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CROSS BORDER TEAMBUILDING IN AN INTERNATIONAL  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT

Business & Administration

2013

# CROSS BORDER TEAMBUILDING IN AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT

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Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma  
Toukokuu 2013  
Ohjaaja: Kuisma, Pekka  
Sivumäärä: 43  
Liitteitä: 2

Asiasanat: virtuaalitiimi, kansainvälisyys, projektinhallinta, kehittäminen

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Opinnäytetyön aiheena oli selvittää ja tutkia kohdeyrityksessä työskentelevän projektitiimin näkemyksiä virtuaalisessa tiimissä työskentelemisestä ja tiimin kehittämisestä. Projektitiimi työskentelee laajojen, kansainvälisten tuoteistusprojektien kanssa ja tiimin henkilöt työskentelevät pääosin Ruotsissa ja Suomessa. Työssä selvitettiin miten työntekijät kokevat käytettävissä olevat työvälineet ja niiden kehittämisen, mahdolliset kulttuurierot ja miten virtuaalitiimiä voidaan jatkossa kehittää.

Teoreettisessa osassa tutkittiin virtuaalisen toimintaympäristön määritelmiä, tunnettuja haasteita niin toiminnassa kuin tiimin perustamisessa, johtajuutta ja miten kulttuurierot voivat vaikuttaa johtamiseen ja viestintään, virtuaalisen työympäristön työvälineitä, viestin ja tiedon välittämistä, miten luottamus rakennetaan, hiljaisen tiedon siirtämistä ja minkälaisia ominaisuuksia hajautetussa tiimissä työskentelevältä vaaditaan.

Kysely toteutettiin verkkopohjaisella lomakkeella ja lähetettiin 50 projektinhallinta-tehtävissä työskentelevälle nimetyn yksikön jäsenelle. Vastauksia saatiin 25 kappaletta. Analysoidut vastaukset esitellään sekä graafisesti että taulukkoina.

Tutkimuksen perusteella saatiin tietoa niistä asioista, joita hajautetussa virtuaalisessa projektityössä työskentelevät pitävät tärkeinä. Kehittämisen tarpeita nähtiin niin viestinnässä kuin käytännön työvälineissäkin.

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Degree Programme in Business and Administration

May 2013

Supervisor: Kuisma, Pekka

Number of pages: 43

Appendices: 2

Keywords: virtual team, international, project management, development

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In this study the goal was to examine and study target company's project team member's opinions on working in a virtual team and how to develop the team further. The team works with large, international productisation projects and work mainly in Finland and Sweden. In this study it was examined how the employees experience the existing tools and development of tools, the eventual cultural differences and how a virtual team could be developed in the future.

The theoretical part of the study concentrated on definitions of a virtual environment, known challenges in the daily operation as well as in the team start up, leadership and how cultural differences may affect leadership and communication, tools in a virtual working environment, communication and knowledge sharing, how trust can be built, how to share the silent information and what kind of characteristics are needed from a person working cross border.

The questionnaire was executed with a web based form and was sent to 50 project management professionals in the case company. 25 responses were received. The analysis of replies will be shown as graphs and tables.

This study provided information on issues that are considered important in a virtual cross border project work. Need for improvement was seen both in communication and in everyday tools.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the thesis, it is examined how to form and lead specialist teams in a cross border environment and teams especially concentrating on project management. A special interest will be laid on the challenges and possibilities in such an organisation where groups, specialists and leaders are located in different countries, working in a virtual manner. The goal is to study the work in product development projects mainly in the Finnish and Swedish interface and to examine the experiences in forming, maintaining and leading this kind of way of working. The groups and teams to be reviewed work in a specialist environment implementing demanding product and process development projects.

The organisation in the focus of this thesis has been working virtually for years and the existing virtual team model is now going towards a more condensed model where specialists will be located closer to each other in the same country and even on the same locality. This will be done to strengthen the core competence, to add team spirit, to increase the employee commitment to organisation's goals and to boost continuous learning. The development in the organisation will make common operations model even easier to adapt and to decrease the growth of costs.

The theme for the thesis was chosen based on the fact that large organisations operate more and more in an international manner and working productively is not necessarily dependent on the location of the employees. Tools and data networks make it possible to work in a new way but also set some challenges to the daily duties and routines. From the organisation's point of view, one significant factor for optimizing the virtual tools is the savings in travel costs. When working in a virtual project team, especially cross border, the importance of video conferences, telephone meetings, e-mails and other available technologies is considerable. Communication skills and tools have an extremely important role in the everyday management of a virtual cross border project team.

### 1.1 The organization – An internationally acting operator that offers network connections and telecommunications services in seventeen countries

The organisation reviewed in this study is an internationally acting operator that offers network connections and telecommunications services in seventeen countries. In this thesis, the focus is on studying a strictly defined part of the organisation that operates in three countries (Finland, Sweden and Denmark) and has about 95 employees, both on specialist and supervisor level.

In this thesis, important themes will be means and skills of communication, how to utilize the available communication tools, the internal team spirit and trust and also the understanding of cultural differences. Practical challenges, such as using a common language and time zones are also to be noticed. Leading oneself is one of the themes, since independent way of working (due to the job description and geographical location) requires a controlled working ethics and a controlled way of working. During the study of this thesis, a closer contemplation will be done of new possibilities – for example how the role of a facilitator could be used in team work and how competence could be delivered cross border.

Thinking of team work and leading specialist seems to be similar in all kind of organisations, motivating and supervising is needed in the same way as in any groups but the graphical challenges and virtual locations do still have their effect on the activity. This thesis might be used as an inspirer of fresh angle of thinking in the organisation even though the management is well aware of managing teams and employees in this kind of work groups. Still, it is sometimes preferred to think on the obvious. This thesis might therefore interest new leaders as well as more experienced team professionals and even the employees working in the cross border environment. The fact that this organisation is now planning actions on replacing split, virtual teams with a more compact group structure probably tells something of the gained experiences in this particular part of the company.

## 1.2 The thesis formulation

The main question in this study is to solve how a virtual, cross border team is working at the moment in the case organisation and how it could be developed into such a working environment where location and other themes would not act as a barrier in the daily work.

Main questions for this thesis are:

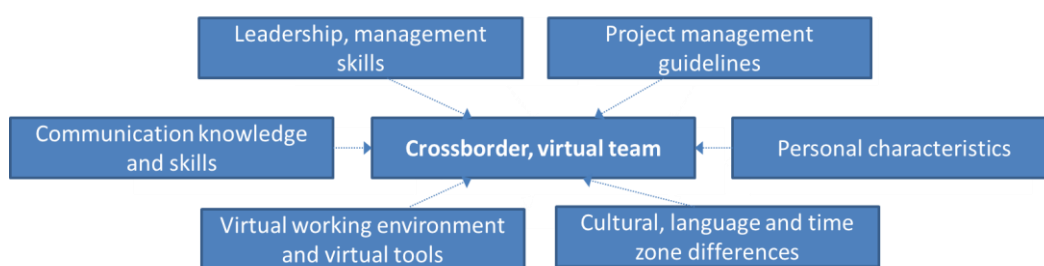
- What kind of challenges does an international, virtual team bring to working in projects
- Development and future of a virtual cross border team
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a virtual cross border team
- What prerequisites are needed from a virtual cross border team manager
- What prerequisites are needed from a virtual cross border team member
- How do employees themselves experience a virtual cross border environment

The theory part of the study concentrates on definitions of a virtual environment, known challenges in the daily operation as well as in the team start up, leadership and how cultural differences may affect leading and communication, tools in a virtual working environment, communication and knowledge sharing, how trust can be built, how to share the silent information and what kind of characteristics are needed from a person working cross border.

The empire of this study concentrates on building a web based questionnaire including a comprehensive amount of team related questions and analyzing the responses from project management professionals in the case organisation.

## 2 THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

One of the most significant themes in the reference frame is *leadership and management skills*. Since there may not be any daily interaction with all employees in a *cross border, virtual team*, the supervisor's *communication knowledge and skills* have a major role. Besides any *project management guidelines*, the *virtual working environment and virtual tools* define the specialist's prerequisites to work with demanding project management activities. In a cross border team, it is vital that both the supervisor's and the employee's *personal characteristics* match the requirements that are set to persons working in such an environment. All the employees do have to understand that some *cultural, language and time zone differences* may occur and act based on that knowledge.



Picture 1. Reference frame

### 2.1 Definition of a virtual team

Working in a virtual environment can be defined as a work that is supported by electric communication and shared tools with an option of mobile, distributed, remote and self-employed manner of working and all distributed work is not mobile, but mobile co-operation is always distributed (Humala 2007, 8-9). "A virtual team is a group of people that work separately from each other in order to reach a common goal by communicating mainly with electronic means of communication" (Humala 2007, 9). However, Grönroos (2003, 173) defines that a virtual organisation is a combination of individuals or organisations working for a defined entity or a constant activity which is connected to each other by a data network. In this definition it is emphasized that the group will work in a variant manner.

## 2.2 Challenges in a virtual team

Creating effective virtual teams has been harder than expected. A leader has to abandon the former ways of leading a team in case they do not work, to question the existing assumptions and beliefs and to be able to break many of the rules that had been valid for generations. It requires time, pro-active planning and follow-up for the team members to understand the team goals and for all team members to feel that they are actively involved both as individual contributors and team members (Humala 2007, 20-21.)

Building trust is one of the main issues in virtual team world. The emergence of virtual trust differs evidently from the trust that is built in a face to face relationship. It is usually created little by little, as a constant and consistent process, but it can also be built quickly. Trust seems to be in context with telling about oneself. (Humala 2007, 54.)

Trust can be based on agreements, where things are done as promised. There are two levels of promises; to oneself and to others. Acting in a responsible manner also creates trust, where one has to take responsibility on actions, negative or positive. Communication is one of the main trust builders and it both expresses attitudes and will and is related to the way of expression (focus is in the ability of communication). (Ristikangas 2010, 163-184.)

Cultural, geographical and time differences create challenges to leaders in a work where they are to provide the employees working structures, to value their performance, to inspire and give possibilities to evolve and to make it possible to identify with the organisation. Commitment can be reached by open communication, understanding the factors behind decisions and with personal influencing. People working in crossborder, virtual teams may not necessarily have a clear picture of their own or each other's roles and responsibilities. Team members in distant locations work differently and they are not aware of each other's work processes, job descriptions or capabilities. (Humala 2007, 23-24.)

“It would seem from the research that language does have a significant role in communications, by either enabling or hindering communications and causing confusion. The main issue brought up was the lack of a specific guide and structure to the use of languages within the organisation and the lack of equality between the four official languages. In addition the lack of knowing which language to communicate in or having a shared language caused there to be a lack of sharing within the organisation, and therefore hindering knowledge communication.” (Lehtovaara 2009.) According to this, the differences in language skills may cause misinterpretation in the delivered message. In the organisation that is studied in this thesis, English is the main language for communication. The official information is delivered in one common language, but still some local information is not translated.

### 2.3 Creating a virtual team

When creating a new virtual team, there are four phases: starting phase, commitment, development and maintenance. Starting phase consists of basis for the team or project work; defining the team roles and responsibilities, supporting the team culture, creating a learning plan, making the team presence visible and choosing the right means for communication. Commitment is a phase where especially communication is improved; to communicate often, to use diverse methods for communication, to secure that team member presence is visible, to agree on active involvement and to practise methods that support joint learning. The development phase emphasizes the guidance to learn and support; encouraging the team members to evaluate their ways of working and creating the prerequisites to be able to work in an effective flow. The maintenance phase is about securing that the team or the project really identifies what has been learnt and that it is able to spread it to others. (Humala 2007, 87.)

Asp (2010) states that along with the growth of knowledge work, organisations will evolve into network-like project organisations. In that case work communities will be created from organisations vast internal and external network to produce different projects and tasks according to requirements stated by business operations. Development of technology will change the tools in a working environment. The physical

environment will change partly to a virtual one in which case global virtual (work) communities are an essential part of daily activities.

### 3 LEADERSHIP AND ROLES IN A VIRTUAL CROSS BORDER TEAM

#### 3.1 Leading an international team

The leader should be able to deliver communication and support evenly, to react quickly even not being on site at a moment where decisions and support are needed and act in such a role that the employees feel that they are treated equally despite of the location. According to Humala, presence should not be only defined as being physically present, but also being present is a virtual space, in a network (Humala 2007, 15).

