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Leading Global Project Teams: The New Leadership
Challenge

Introduction to a Six-Part Series

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We are pleased to present this series of articles for PM World Today focused on the subject of leading globally distributed program and project teams. The articles are extracted from portions of the book entitled *Leading Global Project Teams: The New Leadership Challenge* (ISBN 978-1-55489-064-4, Multi Media Publishing, 2010).

This six-part series of articles focuses on the key concepts and tools addressed in our book as well as introduce some additional perspectives on analyzing this complex subject. Throughout the series we will specifically addresses the question, “*How does one effectively lead global, highly distributed teams to achieve the improved business results needed to compete in today’s market?*” In short, it is not the work of just “one” leader that delivers results, but of “many” working as a collective, collaborative team that happens to be separated by distance, time, and culture. We therefore focus on the responsibilities of the collective team – from senior managers, to program leaders and project managers, as well as the individuals that make up our global project teams.

This series of articles is written from the practitioner’s point of view. We work in industry and therefore our experiences are first hand and real world. The viewpoints we present reflect this perspective. We welcome your comments, perspectives, challenges, and other thoughts.

The following is a set of abstracts from the articles to be presented in this series on leading global teams.

Part 1 – Leading Global Project Teams: Barriers and Challenges

Undeniably, our globe is quickly becoming a smaller, flatter and a more level playing field on which to compete. However, small, flat and level are not synonymous for easy or effective. The opening article offers an explanation of why organizations

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globalize, along with a discussion characterizing the barriers and challenges encountered when global execution fails to achieve globalization business goals. “*Leading Global Project Teams: Barriers and Challenges*” details the criticality of the elements that create a firm foundation to support an organization’s global project team leaders. To be published in the July edition of *PM World Today* at www.pmworldtoday.net.

Part 2 – Putting Skin in the Game

In order for any team to begin operating more effectively within a highly distributed global environment, senior managers of an organization must step beyond their traditional role and become personally engaged in enabling global project leaders’ execution success. Leveraging the conclusions from the first article, “*Putting Skin in the Game*” focuses on the senior leaders of the organization whose responsibility it is to create a global execution environment in which their project teams can successfully operate. Specifically, we address organizational and behavioral changes that senior leaders within a global company must drive in order to eliminate the common global execution barriers that prevent successful product and service development in a global environment. This article to be published in a future edition of *PM World Today*.

Part 3 – Extending Good Team Leadership Practices

Whether operating in a domestic or global environment, the project team leader is accountable for the team’s performance and quality of its output. All leaders must grapple with four essential issues while building and leading the project team: (1) establishing the team vision, goals and objectives; (2) defining the roles and responsibilities for each member of the team; (3) instituting the team norms and work procedures; and (4) managing personal relationships. In this article, “*Extending Good Team Leadership Practices*”, we explain how to extend basic principles of team leadership to successful global project team leadership for a highly distributed team application. This article to be published in a future edition of *PM World Today*.

Part 4 – Achieving Sustainable Global Team Success

Global execution leadership means more than achieving repeatable success in developing new products and services in a global team environment. It means establishing continual improvement in their new product or service development process and continually raising the bar on global team execution performance in order to achieve the intended business results. Part 4 of this series, “*Achieving Sustainable Global Team Success*”, explores the critical factors that leading global

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companies have used to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by establishing sustainable and improving global execution practices. This article to be published in a future edition of *PM World Today*.

Part 5 – Global Team Leader Skills

It is a rare occasion when a person comes to the role fully qualified to fulfill all aspects of the broad and encompassing set of skills and competencies that can be needed for a global project team leader. In Part 5, “*Global Team Leader Skills*”, we address the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to successfully plan, lead, and sustain global team effectiveness. This article can serve as an audit tool, human resource maturity and planning guide, and training tool for both the global executive and project leader. This article to be published in a future edition of *PM World Today*.

Part 6 – Leading the Global Transition

Given the discussion in the earlier parts of this article series, and the knowledge that most organizations are still in search of greater effectiveness in global team leadership, it becomes clear that transitioning from a domestic environment in which products and services are developed to a global development model will most likely require some, if not significant organizational changes. In the final installment of this article series titled “*Leading the Global Transition*”, we introduce a comprehensive transitional change management framework for realization of improved business results through effective global product and service development. The companies that systematically manage this needed change are the companies that will have the greatest probability of success. This article to be published in a future edition of *PM World Today*.

About the Authors



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Jim Waddell, former director of program management for Tektronix, is currently an independent management consultant in his fields of expertise: program management and mergers and acquisitions. He has held a variety of management positions, has been a speaker at numerous conferences, and is a co-author of *Leading Global Project Teams*, and *Program Management for Improved Business Results*. Jim is a co-founder of the Program Management Academy (www.programmanagement-academy.com). Jim can be contacted at jim.waddell@programmanagement-academy.com.



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