suggest that the India-based managers tend to focus less on specifics and more on discussions of various issues regarding the goal and the way to achieve it. To India-based managers this “narrow” or focused approach seems very “two dimensional” (Manager 5). U.S.-based managers tend to quantify things by talking in numbers. Conversely, India-based managers feel that not everything
can be quantified – such as ‘initiative, willingness to take on new labor’ (Manager 5). According to the India-based managers, such skills, even though difficult to quantify, contribute to a goal being achieved.

In order for both U.S. and India-based managers to build a shared understanding, i.e. recognize and deal with each others management approach, it is important to understand where these approaches stem from. While interviewing Manager 5, I asked what prompted such different approaches. Having experienced both cultures, Manager 5 said that both approaches were driven by the larger society or cultural context. U.S. corporate culture tends to be task oriented and goal driven with emphasis on strong problem solving skills. Also, the U.S.-based managers are constantly trying to align to clients needs. In India, which is a relationship oriented society; Manager 5 noted that relationships aid in achieving goals. The importance of relationships was apparent in the India-based managers’ survey responses. Two India-based managers said they thought that involving the India-based managers in planning processes and developing teams that have mutual trust would better serve the project management process. However, unlike U.S.-based managers, the India-based managers have only limited contact with clients in the United States. Moreover, their interactions with the U.S.-based managers are limited to modes of virtual communication. Because it might be
difficult to build relationships with U.S.-based managers at such a distance, having long discussions about a number of surrounding issues could be an attempt to gain more information in order to build a trusting, mutual relationship, which leads to them fulfilling a particular goal.

Without understanding these distinctly different approaches, each set of managers appear to be dissatisfied with the others’ quality and standards of management. On the one hand, U.S.-based managers think that India-based managers are not strong in problem solving or achieving goals. Conversely, the India-based managers feel that the U.S.-based managers are too narrow in their “outlook which results in a less than optimum result” (Manager 3). However, both sets of managers have different perceptions of what problem-solving or setting and achieving goals entails. What Manager 1 (U.S.-based) considers to be “world-class management” leading to optimum results appears to be very different from what Manager 3 (India-based) considers to be a management approach that achieves optimum results.

At the present time at Company X, managers do set and achieve goals but with constant dissatisfaction along the way. Building a mutual understanding of each others’ influences and backgrounds will enable Company X’s managers to set and achieve goals in a smoother, more productive fashion.
4.3.3 Theme 3: Effective Teams: Ownership and Accountability

When asked about cross-border project management, the words ‘ownership’ and ‘accountability’ were present in the majority of managers’ responses. However, for U.S. and India-based managers these concepts emerge from very different cultural contexts. A majority of the U.S.-based managers said that the cross-border teams called for ownership and accountability saying: “there needs to be accountability for decisions, everyone needs to be clear of their responsibilities and be accountable” (Manager 6). Another U.S.-based manager said, “we have to empower people to make decisions and hold them accountable” (Manager 1). According to the U.S.-based managers, ‘ownership’ and ‘accountability’ contribute directly to building an effective team. Thus, when the U.S.-based managers talk about ‘ownership’ and ‘accountability,’ it means that taking on responsibility, having ownership and being accountable builds a certain amount of reliance and trust between managers. Manager 5 said that in American companies, taking ownership is a virtue.

In contrast, in the Indian context taking ownership and being accountable stems from a relationship built on trust. For instance Manager 4, an India-based manager said that in order to be an effective team, managers must create mutual trust
rather than one up each other. Manager 4 repeatedly mentioned the notion of building trust in conjunction with U.S.-based managers appreciating Indian talent and understanding the extent of the challenges on the ground. This suggests that a mutual trusting relationship builds accountability in the Indian context.

Such different notions of trust, accountability and ownership become apparent in the organizational cultures of U.S. and Indian companies. After experiencing both the Indian and U.S. contexts, Manager 5 cited different ways that trust and accountability play out in the case of U.S. and India-based managers. In the U.S. organizations, trust derives from ‘structure,’ such as the relationship between the President and the Vice-President of a corporation. Manager 5 said things in the U.S were more contractual than they appeared to be in India. Manager 5 added that in the U.S. ‘trust’ is built through contracts, long documents, lawyers and accountants.

In India however, trust is built through different mechanisms. In the Indian context the absence of trust stems from a lack of familiarity and a strong relationship between people. Manager 5 referred to India as a high context country where, in the absence of trust, managers use long discussions, and personal gatherings to get to know one another in order to build a relationship. Manager 5 saw trust, ownership and accountability occurring as a ‘chain’ relationship in India. He said that the
absence of a strong relationship or the absence of trust among team members leads to a fear of conflict. This fear of conflict has manifested itself in India-based managers not fully airing their opinions. Some U.S.-based managers mentioned that they think that sometimes the India-based managers do not explicitly mention their reservations about certain issues – which ultimately lead to miscommunications between the two teams. Manager 5 suggested that this occurs due to a fear of conflict, or “going against the boss.” Due to limited time and the constraints of working at such distances from one another, India-based managers may not have been able to develop strong, open relationships with their U.S.-based colleagues which results in a fear of conflict.

In the chain, this fear of conflict results in a lack of commitment since the managers feel they cannot voice their opinions. India-based managers might feel that they have not fully contributed and cannot therefore commit to a decision. A lack of commitment in turn leads to a lack of ownership. Finally, this lack of ownership leads to managers’ feeling that they cannot be accountable for a decision they are not part of and accountability is avoided. On the surface such lack of ownership results in inattention to goals and results.

At Company X this chain relationship has played out in various ways. For example Manager 5 noted that India-based employees often carry out instructions
without even wanting to know why. Manager 5 said this behavior stemmed from a lack of information and trust being built by colleagues in the United States. Indian managers may have felt that they could not speak openly in such situations. In situations where there is a relationship between the U.S.-based managers and those based in India, Manager 6 noticed that the level of accountability is much higher. For example, the client servicing team in India is in constant contact with the U.S.-based client servicing team and clients themselves. Manager 6 noted that this team had come around the quickest in terms of accountability.

After dealing with ownership and accountability issues for a long period of time, the U.S.-based managers have started to bring in India-based managers earlier in the project planning process. Involving India-based managers earlier on the project management process shows value for and builds a relationship with managers. Both India and U.S.-based managers feel that the dynamic and situation has improved considerably in the last four years. They also feel that managers have a better understanding of one another.

By recognizing the underlying differences that prompt ownership and accountability from the U.S. and India side managers will be able to communicate better. Manager 2 noted that U.S.-based managers are more likely to say they had made a mistake and describe how they envisioned correcting it. In the case of the
India-based managers getting to the point of open communication requires building a relationship and trust.

Such deep-seated cultural influences (that have been previously discussed) also contribute to the way messages are communicated. The U.S.-based managers appear to be more explicit in the way they communicate. This is evident from their goal and task oriented approach toward situations. The India-based managers tend to use more implicit communication, relying on the relationships they make in the organization. While the U.S.-based managers are sometimes frustrated by the lack of clear communication, the India-based managers are taken aback by explicit communication. By understanding each other’s differences, both sides can avoid heated discussions and pave the way to understand each other better and possibly faster.

In organizations such as Company X, a tight project management process is a driver for higher productivity. However, as this chapter has repeatedly noted, acknowledging differences in cultural contexts that influence the process are equally as important drivers of success against barriers to productivity. In an industry so heavily influenced by client’s demands in one cultural context, the other cultural contexts are often ignored or dealt with as they emerge as problems in the process. Conversely, it is equally important for managers based in other realities to appreciate
the U.S.-based managers’ methods and client driven approach that constantly prompts Company X’s to align their output with client expectations.

As we have seen from the managers responses, operating across borders in two distinctly different settings requires management to have a broad view of different realities while balancing financial targets and client’s needs. Both India and U.S.-based managers still appear to be in the process of building their world views. At the present moment, the managers appear only to be ‘coping’ but not actively understanding each other. After dealing with frustrations about different business practices for some time now, the managers appear to better understand the implicit motivations for each others’ practices, methods of communication and actions. The next step for U.S. and India-based managers is to build a shared understanding of their different cultural contexts to overcome obstacles in the project management process at Company X.
Chapter 5. Conclusion

In the last thirty years, diminished barriers to enter new markets and advances in technology have enabled companies to multiply their presence in new locations world-over (Jones, 2005). As companies have diversified across their national borders the factors contributing to high productivity and overall success have changed to a large degree. Initially, the availability of more resources (labor and material) and lower costs in new locations were drivers of success. Over time, companies recognized that in order to survive in this global market, attention to technology and monetary issues alone would not be enough. With this realization, came awareness of the difficulties entailed in conducting business across national cultures. National styles differed, and trying to fit one approach into a different reality where individuals had a different vision of how best to conduct business required special coping mechanisms.

Firms that have diversified have made understanding management practices in different locales more of a priority. They recognize that building an understanding of the different cultural institutions and associated business practices is crucial to the success of multinational corporations (Cameron and Quinn, 1999).

This thesis explored business practices at one such firm that is co-located in the U.S. and India. Speaking to the senior managers at Company X, a business process outsourcing firm, this thesis sought to explore how U.S. and India-based managers
cope with cultural influences on project management. In this chapter I will first summarize the findings of the study, and how each chapter contributed to it. Next I will discuss limitations and contributions of the study and its place in the body of literature about cross-cultural issues in business practices. I will end by discussing avenues for future research.