Culture, both the culture of the people and the culture of the organisation, has to be identified. Culture, in an organisation, is the total sum of all learned and inevitable negative and positive assumptions (Manka 2006, 139). All organisations have their own culture and it affects all the employees and the way they think and act. It provides safety and proactivity in the work (Manka 2006, 141). People working in the same company, in different countries, each have their own working culture (Humala 2007, 143). One has to know that communication inside the organisation may differ from the everyday communication outside the company (Humala 2007, 143). According to Humala, both cultural and organisational factors may cause problems.

Table 1. Cultural and organisational factors causing problems in leadership (Humala 2007, 144)

<b>Cultural factors</b>	Team members have different expectations on how a team works and communicates
	Different leadership styles (based on culture)
	Smoothness of the commonly used language
	Individuals cultural identity and how strong the individual follows the norms of one's own culture
<b>Organisational factors</b>	Position of different cultures in an organisation (stereotypical conceptions of different cultures)
	Geographical location of team members
	Similarity or difference of professional cultures (for instance, engineers and psychologists)

A leader working in a multi-cultural environment does have to pay attention to both cultural and organisational factors. A leader has to be able to create and maintain such an environment that promotes co-operation and where common learning is supported. The most important quality for a leader in a split virtual team is probably an ability to communicate with people from another culture in such a way that their respect and trust is attained. (Humala 2007, 144-145.)

### 3.2 Different team roles

According to Meredith Belbin's team role theory; there are nine different team roles: plants, resource investigators, monitor evaluators, co-ordinators, implementers, completer finishers, team workers, shapers and specialists. The success of a team is not having just some kind of roles working but the key is to have a balance on the roles (Belbin Associates www-pages).

The case company (referring to the defined group that is observed) consists of different specialist; project managers, product development managers and their leaders. There has not been a study based on Belbin's team roles.

Belbin (Belbin Associates [www-pages](http://www-pages)) states that identifying the strengths and weaknesses of team workers can be used to

- *Build productive working relationships*
- *Select and develop high-performing teams*
- *Raise self-awareness and personal effectiveness*
- *Build mutual trust and understanding*
- *Aid recruitment processes.*

#### 4 TOOLS IN USE IN A VIRTUAL TEAM

According to Kemppilä (2009)

“At this point all stakeholders are familiar with and comfortably use e-mail and conference calls, which represent the 1<sup>st</sup> generation technologies. Therefore, these media are safe to use and the Communication Manager or Specialist can support their use in a project by providing basic guidelines and policies in the written format. Instead, as regards to the so called 2<sup>nd</sup> generation technologies (e.g. instant messaging, online discussion boards, Power Point presentations, video tools and online meeting tools), stakeholders do not seem to be 100% sure about their use. For example, guidelines on how to use instant messaging correctly were missed among the informants and yet it was stated that in the case program more instant messaging is used than in the ‘normal’ work organisation. This derives probably from the fact that the base in the program is far more aggressive than in the ‘normal’ work organisation.”

The case organisation tends to use e-mail as the main means for communication. Video conferences and telephone conferences are preferred instead of traveling to other countries or places. Documentation of project material and team instructions is done in virtual workrooms (Sharepoint) which enable to restrict the audience of the material. Telephone is a daily tool for employees and a new application, Microsoft Lync has been introduced and installed. Besides utilizing the computer as a phone, Lync also makes it possible to share documentation during a meeting without having

to send it to all participants as an e-mail attachment which decreases the amount of data storage space needed on e-mail servers.

Grönroos (2003) questions the development of new tools, since only a limited amount of all the features have been taken use for new terminals and applications. What is the real amount of features that are needed?

## 5 COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION DELIVERY AS A SUCCESS FACTOR

Good communication can be defined as information that is delivered equally to all recipients in an easily understandable format. Communication is simply the process of sharing knowledge (Merilehto, 2010). On the other hand, communication as a leader's tool is always influencing, never plain informing (Pitkänen 2010, 208).

It is a challenge to the leader to perceive the needs of each, different person working in a crossborder environment, since the physical visibility is not one of the assumptions. Still, the leader should be able to fulfill the needs of each individual even though some of the messages received from the employees are non-verbal. In a virtual environment, a leader has to find ways to motivate people that you do not see on a daily basis, new ways to express the vision and to create a common working culture and new ways of thinking how to company looks like and how it should look like (Humala 2007, 21.) Virtual leadership has been considered as improving the interaction between people, which means that building trust and credibility are included in the challenges (Humala 2007, 22.) According to Humala (2007, 22-23) an advantage of a virtual working group or a team is that the geographical factors restrict them less and therefore they have a greater possibility to gain needed human capital or skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver challenging projects.

Johari –window gives an access point to communication in a team. Based on self-assessment the method can be used in many situations, but also in finding out the communication status in in a team. The outcome will provide the team information

on the interaction among the team members. Based on the definitions (adjectives) given by the recipient and by the people working with the recipient, the tool positions the person or the team in some of the four corners (open, blind, closed and dark). The group can then make its' own conclusions on what could be improved to achieve an environment for open communication and information delivery.

Table 2. Johari –window

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Open arena	Blind
Not known to others	Closed	Dark

### 5.1 The silent information needs to be shared

In a geographically split environment, the delivery of the so called silent information is not easy. It is not always even easy in a group where all team members work in the same location.

The silent information is hidden in the routines of the work community and the skills will be improved by developing the routines. It is hard to wrap the silent information into a verbal format and pass it to colleagues. Silent information will though be easier to forward if the team has a similar cognitive reference frame; the language and a common experience history with common conceptions. (Manka 2006, 131).

To achieve a constant and equal flow of information delivery, all the parties in the process needs to be committed and actively involved. Manka (2006, 133) states that the organisation should be able to provide spaces for interaction with a possibility to intercourse and collaboration.

## 6 EXECUTION OF THE RESEARCH

### 6.1 The case organisation

The organisation that is observed is a large multi-national company providing “network access and telecommunication services that help people and companies to communicate in an easy, efficient and environmentally friendly way” and offers services in the Nordic and Baltic countries, the emerging markets of Eurasia, including Russia and Turkey, and in Spain with about 27 000 employees (Case company’s www-pages). The case study does not cover the whole company but only a strictly defined group of project specialists located in Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

#### 6.1.1 Organisational changes

Due to needs to cut costs, the organisation has been down-sizing the amount of personnel and centralizing the employee locations. In October 2012, based on information on the interim report provided by the then CEO the goal was to change the way of business thoroughly by simplifying the way of working. This was estimated to lead into net savings of two billion crowns during the next couple of years. Seven percent of the personnel (ie. about 2000 employees) would be affected. (Taloussanomat 2012.)

The goal for this thesis is to find out how a virtual, cross border team working within projects can survive and improve its’ processes, routines and use of personnel. The first part of the study is performed as a quantitative research with theory sources and the second part of the study is concentrating on qualitative research where case organisation’s employees will be asked to respond to a survey with an amount of questions.

The purpose of the thesis is not only to validate qualities of a good leader or a good team but also to identify the characteristics of a specialist (employee) that is well fit for working in a virtual, cross border team. It is interesting to find out which are the prerequisites that make teams successful despite of the geographical limitations and

how it will be possible to develop working in such a virtual team. Based on empiric information received from experienced cross border employees the view on the thesis may be expanded and to gather theoretical information that support these experiences.

The way of working has been international for many years in the organisation. To question and evaluate the existing methods and processes may be left on a theoretical level without a real interface to practice. Implementing any changes, especially in a large organisation, may take a long time.

## 6.2 Questions in the web based questionnaire

A web-based questionnaire will be sent to chosen recipients by e-mail. If needed and allowed by the recipient, closer questions may be performed based on received answers.

Main themes for questions are:

- What kind of challenges does an international, virtual team bring to working in projects
- Development and future of a virtual cross border team
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a virtual cross border team
- What prerequisites are needed from a virtual cross border team manager
- What prerequisites are needed from a virtual cross border team member
- How do employees themselves experience a virtual cross border environment

## 6.3 Recipients of the questionnaire

The recipients for the questionnaire are employees in the case organisation that are working in named parts of the company. These employees are all either project management professionals, product development managers or their leaders.

The focus is on studying a strictly defined part of the organisation that operates in three countries (Finland, Sweden and Denmark) and has about 95 employees, both on specialist and supervisor level.

The target group is split in two countries, in four cities. Colleagues are located both in Finland and in Sweden and the team supervisor works in Sweden. The team members are specialist in project management and used to work independently in their own projects. The team is part of a bigger group that consists of several teams. The group is a project organisation where employees are split in teams working with certain products and services but whenever needed a project specialist can be borrowed into another team, depending on available resources and knowledge needs. All the team members are trained and certified project managers with a strong experience on demanding product development projects.

Danish colleagues are also invited to join the study. They were merged to the organisation quite recently and their views and opinions on working cross border may differ from the Swedish and Finnish opinions. It is also interesting to see how the location of Denmark and their national culture may affect the outcome of the results.

#### 6.4 Methods used in the case study

Main emphasis will be laid on qualitative research, since the background information of respondents is not important when analyzing the answers. Quantitative research will be performed as well since some of the questions will deal with issues that can be analyzed in figures. It is more important to examine the answers to open questions that will bring out information on personal opinions on the given subject. Qualitative research will enable to form a comprehensive understanding on challenges and possibilities of a cross border, virtual team work. The received answers will possibly have an effect on how the theme will be handled.

Qualitative research method is reasonable choice in cases where the human is preferred as an instrument for data collection and in cases it is possible that the research

plan may evolve as the actual research progresses (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2008, 160).

For the thesis, both Finnish and Swedish team members and team leaders will be interviewed. The interviews will be conducted with an internet questionnaire (<https://elomake.samk.fi/>). A closer look at the target group and amount of questionnaires sent will be done together with the team leader.

Collecting the data/information with interviews is justifiable since the theme of research is quite complex and it bases on a subjective view. The interviewee has to have a possibility to bring out and emphasize his/her own point of view as freely as possible (Hirsjärvi etc. 2008, 200). Disadvantage may be that in an interview, socially desirable answers can be preferred (Hirsjärvi etc. 2008, 201).

Getting answers can be made easier by giving some thought on setting the questions. On the other hand, open questions and their answers may provide more valuable information on the existing situation and possible future development ideas. Ranging the amount of respondents will affect the final result which demands that it is to be defined which amount of answers is required for a reliable sample. It is stated that the interviews can be done without knowledge on the sample since the data is said to be sufficient when certain items are repeated in the answers (Hirsjärvi etc. 2008, 177). The questionnaires have to be compact and easy to answer. It is important to form the questions in an unambiguous format. An interview of good quality will provide an outcome of good quality (Hirsjärvi etc. 2008, 193).

Information on supervisors' and specialists' experiences will mainly be gathered with a help of a web-questionnaire. A certain amount of questions are quantitative answering on estimates on the existing team model (and will be sorted in relation to for example the working years of the respondent) and a certain amount of questions are qualitative, where the respondent's own opinions on a virtual, international, cross border team are requested and how the environment could furthermore be developed.

Basic background data will be gathered; such as age group, gender, working experience and international experience in years in order to achieve a good understanding

on how for example different backgrounds will affect opinions on working in a cross border team.

Possible obstacles for getting the needed user response may be that the respondents do not commit to reply on the questionnaire. There is an organisational transition on-going which also might affect the willingness to respond.

### 6.5 Reliability of results

The information gathered by interviewing the respondents and the validity of the information is based on a subjective view and cannot be questioned. By sending out a well-considered amount of interview requests, a single response will not dominate the sample.

## 7 RESEARCH RESULTS

### 7.1 Basic information on the responses

The link to the questionnaire was sent by a Team Manager to 50 Project Managers, Project Development Managers and project team members via e-mail in early April 2013. The questionnaire was located at <https://elomake.samk.fi/lomakkeet/2459/lomake.html> with a response time of eight days (2.4.2013 – 10.4.2013). No names or IP addresses were collected and all answers were handled anonymously.

