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ABSTRACT

Intercultural Team Maturity Model

Unity, Diversity, Capability

Achieving optimal performance when leading
a multicultural project team

Abstract

"I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another." *Mahatma Gandhi*

When team members of diverse cultures act and react together on a project they frequently under-perform, whereas project teams that enjoy an appropriate cultural analysis, could be more effective.

Our research focuses on exactly how to analyse the team members' ability to adapt to complex intercultural project environments, using an intercultural team maturity model.

Empirical results from a previous study on 'switch leadership', showing how a manager changes leadership styles to enhance project performance, demonstrated that cultural forces influence many aspects of leadership and managers highly adaptive in their approach succeed more as they adjust to the intercultural requirements of the team.

Earlier studies took a descriptive approach to compare individuals on a multicultural team. We believe though that an intercultural maturity model could help a manager select the most effective style of leadership. Differentiation by a maturity model based on a team member's ability to culturally adapt could be a superior method of analysis than simply assessing an individual's cultural/country background.

We detail four intercultural maturity levels; starting with team members who have had little contact with people of another culture up to those with extensive cultural knowledge and a higher acceptance level of change; more able to perform within a culturally diverse project team context.

A questionnaire measured the intercultural maturity level of team members across twenty five countries. Results show a statistically significant relationship between intercultural team maturity and project success, when a manager is able to identify and adapt his leadership accordingly.

Our research helps to judge 'maturity' as an asset to projects and heightens awareness of situational leadership, using intercultural team maturity levels as a tool for optimal project leadership success.

Keywords: Intercultural, maturity model, project teams, project success, switch leadership