In order to understand culture and it’s relevance to the global market, in Chapter 2, I situated my study in the cross-cultural field. This chapter created a foundation for the qualitative study that followed. It defined culture as a “the unique pattern of shared assumptions, values, and norms that shape the socialization, symbols, language, narratives and practices of a group of people” (Jackson and Schuler, 2003, p. 131). Furthermore, the chapter reviewed literature that discussed culture’s relevance to organizations as it evolves from embedded institutional practices to values, beliefs and business practices particular to the environment in which the organization is present. Next, Chapter 2 characterized how organizational culture plays out in the context of a global market. It traced the growth of the collaborative global business-sphere, highlighting how cultural patterns and hence business practices vary according to different groups of people. It pointed out that, as companies expand, their management practices must change to include different employees’ perceptions of management rather than force a standard management approach.
Chapter Two focused on business process outsourcing companies and why they were interesting to study. Business process outsourcing companies (henceforth BPO) are heavily influenced by their clients who are based in one country. BPOs must meet their clients’ expectations and needs by coordinating a project management process that transforms those expectations into services in a different country. Therefore, in the case of BPOs, managers must deal not only with coordinating project management virtually but also satisfying their clients who are concerned only with achieving quality services at a lower cost. BPO’s clients may be unaware of the challenges of operating in a new environment and the need to understand the cultural contexts present there. In order to build an understanding between managers, they must understand each others backgrounds, experiences and cultural influences. Addressing this need to ‘understand’ culture, Chapter 2 explained why the study took a descriptive approach.

Chapter 3 explained the method used to conduct the study. It described ‘grounded theory methodology’ and why it was the most appropriate methodology for this study. Grounded theory provided the basis for developing a narrative about the current state of project management practice at Company X. It emerges directly from the survey and interview responses I obtained from a group of U.S. and India-based managers. Using this approach I could describe and understand how project
management was conducted at Company X, and how different managers’ dealt with cultural influences.

Building on this methodology in Chapter 4, I used an input-output model to describe how project management practices were planned and defined in the U.S. by U.S.-based managers but implemented in India by India-based managers. The input-output model illustrated the need for a shared understanding to be built, taking into account the different perceptions of project management. Three primary themes emerged from the managers’ responses about cultural influence on project management. First, the U.S. and India-based managers faced significantly different challenges in their operating environments. India-based managers have transportation, coordination and cultural challenges. Conversely U.S.-based managers do not have to deal with such challenges in the U.S. Second, the U.S. and India-based managers had different management approaches that stemmed from their larger cultural and societal backgrounds. These differences caused misunderstanding between managers on issues related to meeting deadlines and timeframes for client deliverables.

Third, U.S. and India-based managers have different approaches to building trust and having accountability for their actions. U.S.-based managers, who appeared to be goal and task-oriented, cited ownership and accountability as key management traits. The India-based managers also felt such traits were important. However, they
were more relationship oriented – building trust and being accountable when they felt the genuine presence of a supportive team.

Based on these findings, I concluded that U.S. and India-based managers were coping with cultural differences to project management but not necessarily understanding them. When problems occur in the project management process, both teams said they quickly realign with one another, reassigning new resources when a mistake is made or clearing up miscommunications. On the surface such solutions appear to solve the project management problems without necessarily building and implementing a shared understanding of project management. Building a shared understanding of project management would entail managers sharing their perceptions of project management, their backgrounds, the limitations they face on the ground and experiences they have had. In doing this, both sets of managers will be able to build a shared project management approach that they agree on, rather than one they constantly need to fix.

Conducting surveys and interviews gave me a detailed sense of the state of project management practices. But being able to observe the relationship and dynamic between managers would have provided even greater insights to the study. For example, sitting in on the managers’ voice or video-conferences or spending a few
days observing practices at the offices would have added new dimensions in the study. However due to geographical distances, this was not possible.

To overcome some of these limitations, the study builds on previous literature about the importance of understanding cultural influences to management practices. It provides evidence for what cross-cultural scholars have had to say about project management practices in different countries and corporations all over the world. Victoria Miroshnik (2001), a cross-cultural management scholar, emphasized the importance of values in shaping practices and the underlying culture in organizational settings. Miroshnik and other scholars such as Schein (1988, 1996) and Denison (1996) have said that values and beliefs shape ‘codes of behavior’ that govern the present and future behavior of groups of people (Miroshnik, 2001). Miroshnik’s theory is evident in the project management process at Company X. Both sets of managers value certain things (trust, accountability, relationships, and timeliness) which influence their perceptions of how a project ought to be managed.

The study not only supports much of the literature of project management, it also reiterates the importance of understanding’ underlying cultural influences rather than simply fixing them. Descriptive studies of this nature are a stepping stone for further awareness about the value of cross-cultural issues. Conducting a descriptive study allowed me to emphasize deep-seated cultural influences that require for the
attention of Company X’s senior managers, if they are to foster an understanding of each others’ perceptions and behavior rather than simply problem solve when obstacles arise.

This study should be useful not only to managers at Company X, but also to future scholars and business leaders who conduct cross-border project management. While the results are specific to managers at Company X and hence not generalizable to all cross-border situations, they do emphasize the importance of understanding cultural influences in order to contribute to success and productivity when managing projects across borders. Rather than simply discussing differences in business practices, or measuring dimensions of cultural practices, a descriptive study looks into why such varied business practices exist and where they stem from. For future scholars and business leaders, understanding cultural influences is the first step to build strategy that deals with and incorporates different cultures’ management practices. This serves only to make the project management process more efficient and to foster a tight knit organizational environment.
Appendix 1

Survey Responses

1. Name:
Manager 1

2. Date:
1/28/2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
United States

2. ii) Are you working in your country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
Yes

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.

I have oversight for the ABC Collections Process. This includes the client relationship as well as operations.

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with India-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for US and India-based team meetings?
I am typically in India every 2 to 3 weeks; however, when I am not there, I typically use the phone to communicate. We have numerous calibrations and several unit specific calls. I have 1 ops meeting weekly, 1 training call weekly, 1 quality call weekly and a staff meeting weekly. Other modes of communication are e-mail and every once and a while, we use video conferencing.

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. i) Can you think of time when the India-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

Yes. There are times that the management team in India gets disconnected from the priority of serving our clients. When this happens, we have a delta. That being said, once I find out, we re-align quickly. As goal setting, many of the India based managers are in their first or second job. This leads to a lack basic management skills. To that end, I set the goals with them and create action plans to ensure we hold the team accountable. To often, people want to blame others v. focus on the business and drive results.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the India-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

At first, yes. However now, we are all aligned.
6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with India-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

I believe you cannot have "too many cooks in the kitchen." We need business owners that have full decision making powers and are held accountable. Even though I do not have anyone reporting to me, I run the business. This has been done due the fact that our US clients want someone that understands US customers and manages the business accordingly. In our operating model today, this is unique. I have been given full authority to run the business and it really doesn't matter what the org chart says. As for other decisions, many of our leaders are afraid to make decisions. They do not want to be in the firing line if they made the wrong choice. This is one of the key issues that needs to change. Empower people to make decisions and hold them accountable. If they are unable to do that, get someone who can.

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in India?
There are times that there are cultural gaps. However, when this happens, my friends help me understand the issue and we re-phrase the points.

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

Early on, US managers were only a little involved in the day to day operations due to the India managers wanting to run the business. Today, the US managers are very involved in the day to day business. Some of this is due to client driving this and some of it is due to the lack of management expertise on the ground.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned about the way the India-based managers were implementing/executing a project? What were your concerns?

Yes. I believe there have been numerous times that execution has been poor. At times, they took a very casual approach to launches. Today, some of that is still there but it is much better due to the disciplined approach of action plans and accountability.

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to. I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:
I would say we are in a much better place today than a year ago. However, we have a tremendous amount of work to get our mid level managers up to what I consider world class. This has to be driven by people who understand it and can train the teams. Also, as India evolves, our clients and future clients will evolve and it will be more difficult to manage the business. It is no longer about cost savings only. Our clients demand the same performance and quality that they can get in the US at the lesser rate. Also, they want us to manage more like they do. So, we must close the cultural gap and help our management think more like our client in approach.
1. Name:
Manager 2

2. Date:
26/01/2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
India

2. ii) Are you working in your country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
No. Please specify your country of origin below
Other (please specify) - Scotland

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.
Executive Vice President Responsible for operations and client servicing for Company X's 2nd largest client, namely NCO. Also responsible for special projects.

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with US-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for India and US-based team meetings?
Communication with US-based managers is predominately through email and phone. There are occasional video conferences.

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. i) Can you think of time when the US-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

I believe myself and US-based managers have similar approach to setting goals and objective. I believe this is due to similar culture backgrounds. I do believe that US-based managers approach objectives with a very narrow focus on their own program and do not relate to the big picture within the organization.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the US-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

US based managers try to manage the business remotely and focus very much on THEIR own responsibility. This remote management is doomed to failure as decisions such as people allocation has many touch points which only people on the ground can know. Cross-border teams can not work within silos.

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with US-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

Creation of a Project Management Office which must control all Projects within the organization. The Project Management Office would work within certain project management guidelines such as PRINCE. This will give structure and process for planning, escalation and ownership. Current project management has no accountability and no defined escalation.

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in the US?

My personal issue with communication is within the India teams and not the US team. This is true particularly with the IT team who are not customer centric or open to ideas from outside the IT team.

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?
I believe the US managers expectations have improved over time but they still fear a new project launch. For example project documentation has improved. The fear is due to short-timelines leading to lack of detailed planning and testing prior to go-live. This leads to the US team spending many hours and valuable time checking immediately after a 'go-live' or client highlighting numerous error.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned with the way the US-based managers wanted a project to be implemented/executed? What were your concerns?

The only concern I would ever have is short timelines from initial go-ahead to go-live. Unfortunately this is the type of business we operate. Clients make decisions with short-timelines but on occasions the US based managers commit to short timlines without local consultation or push back to client due to fear of losing potential business.