The total amount of responses was 25 which mean that 50% of the respondents replied to the survey. The respondents were not obliged to answer all the questions, only some of them were compulsory. Basically, the questions with a menu were compulsory and those that required an answer in a free text field did not require to be replied. Even though Danish colleagues were encouraged to join the survey, only Finnish and Swedish co-workers responded.

## 7.2 Structure of the questionnaire

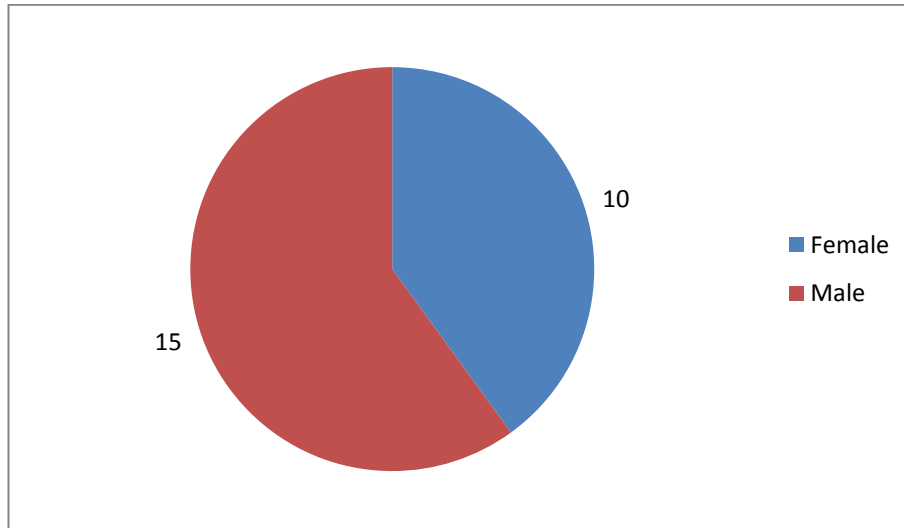
The survey consisted of eight pages with questions divided by topics as following:

- Background information – to find out basic information on the respondents such as sex, location, role and experience in virtual, project management environment.
- Reference frame – to define how respondents find the importance of different factors that affect the work in a virtual, project management team.
- Tools – to discover which tools are mostly and preferably used and how they support the work in the defined environment and how to improve the usage of common tools.
- Team building – to gather information on how the virtual team members experience the existing team environment and how they would improve the team if they had the possibility.
- Cultural differences – to find out if the employees feel that there are differences between nationalities and how these could be overcome successfully.
- SWOT analysis - was needed to define the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats the respondents feel in the existing working environment.
- People – to define what kind of characteristics and support are needed in the defined organisation, in a role of a team manager and in a role of a team member.
- Ideal environment – to find out how the respondents would describe an ideal working environment when thinking about tools, resources etc.

Detailed questions are attached later in this document.

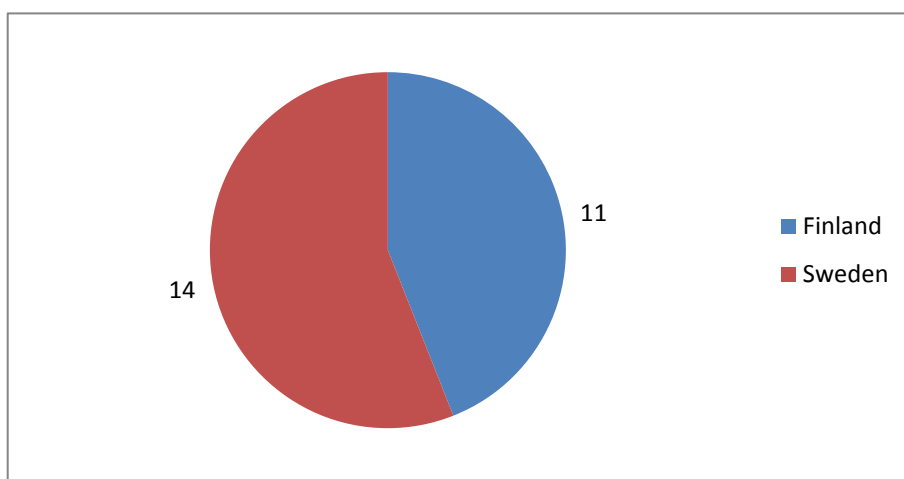
### 7.3 Background information of the respondents

The survey was replied by 25 respondents. 10 of them were women and 15 were men.

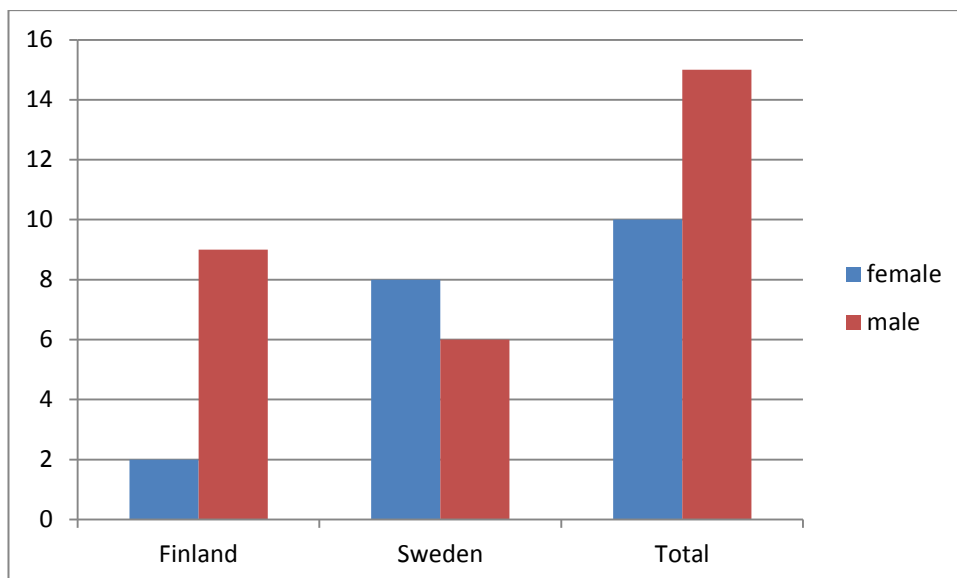


Picture 2. Amount of men and women replying to the questionnaire

Location was asked since the employees are located in different countries and some of the answers might differ significantly based on the physical site. The respondent could choose between Finland, Sweden and Denmark. No one from Denmark responded to the survey.



Picture 3. Location of the respondents



Picture 4. Amount of men and women responding the survey from Finland and Sweden

Background tab included a menu for defining the role in the project organisation. Ready defined options were offered in the menu; Project Manager, Project Development Manager, Project member, Project owner, Other. From 25 respondents 24 were Project Managers (96%) and only one respondent defined his/her role as “Other” (4%).

In order to get information on the project work experience, the respondents were requested to give an estimate on years that they have been working in a project related environment. This could even include work experience outside the case company. Experience in a virtual, cross border team was also to be defined; a menu was given and the user was requested to choose the option that suits the best. The answers show that 28% of respondents have been working within project management are for 10 – 12 years as the average of experience is 11,8 years.

Table 3. Amount and percentage of years of experience within project management

	Amount	%
2 - 4	2	8
4 - 6	1	4
6- 8	0	0
8 - 10	3	12
10 - 12	7	28
12 - 14	4	16
14 - 16	5	20
16 - 18	0	0
18 - 20	0	0
20 - 22	2	8
22 - 24	0	0
24 - 26	1	4
Total	25	100

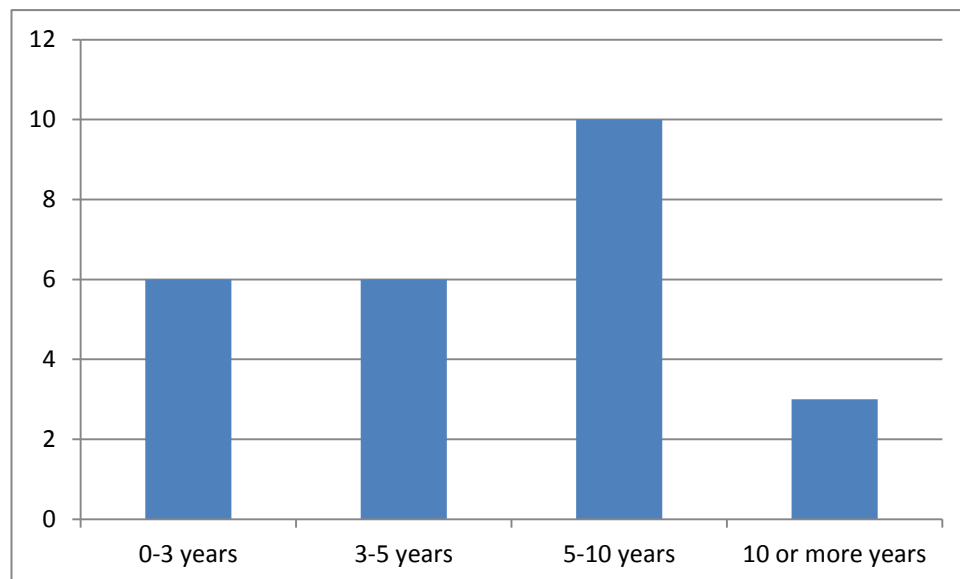


Picture 5. Amount of project work experience of the respondents in a graphical mode

The respondents also estimated their experience in a virtual cross border team. Options were given; 0-3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years and more than 10 years. It seems that 40% of respondents have been working in a virtual environment for 5-10 years. Only 12% have been working cross border for more than 10 years.

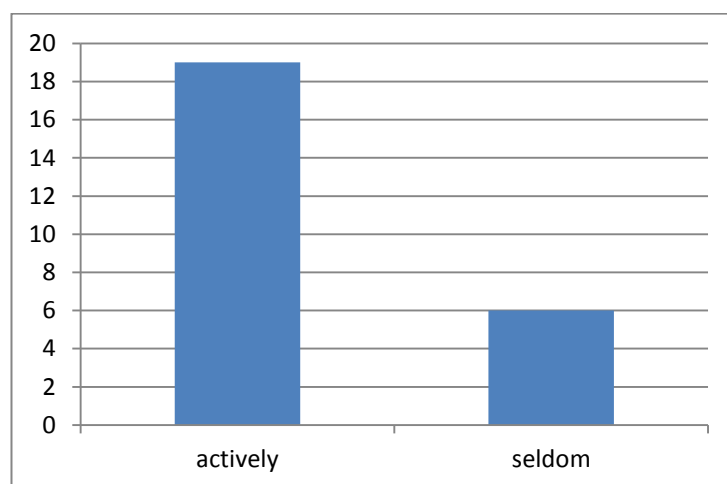
Table 4. Experience in a virtual cross border team

	Amount	%
0-3 years	6	24
3-5 years	6	24
5-10 years	10	40
10 or more	3	12



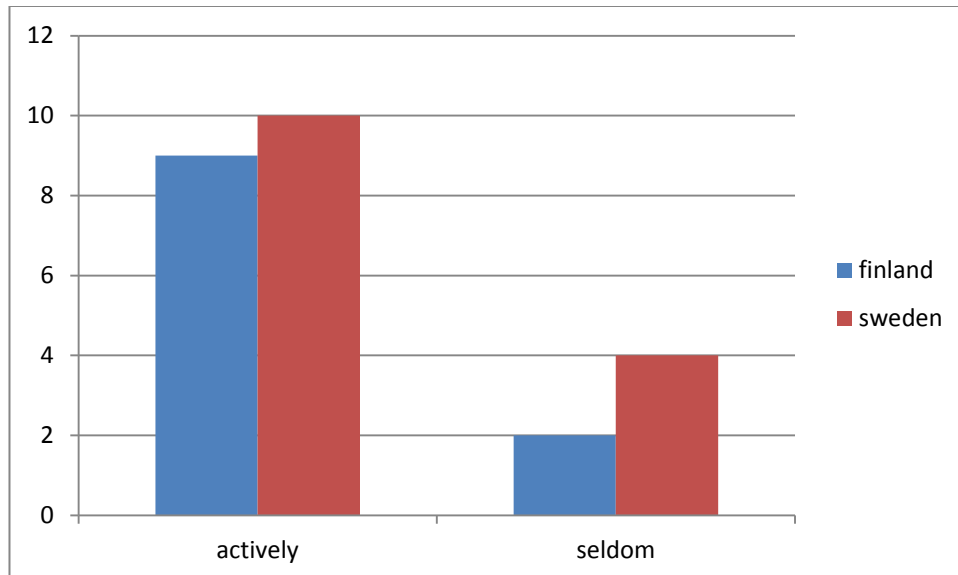
Picture 6. Amount of experience in a virtual cross border team

Cross border activity was asked in order to find out how actively the respondents are working with cross border resources. The outcome was that 76% answered that they work actively with cross border resources and the rest, 24%, seldom.



