

Association for Information Systems

AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

SAIS 2023 Proceedings

Southern (SAIS)

7-1-2023

ISD Virtual Team Project Culture

Solomon Negash

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/sais2023>

Recommended Citation

Negash, Solomon, "ISD Virtual Team Project Culture" (2023). *SAIS 2023 Proceedings*. 31.
<https://aisel.aisnet.org/sais2023/31>

This material is brought to you by the Southern (SAIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in SAIS 2023 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

ISD VIRTUAL TEAM PROJECT CULTURE

Solomon Negash
Kennesaw State University
snegash@kennesaw.edu

ABSTRACT

This work in progress looks at Information Systems Development (ISD) project culture. This study combines several virtual project attributes including an ongoing project, virtual project teams, remote-first hiring principle, and multi country operations. The study wants to understand emergent contradictions and synergies. The contradictions create conflicts that may enhance or detract from the project objectives. In studying ongoing projects, we intend to identify emergent contradictions and apply strategies to increase project enhancing outcomes. The project is staffed by teams from three countries United States, India, and Ethiopia.

Keywords

ISD projects, culture, cultural contradictions, project teams, virtual teams, virtual projects

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity prevails when the values, norms, and practices of group members are different, when not aligned, cultural diversity creates contradictions. The contradictions create conflicts that may enhance or detract the project objectives. In studying ongoing projects, we intend to identify emergent contradictions and apply strategies to increase project enhancing while minimizing project detracting outcomes.

This study looks at four areas of cultural contradictions identified in prior research (1) organization culture \leftrightarrow culture of the IS, (2) organization culture \leftrightarrow project culture, (3) project culture \leftrightarrow occupation culture, and (4) organization culture \leftrightarrow occupation culture (Emergent cultural, 2023; Geeling, S., Brown, I., & Weimann, P., 2020).

The ISD project work culture is remote-first, supporting ‘digital nomad’ work cultures with virtual platform and communication; connectivity and digital access are paramount. The digital quality dimensions exhibited by mobile speed (Mbps), mobile internet stability index, broadband speed (Mbps), broadband internet stability index, and overall internet quality ranking and index (Digital quality index, 2021) are relevant for this virtual ISD project. Mobile and broadband speed and stability varies among the three countries with significant implications (and cultural contradictions) on performance.

Based on the team dynamics and performance we applied iterative project management and communication process. Initially the project was setup where developers directly engage with managers, no interventions or middleman; communication & management intervention was handled via email; and each country team had their own stand-up team. This initial setup had numerous miscommunications and ended up with three resources terminated within a week.

Learning from the challenges, the project management process was updated by creating a single stand-up to align with the manager in India; single collaboration platform with messaging, video calls, file sharing, and task board; and a process and status update session was setup for the Ethiopian team in advance of the combined stand-up. This showed some improvement in communication and performance.

A month later, a second project management update included a talent pool pipeline by establishing an internship program with local Ethiopian universities; develop internship process with four stages each with 4-weeks duration: courting, in-training, independent, and candidate; process and cultural orientation for interns; access to collaboration platform (rocket.chat, an open-source platform) and setting expectations for interns; and implemented pair programming for interns.

Early observations of potential contradictions and synergies were:

- Miscommunication among cultural similarities, Ethiopia-India (south-south) accents frustrating to otherwise technically capable developers. The case of ‘Demelash’ during Odoo ERP implementation. Other groups that work in teams perform better.
- Indian manager request to provide daily status at start and end of day ignored by the Ethiopian team.
- Lack of transparency in stating performance difficulties and challenges; Ethiopian cultural nuances including secretive, suspicious, and pride created status reporting problems.

- Providing daily work status seem to suffer from cultural differences; task-board created, and a separate session established to inculcate transparent status reporting.

REFERENCES

1. Digital quality index (2021). Digital quality of life index 2021. Retrieved from <https://surfshark.com/dql2021>, Retrieved on 11-Oct-2021.
2. Geeling, S., Brown, I., & Weimann, P. (2020). Cultural levels and emergent cultural contradictions in IS development.
3. Emergent Cultural Contradictions from Overlapping Cultural Levels in Information Systems Development, forthcoming (2023) CAIS paper.