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to. I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:

To ensure success in cross-border teams your must run a Project Management Office who have ownership for ALL projects, authority and process for escalation. This
Project Management Office must reside in the delivery centre to enable cross silo communication/management. The escalation must also come to the top of the organization and must be taken seriously.
1. Name:
Manager 3

2. Date:
27th February, 2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
India

2. ii) Are you working in your country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
Yes

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.
Chief Financial Officer - India Responsible for Accounting, Finance, Taxation and Internal as well as External Financial Reporting.

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with US-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for India and US-based team meetings?
Phones, E-mails and Video Conferences

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. i) Can you think of time when the US-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

As an External Covenant requirement, the Organization was required to implement an ERP package. The external requirement was specific to certain functions within the organization only. The US office set the goal to meet the external Covenant and only implement specific modules. As against this, the Indian Managers expanded the scope and set the goals to get other peripheral modules also included to make the best use of Investment in the ERP.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the US-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

The US - based managers are more focused on these areas as compared to Indian Managers. For example, meeting start and close timings are adhered to very diligently. If the meetings get extended beyond the set time, they do not mind if some participant excuses himself for other meetings which is not so in case of Indian Managers. However, my experience is that US Managers tend to allocate more resources than needed especially if the resources are located in India. This could be because of the they being too far to directly control the work, less expensive resources etc. Quality expectations of the US based Managers are higher as compared to the Indian
Managers. In most cases these differences are on account of definition of materiality between the two sets of managers.

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with US-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

Many US based Managers ignore the fact that the projects, for which the decisions are being made, are not in US and hence may require an approach different than what you would have applied for the projects within United States. Though in most cases, they do take into account the regulatory differences but ignore other important differences like working styles and culture of the local staff engaged in the project. I believe people aspect is extremely important for any successful implementation of the project. Hence, they need to consider the aspects beyond Regulatory and especially the human aspect of any project.

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in the US?
Yes, as stated in the first answer, during the implementation of the ERP, it was difficult to put forward the idea as the difference was on the goal that the US officers had set and what we thought was needed to be done. They wanted to meet the covenant and we wanted to implement an ERP. Unfortunately, both meant an implementation of the same software but for a different purpose and they had a higher say in the decision.

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

Quite a bit. I am working with US based organizations from last 13 years. Years ago, it was only execution was entrusted to India and that too with a lot of Ex Pats supervision. Today, the local managers are involved in the planning and decision making processes substantially and also have been empowered to take lot many more decisions. Number of Ex pats have reduced drastically. Though there is a lot more that can be done, I would say that the process has gone a lot in favor of the Indian management for establishing and running projects for the US Companies.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned with the way the US-based managers wanted a project to be implemented/executed? What were your concerns?
As mentioned in my earlier answers, there are times when the so called Focused approach results in to a very narrow outlook resulting in to less than optimum result. It satisfies the planners only because it gets looked upon as achievement of the goal without there being any consideration to a very myopic view built in to the goal. In most cases they end up giving more emphasis to the gains and ignore the opportunity losses.

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to. I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:

Most projects are managed from the aspects of time and money being the drivers of the success of the project. These aspects are important in any project whether domestic or cross border. There have been many proven methods to monitor, manage and measure these drivers and their outcome. However, at times, the managers are caught unaware of third dimension to a cross border project which is managing the people in a distant location in different time zone, speaking different language and having a very different culture. Making this group perform optimally is the challenge which many cross border project managers fail to recognize and hence fail.
1. Name:
Manager 4

2. Date:
Jan 18th, 2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
India

2. ii) Are you working in your country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
Yes

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.
Executive Vice President, responsible for Employee Development, Process Excellence and Collections Operations

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with US-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for India and US-based team meetings?
depending on the kind of meeting and the agenda, we use all possible channels - phone, video conference, emails etc...most frequently used would be email and Conference calls on phone

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. i) Can you think of time when the US-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

Not really..... in case of any disconnects we would normally discuss, brainstorm and resolve.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the US-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

generally in sync but some times there are concerns on delays (meeting timeframes) and resource allocation... They generally would be discussed and resolved

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with US-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

- clearly understanding the extent of challenges on the ground vis a vis perfect hypothetical/theoretical situations. - valuing people on the ground for their ability and
experience and not be the "know All" - ownership and accountability - giving the credit where it is due.. all these would make us more effective as a team

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in the US?

Nope never

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

they have become far more appreciative of the talent and the ability in India and have clearly backed off in some cases.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned with the way the US-based managers wanted a project to be implemented/executed? What were your concerns?

too self focussed... personal glory over team glory...

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to. I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:

Appreciating cultural differences... appreciating talent and creating mutual trust and efficient teams... ensuring the people on the ground get the credit due and not thrive on people's work for personal glory.
1. Name:
Manager 5

2. Date:
14 February 2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
United States

2. ii) Are you working in you country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
No. Please specify your country of origin below

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.

I manage our ASD entity - Company X Global Ltd. Company X Global is the holding company for all non-US assets within the group which include Company X India, GRO India and Blackheath UK. Company X Global uses the US entities within the group as sales front-ends. Company X Global is the company that contracts with customers for services. I am responsible for all Company X Global operations and for oversight of activities of the non-US entities.
2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with India-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for US and India-based team meetings?

In order of frequency of use: 1. email 2. phone - multi-call bridges. 3. video conferencing

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. i) Can you think of time when the India-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

Americans are very goal-oriented. Indian management is more comfortable with ambiguity. The focus in India is more on relationships that help achieve goals, whereas Americans think the mere setting of goals guarantees their achievement. The difference manifests itself when goals are not achieved. Americans are more willing to impose penalties, Indians less so with a view to maintaining the relationship.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the India-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

Meeting timeframes does not have as high a priority with Indian managers when compared with some other aspects of a project. Even where Indian managers have the
knowledge on issues such as quality there is an unwillingness to share it. This is probably a result of reluctance to go against 'the boss'.

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with India-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

there should be a more consultative approach in arriving at decisions. Frequently American managers have an approach that might be viewed as condescending. Involving India based managers early in the process is important. This will lead to a greater sense of ownership.

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in India?

Not really. the fact that I am an Indian has made communication easier. what has been harder has been being able to appreciate both the US idea and Indian idea but unable to reconcile the two.

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

US managers have come to realize that micro-managing from the US is not going to work. They are now investing more time in mentoring and coaching Indian managers.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned about the way the India-based managers were implementing/executing a project? What were your concerns?

Yes. Currently I am leading a re-branding effort. the biggest concern I have is the lack of willingness in India to think about what is being attempted and to simply carry out instructions. If the instructions are not very specific the execution is of a poor quality. The other hurdle is standards imposed by society - for example cleanliness. Indian society accepts lower standards in some aspects which need to be overcome.

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to. I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:

There needs to be more education on cultural differences that impact execution - for example the attitude to time or context. The US is a very low context society and generally non-financial considerations (penalties and rewards) play a very low role.
1. Name:
Manager 6

2. Date:
2/2/07

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
United States

2. ii) Are you working in your country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
Yes

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.
I am responsible for our CRM business which includes outbound sales and inbound sales. I oversee both operations and client services.

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with India-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for US and India-based team meetings?
We communicate with India mostly via the telephone and e-mail. We have conference calls with the team in India (typically, weekly scheduled meetings) and some video conferences.

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. i) Can you think of time when the India-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

One thing I have noticed is that the India-based team schedules more meetings to "talk" about things. In my experience, there is a lot of talking in these meetings but not always a lot of results. So if we are talking about setting goals to improve something like our training of agents, there is a long discussion about other issues, such as the quality of the candidates we are hiring. From the US side, we would say, "Okay, if the quality of the candidates is worse than previously, training needs to set a goal in how to overcome this gap." Many times, India wants to blame their gaps on other departments instead of solving the problem or setting a goal that would help overcome the new opportunity.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the India-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.
The biggest difference is with meeting timeframes. India does not seem to be as worried about meeting a deliverable for a client as the US is. I am generalizing here because it is not true of everyone in India. Also, responsiveness to client requests is not as quick as we would expect in the US. Our client servicing team works closely with the clients and the US client services team and I feel they are much more aligned with us in meeting timeframes and being responsive than other support functions. Normally, when we have a deliverable due to a client, client services is proactively following up with the team in India to ensure we meet the timeframe for the client. Sometimes, we tell our team the timeframe is earlier than it is because we know they will not meet it.

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with India-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

Whether it be for the India-based team or the US, there has to be accountability. Everyone needs to be clear on what their responsibilities are, and they need to be held accountable for these responsibilities. An example would be launching a new project for a client. IT is responsible for producing files and reports for the client. Many times, if they can produce the files and reports, they feel their job has been accomplished. The files and reports may be wrong, but they feel it is client service's job to check their
work for accuracy. In my eyes, it is their job to produce correct files and reports and it is their responsibility to ensure accuracy of both. Client services can be a secondary check, to ensure they are correct but IT needs to be the first step. If they send us a file or report to check, it should be with their full sign stating that everything is accurate. I also think that all decisions need to be made with a couple of things in mind- we work for Company X and want Company X to be a profitable company. We also need to meet the needs of our clients while maintaining Company X profitability. There are times when we are presented with a new project and although it may be an exciting project, it does not address any of our current issues. There needs to be a business need for new projects. On the other side, when there are opportunities, many times the solution is to spend more money. Spending more money does not always solve our problem but it seems to be the quick and easy way out of an issue.

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in India?