Picture 7. Amount of replies on working with cross border resources

When comparing Finland and Sweden, the outcome was that about 81% of Finns and 71% of Swedes felt that they work actively with the cross border resources.



Picture 8. Comparison on activity with cross border resources between the countries

#### 7.4 Reference frame review showed that communication knowledge and skills are the most important themes in the daily work

The reference frame for a cross border, virtual team was defined to include following areas:

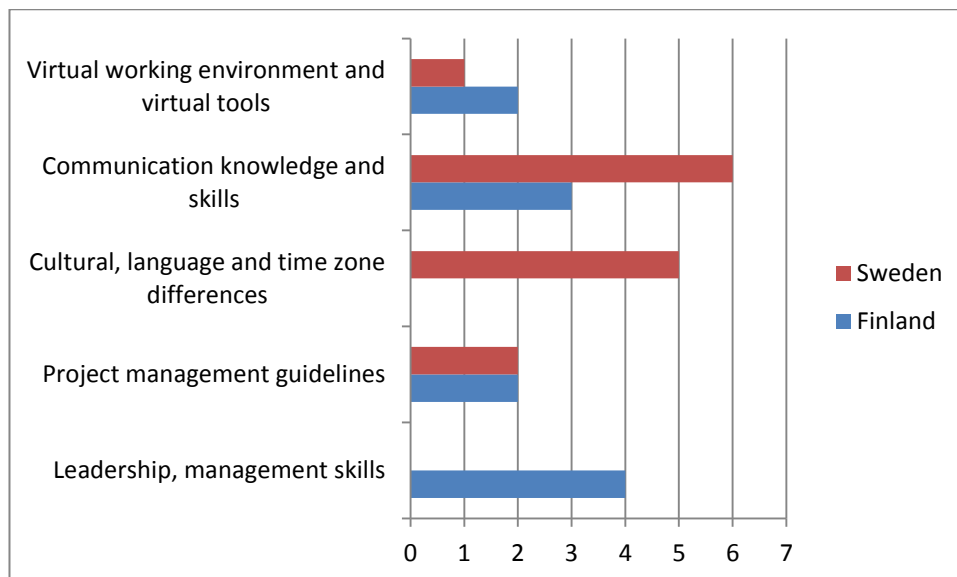
- leadership and management skills
- project management guidelines
- communication knowledge and skills
- virtual working environment and virtual tools
- cultural, language and time zone differences

The respondents were requested to define the most important area in the daily work that would need the most attention. Only one of the given themes could be chosen. According to the replies the majority (36%, 9 replies) defined communication knowledge and skills to be the issue that needs the most attendance in a virtual cross border environment. It is to be noted that the Swedish respondents stated that cultural, language and time zone differences should be paid attention to, whereas no one

from Finland considered that theme as the most important one. Further, leadership and management skills were named in Finnish replies without any support from Sweden to that theme.

Table 5. Reference frame responses

	Amount	%
Leadership, management skills	4	16
Project management guidelines	4	16
Cultural, language and time zone differences	5	20
Communication knowledge and skills	9	36
Virtual working environment and virtual tools	3	12



Picture 9. Reference frame themes based on Finnish and Swedish responses

### 7.5 Tools in daily use – e-mail in use most often

To get information on the usage of tools in the daily life, the respondents were requested to define which tools they use on an active basis. Available options were phone, e-mail, WebEx (web conferencing tool), Lync (Microsoft client used for instant messaging, Voice Over IP –telephone calls and video conferences), workroom (SharePoint based workspace for sharing documentation), video conference. Next questions required some further evaluation on the tools; which do the user prefer and why and is there a tool that the user does not like to use that much and why. To get further development ideas and to encourage innovative thinking, the respondents

were asked to define how the virtual tools could be used more effectively and whether there are tools that we, in the working environment, are missing.

Table 6. Tools in daily use

	Amount	%
Phone	21	84
E-mail	25	100
Webex	7	28
Lync	22	88
Workroom	21	84
Video conference	1	4

The respondents were asked to name one tool of the list above they prefer in their daily work and why. 10 of respondents stated that they prefer a combination of the tools depending on the need, 7 named that e-mail is the preferred tool in the daily work and 7 stated that they prefer Lync. One respondent named Webex. Combination of tools was preferred due to the difference of the tools; Workroom for saving the materials, e-mail for a discussion with several people and Lync for the ease of use. In cases where e-mail was preferred, its' traceability was mentioned as one of the benefits. The possibility to send pictures and other information was appreciated. E-mail also makes it possible for the recipient to reply whenever it is possible. Lync was preferred since it is easy to use and available for ad hoc discussions, questions and file sharing.

When asking to name the tool the respondents did not like to use (and why), video conference got most attention. It was stated that is complicated to use and that it is hard to find an available meeting room with video appliance. On the other hand, some respondents named that there is not a need for the project members to even see each other in a meeting. A couple of respondents named phone to be the least favourite one due to issues with voice quality and that after a telephone call one might not remember what was discussed and agreed. Lync also got a couple of mentions with a comment that there have been technical problems in using it.

According to the respondents, virtual tools could be used more efficiently with some more training and with commitment to simply use them. Even video conferences might be used more often if people were more familiar with the available functionalities. Technical reliability of the tools is needed in order to be able to utilize the fully in a virtual environment.

In order to develop the project work environment, many of the respondents named that a whiteboard tool is needed. It could be used virtually in the same way as a whiteboard in a meeting room but with a possibility to share it via network and to simultaneously modify documents. From the tool perspective, a more flexible policy to add and install applications was suggested. Workroom application also needed some further attention and development since it is not in an efficient use as it is.

In a study by Päivi Blom cross border managers were interviewed on communication tools:

*“In general, nearly 60% of the respondents were satisfied with the communication tools and the same percentage had no difficulties in selecting which communication tool to use. However, the large selection of tools can also lead to difficulties in finding information, especially in the case of tools for document sharing.”* (Blom 2010, 60.)

## 7.6 Team building

Team building questions were asked to clarify how the cross border team members see their virtual teams, since some of the co-workers and project members are located in other countries. The purpose of the questions was to find out how the environment (with its' limitations) could be improved and developed into an environment that supports the virtual way of working.

### 7.6.1 Daily routines are affected by time zone differences

Respondents were asked if the cross border environment prevents or causes troubles in their daily routines and to describe these possible challenges a bit closer.

Time zone differences were mentioned in several replies. It was stated that even though there is only one hour difference, it makes challenging to book meetings since during 11-13 EET it is lunch hour in first in Finland, then in Sweden. Language and culture were also mentioned as minor challenges, since the ability to talk the common language, English, is not always on such a level that complex things can be discussed with ease. The unofficial interaction does not exist and still some of the sometimes even important issues are discussed by the coffee table. Differences in the local organisation, roles, processes and decision making were considered as issues that cause challenges in a cross border organisation.

#### 7.6.2 Interaction between team members needs to be developed

Since the target organisation has been evolving and changing lately quite dramatically by re-locating some of the resources closer to each other, the question was how to improve the interaction between team members in another country.

For some (about 8) of the respondents the interaction would require more traveling and face to face meetings. At the same time, same amount of respondents stated that the interaction can be reached by regular meetings (not necessarily face to face) with a pre-defined agenda. For some respondents (3) the question of interaction between team members after the re-location process was not that relevant, some of them even stated that people in the same location prefer to have virtual meetings with each other.

#### 7.6.3 Communication should be improved

Due to the fact that the team members often have geographical limitations, the respondents were asked if they feel that they have enough of communication between each other. Grounds for their opinions were also requested.

16 of the respondents either stated that there simply is not enough of communication between each other or defined that the communication is on an adequate level but

can still be improved. About 5 of the respondents felt that the amount of communication is enough as it is. Someone even questioned whether communication itself is important if you do not have anything to say? Based on the answers, communication is definitely needed.

Geographical constraints often limit the communication flow. Especially, the silent information does not reach the other party. Sharing the silent information could be supported with the following cooperation forms (Virtainlahti 2009, 118):

- teams and named work groups
- mentoring
- master – apprentice model
- senior – junior –pairs
- experienced – beginner –pairs
- substitute and deputy arrangements
- networks
- reflections.

Communication is one of the key assets in an organisation. Different kind of expertise is spread in the organisation and the resources need to communicate with each other to be able to reach the goals. Without personal contact and interaction the silent information will remain to be used by the person himself. By interacting, the knowledge can be shared and utilized more extensively. Being successful in a working environment depends on how well the resources share and address the information available. Interaction is associated with trust, cooperation, human relations, atmosphere (ethos), attitudes, motivation and observation of disparity. (Virtainlahti 2009, 215.)

#### 7.6.4 A local team does not always support the common way of working

Fourth question was to think about a team that would only consist of local resources without any cross border qualities. Would it make the project work somehow easier or harder and why?

68% of the responses included an assumption that working with a team with only local resources would make the work either somehow or much easier. Still, when working with a cross border project, it was preferred that the team members would be located locally (in different countries) to make the local expertise and competence available. Since the company does not work with standard consumer market products, it is essential that there are resources available in the target country. Common way of working requires geographically split resources to be available.

#### 7.6.5 To start a new cross border team requires face to face meetings in the beginning

A hypothetical question on what the first activities would be in a role of a team manager who was establishing a new cross border team was asked to find out how the respondents would react in such a situation. The time period was limited to the first six months.

60% of the respondents defined that meeting the new cross border team members, either face to face or in a common get-together, would be needed to be able to start a new team. Face to face meetings should be followed by frequent team meetings and even phone calls to distant team members located in another location. The expectations, common way of working and the common toolset should be defined. Even a look at cultural differences would be appreciated in the beginning of a new cross border team. It seems that communication and planning the long term activities (such as meeting, team building) are needed to succeed.

#### 7.6.6 Communication is needed to reduce challenges caused by location

The last question in the team building section was how the respondents would secure that the geographical location would not act as a limitation.

28% stated that communication and communication tools would be the key to prevent the geographical location to limit the work in a cross border team. 32% expanded the idea into having meetings regularly and starting with a face to face meeting

and continuing with a virtual meeting tool. Common goals were also named as an enabler for a good co-operation between different countries. Knowledge sharing and networking both locally and cross border would help the team to evolve as a diversified team.

#### 7.6.7 Cultural differences show that we act differently in different situations

Since the employees are located in different countries, they also are of a different cultural origin. The respondents were asked to describe if they have noticed any differences when thinking about the co-workers abroad and if they have had the possibility to adapt any new ways of working from the foreign team member; is there some things that we might learn from each other? Then the respondents were asked to reply either “yes” or “no” to a question if they would appreciate if the colleague knew more about the respondent’s culture and language.

80% of the respondents felt that they would appreciate if the colleague in the neighbouring country knew more about the culture and language.

Table 7. Would you appreciate if your colleague knew more about your language and culture?

	Amount	%
Yes	20	80
No	2	8
No reply	3	12

17 of the respondent stated that there are differences how Swedish people and Finnish people act in a working environment. Important seems to be how the difference is handled; is it appreciated or just ignored. One of the respondents suggested that the company would arrange a course in intercultural understanding to get more familiar with the other party’s habits, for example in a meeting.