Over the last 4 years, this has gotten easier. In the early days, it was difficult. Recently, we were having problems hiring enough people to meet our needs. We have a weekly call to discuss this. Most weeks, this call starts out with the recruiting team questioning
operations' needs or the current headcounts. So instead of discussing the issue— not having enough resources—it becomes a battle about whether or not operations numbers are accurate. On a more recent call, I made a request to recruiting to show us what they are doing and what the results of their efforts were. I explained that we all knew they were working on things but that the gap was we didn't really know what they were doing or what the results were, so it was difficult to help them with ideas on how to improve. I explained a simple table showing the new things they were trying along with the results (# of people interviewed, # of people hired, % hired) would help us figure out where we should focus our efforts. For example, we currently have a voice academy for people we want to hire that can not pass our voice and accent screens. If we know the success rate from this training is 50% and our future headcount requirements are 100, we would need to put at least 200 people in the voice academy to meet our future needs. To date, we have never received this spreadsheet showing the different things we are doing in recruiting and what their success rates are.

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

Because US-based managers are working closely with our clients, I don't think our expectations have changed much. I think we have changed how we deal with the India-
based team by scheduling more conference calls to follow up on new projects to make sure we are on track. Since we know they are not as sensitive about timing as we are, we put the responsibility on ourselves to ensure we meet deadlines.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned about the way the India-based managers were implementing/executing a project? What were your concerns?

Since we are not on the ground in India, we don't normally see how they are implementing/executing a project so this is a tough one to answer.

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to.

I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:

I think both teams are learning from each other. Clear communications and expectations are key to our success. Thank you!
1. Name:
Manager 7

2. Date:
19th January 2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
India

2. ii) Are you working in your country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
No. Please specify your country of origin below

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.
Executive Vice President - HR, IT & Infrastructure

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with US-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for India and US-based team meetings?
the most popular technologies to communicate are regular Phone system and e mail.

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. i) Can you think of time when the US-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

It happens quite regularly and in most cases we end up following their way especially if its client driven. However if it’s related to technology or Indian laws …etc we generally work with our recommendations

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the US-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

Timings of conference calls with the US ….most of them occur US business hrs and not IST business hrs ….rarely will you find your US team working on a weeked whereas its expected in india Quality - the US has much higher standards which we need to work towards.

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with US-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

extremely subjective question .....it'll have to be based on the situation. Overall the objective would be to make decisions which would give equal responsibility and workload to both US and india teams.
7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in the US?

these difficulties mainly arise when the subject matter relates to indian culture / mgmt style as opposed to what is practiced in the US

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

the comfort level has increased ; are willing to rely on the Indian managers ; skepticism about India has reduced ;

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned with the way the US-based managers wanted a project to be implemented/executed? What were your concerns?

Empty

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to.

I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:
Akshina my apologies for such short answers but im sure you got the jist ....please feel free to call
1. Name:
Manager 8

2. Date:
25 January 2007

3. Section I: Background Information

1. i) Where are you based?
India

2. ii) Are you working in you country of origin? [e.g. 'American in the United States.]
Yes

4. Section I: Background Information

1. iii) In the space below please briefly describe your position, role, and/or responsibilities in the company.
Working as the First Vice President - Human Resources and am responsible for the Human Resources functions and also the middle & senior management recruitment.

2. iv) In the space below please specify how you communicate with US-based managers. Specifically, what forms of technology (phone, video conferences etc.) does your team most frequently use for India and US-based team meetings?
Communicate through the phone and at times through video conferences.

5. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. i) Can you think of a time when the US-based managers approached setting goals and objectives differently from you? What happened?

No, I have not experienced this since my interaction with them is minimal. My responsibilities are with the Indian side of the operations.

2. ii) Have you experienced any differences in expectations with the US-based managers in any of the follow areas such as, meeting timeframes, allocating people and other resources, quality control? If so, please explain.

Not applicable for reasons mentioned above.

6. Section II: Project Management Experiences

iii) Assume that you could change the way decisions are made about projects with US-based managers, what improvements would you make? Why are these changes important to you?

Not Applicable

7. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. iv) Can you tell me about a time when you found it difficult to communicate an idea, goal or any aspect of a project you were working on with your colleagues based in the US?

Not applicable

8. Section II: Project Management Experiences
1. v) How do you think US-Based managers' expectations for establishing and running a project in India have changed over time?

The US based managers are realizing that the people in India have the necessary skills and are competent. Hence they are giving them more freedom and accept their views.

9. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vi) Can you think of a time when you were concerned with the way the US-based managers wanted a project to be implemented/executed? What were your concerns?

No

10. Section II: Project Management Experiences

1. vii) Sometimes a survey doesn't give people a chance to say everything they want to. I would be glad to hear more about any thoughts, opinions, or stories you have on project management in cross-border teams. Use this space in any way you like:

Us based managers should take decisions after considering the ground realities and the local culture.
Appendix 2

Interview with Manager 2

Manager 2: Hi, this is Manager 2

Akshina: Hi Manager 2, how are you

Manager 2: well, well and yourself?

Akshina: I’m well, I hope I am not keeping you up

Manager 2: oh, no no no, I’m still in the office working away

Akshina: Okay, before we start I have to ask you if you consent to this interview being recorded? Your will not be named in the final product?

Manager 2: Yes

Akshina: I’m just going to refer to your survey. You said that U.S.-based managers approach their objectives with a very narrow focus. And they do not relate their activities to the larger organizational settings. Could you elaborate on that point on give me an example?

Manager 2: I’m trying to remember what my responses were. I think at times they have a very narrow focus in the sense that their concern really is only that one particular project whilst owners of that maybe running multiple projects at the same time. I think also there is cultural differences around project management. I think we’re weak here
in India, particularly within Company X, project management compared to what the U.S. would expect of project management.

Akshina: Okay, can you give me an example of an expectation from U.S. managers that India-based managers just don’t…

Manager 2: Well particularly within Company X, if you look at project management typically you would have a very strong escalation process if the project is getting behind. You’d have a very strong system integration process, a very strong user acceptance test. If I look at Company X’s project management, these three things never really exist. And you usually get user acceptance testing the day before the project is going to live. So whatever testing is done is last minute, its extremely weak and you’re not really testing enough options to say is there a strong system being built or is there a strong process in place to meet the clients requirement. You can- virtually 90 per cent of the project we launch when it gets to the first day of ‘go-live’ you’ll have issues in some way.

Akshina: how has the team dealt with that over the years?

Manager 2: Fire-Fighting and Short term fixes.

Akshina: Okay…
Manager 2: So they just put resources toward the issue until it resolves and then we have the same issue at the next project launch. And again, resources get it fixed and the same issue again.

Akshina: okay, so clearly there’s a difference in how the two teams operate. Do you know where that is prompted from? Do you have any ideas?

Manager 2: I think the project management skills is particular to Company X. And some of the issues you probably face in the U.S…and typically there’s very short timelines given to complete some of the projects. So the U.S. side is pushing because obviously there’s revenue at stake or there’s clients and future business at stake. So they have a strong focus purely from that perspective. Where as IT have a perspective…so you have clashes around where the priorities lie.

Akshina: hmm, ok

Manager 2: with a lack of a real escalation process, when you get to that situation there’s no where to escalate and for decisions to be made from the business, to say “oh we’ll take a priority on what to focus on”

Akshina: okay, you made an interesting point saying that remote project management which is the U.S.-based project managers are doing is doomed to failure because they don’t understand the issues on the ground in India. What kinds of issues are you referring to?
Manager 2: If you’re not on the ground you can’t really see what the team is doing. What they see is a very narrow perspective that “I’m looking at my project and that’s all I am concerned about.” But ere on the ground, you are able to see that this guy has four projects to run, they are all behind. He has got no escalation process. He doesn’t know himself what to prioritize. It’s whoever comes on the phone, he’s making commitments which he can’t keep. He’s making commitments just to satisfy the issue on the phone.

Akshina: How have they dealt with this? If commitments aren’t being met?

Manager 2: Oh we haven’t dealt with it. We still have this issue on a daily ongoing basis.

Akshina: Are the teams not clear on what is expected? Do they have different goals?

Manager 2: It’s a probably a mixture of skill sets, discipline, commitments from for the client, the U.S. team, the I.T. team.

Akshina: alright, you’ve also spoken about accountability. How has is differed, or, how does it differ rather with the India versus the U.S.-based managers.

Manager 2: Well I find that the U.S. are probably more able to raise their hand and say you know I made a mistake, I screwed up here. Whilst, the fight here is that it’s never their fault. It always some else’s fault: the information wasn’t there, they don’t ask questions therefore they assume. I think, if you look at India as a place, their extremely
strong if you have a process which says a-b-c and you can only do a-b-c-. As soon as something comes outside of that structure of a-b-c they can’t think what to do. They won’t ask questions, they will just assume it’s a-b-c.

Akshina: Okay…

Manager 2: Do you understand what I’m trying to say or not?

Akshina: mm, yes that makes sense. Then would you say there’s a significantly different dynamic? You mentioned in your survey that you actually find it more difficult to communicate with the team where you are based, versus the U.S. team. Do you find there is a different dynamic between the teams when they are working together?

Manager 2: There are times when there is a lot of friction. And, I mean I don’t think its cultural that project management is poor in India because then companies such as the Infosys’s of this world, the Wipro’s of this world would not be successful. Because 60-70 per cent of their business success lies in project management. And how they view the project and deliver the project to clients – how they do that is extremely successful. So I don’t think it’s an Indian cultural thing that’s lacking. I think its probably a skill set within Company X around project management. People think writing a project plan is project management – but project management is a lot more than that. It’s being able to chase after timelines, understand that if this timeline is not met what is the knock on
effect. Being able to escalate back to the business that we have an issue here and we can’t meet this timeline. Or, if I do this I’ll meet the timeline but this will suffer elsewhere. So, somebody make a decision as to how you want us to do this. Many times we’ll try and meet all three of them or all four and it’s not possible to meet three or four. You have to really decide to concentrate on this particular one because this is far more important to the business and the other one has to suffer. And that is a business decision. And the business doesn’t make those decisions. I think the I.T. team are making those decisions on their own but probably not communicating those decisions back to their owners. They’re just say “yeah we’ll have it delivered” and then it comes in late.

Akshina: Yeah

Manager 2: It’s over commitment and under-delivery

Akshina: okay, okay. That’s been a reoccurring theme here. I have one last question. You said you have a personal issue with communication. Do any instances stand out to you?

Manager 2: I would say typically around crisis management or when we have a serious I.T. issue within the organization. Typically, I get to phoning around senior members of the I.T. team to get updates. They will not answer the phone because they know who is calling, their being very selective around who they answer the phones too. And there
are time I’ll have a client on the phone saying “can we please get someone from I.T. on this call,” and eventually we get through the I.T. and we can’t get the vendor on the call because we’re working on this issue. They don’t want to take responsibility in a crisis, they just want to say ok let me get on and fix it. But, this communication – I need to get back to the client on what is happening, what are we doing and we’re extremely weak on that.

Akshina: How long have you worked in India for?

Manager 2: Four years

Akshina: Has it become an easier process over these four years? Do you find a more of an understanding?

Manager 2: I think there has to be more focus on project management such as building a project management office within the organization. And I tried to do that probably eighteen months ago. And it failed. One particularly for instance, I.T. didn’t want I.T. projects to be run through a project management office. They felt that they would just run new product launches or new client launches. If you have a project management office they have to run every single project within the organization. But I.T. were very reluctant to give that up. So, the process kind of failed. We disbanded the whole structure and plan to kind of build that into the organization.
Akshina: You also mentioned that project documentation is not followed through in India. Even if it's enforced, is there no attempt to get it done?

Manager 2: When it is enforced, it will typically be weak. Not very detailed, they’ll spend as little time as possibly doing the documentation.

Akshina: In your four years there, have you figured out why? What reasons can you attribute to them not completing documentation?

Manager 2: It’s probably that there is not enough time. When you sit down and try and write a complete documentation it is time consuming. Again, people who would need to write that documentation in our current structure are doing the tasks. And as soon as they finish this task I can assure that there is another one or another three or four for them to get working on. So there really is not enough time. And probably to a certain extent a lack of skill. Writing documentation is a skill. That documentation as well goes across the whole organization, even as far as operations. We have to write operation procedures, standard operating procedures which is kind of like a Bible for that process. If I go and read some, it just makes one statement but it doesn’t explain how you do it which is what I expect the document to say. And project management documentation would say the same thing. If I’m a newcomer to this business, I should be able to see that documentation and have a clear understanding of how things are done, down to detail that if the business were to blow up tomorrow and I’ve got this
manual I can start up tomorrow based on the manual. There is no way that could happen with the documentation now.

Akshina: Yes. Okay well thanks for your responses, this is great. Those are all the questions I had for you.

Manager 2: Okay, were they helpful?

Akshina: Yes, yes very helpful. Speaking face-to-face is more useful of course.

Manager 2: If you have any other questions just give me a call.

Akshina: Thanks a lot.
Interview with Manager 4

Manager 4: Hey Akshina

Akshina: Hi, before we start I have to ask if you consent to this interview being recorded. Your name will not be attached to your responses in the final study

Manager 4: I am good, let’s go ahead.

Akshina: You said that with regards to expectations there are some concerns on meeting timeframes and resource allocations between the U.S. and India-based managers. Can you elaborate on that, what are the concerns from both sides?

Manager 4: It usually it does happen. I think it is an issue with expectation setting, we do tend you, you know over commit in a spirit of getting business and working at it you tend to over commit. And that is something that does lead to some timeframe issues and resource commitment.

Akshina: this is from the India-based side?

Manager 4: Yes, it a over commitment usually from the India-based side. It’s difficult for me to acknowledge that, but that what is it.

Akshina: How had that been dealt with over time

Manager 4: Over time it has been something that clearly the organization has understood and you know they’re getting into better practices, putting into project management plans, putting into clearly defined resource allocation structures and over
all plan charts across. So you know that’s something which is you know there is six sigma based toolkits, transition toolkits and processes which have come into place. That’s all really helping to provide the gaps there. But these were stark gaps initially.

Akshina: I’ll just move onto the way decisions are made. You said an interesting thing, “if you could change the way the process was done, you would ask that the U.S-based managers clearly understand the extent of the challenges on the ground visa- vi hypothetical versus theoretical issues. What is the lack of understanding from the U.S.-side?

Manager 4: Unless you have an insight into the cultural differences, unless you have an insight into what exactly it takes to create an overall, run a 24/7 sharp, or run people working at night or the challenges around that, manager the 18-24 age group, manager working through the night – it’s effectively if you look at it multiple competencies there. You have these young kids who’ve just come out of school, not even gone to colleges for graduation or something and they start earning money which they’re families have never looked at. They get sums of 15 to 20,000 rupees in hand per month which their father has never earned in some cases. Now that actually sets their minds into a different mode. Now that’s a huge challenge, they have the buying power, they have age and they have freedom to work through the night. It’s just the discipline when managing expectations, when managing the male-female population across, working
through the night. I think those are huge challenges in terms of operational understanding. And then the nitty gritty of clearly managing so many people – it’s a mammoth task, an outstanding task. One there are multiple individualities. For example, you could not start a shift on time because four of your vehicles are stuck in traffic. And traffic is something you cannot talk about. Even while your plan was to get people thirty minutes in advance you can’t even get those people in. Those are challenges which the U.S. manager may never be able to appreciate or find out how that impacts. For them it is bad planning because people did not come in on time to start for the shift. But on the ground it could be something beyond that. Where you could have planned where people normally, 99 per cent of the days they would be on time and they would be here thirty minutes before. But one day there could be an exigency on the road which really could not…and you cannot say well you did not plan well. Did that help you get the perspective on that?

Akshina: Right right, initially before you started answering you said they do not understand cultural differences. Would you group all these factors under cultural differences or are their specific things you feel culturally…or do you feel all these factors are culturally different?

Manager 4: I wouldn’t say all of this being culturally different, I would say some of this being culturally different. Some of these are simply operational challenges. There
are disconnects at times because places in the U.S. will never have such operational challenges of picking and dropping people from their homes, which is what we do. And public transport knowing how it is the U.S., agents would drive down to work or manager their own transport. But here in India, generally people will not have their own transport and you have to literally go door to door and pick them up and drop them off. Now, I wouldn’t call that just a cultural challenge but a cultural-cum-operational challenge.

Akshina: Can you think of any specifically cultural or stark cultural differences that you’ve encountered over time?

Manager 4: One of them could be working at night and working on their own. That could be a stark challenge and different. The freedom which a youth in the U.S. have because he/she doesn’t have a joint family set up or influence sitting at home. They can take their own independent decisions. Whereas, you know in the Indian context, it’s like I’m 40+ and my mother still stays with me and I stay with my family. My boys are 18 years old and they will hopefully continue till whatever time …now that does not that give them that level of autonomy or independence…that’s a huge cultural difference

Akshina: Right, and that’s a huge cultural difference and you have to account for that while making plans correct?
Manager 4: That’s correct

Akshina: Okay, got it. Okay, you’ve also said that you would appreciate the U.S-based managers valuing people on the ground for their ability and experience. And giving credit where it’s due to the team rather than just one person.

Manager 4: Okay yeah, did you see a lot of scorn in what my comments were?

Akshina: No, no I didn’t take them as scornful.

Manager 4: My point there was at time, you know some of our colleagues of U.S. counterparts do have pretty disdainful comments which could lead or mean there is something where we get a feeling that they would say “you guys don’t understand this” or “this is not the way it’s done in the U.S.” It is understanding how the Indian organization works how the Indian culture is. And that people working here, could have on the ground experience of running large organizations and multiple centers across diverse locations and stuff like that. Which would ideally be, actually more than normal American exposure would be because the way this industry has been in India and the extent of it. Like here I can talk about myself, I have been in this industry for the last ten years and you know we started this industry when it was purely concept setting. I actually set up a proof of concept center in ABC where we carried calls from the east to the west coast to prove it to clients saying that you could actually do outsourcing and it works. And you know while I can carry it to west coast, I can
actually carry it to India. And technology permits me to do that. Now have said that
people have, it is not that, there are times when are colleagues in the U.S. feel that
there is lack of talent or understanding of the process the way it is and the way it
should be. Which may not be a rue statement but when it is linked with the
complexities on the ground as I said earlier, it does change.

Akshina: Speaking of talent, you’ve said that over time you feel the U.S.-based
managers have backed off in some cases, appreciating the talent in the last couple of
years. They’ve started appreciating the ability you were talking about in India. Does
any particular instance come to mind?

Manager 4: Yes, over the period of years and initially I said they did start with a sense
of disbelief or pride where they thought they have far more experience in the Indian
industry and they would not really have an insight into what it really meant. But slowly
they have backed off by realizing how successful the organizations are and some
people who have worked with large plans which are actually U.S. plans for example,
we have people working with us who came from Motorola. And these are respected
brands, and people literally realize that there if there are people who worked with these
organizations they surely would have that level of understanding capability to deliver
on some services. So that’s where they have backed off. The other thing which has
really seen, is when you get onto six sigma and tools around that and making it far
more effective in terms of getting to database management rather than just perception based management. It really has brought a lot of respect and belief in the Indian leadership and the people on the ground. And you know some of our counterparts have acknowledged that have backed off.