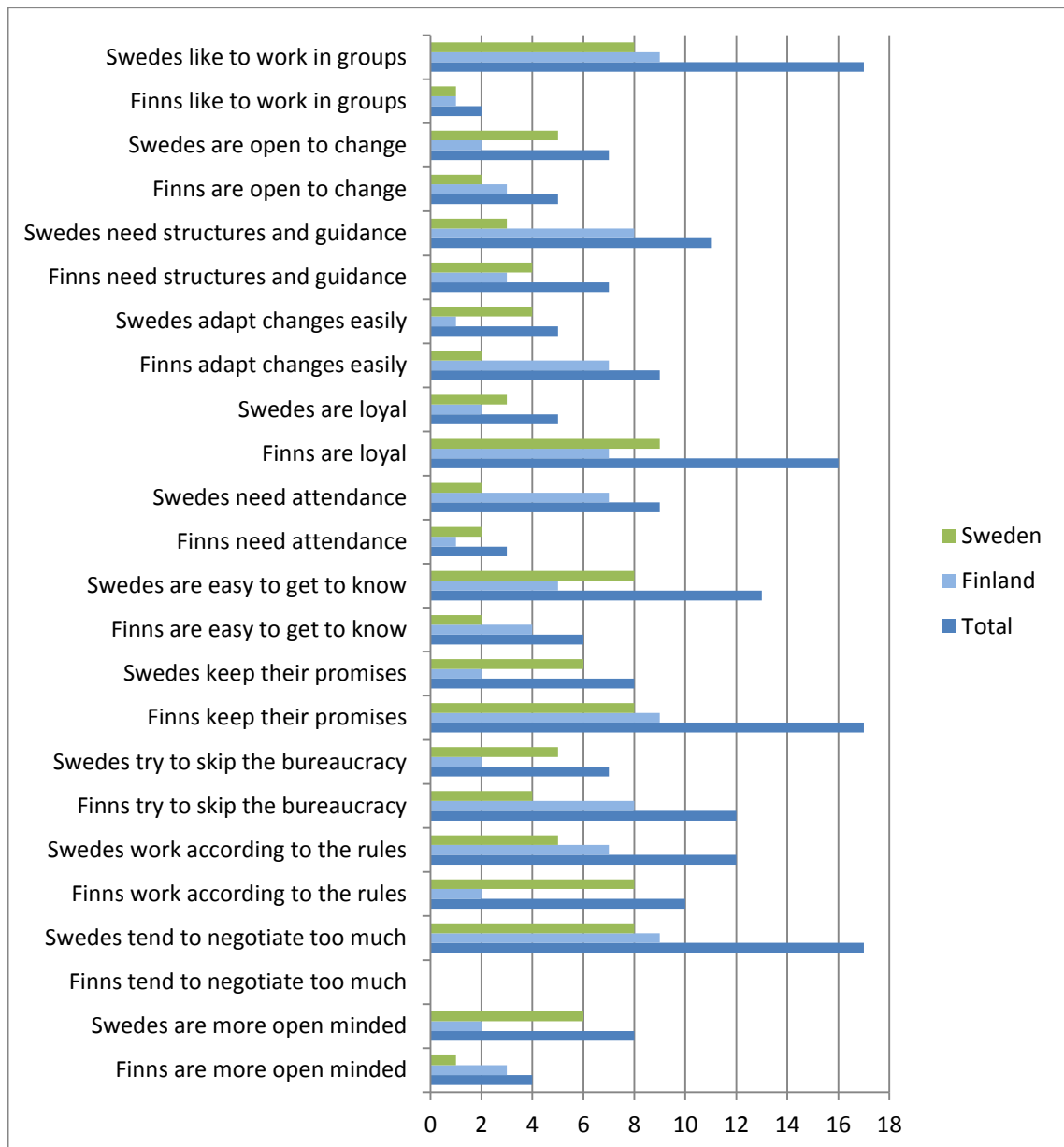
A comparison between nationalities (Finns and Swedes in this case) was asked to be filled in. The goal was to find out how the respondents evaluate different characteristics and are there differences between nationalities or are they just depending on per-

sonal features. According to the answers, it seems that the majority (more than 70%) of the respondents think that Swedes like to work in groups, Finns are loyal, Finns keep their promises and Swedes tend to negotiate too much.

The given answers can also be shown based on the location of the respondent (table 8). According to this view, Finns define that they keep their promises (90%), they try to skip the bureaucracy (80%), are open to change (70%) and are loyal (70%). Swedes define that they are easy to get to know (66,7%), like to work in groups (66,7%) and tend to negotiate too much (66,7%). It is interesting that for some characteristics the Finns and Swedes see themselves very differently. When Finns think they are open to change (70%), only 16,7% of Swedes agree. 70% of Finns think that Swedes need attendance, but the Swedish co-workers do not agree when looking at themselves (16,7%). Finns also think that Swedes need structure and guidance (80%), but only some Swedes (25%) agree.

Table 8. Summary on the responses of Swedish and Finnish characteristics

	Amount of Finnish responses	Amount of Swedish responses	% of Finnish responses	% of Swedish responses
Finns adapt changes easily	3	2	30,0	16,7
Finns are easy to get to know	4	2	40,0	16,7
Finns are loyal	7	9	70,0	75,0
Finns are more open minded	3	1	30,0	8,3
Finns are open to change	7	2	70,0	16,7
Finns keep their promises	9	8	90,0	66,7
Finns like to work in groups	1	1	10,0	8,3
Finns need attendance	1	2	10,0	16,7
Finns need structures and guidance	3	4	30,0	33,3
Finns tend to negotiate too much	0	0	0,0	0,0
Finns try to skip the bureaucracy	8	4	80,0	33,3
Finns work according to the rules	2	8	20,0	66,7
Swedes adapt changes easily	1	4	10,0	33,3
Swedes are easy to get to know	5	8	50,0	66,7
Swedes are loyal	2	3	20,0	25,0
Swedes are more open minded	2	6	20,0	50,0
Swedes are open to change	2	5	20,0	41,7
Swedes keep their promises	2	6	20,0	50,0
Swedes like to work in groups	9	8	90,0	66,7
Swedes need attendance	7	2	70,0	16,7
Swedes need structures and guidance	8	3	80,0	25,0
Swedes tend to negotiate too much	9	8	90,0	66,7
Swedes try to skip the bureaucracy	2	5	20,0	41,7
Swedes work according to the rules	7	5	70,0	41,7



Picture 10. Graphical view on Swedish and Finnish characteristics

According to Svenolof Karlsson from Åbo Akademi, Finns work best under pressure and they move easily from chaos and disorder to clarity and implementation. Swedes get the best results by planning, anticipating and participating. If a leader manages to combine these two different manners, he has found a key to success. (Karlsson 2005, 173.)

Anni Vepsäläinen (Karlsson 2005, 178) states that some stereotypes are true; Swedes plan thoroughly and discuss a lot, Finns act in a more instinctive way, quickly and

assertively. According to Vepsäläinen, the personal characteristics are still stronger than stereotypes and we all are individuals. (Karlsson 2005, 178.)

### 7.7 SWOT analysis on a cross border organisation

SWOT analysis describes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Respondents were requested to fill in the analysis on a cross border organisation. It was not limited how the respondent himself or herself would in this case define the organisation; it may be whole company that is seen as the organisation or just the cross border team as the organisation.

In the SWOT section, the respondents were requested to tell what kind of support they feel is need from the management to make the project work succeed in our way of working.



Picture 11. SWOT analysis conclusion

It can be concluded that communication is an important theme, since it was mentioned as strength, weakness and threat. Attitude could be seen as strength and weakness. The respondents see the people and their experience as strength but at the same time realise that learning is an opportunity. Differences in culture, location and the way of working are seen as weak spots in the organisation.

The respondents were asked “what kind of support is needed from the management to make project work succeed in our way of working?”. Majority of the replies referred to management, governance and support. Clear principles on the way of working in and between the countries were requested and it was also important that the management would share the same view in different countries. Flexibility was needed from the management as well as an understanding that things can occasionally be made in an innovative manner. Traveling permissions and possibility to meet project group members face to face was mentioned in some responses.

#### 7.8 People in a virtual team – team members do not differ from the team manager, similar characteristics are needed

People section concentrated on personal characteristics and qualities. The first question was to define which qualities are needed from a cross border team member and the second question was to define the qualities that are needed from a cross border team manager.

According to this case, a cross border team member needs to have

- communication skills
- language skills
- social skills
- an open mind
- cultural knowledge
- an independent way of working
- motivation
- ability to work in a flexible way.

A cross border team leader needs to have

- good or excellent communication skills
- language skills
- social skills
- an active and practical attitude

- an understanding on the cultural differences
- ability to “read between the lines”
- experience
- motivation
- ability the trust the team
- ability to keep the promises.

It seems that both the team member and the team leader share the majority of the characteristics needed. Independent way of working and ability to build trust are appreciated in a virtual cross border environment where daily or even weekly face to face contacts with all team members may not exist.

According to a study by Blom “an overwhelming 92% of the respondents feel that it is more challenging to be a cross border manager (than a local one).” (Blom 2010, 56.) This would imply that even though characteristics for a team manager and team member are quite alike, the manager needs to be willing to work with challenging personnel administration issues. ”Reading between the lines”, as mentioned in responses, is much more challenging from a distance than from the work room next door.

#### 7.9 Ideal environment consists of interaction, good tools and is more of an attitude than a physical space

The last section in the questionnaire was related to an ideal project work environment. The respondents were asked to think about the tools, networks, resources and so on without any further limitations.

Kaario & Peltola (2008, 43) lists that a modern group work environment could consist of:

- documentation management
- support for non-synchronic discussion
- support for synchronic discussion (instant messaging)
- bulletin board

- sharing of photos
- calendars
- task lists
- tool for blogging
- tool for wiki publishing
- support for presence information
- online –conference tool.

Ideal environment was described as a place where all project group members could either meet each other or work in a round table way even though the physical presence was not possible. If it was not possible to work with local resources in a project, video conferences were defined as a good, already existing tool. It seems that working in a project is more about the attitude, not the location. Many of the respondents named that an ideal environment would need concentration on only one project at a time, commitment, attendance and close collaboration. One respondent named that a local administrative resource would be needed for helping with local activities, such as booking meeting rooms and getting access rights to premises if needed. From distance, these actions are quite hard to maintain. One respondent stated that a white-board tool on the computer might be useful in meetings where some of the participants are joining by phone and the other in the physical meeting room. Otherwise, the existing tools seemed to cover the needs the respondents have.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated what kind of challenges a virtual cross border team faces when working within project management, how teams could be developed further, what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the organization, what is needed from a cross border team manager and team member and how do the employees themselves experience the virtual cross border environment in their everyday work.

Information was requested from the employees working in the project management environment cross border. The responses showed that the employees feel that there are underlying issues that need to be handled in order to create such a working environment that it supports open and constant flow of information. The answers were quite aligned with each other.

### 8.1 What kind of challenges does an international, virtual team bring to working in projects?

This study shows that communication was stated as one of the major challenges in virtual environments, either a lack of communication or a lack of adequate information. Also differences in language skills and even differences in the time zones were considered as challenges. Tools could also act as challenges since all employees either cannot or will not use the tools available as efficiently as possible. Due to cultural differences, some common tasks and activities can be challenging since Swedish employees and Finnish employees act differently in certain situations.

Communication as a strength and as a weakness was one of the main themes mentioned in many of the replies. In order to create trust and to support knowledge sharing even cultural aspects needs to be taken into account. In a situation where traveling is limited and face to face meetings are infrequent, the management needs to find new, innovative ways of communication and trust building. Technology should support the goal of constant information flow and flexibility should be a key factor.

### 8.2 Development and future of a virtual cross border team

The respondents felt that the early stages of a virtual cross border team requires face to face meetings and a great amount of interaction between the team manager and the team members. A unified understanding on expectations should be defined and agreed to be able to create trust. Since location might act as a limitation in a cross border team, communication tools and methods should be taken into consideration. Knowledge sharing and networking should be encouraged.

### 8.3 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a virtual cross border team

A SWOT analysis emphasized that communication is the main theme in a virtual, cross border organization. Communication was defined as a strength, weakness and threat. In practice, communication should be emphasized in any actions regarding a virtual cross border team.

### 8.4 What prerequisites are needed from a virtual cross border team manager and a team member

According to this study, the majority of personal characteristics for both a team member and a team manager are basically the same. Communication skills, language skills, ability to work independently and ability to appreciate cultural differences were mentioned for both a team manager and a team member.

### 8.5 How do employees themselves experience a virtual cross border environment

The respondents felt that communication knowledge and skills require attention. According to the study, there is not enough of interaction cross border and it should be improved. An amount of improvements are needed in order to create such an environment that it supports the challenging requirement that projects often deal with.