Akshina: You’ve alluded to the issue of trust a number of time during the survey and you even mentioned it towards the end saying that you think that creating mutual trust is important between teams. I have two questions regarding that. If you had to rate the level of trust right now between the two teams what would that be. And, within the India-based team can you describe the level of trust?

Manager 4: Ah, you know I think the issue there that I was trying to bring forth was of one-upmanship. And, I wouldn’t call that a racial or cultural impact, just term it as individuals wanting to get the better of the other and blending it with effective organizational politics and stuff like that, which leads to some level of mistrust. The clear opportunity there is not to try and work on one-upmanship but work as a cohesive well performing team. So that’s usually the challenge. Even with managers within India, I would not say that you can effectively negate having similar issues, it’s not only with the U.S. managers, it’s within the Indian managers as well. However, it’s, the extent may be lower and you are on the ground and you can effectively communicate and work with people and try and address those gaps which may not be
the case from people who are working across the globe. You may not even have the opportunity of interacting, of clarifying some…... And when I say trust it really comes to a point where while there has been so much of water under the bridge clearly people need to appreciate that mutual dependence and working together with each other clearly is the need of the hour. And all organizations cannot work without people working as a cohesive team. And that’s something, it has been there, people have had gaps there but it’s now bridging out to a great extent. The industry is maturing and the people are maturing and the individual differences, locational or cultural are withering off.

Akshina: How long do think it’s taken for you to see these differences to start withering off?

Manager 4: I think its, in the past 4-5 years one has really seen a stark change happening where people oversees have started really respecting the performance standards of the Indian counterparts, organizations here, their understanding of the business and domain expertise. I think those are the key things which have yielded their results and effectively there is a lot of you know understanding of each others differences

Akshina: Well, that’s it for the questions unless you have anything else to add.
Manager 4: Is there somewhere, where one can access this? It will be interesting reading.

Akshina: Yes, I’ll be sending each of the respondents a copy. Thanks so much for your time and help

Manager 4: That’s exciting. Alright, feel free to give me a call on the office or cell number

Akshina: Thank You, Bye.
Interview with Manager 5

Akshina: Hi, this is Akshina.

Manager 5: Yes Akshina, How are you?

Akshina, I am well, how are you?

Manager 5: I am alright.

Akshina: Should we start?

Manager 5: Yes, sure

Akshina: Okay, before we start I have to ask if you consent to this interview being recorded. Your responses will not be attached to your name in the final study.

Manager 5: Yes I do

Akshina: You feel that the American managers are more goal-oriented and the India-based are used to ambiguity. What happens when goals are not achieved at Company X? How do managers on both sides reconcile with that?

Manager 5: I think on the U.S. side there is usually some sort of, depends on the degree of importance of that particular deadline being missed. Whether it’s a deadline or the budget is overshot or a particular goal is not achieved at all. If it’s a serious matter the American approach is that some for of sanction or punishment.

Akshina: And on the Indian side is it taken more lightly, or dealt with?
Manager 5: I don’t think on the Indian side its taken more lightly, but I think the sanction typically is not necessarily financial. A lot of it is really process driven. They have these rules like your given a written warning, you’re written up, meaning do a feedback session. It’s really on a case by case basis.

Akshina: What has been done to improve the situation when goals have not been met at certain points? Have there been active measures taken by both sides to ensure this doesn’t happen?

Manager 5: Not really no, I think that the…I don’t think anyone recognizes that there is a difference in approach first of all and second thing is that I don’t think it is recognized that one is better than the other. So, I mean I don’t think a goal driven approach is necessarily the best approach

Akshina: What would you consider to be a better approach?

Manager 5: I think that within the overall goal you have to...one of the problems with a goal driven approach is that there is very little focus on building capacity or capability. A lot of that comes through how you manage your people as opposed to simply saying you know, If I give somebody a task to do and if they do it well I give them a bonus. If they do it badly then I beat them up. You know which is a very two dimensional way of managing people. You know I think essentially the goal oriented stuff falls down. Because there are a number of …you cannot quantify everything. For example you
cannot quantify motivation, or initiative or you know willingness to take on additional labor. But a lot of these things contribute to a goal being achieved.

Akshina: And the U.S.-based managers are definitely more goal driven?

Manager 5: The U.S. managers? Yes, yes. In general I think that’s a societal thing.

Akshina: So you think as a society, U.S. society would promote goal driven approaches versus Indian society?

Manager 5: Versus other societies, not just Indian.

Akshina: And do you think the ambiguity that the India-based managers deal with or that they are used to. Where do you think that stems from?

Manager 5: I think you know that the fact is that a lot of that is driven by you know really emphasis on relationships. For example, if your relationship with someone is really good then you will still work with a bit of faith. Even though you may not know the whole picture, or all the facts. Whereas I think with U.S. staff there is a tendency to say I want to know where we are going or where we are headed. How we are going to get there, I want to know what the strategy and the big picture is. A lot of it is a desire to be in control to some extent of one’s own destiny. Whereas I think with the Indian case if it’s a person you trust or if it’s a person you have a good relationship, you don’t mind not having absolute control.
Akshina: You mentioned for example if Indian managers have knowledge about quality they are often unwilling to share it with the group because they don’t want to go against the boss. How does that work if they’re built a relationship with managers?
Manager 5: I think where a good relationship exists with your team the team will be much more forthcoming in terms of disagreeing for example without worrying about job security and things of that nature.
Akshina: And you think the U.S.-based managers are different in that regard?
Manager 5: I think yes, I think most American managers are pretty willing to speak up. And tell you when they think that they don’t see things they way you see them. I think it takes time for the Indian managers to feel comfortable enough to say that.
Akshina: Has there ever been a case where a U.S. and India-based manager disagree with one another. How do they deal with that because its obviously amplified when dealing over e-mail or the phone versus face-to-face?
Manager 5: Yeah, there was a case recently where in the I.T. department the Indian I.T. folks and the U.S. I.T. folks didn’t agree on something. Basically the Indian I.T. guys just kept quiet. They sent the stuff to me saying if you can influence management in the U.S. rather than directly taking it up as an issue.
Akshina: And, suppose they were to directly take it do you see it being beneficial to the process. Or, is it better the way it’s going now that they refer to someone else?
Manager 5: I think it’s a question of how you view your responsibility, I mean I think that in American society or in American companies this thing about taking ownership is considered a virtue. And that you must stand up and take ownership and stuff like that. Whereas in India its much more hierarchical, you tend to take the approach that ok you know I’ve sort of said what I want to say but in spite of that you want to do this stupid thing well you are the boss and I’m not going to…

Akshina: In the survey you mentioned, regarding ownership, that if they brought in or asked for the India-based managers’ opinion early in the process it might encourage ownership.

Manager 5: I think so yes. If you want to take the ownership approach I mean I think that...I personally think that the ownership approach really works. I think it’s a con game in some ways. You’re telling somebody to take ownership for something that they don’t get paid to do. They don’t get paid to take ownership…saying ‘take ownership’ is actually a way of abdicating your own responsibility. That’s my own…I think if that’s the approach, if you want them to take more ownership they should be brought into the process early. In general I think there is a chain, if you think about a team, the first sort of seed of trouble is absence of trust amongst the team members. And because of absence of trust that leads to the next step which is really fear of conflict. If you don’t trust your fellow team members you want to try and keep
distance you don’t know how they’re going to react or what their going to do if you spoke up openly. So you avoid conflict. So absence of trust leads to fear of conflict. And fear of conflict leads to a lack of commitment because if you haven’t really fully aired your views you’re not going to be willing to commit to something, to a decision that you don’t feel you have fully contributed to. And you haven’t fully contributed because you’re scared of conflict and you are scared of conflict because there is no environment of trust. So if you get that lack of commitment then that is equal to lack of ownership. So the next thing is you’re not accountable because it’s a decision you haven’t committed to...you start avoiding accountability and once you start avoiding accountability that leads to really inattention to results or goals. To me that’s a kind of change that operates in all teams. Absence of trust leading to a fear of conflict leading to a lack of commitment which leads to people avoiding accountability which leads to basically not being goal focused or goal-driven.

Akshina: And how do you see this cycle being played out in Company X between these two teams?

Manager 5: Well I think they..it plays out in both India and in the U.S. but in different ways. One of the key ways that it plays out is really in the first step itself, in the absence of trust. I think that in the U.S. the trust derives from what I would say is sort of a structured relationship. So this person is a V.P., this person is a manager therefore
this is their relationship and this is how the information is exchanged and how money
is exchanged. It’s a very black and white where all the essentials they need for trust is
eliminated as much as possible by making it contractual. Whereas in India the absence
of trust stems really from lack of first of all any kind of relationship building or any
kind of provision of context. Because the Anglo-Saxon countries and you’re probably
aware of this, especially America tend to be extremely low context countries. When I
say low-context I mean that all the data I need to do something is in the message.
Whereas in a high context the data content in the message is actually quite low. In the
sense that, well let me give you an example if you said to an Indian person, my name is
Akshina Samtani right. Then that person would guess because of the context that he
and you share that your second name implies that you are a Sindhi. But, in a U.S.
setting that kind of context is either absent or unnecessary. So what you have is really,
two different approaches to dealing with trust. The U.S. approach is to say okay, let’s
try and eliminate the need for trust. And we try and eliminate the need for trust by
having two hundred paged contracts that have been reviewed by teams of lawyers,
accountants and tax people where every T is crossed and every I dotted. Whereas the
Indian approach to dealing with absence of trust is to say you know lets get to know
each other, lets go out to dinner, you come home, meet my family, I go to your home
and I’ll meet your family. And you sort of build the relationship and it’s not unique to
India. The whole world is like that, except the U.S. really. Which is why the U.S. is such a litigate society. But you know so because these two approaches are very different, and because there isn’t a recognition that you need to build that trust first and then people will not be scared of conflict. So they will speak openly and give full commitment because they have contributed to what happens and then they will be accountable. So I think the mangers tend to have those differences which is where somebody says this is a project plan, this is what I expect you to do…

Akshina: That makes perfect sense. Moving over to expectations between managers – one thing you pointed out was that timeframes aren’t a high priority to India-based managers.

Manager 5: No, no they aren’t

Akshina: What’s been done to deal with that because it appears to be a big issue.

Manager 5: Yeah generally they don’t. Generally they deal with it in two ways, because there are typically back to back commitments. Somebody, a client might say I need this done when do you think you can do it by. And the U.S. manager will consult the Indian manager and if they Indian manger gives a certain date, the U.S. manager will probably add might into that before going back to the client. So they build in some of that buffer.
Akshina: From your experience why do you think time is not a big priority or not a priority with the India-based managers?

Manager 5: I think time is a priority with the India-based managers. I think it is not considered unimportant, it is. But, you know it is probably not the number one priority.

Akshina: What is the number one priority in your opinion?

Manager 5: You know, I think that…and again I go back to this whole thing about relationships and I’ve seen this. If you’ve got for example, an employee – a male employee who’s wife is going to give birth to a child. And you have got a project deadline, the chances are that the India-based manager will say I don’t mind if the project slips…go be with your family. A U.S. manager will say I don’t care, that is your problem. So here what you see is that the relationship between the manager and the employee takes precedence over a specific you know deadline in time. And, I think that’s a really a cultural thing. In that sense I think that the Indian managers will for example, if I have a meeting or something and I get a call from I don’t know the ministry or the reserve bank of India saying “we need to discuss this.” I will probably drop what I was doing and I will pay attention to that. Because I know if I say to this guys no, then a year down the road if I need a favor, they’re going to say no to me.

Akshina: Right and that is different in the U.S.
Manager 5: Yes, I mean its different with societies which grew up as hunting societies tend to place more emphasis on time than agricultural societies. You know because if you’ve got to go out and hunt a deer to eat tonight, to kill the deer you have to be in the right place at the right time. In an agricultural society, the seasons come and go and if this year you don’t get a good crop next, year you might.

Akshina: Yes

Manager 5: So, it’s a much more cyclical approach, whereas the American approach is much more…so you know in their books they refer to the arrow of time.

Akshina: I have three very short questions left. One is directly from something you said in the survey, you said that the U.S. manager have an approach that seems condescending to the India-based managers. Could you elaborate or provide and example of that?

Manager 5: Yes, I have seen… I can’t really give you an example, it doesn’t come to mind. But I have seen because its more about tone, and tenor and style rather than substance. I have seen U.S. managers basically refuse to listen to what the India managers are saying not because of what that person is saying wrong but because of who is saying it. And typically somebody is saying something and they will say, well in the states we do it this way. It’s a very provincial kind of mindset. But it comes
across as very condescending, you don’t respect what the other person is saying not because of the substance but because who they are.

Akshina: Based on what your saying it seems that the entire project management process is very tilted to what the U.S. managers’ perceptions, or how they think it should be run?

Manager 5: Ya, it’s driven from the U.S.

Akshina: Do you find that odd seeing as the project is based in India.

Manager 5: I think it’s one of the drivers of success. I mean I experience this quite a lot. In the states you probably spend 50 percent of your time on planning and 50 percent on execution.

Akshina: And the Indians?

Manager 5: The Indians, I’ll probably say do it the other way around, in the Indian case, because of the fact and with good reason. Because you are dealing with so many variables and so many uncertainties that probably 30 per cent of the time on planning and 70 per cent on execution. Because a lot of the time you just don’t have the data that you need to do for planning. You don’t have the reliable data, for example you may not get cost quotes, or you may not get delivery timelines. Or you may those but may not be reliable because there was a bandh or a truckers strike. Because of the levels of
uncertainty build into the whole economy or the society you cannot plan to the extent that you want to.

Manager 5: You had some more questions?

Akshina: I think you mentioned in your survey you said there are so many hurdles imposed by society. You’ve suggested that’s prompted or influenced Indian to accept lower standards? Do you see that being played out in the project management?

Manager 5: Yes, I think I do. I think that the…frequently I’ve observed that we seem to fall just at the finishing line so to speak. We don’t seem to give importance to the last 0.05 per cent. We’ll get the 99.05 per cent right and at the last minute…So I think that…we tend you…you’ve seen the offices in Fairmont right? I think that quality of finish for example you know…we achieved that kind of a finish. I think if we had someone who has grown up and only been exposed to the Indian society run that as a project, probably we would not have achieved those levels. Simply because people have not been exposed to that level of possibility… that is the hurdle. You know whether it is cleanliness of the washrooms or the way the cafeteria is laid out, whether its just the attention to detail in terms of how the doorframes fit into the wall, their not wonky or there are no gaps. So I think since your small if your not exposed to that quality of standards you learn to accept less than the best. That’s what I mean by…
Akshina: My last question is based on something you said in the survey. You said you find a problem with the India side because they simply carry out instructions without understanding why.

Manager 5: Yes, in a number of cases that happens yes. Not so much without understanding why but it’s without even wanting to know why in some cases.

Akshina: Have you figured out why that is happening?

Manager 5: I think it connects back to what we said earlier – that there isn’t that trust being built by the U.S. management and India management where Indian managers want to have that level of commitment and have that trust and speak openly or try and find all the information. And I think also that they are used to working in an environment where people don’t share information. That’s how a lot of the Indian businesses are run, especially the family owned ones. You know, everything is in the owners head. Whereas, we here keep asking what is the big picture, the two year plan. I wouldn’t be comfortable with that. I wasn’t…I wasn’t…

Akshina: Different approach…

Manager 5: Yes, but I found that the Indian colleagues that I work with were quite happy to simply take instructions and work. I found that the India-based managers were quite comfortable simply carrying out instructions.
Akshina: And do you think the U.S.-based managers – there is obvious discomfort with that. Or not obvious?

Manager 5: Not obvious, I think it’s a case of percentages. I think as a percentage there are more people in the U.S. who would be uncomfortable with that, it’s not a black and white thing.

Akshina: Well, alright this was great.

Manager 5: I think I have another call Akshina, call me if you need anything

Akshina: Thank You so much though.
Interview with Manager 6

Manager 6: How are you?

Akshina: I’m fine, how are you? Are you free to talk right now?

Manager 6: I sure am

Akshina: Thanks a lot for doing this, before we start I need to ask if you consent to this interview being recorded.

Manager 6: Yes

Me: Okay, you will not be named in the final study. The first question I have is about meetings. You said during meetings India-based managers tend to talk a lot about issues but the results don’t show always. What are they talking about? Are they planning? You say that U.S.-based managers articulate their goals and follow up promptly after. What is the difference?

Manager 6: Yeah its almost like when lets say there is a problem, that you know our goal is to get on a call and say lets figure out here is the problem, why did it happen and what can we do to fix it. And the only reason you care why it happened is because you need to understand that so you can fix it, right? But a lot of time when you get on a call with a bunch of people in India, they’re worried about the accountability for why it went wrong – like I don’t want to be blamed for it – so, there becomes a whole discussion about what the issue is and who’s fault it is as opposed to hey, lets just
figure out what went wrong so we can fix it moving forward. I think they’re, I don’t know so worried about the blame that a lot of the times their focusing more on well I didn’t do that, or, it wasn’t me it was your group. Then it becomes this heated discussion between the groups that gets so far off base you’re not even talking about the original problem anymore right?

Me: Right. You’ve visited India haven’t you? Have you, while you were there found any reasons why they don’t hold themselves accountable, or why is their so much emphasis on blame?

Manager 6: Yeah, you know I don’t know. It could be…you know I remember in my early days here we would get on the call with a client and the client would ask us if we could do something. And the team in India would tell me that they can’t do it. And I’m like okay. So then they’d get on with the client, and the client would say can you do this and they would say yes. So we would hang up and call them back and say “can we do it?” “No”

Me: Oh

Manager 6: But you just told the client yes, why did you tell the client yes? “Because client’s don’t like to hear no.” So I don’t know if there’s a perception that the U.S. doesn’t like bad news. You know, so it’s easier to just tell them what they want to hear instead of solving the problem. And you know, a lot of times they want to handle it on
their own and maybe not have the U.S. team involved in the issue. Which you know what – would be great. If you can solve the issue and I don’t have to be involved I’m happy. But the problem is it doesn’t seem like the issue gets solved.

Me: Okay

Manager 6: And I don’t know, you probably have more insight into it that I do. Is it difference in the way you were educated? You know what I mean? are we more focused on problem-solving skills and I…I..don’t know

Me: To be honest with you that’s what I’m trying to figure out in this thesis – there is clearly a differences, let’s see if we can figure out the motivations for that difference.

Manager 6: I guess it would help us to understand. And I’m sure I could have, you know, created that by early on being frustrated by the differences and being upset about something. So now, their afraid they don’t want to upset me. So I could have created it as well. I don’t know

Me: okay, you also said that another gap between U.S. and India-based managers is that they are not as concerned with timeframes and meeting deliverables? Have you seen a trend? Do you know any reasons for this?