This report can be used to improve the virtual cross border project management environment. The people working with the daily challenges have many brilliant ideas on how to develop a virtual working space that both supports the project work itself but also makes it easier for a project manager to commit to the goals defined in projects and by the management.

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# ATTACHMENT1

The screenshot shows a questionnaire page with the following content:


- Logos for 'samk' and 'KYSELY'.
- Contact information: 'If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire, please contact: sari.anttila@teliaonline.com, +358 40 3022115'.
- Title: 'Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment'.
- Form details: 'Form is timed: publicly starts 2.4.2013 6.00 and ends 10.4.2013 22.00. This questionnaire has been created in order to gather project professional feedback for a thesis "Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment".'
- Section: 'Background information'.
- Fields:
  - Gender: Radio buttons for 'Female' and 'Male'.
  - Location: Radio buttons for 'Finland', 'Sweden', 'Denmark', and 'Other'.
  - Role: A dropdown menu with 'Select from the menu'.
  - Experience in project work (in years): A text input field with a warning icon.
  - Experience in a virtual crossborder team: A dropdown menu with 'Select from the menu'.
  - Crossborder role: Radio buttons for 'Actively working with crossborder resources', 'Seldom working with crossborder resources', and 'Not working with crossborder resources'.
- Navigation: 'Next >>' button.
- Page footer: 'Page 1 / 9', 'Järjestelmä EduX E-omake 3.1', and 'www.e-omake.fi'.

Picture 12. Background information

The screenshot shows a questionnaire page with the following content:

- Logos for 'samk' and 'KYSELY'.
- Title: 'Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment'.
- Form details: 'Form is timed: publicly starts 2.4.2013 6.00 and ends 10.4.2013 22.00. This questionnaire has been created in order to gather project professional feedback for a thesis "Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment".'
- Section: 'Reference frame'.
- Text: 'There are several things that might be considered a reference frame for a virtual, crossborder team. Which of the following do you consider to be the theme that needs most attention? Choose only one.'
- Field: 'Reference frame' with radio buttons for:
  - Leadership, management skills
  - Project management guidelines
  - Communication knowledge and skills
  - Virtual working environment and virtual tools
  - Cultural, language and time zone differences
- Navigation: '<< Previous' and 'Next >>' buttons.
- Page footer: 'Page 2 / 9', 'Järjestelmä EduX E-omake 3.1', and 'www.e-omake.fi'.

Picture 13. Reference Frame

samk  KYSELY

Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment

Form is timed: publicly starts 2.4.2013 6:00 and ends 10.4.2013 22:00  
This questionnaire has been created in order to gather project professional feedback for a thesis "Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment".

---

**Tools**

When working virtually and crossborder, it is important to be able to use the communication tools as effectively as possible.  
Which one(s) of the following do you use actively, on a daily basis? Choose as many you like.

Tools used actively

Phone  
 E-mail  
 Webex  
 Lync  
 Workroom  
 Video conference

Which one of the tools above do you prefer in your daily work? Why?

Is there a tool you do not like to use? Why?


How could virtual tools be used more effectively?

What kind of tools are we missing? Is there something that could create more interaction between colleagues in different countries? Think outside the box.

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 Järjestelmä Eduo E-omake 3.1 | [www.samk.fi](http://www.samk.fi)

Picture 14. Tools

samk  KYSELY

Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment

Form is timed: publicly starts 2.4.2013 6:00 and ends 10.4.2013 22:00  
This questionnaire has been created in order to gather project professional feedback for a thesis "Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment".

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**Team building**

Team building is more challenging when the team members are located in different countries.

Does working cross border prevent or cause troubles in your daily routines? Describe the challenges.

The organization has changed recently to a mode where employees have been re-located closer to each other. How would you improve the interaction between team members in another country?

Do we have enough of communication with each other? Why (not)?

If teams would only consist of local resources (ie. no cross border), would it make project work easier/harder? Why?



If you were a team manager and should start up a new cross border team, what would be your first activities during the first 6 months?

How would you secure that location would not act as a limitation?

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 Järjestelmä Eduo E-omake 3.1 | [www.samk.fi](http://www.samk.fi)

Picture 15. Team building

**Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment**  
 Finn is timed: publicly starts 2.4.2013 6.00 and ends 10.4.2013 22.00  
 This questionnaire has been created in order to gather project professional feedback for a thesis "Crossborder teambuilding in an international project management environment".

**Cultural differences**

Thinking about your co-workers abroad, how would you describe the cultural differences? Are there any?

Have you adapted any new ways of working whilst working with a Finn/Swede? What could we learn from each other?

Would you appreciate if your colleague knew more about your culture and language? Choose from the menu

Compare Finns and Swedes, make choices between the nationalities:

<input type="checkbox"/> Finns are more open minded	<input type="checkbox"/> Finns need attendance
<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes are more open minded	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes need attendance
<input type="checkbox"/> Finns tend to negotiate too much	<input type="checkbox"/> Finns are loyal
<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes tend to negotiate too much	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes are loyal
<input type="checkbox"/> Finns work according to the rules	<input type="checkbox"/> Finns adapt changes easily
<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes work according to the rules	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes adapt changes easily
<input type="checkbox"/> Finns try to skip the bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Finns need structures and guidance
<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes try to skip the bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes need structures and guidance
<input type="checkbox"/> Finns keep their promises	<input type="checkbox"/> Finns are open to change
<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes keep their promises	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes are open to change
<input type="checkbox"/> Finns are easy to get to know	<input type="checkbox"/> Finns like to work in groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes are easy to get to know	<input type="checkbox"/> Swedes like to work in groups

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Järjestelmä Educa E-timote 3.1 | [www.e-timote.fi](http://www.e-timote.fi)

Picture 16. Cultural differences

**SWOT analysis**

SWOT analysis describes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Please make your own SWOT on a cross border organisation.

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

What kind of support is needed from the management to make project work succeed in our way of working?

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Picture 17. SWOT analysis

**People**

What qualities are needed from a cross border team member?

What qualities are needed from a cross border team leader?

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Picture 18. People

**Ideal environment**

What would be the ideal environment for project work?  
Think about the tools, networks, resources etc.

Any other comments?

<< Previous   Next >>

Thank you for your response!

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Järjestelmä EduX (Lomake 3) | [www.e-lomake.fi](http://www.e-lomake.fi)

Picture 19. Ideal environment

## ATTACHMENT 2

### RESPONSES TO THE OPEN QUESTIONS

#### TOOLS

##### **Which one of the tools above do you prefer in your daily work? Why?**

Email since the discussion can be performed anytime (whichever time suits the best) and it will be documented.

Email. When you have a dialogue/discussion by email in order to solve a problem and to find a solution, it's easy to elaborate in text and pictures what you mean.

Sometimes there is even a need to supplement with one or several Lync meetings.  
email

Email. Easier to make sure the facts are correctly presented & understood. Traceability. When issue is not urgent, gives the recipient opportunity to choose best time to repond.

E-mail, easy to use and can be use while you have time  
e-mail

I use e-mail to check progress, send out information that needs to be known by many and to ask questions. With e-mail the other party can answer when i suites them and you can always go back and look at the conversation later.

Lync... combines phone, IM, presence and online meetings in an easy way  
Lync

Lync, easy to use and book meetings

Lync. You can talk and share documents in an easy way. Some very little ad hoc questions we can ask by chat.

Lync; it is easy to work together when a desktop can be shared among participants.

Lync/Webbex. easy to share information both in small and large groups

It use to be telephone conferencing and Webex but now a days it is Lync.  
all of the selected above.

All, depends on the information and situation

Phone and email

phone and webex plus e-mail Easy to use and essential for communications

Depending on situation and purpose - video conference is outstanding (or mandatory) for daily interactions and short checks/planning. Lync for ongoing communication

and workroom (or similar) for documentation. What is lacking in TS environment is a modern (agile/lean supporting sprint based) tool that gather project planning, tasks and execution.

EMails and Lyncs are essential, because writing emails there will be documentation what is agreed and what isn't agreed. Lync is mandatory because travelling restrictions.

phone and e-mail. It's easy and fulfill my needs.

E-mail for the conversation which one or more participants. Lync for the meetings.

Instant messaging to get quick information. Workrooms for the materials

All of the ones selected. It always depends on the issue at hand. Simple, quick checks: phone, Lync. More complicated requests, things that need wider acceptance, issues that have time for asynchronous communication: email. Working on documents to be shared: Workroom (I only use the library)

Phone - quickest E-mail - when you can't connect otherwise or need a decision Lync - for meetings with several people Workroom - for documents storage mainly

WebEx

### **Is there a tool you do not like to use? Why?**

Workroom, Not available for external member of the project

Workroom, because it is not very user friendly.

Workroom

Workroom. It is good only for the final versions as a storage. Not very flexible for the work in progress.

Video conference. It requires more preparations than for example a Lync-meeting.

Video conference: Complicated to find an available room and not very flexible since it requires that people turn up in a certain room at a certain time. Since there are rather few rooms that usually requires running to a conference room far far away :-)

video conference - no need to see people, voice and document sharing is enough and needed

Video it's restricted use, take too long time for preparation, easier to have face to face meetings

Video conference, Project member doesn't need to see others. Video conference systems has still faults which stole a effective times from the meetings

I do not use video conference very much due to overhead and having resources in too many different locations. Being on my workplace also gives me more screen area which makes information sharing and taking notes easier.

Video Conference, I am not sure how to use it.....

Video conference. it's seldom this add value when you know your team.

Webex - I never really took the time to learn how to use Video conference - always occupied

Lync. It's too complicated Video. It's not creative, it's a "dead" feeling.

Lync is good when it works, sadly it is often technical quality issues with sound.. and that is sometimes causing disturbance and delays in meetings.

Phone, because if you call you do not remember what is discussed.

Voice quality with mobile phone is often inferior to other options.

No

No. Each have their uses.

No

### **How could virtual tools be used more effectively?**

All should learn / be trained to use the tools. There are still quite many who are not really familiar with them or are e.g. missing headset / webcam.

Easier to use

more training and usage of them

Better understanding how lync works

If only everyone knows how to use them... too much time waisted in learning instead of using.

Tools should be easy to use and we all should be committed to use them.

I believe that the selection and combination of tools project managers and project members have within the company, pretty well covers the need.

In environemnts with teams and activities in several countries a common place is of topmost need, this is very harde to get in place in TS, for all countires, if even possible.. It is up to projets to solve this best possible way and is often blocking project execution or best practice.

The whiteboard in Lync could be used more effectively. It would require that there would be less delay when writing/drawing on it and that it would be as common as a normal whiteboard. It should be integrated in the meeting culture.

Workrooms could be used more efficiently. On my projects it has been only for documentation, but I know that it has a lot more advanced features.

I should use more video conference

I would like to use Video conference mor often but it its very hard to find them available.

I believe that workrooms could be more effective if all members and stakeholders use them. Now I think that most people only use them to store documents. I use to add news etc but I don't think people read it so I also send it out by email.

People tend to use e-mail a lot. Only a few are relevant to your current tasks. Message threads are difficult to manage.

Lync needs to be more reliable. Video conference booking seems too often to have reservations for rooms that do not show up in the calendar. Then I get to know only after scheduling the meeting that the room is not available. And I have to find another room.

no technical problems, always problems with Lync, more "driftsäkert"

**What kind of tools are we missing? Is there something that could create more interaction between colleagues in different countries? Think outside the box.**

Whiteboard-pads with pencils in meetingrooms or personal ones. It should be connected to lync, so that I could draw something with a pencil and it would show on the computer screens. And all could do the same. Today when I or somebody tries to draw with the mouse it looks dreadful.

On site the White Board is very useful for discussions around a hoc drawings but that is not possible when working remotely. That should be possible to fix.

tools for simultaneously modifying documents / whiteboard / virtual "PosIT board"

It would be good to have a meeting tool used in laptops that would be "conference-like". Workroom could be developed into something more virtual.

Everything is not about concrete and well-defined tasks, but thing may evolve from embryonic ideas into reality with boards or shared whiteboards/mindmaps.

graphical tablets (e.g. Wacom) could be used for easily sketching pictures during discussion similar to using a whiteboard in a physical room.

More Video conference rooms.

I don't miss any tools. It is more the way we use them. I think that dispersed teams miss the natural discussions by the coffee table, but that could actually be arranged by setting up video conferences or phone meetings.

For the moment, I can't come up with something. See the former answer.

Better support for common project execution place. TS PC environment is generally blocking installation of downloaded SW. Browsers is not latest version and is often not supporting web based tools. Tools in TS toolbox is extremely limited when it comes to project place/execution and not updated according to modern standards. TS should allow projects and multi country teams to select tools themselves, and support this.

Workroom services, such as common documentation management in the projects are not in the efficient use

Wiki instead of workroom

common shared application project services and tools

A better sharepoint set up

Virtual coffee room; always connected HD quality video conference screen between different locations.

Use good quality headset! MS project doc can be saved as pdf doc. but this is not optimal.

Face-to-face meetings are also required, at least one at the start of a project.

I do not know

## **TEAM BUILDING**

**Does working cross border prevent or cause troubles in your daily routines?**

**Describe the challenges.**

Time difference even for just one hour is annoying. The working day for common meetings etc is then only 6 hours.

No. ...Or the only practicality issue the very strict attitude on lunchtime (the time itself, no flexibility on it) in Swe.

Different time zones

Not much. The main challenge is the slight time zone difference.

Challenges are the following: different timezones, language and culture

Small challenges are the time differences.

Large meetings in several time zones need to be planned in good time.

One hour time difference causes that basically from 11-13 you cannot schedule a meeting since it's the lunch hour in Sweden and Finland.

Language if there is a complex thing to discuss

Not easy to communicate because of language, culture.

Yes. Employees' skills in English are not good enough to start with

cause. Language and out of team spirit. Teams should be local and functional. The "fika" talk is most essential.

Yes, it is much easier to have spontaneous talks with people that you meet on a daily basis.

Interaction does not exist. Phone and e-mail are to be used for communication instead of face-to-face discussions.

You cannot meet people face to face, there is no small talk, more of a challenge.

Yes, there are a lot of misunderstandings because of many things like: - organization is different - roles are different - communication issues/misunderstandings - people are afraid of being responsible other than their own country.

Differences in common ways of working, non-aligned TS processes and not sharing possibility for some tools are true disturbances and blockers.

Everyday problems with decision making, resources and what should be done...

More difficult to follow up and know actual progress.

Not really. The reason is that we quite much are adapting a local way of working regarding to processes and IT solutions. The exception is the design of the network technical solution.

It requires more conversation and spreading of information. The problem is that decisions are made in one place but all parts need to be involved equally.

The main problem is that people think local and forget the bigger, common picture.

From the point of physical interactions it is a bit easier to have resources local but even then many prefer to call in to meetings so the physical aspect is not that great for daily routines.

Working cross-border is not a problem. Bureaucratic internal processes are the problem.

**The organization has changed recently to a model where employees have been re-located closer to each other. How would you improve the interaction between team members in another country?**

It could be good if we could travel a little bit more

Face to face meetings on site are necessary on a regular basis. At least every quarter if real interaction is required. Like in project work but in the functional teams we often don't interact because we work with different projects and therefore don't have common goals. But maybe I don't understand the question.

It is easier to work when you can see each other and use of whiteboard

Frequent meetings and face-to-face workshops.

Travel restrictions is blocking a very important aspect, that is Face 2 Face meetings recurrently. Besides that a common "way of working" environment is needed.

Only way is to travel and arrange f2f meetings. This is not possible today, and lack of performance in project managers work

First, some kind of team spirit should be created. Secondly, we should all be committed to communicating with each other.

Has it changed? I wasn't aware of it. Maybe it was before I started. Or is it the upcoming changes?

This relocation is quite irrelevant to me. I am working with resources from different areas/groups and usually do not have several resources from the same group.

Re-location has not affected the work much. Team members are still pretty scattered around different places, and even in the same location virtual meetings are more popular.

The interaction between project members in each country will be deeper when you establish cross functional teams within project (Product; Networks; IT and Processes) and have members from all countries in the overall project meetings.

Create groups and team in a mixed set up  
use video conferences.

We are sharing project tools and try to keep regular walkthroughs.

Regular meetings needed.

Probably. More easy to interact in group with members in other countries, e.g. via video conference.

Important to have weekly progress meetings with the core team. Use a good schedule to make a clear view of where we are in the project, both on high and low level.

In project organization, people work mostly with the project team. Interaction with team members in another country is easy when he/she is in the same project. Projects are often so far from each other that there might not be need for much communication between project managers. If the communication is not related to work; e.g. to coordinate things or how to make things smarter - it's more or less just a social chit-chat. That's of course needed also, my colleague project managers are great and funny people. However, socializing with them more face-to-face would not add much value. A couple of f2f meetings per year is enough.

Pairing the team members up to do small tasks - though there has to be a reason to do it, not just interactions sake...

Try to have a start up meeting in the project with the team members

No affect

**Do we have enough of communication with each other? Why (not)?**

Not enough. Location in different countries does not support constant flow of communication.

No

No, there are a lot of information only within a country. One reason is that the core people in a project might be in the same country. The core of a project should always be a mix from all countries involved.

No unfortunately not, difficult to have an active and constant communication with each other, there isn't enough time

No, from my point of view...

No No time to spent, resources to busy

No.It is harder to communicate with persons you do not meet so often.

Do we ever?

No, I think there is a risk to miss things because we do not see each other on a daily basis, you can not pass someones desk and change som words and have a short discussion about work

In projects we never have enough communication with each other. Communication within a project can always be improved.

The travel restrictions have caused that people in different locations don't meet that often and it's harder to get the group spirit up in a project

some times people has very much to do and can't partisipate meetings.

More interaction needed with colleagues that are not working in the same projects  
In the projects : It can always be improved. But travel restrictions are a problem in some cases.

I think so but that view needs of course to be evaluated by project members.

It depends. In some cases - Yes, but in other cases - No. It is also dependent on the resources and their ability to communicate. Not only on the project manager. In some cases people don't say so much as they think their English is bad.

Yes, on a team level.

Communication is not important if we don't say something important. It is what we say rather than communication itself that counts. Politicians communicate a lot... :-)

Could be better. Communication concentrates too much on the meetings, should have more "off-line" communication.

Yes.

Parallel local projects and international projects means that local projects tend to have more focus - which is quite human, I reckon.

Often it turns out that more communication is needed than was anticipated. This is also depending on the persons I am working with and one of the main challenges: have the right level of communication with different persons at different project phases.

**If teams would only consist of local resources (ie. No cross border), would it make project work easier/harder? Why?**

Possibly easier, since face-to-face discussions might support the work in an easier manner.

Yes, easier to meet and discuss issues

Yes and no. It would be easier in the short run, for the project itself. For example communication could be easier. But in the long run it would not be beneficial at all, because the countries not involved might result in a total chaos when there are differences in how we work.

Easier I think, you can have a meeting and draw on the whiteboard

Much easier. When sitting close together it's easier to go by and ask questions and discuss problems.

If these resources are sharing the common platforms, process and tools it is of course easier. However TS is rather distributed within each country as well and then most of the same issues remains.

Much easier, e.g. language and cultural barriers.

Easier. The location itself is not the issue, but for several the language is.

It might be easier but how to that in cross border organization.

Yes, definitely! It's always more effective when people are sitting close. It creates a creative atmosphere that invites to talk and engagement.

Much easier to communicate face to face

Easier absolutely. Every member knows almost how the processes works.

easier

For a local project it would be easier but this would not work (well) for a common project. Competences are in many cases still local.

It will be easier, and I think you build a better team spirit and a We feeling.

Easier to manage but can be more difficult to put (TSIC) products in production (including hand over).

Yes, smaller risk for misunderstandings, more face-to-face communication.

It seems that there will be a team only in Sweden tomorrow, after next job cuts

Local resources are still "all over", so the meetings will still be virtual. Maybe some language barriers could be avoided.

Probably the lack of competence in all required areas would make the project harder to run.

It will not be easier for X-border project but for local projects it would be easier.

I think that the different countries can learn from each other. Best practise.

It is impossible to have exactly similar expertise for various products for every market.

Absolute not, local resources are always the best way to work.

This question is not relevant for this company, because working only locally is not possible for product development projects. Might be for some IT development or smaller assignment. We are not developing standard consumer goods fitting for any market. Telecom products need always also local tailoring for succeed in local markets.

**If you were a team manager and should start up a new cross border team, what would be your first activities during the first 6 months?**

To meet!

To meet at least two times live. Then set up weekly meetings in the beginning. Make sure everybody understands each other, their roles and responsibilities.

To travel around and meet people in my new team

Face-to-face meetings from start. Set up rules and way of working together with the team members. I would also use the phone frequently calling the members in other locations.

Meet all team members and arrange face to face meeting for all. Goal is that everyone should know what is expected from us in group and individuals.

First start all to know each other, means meet in person. After that regular video conference meetings.

Meet everybody face-to-face, get to know each member of the team, secure commitment to common goal, establish routines and format for meetings and status follow-up.

First it must be a kickoff for the new team, two days f2f meeting, and then f2f meetings every two months.

Get together meeting for two days, a little bit of fun and also information, every one can express their expectations for the team and so on-----

Frequent face-to-face time, reasonable amount of communication & team meetings.

Kick off in one country for the whole team & follow-up in another country. Equality!

Kick off, personal contacts, set up a group target and activities how to get there

Define common goals and have work shops face to face around this. Also some more general team building activities are important.

planning with project core team. Common start up meeting for 1-3 days at one location.

To get to know how each of the team members would like to work and support that way of working. To create a constant communications channel.

See to that the employees get to know each other cross border by making them work in the same projects. I also think that we need to get a deeper knowledge about the local way of working (foremost IT systems and Processes) in the different countries.

Common toolset, agreed common "way of working" or process. Meet each other recurrently and agree on how and what to do.

Learn the local culture and learn how to appreciate it and bring the best out of it. I've just tried this... it is important to build up the network and get to know people and understand possible cultural features. It is quite important to put enough hours to the first joint tasks, because otherwise working remotely means that expectations are not transferred in a proper way leading into misunderstandings.

Team building and structure

Educate everybody to how things are working in the other countries to understand the differences and have everyone to try hard not to fall back into the local thinking but always looking at the bigger, common picture. People, even in common groups, usually fall back to think local in projects.

I would dig into what each team member is actually doing and the competence level for each person. After that I would make a communication plan for team meetings (what things must be discussed with the whole team to support the work), operational steering groups (things addressed with the management&reference group) and individual dialogues.

Depends on what team and task we are assigned...

Can't say

### **How would you secure that location would not act as a limitation?**

Communication.

Communication, communication, communication

Have the right communication tool, regularly face to face meeting, resources within the team to know and feel for each other.

Use lync and telephone. That is more personal than sending mail.

By using the virtual tools.

More discussion in the team even though the possibility to meet each other on a daily basis is not possible.

By using virtual meeting methods, varying my own location in the meetings.

To know each other

Make sure that it is possible to meet live in the beginning, travel restrictions are not beneficiary. Most don't like travelling, but it is a key success factor to meet.

By having constant meetings and videoconference, try to meet once in a while at least

Just make sure that there is possibilities to meet each other ....

Limiting travelling to zero pays never back. Travelling costs can still be moderate with proper long term planning, and results have higher quality and less misunderstandings.

A certain amount of travelling to meet the project members is needed. Have some face-to-face meetings, especially at the start of a project. Possibly combined with a social group activity.

Establish good contact with each person face-to-face, and agree about how to communicate and follow-up.

try to create a team spirit, get together meeting

Recurrent alinement of plan and that the goal/target is shared and agreed.

It is essential to have common goals otherwise there is no reason to interact. These goals have to be shared and understood by all involved. Then meetings, tools and good communication are the ways to overcome the problems with different locations. I would ensure that all people have big enough network both remotely and locally. I would encourage networking also with local people from other groups to prevent 'silo' effect and to share knowledge.

Having skilled employees

Don't know, as it is by defenition.

see above

See above

## **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

**Thinking about your co-workers abroad, how would you describe the cultural differences? Are there any?**

There are some cultural differences in the way we (they) act, decision making process is not similar.

Yes plenty, I as a finnish citizen working in sweden understands that there are so many! There should be a course in intercultural understanding: - how are decisions made in different countries - how do we talk,rythm? Can anyone talk anytime? - ethics, for example, is it ok to leave the meeting suddenly? Is it okay to skip the agenda or protocol?