Manager 6: Yup, umm, you know the team that I see that has come around the quickest, is the client servicing team in India. Whereas, with operations or IT or training, its not as structured as it is with client servicing. And the only reason I can
think is that client servicing deals with the team in the U.S. as well as U.S. clients everyday. So if they commit to something getting done on Thursday and they don’t get it done on Thursday, their accountable for that. Either the client’s calling them saying “where is it?, you said it would be here.” Or, one of us it doing that. So I think after four years of “you got to get things done on time” they’ve come around. Things have improved so when I think back four years ago, we would schedule a call for 9a.m. By 9.15 we would probably have everybody on the call. And when someone would log on at 9.15 I would say “the call was at 9” and they would say “yeah I’m on.” (laughs) And I’m like – “it’s a quarter after 9!.” And they didn’t think there was an issue. And I think again, dealing with clients there is more time sensitivity now. And I had read a book at one point that said the difference really between American kids and Indian kids is that American kids are raised by a clock. So you know, you wake up, it’s breakfast time. You play for the next two hours, so that is play time. Noon is lunch time and afternoon is playtime and dinner time and study time and bed time. Like we’re all geared to a clock to the point of excess. Where at least the book claimed that in India children aren’t raised by a clock. For whatever reason we’re crazy about time here.

Me: Okay, that would explain part of it. Clearly this has disrupted management processes earlier on. You said it had changed in the last four years?

Manager 6: Yes
Me: But earlier on, what would you do – as a U.S. based manager – if something like this happened? How would you deal with this?

Manager 6: Well you know, you start with the easy things, like you know, when people log in late the call in scheduled for 9 o clock and they say “yeah I’m on.” You say that the call is scheduled for 9 a.m. and it’s 9.15, you are 15 minutes late. You’ve got a lot of people on the call, it’s very important that we are on time. If it’s a client call, you would actually in the early days lie – you’ve give them an earlier time. So that you knew that they would be on time. Or, the top offenders, you would call them before the call. A lot of follow up. So, if the call is at 9 at 10 minutes to 9 you’re calling saying, are you going to log in, the call is at 9 o clock and the clients going to be on. I need you to make sure that you are on time.

Me: Apart from time, what other major differences have you seen between the set of Manager based in the U.S.? any you can think of?

Manager 6: Yeah, I’m trying it such a broad topic, sometimes I have to stop and really think to like which group does this fall into. You’ve got the time, you’ve got the…I kind of group it under the problem solving. And again, I think it gets convoluted because there is the accountability piece. You’ve got to say I’m accountable for this before you can turn around and say I can solve the problem. Um..what else.
Me: Speaking about accountability, because you did mention that quite a few times in the survey. You said there has to be more accountability. Now are you refer to the team as a whole – U.S. and India-based, or, are you referring to one team?

Manager 6: I would have to say that it is probably both sides, but, you know when you’re dealing with the client there obviously is accountability right?

Me: right

Manager 6: Um, so we get held to a certain level of accountability daily by our clients. Some of the teams don’t deal daily without clients but we are relying on them to meet our clients needs. So if there is no accountability it makes it harder for us to meet the clients needs. So I mean it is probably more India. And you know, the question I can’t answer is “is this a Zenta issue, or is this India” right?

Me: Yes

Manager 6: You know I worked at Company JK before I worked at Company X and we dealt with a couple of different call centers in India so some of these issues carry over. So for example timeliness used to be an issue then too with those call centers. Accountability, its harder for me ti tell because I wasn’t as involved with what happened on the ground but you know I’m guessing that… You know, lets say for example we’re not performing well. So if I call the operations manager and say “performance isn’t good what is going on?” “Well blah blah blah” Like sometimes and
again I don’t know if they don’t want to tell me – maybe they know and they just don’t want to tell me this is what we’re screwing up. It’s very general, “well we’re not getting as many sales.” I know that! (laughs) you know – but why? Just doing the action plan and the follow up on the action plan. So here are the five things we’re going to do to improved performance. We all agree that these things can impact performance. They might do them for three days and after three days they’re gone again unless you are constantly following it up.

Me: Alright, so it’s a reoccurring problem then?

Manager 6: Yes, yes

Me: Also, related to this you described a situation about recruiting activities and it turned into a heated discussion and you finally described a table to them and said “fill in these things and that’s a pretty efficient way of doing this.” You cited this under a communication issue. Do you think there are different definitions of what “efficient” is between the two teams. Because you said you’ve never gotten that report and to you its seems clear that that’s the cleanest way and clearest way to go about doing this. Why do feel it’s a communication issue?

Manager 6: again, the conversation got heated because it becomes two groups arguing over who’s screwed up. (Laughs). So if you need to hire a hundred people and you only get 505, recruiting will say well we hired 100 but 50 of them needed to be trained
so that they could be formally hired. So it’s trainings fault that we didn’t get more people. And then training will say that the people you gave me are no good, or you didn’t give me enough people and then it becomes a heated discussion between the two groups over who is screwing up. But no one’s talking numbers. So it’s easier if you sit down and say we hired 100 people, 50 went to the floor, the other 50 need to go through training, they went through the training and after that only 2 of them went to the floor. Then you’re like “whoa” either there is a problem with the 50 we hired for training and if that’s the case training should have flagged that on day 1 – that these 50 people are no good and I’m not going to be able to graduate them. Or training did something wrong with them, or, every time you give them 50 people they can only get 2 out of the group. So every time we need to hire a hundred you need to give them 500 or whatever it is. But there is never specifics, it’s always well you didn’t do this and remember that one person I gave you and da-da-da-da-da – it’s all general comments and its not going to solve anything right?

Me: Right. Right, okay, any other difficulties in communication

Manager 6: Um, well I think every now and then there might be a phrase or something that culturally we look at differently. And I think over four years we’ve figure most of them out. Every now and then one of them comes ups. I think in the early days, people, you’d call somebody and say this is what I need you to do and they would say
I’d try my level best. And I would say oh great it’s going to be done. And of course in the course of four years I’ve figured out and if sometime tells me they are trying their level best I’m never going to get it, they can’t do it. (laughs) it’s a nice way of telling me that. I think, what’s the other one, there is another one that comes up. Oh, in telemarketing a lot of our scripts have to be read verbatim. Which means you have to pretty much say every single word. There are other campaigns where you are allowed a little bit of flexibility. So you can put things in your own words so long as you don’t change the meaning. So to us we call that conversational, somehow the connotation – when we say conversational, they interpret it as well we’re allowed to say things when we shouldn’t say. So you know, all this time you listen to a call and you say why are they saying that. And they say well you said we can be conversation. Conversational doesn’t mean you can lie about the product – it just means you can put the product in your own words but still present it correctly. So I think over the years there have been some communication gaps that way and I don’t think their anybody’s fault. I say something and I know what it means but it may mean something else to somebody else – and vice versa. I’m sure there are times when they say things I take one way and it is another way and a week later we are arguing. But you said this! No I didn’t! So I think we’ve figured out the big ones but I’m sure there are little ones.

Me: Okay, I have one last question
Manager 6: Yup

Me: Expectations in the project management process

Manager 6: yeah

Me: What are the major differences? When you started this did you see different expectations from all of the senior managers? What were the biggest ones you say between the two sets of managers? Because at the end of your survey you said that “we need to explicitly state our expectations” – so what were the biggest differences?

Manager 6: Yeah, no I’m not remembering. Well I can give you a recent example and I’m not sure it’s along the same lines of what I was trying to say in the survey but um, we do performance calls with the management and we talk about “this what we need to fix” and blah blah blah “this is how we fix it.” And then we get on a call the next week and things are the same. And it’s like well we talked to the agents, again all very general right. So after this week’s call I put together an excel sheet, here is the opportunities that we listed, here’s the five steps we agreed to work on this week to try to improve it and I need you to send me an update daily of what exactly was done. And again I think the hard thing is that we’re not on the floor to see it and maybe they just aren’t expressing everything that they have done – I don’t know if it’s a communication problem that they can’t explain what they have done or if they’re just not doing anything. It is hard to tell sometimes.
Me: From what you’ve said in your survey, you would expect documentation –

Manager 6: Yes

Me: to see a proper flow of activities and processes and is that just not being carried through?

Manager 6: Um, yeah. 50-50. obviously there are some groups that are into documentation but maybe not to the level that we are. And it’s not that I like documentation but I know that I can’t remember everything. And if I don’t write things down I’ll forget. It’s just human nature; you have so many things on your plate. So I do it to help keep me organized. Like I said, its not that I like doing it but it keeps your organized. Now that I think about it, we had a call the other day and there was someone taking minutes and I still haven’t seen them and it’s been two days. Like if you don’t do them right away then it’s harder to do them. I guess it’s that efficiency that if you take notes and a week later you try to type them up it’s a lot harder than if you try to do it in the next 24 hours because it’s fresh in your mind. So sometimes I think we create extra work by not doing it efficiently. And I remember and this goes back three or four years. We were on a conference call and the India team was on and I was on. And we were going through all these things and of course I’m taking notes right – cause you’re in a meeting. And Person X said “stop what are you guys in India doing right now,” “do any of you have a piece of paper and a pen in front of you – who
can repeat back to me the five things that we needed to work on.” And nobody could. So, if the whole team is not doing it, I have to assume that it’s a difference in how we were educated right?

Me: right, background

Manager 6: Yeah, which is nobody’s fault? And you know I’m sorry that I can’t give you an example now, there are things that I have learned from the team. Those are the examples I should give. Actually things like on the computer those guys are 50 times better than me. So it’s a give and take, there’s things they learn from us. There’s also things we learn from them. And unfortunately this has been one sided you know saying these are the things we do differently.

Me: yeah, well alright. Thanks for your survey responses and this.

Manager 6: Oh no problem, I am glad I can help.
References


http://hbswk.hbs.edu/pdf/item/4961.pdf

181


[http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/2224](http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/2224)


Usunier (Eds.), *International Business Negotiations* (pp.93-118). Great Britain: Redwood Books Ltd.