Yes there are

There are cultural differences both between countries and parts of the company. Both can be equally important.

Yes, there are differences between for instance the Nordics. My experience is that Finns and Danes don't talk so much but are doers. Swedes are used to the consensus way of working that unfortunately takes a lot of time. Could it maybe depend on that Swedes generally are more afraid to face the consequences of their decisions.

Not that much between Sweden and Finland. I suppose that it could be great differences if we have members in more foreign countries.

Yes, very different in different countries. Even small differences can make huge impact in execution if you are not prepared or informed. Even countries that are almost the same have very different ways of working and ways of understanding. Ex: Estonia is very much into cooperation and closely work together in a joint manner, Finland is very co-located and closed in their way of working.

In Sweden there is a culture that no response for email, if don't know what to answer. Many. We concentrate on "what", the other side on "how".

Yes there are, too many to list here. Some obvious ones: Swedes prefer calls, Finns prefer emails. Finns tend to be more direct and concise in communication, Swedes take a longer route to the subject.

Swedes tend to negotiate more. Finns are more "doers"

I thought that there are only one company culture or do we have several?

Yes there are always culture differences

**Have you adapted any new ways of working whilst working with a Finn/Swede?  
What could we learn from each other?**

Yes. I've learned the power of discussion and to appreciate different opinions.

It is easier/faster to develop something in Finland than in Sweden

Definitely!! In the beginning in Sweden I did not understand the meeting culture at all, there was no agenda! And if there was one, why didn't anybody follow it? When was a decision made? On the other hand, when my Swedish colleagues try to understand the Finnish culture (they might not understand it is a cultural issue), I can help them like saying "you need to have a direct question, you will not get any answer with a fluffy indication". One other thing - on the compare Finns and Swedes below - neither Swedes or Finns negotiate too much. It is a misunderstanding from the Finnish side that Swedes negotiate too much. It is a way of making decision, not negotiation. Therefore I did not answer that one.

No new ways of working that I am aware of. Except the occasional use of Google translate to understand some Finnish texts :-)

The way of working very much depends on the already implemented IT systems and processes. Maybe it's also very much an attitude issue. We all need to be open minded and curious to other ways of thinking and doing. That's even fun.

Be clear what you expect from each of them and be open for communication and feedback.

Finnish have a much shorter way from requirement to implementation (don't talk or discuss forever..) and that is good compared to Sweden. Swedes have a higher administration level and that is sometimes good when it comes to identify risks and issues (but use wisely to not delay everything always).

We could learn communication skills.

Finnish need to learn to discuss more.

No

Daily short phone meetings

Swedish colleagues are more document oriented, Finnish ones should take some advice about the documents and updating the docs. Swedish colleagues should be more courageous to go forward without to ask questions from management

I try to make working assumptions when possible and state that we will work based on this until it changes rather than having long discussions about different alternatives. This needs to be used in a balanced way: it should be fairly clear that the working assumption will be the final decision or at least not cause much extra effort if wrong. It is also important to take into account the different positions and give people the feeling that they have been listened to.

Probably

See above.

Swedes could learn to make decisions faster, Finns could learn to sometimes be less formal.

From Sweden the more communication the better.

Swedes are more about consensus finding. Due to higher level of specialization more people are involved which provides more opportunities to communicate and exchange ideas.

Yes, some.

Yes there are, but not so very much. Be open minded but clear.

Finns are highly skilled workers, always ready to solve problems. However, their organisation is more traditional/hierarchical. They are faster to make a decision, both less about consensus.

In Sweden all the processes are more formal than in Finland.

## **SWOT analysis**

### **Strengths**

A vast group of professionals.

Different kind of resources in the organisation

competent personnel, good tools,

Get the best competence

A lot of competence, different views,

Large span of experiences and expertise

Members of project on many countries know what project are doing and make the right things at the right time

Diversity between different cultures

Differences in the way of working between the countries. See also "Opportunities".

Reusability of experiences from other countries when similar problems have to be solved.

Cross border teams can look at things from different perspectives.

Many different angles and inputs with a wider knowledge and behavioral background. Also different environments provides a wider place for potential solutions.

More "view angles"

Large experience. Easier to contact/do training/get feedback; world wide.

Diversification

Broader knowledge from different markets

Regarding market situation, it's a strength to be able to offer the same product in different countries

Economies of scale by addressing larger market

Communication skills. Structured way of working.

Open mindset

Have a common view, vision.

### **Weaknesses**

## Open communication

Lack of communication with the resources that aren't on site. Decisions at the coffee machine are easier to make than contacting resources in another location for a discussion. Some resources need more attention from managers than others and they don't use their full potential if managers/Project managers don't see and appreciate them and their work.

Communication is harder

Communication requires more time and effort

Cultural differences can be time-consuming to build common understanding

Language barrier, not much interaction outside projects between project members

Many areas still are very local, e.g. IT Systems.

Differences in working methods and processes

Differences in processes, tools and also environment makes execution hard to align.

Environment provides different possibilities that is not applicable in other countries.

Distance is considered as an "issue".

Takes time to learn how to work with each other and to get to know other cultures we do not learn to know each other. different culture.

Be self-sufficient and not open-minded.

Lack of cooperation atmosphere

Slowness, inflexibility

Takes longer time to get "quick feedback".

Management decisions: Too much importance on localities / sites on the cost of losing essential personnel & competences.

I do not like bureaucracy.

Local market-specific features may be missed or belittled. These can be related to networks themselves or customer behaviour.

Multi-market point-of-view may in some cases introduce too much compromises to projects/products.

## **Opportunities**

A chance to learn.

Use best practice from different countries.

Share solutions and ideas from different cultures and environments, also best practice inputs are very valuable.

If doing it right everyone can get more information and learn from each other.

Can gather good practises

new possibilities when thinking in a new way, learning from each other.

Reuse experience

We can learn from each other

Can be easier to think "outside the box"

Travel restrictions => push for more efficient usage of tools and communication

Possibility to work in multi cultural environment

Cost reductions

The possibility to choose the best resources available in several countries.

High level expertise for certain branch/product can be created when several markets can be supported from one spot.

Resources can cover more than one country in common projects

New markets

Multimarket

Can address larger market

Country-specific projects with MMO mind-set; Introduce functionality to some markets quickly and later on extend to all markets if the product is well adopted

### **Threats**

hard to communicate, language, misunderstandings

Distance, lack of "good" communication.

Bad language skills, pronunciation.

Mistakes due to misunderstanding

Increased risk for misunderstandings

Finns vs Swedes attitude, managers from Sweden only (not from Finland, Baltics, Denmark)

Common vision might be only a Swedish vision (could also apply to other countries but this one seems most common)

National interests may differ

fight between the countries and locations for power might result in bad decisions, endless discussions and missed opportunities

Cross border but not equal, the other side becomes the leading partner

The team can be split between the countries and the loyalty can be split.

Differences in environments tends the team to be scattered to work with what is know and only applicable for that market / environments. Projects often need to "educate" the othe country in applicable processes and environments.

Reducions => there are competences lost and balance between localities are upended.

Regular orgnizational changes.

Local knowledge is being destroyed by centralizing operations

Lack of endurance in the organisation caused by constant reorganisations and change of leaders. Constantly new focus areas. Changes and improvements needs to be done but can be done without big reorganisations.

Can be difficult to have overview and controll

TTM can be difficult to meat

Projects will took a longer period and smaller scope to ends it.

### **What kind of support is needed from the management to make project work succeed in our way of working?**

Mgmt should be flexible and understand that results can even be made in an innovative manner.

Clear governance principles to avoid countries fighting each other on who has the decision making power.

A common understanding of TS way of working and applicable processes. Also what possibilities there are to work within or outside these processes. Also a common IT (tools) environemnt is extremely important.

Efficient escalation channels in case of immediate actions are needed.

Support exchange of way of working. Managers need to be very active to get to know the local ways of working in the different countries in order to encourage the exchange the way of working.

Support when problems with stakeholders.

Simple enough process for securing resources cross border. Each project needs to have local competence in one way or another to support a common project manager.

This can be a sub-project manager, a PDM that takes some extra responsibilities or someone else (e.g. in Denmark it seems to be sometimes the local Product Management).

Secure common view between managers in different countries

Just follow the rules of project management, first we must to know what we want, the owner for the project, resources and money for the execution. And then the atmosphere for excellent co'operation....

Project culture and keeping the promises

Understanding the challenges from both sides.

Not to hire people with not enough skills in english.

Travel permissions for occasional face-to-face meetings.

Allow travel

Travelling is important, at least sometimes

let us meet in person to know each other and more video conferences.

We need money for travel and face-to-face meetings

## **PEOPLE**

### **What qualities are needed from a cross border team member?**

Good at communication

Ability to communicate with each other

a lot of communication both on the phone and e-mail.

Communication skills, language skills

English language skills.

motivation, language skills, openness & willingness to communicate

Language skill, open mind, similar skills with supportive tools

open minded, good experience in actual area, language

Open mindedness, good self management

Open mind A smile

Openness towards the differences, and a solution focuses mindset.

Open minded, language skills

Knowing of the cultural differences.

Flexibility, respect for each other different cultures

Understanding the culture, language skills and (pro)activity

Ability to work independently, reliability, commitment.

Communication skills, ability to work autonomously towards a target

Flexibility Perseverance Patience Curiosity Openness

Competence within the area and language

Motivation, language skills, experience, social skills

social and communicative skills

### **What qualities are needed from a cross border team leader?**

good on communication.

Good at communication and building trust

Language and communication skills

Communication skills, sufficient understanding of how things are working in the different countries, clear vision/target

Communication skills, language skills

social and communicative skills

Active & practical attitude, humor, excellent language & communication skills

Understanding the cultural differences!!!

Flexibility, commitment, ability to "read between the lines".

To be open-minded, responsive

Understanding of the differences and the ways to get this in a common project (with meetings, and tools and aligned plans etc.)

Ability to understand the needs of the resources what should be supported to make success possible

Motivation, language skills, experience, social skills, good communicator and leader

Capability of moderation, understanding of cultural differences

Flexibility Perseverance Patience Curiosity Openness

Keeping promises

Ability to trust employees and not trying to control everything

### **IDEAL ENVIRONMENT**

**What would be the ideal environment for project work? Think about the tools, networks, resources etc.**

A round table working environment where all resources would be available either on the spot or virtually by the same round table. Some kind of tool that supports discussion and communication without a delay.

A war room

Concentrated workshops with everybody present face-to-face is a good way to produce results fast.

We need more videoconference rooms. We have sharerooms, Lync and email/phone opportunities already today that works fine

Co-location is always best if possible. For adaptations or releases in different markets then the local release should be handled by co-located resources. A common project tool arena must be available and if not supported by TS environment, a support for creating one easily must exist (and not blocked by IT rules..)

In our case, everybody must be located in the same place, same office, because travel restrictions.

Either totally local project with local resources or a common project with resources equally balanced in different countries. The existing toolset is ok, though more videoconf.rooms would be needed.

Local as project is about people.

Local area placed, resources working 100% for on project

I would like an administrative help in each country since it is difficult for a project manager in one country to handle bookings of meeting rooms, buying small gifts like cinema tickets, getting access keys to different locations, etc.

Hundred percent focus on the project, not divided between different projects. Close collaboration so that none of the resources hesitate to call straight away when there is an issue.

I think it's foremost an attitude issue. Of course it would be more efficient to have all the project members in the same room in order to handle and solve the issues but I find it difficult to accomplish working with cross border projects. My opinion about the project tools has been commented earlier in this questionnaire.

Committed and really available resources, no matter where they are located.

Active&committed representatives from each stakeholder group.

Less subcontractors and more in-house developers (also in-house IT software developers)

I am missing a tool to write at the screen as a whiteboard on the computer to use in e.g. workshops where participants participate on the phone.

To have project resources that can cover more than just a narrow field of expertise so that we need less resources who then have a higher allocation to the project instead. Graphical tablets would be very useful during discussions. Reliable tools, especially Lync. Better system and instructions for document management including version handling.

As stated earlier, email as a communication tool is too widely used and therefore important information threads are jeopardised by overwhelming message flows (cc's, bcc's).

Lync/webbex MS Project server work room time reporting system.

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