

N°12-4 – July 2012

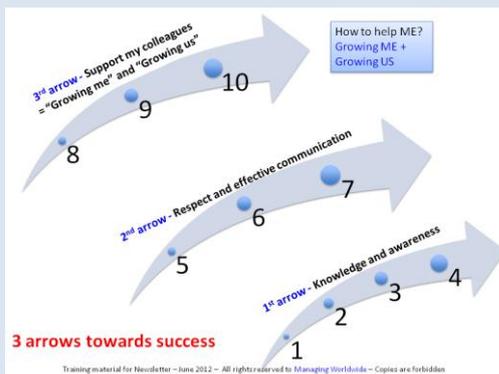
Editorial

Offshoring to India is a solution that has been widely used for the last 20 years by the Western world and Japanese corporations have started using it too. The more time goes by, the more elaborate are the missions to be taken care of by India.

In the experience we want to share with you today, the Japanese company ATJ is an IT infrastructure specialist catering to an internal Japanese customer (Axa Japan) and subcontracting internally to the Indian IT entity. The Indian team, called ATI, is not only supposed to develop a large range of technical software and infrastructure under close Japanese supervision, but also to provide direct assistance to the Japanese end customer.

For our customer ATJ, the purpose of the training organized was to be able to convey the high sense of quality of service to the Indian team (ATI). Once one has lived or worked in Japan, one quickly grasps how strong the sense of quality of service is there. In addition, the extreme degree of attention given to the customer penetrates Japanese Society at large, each business, organization and individual, from the senior management team to the most junior of employees. Conveying these deep values to an Indian team can pose a major challenge.

The training brought all ATJ participants through a journey that I would like to summarize here. The numbers refer to the **"3 arrows towards success"** methodology that we use in similar situations. Please see the simplified graph below and the detailed one on the next page.



Most of participants travelled with us through the following steps:

Knowledge and awareness

- 1 - Getting to know more about the Indian ways of doing things, their preferences and values in the corporate environment
- 2 - Being aware of our own collective preferences and values (as Japanese managers and engineers)
- 3 - Same for my own individual preferences and values (not much challenge at that point in time, with each participant assessing him/herself in general terms)
- 4 - Understanding some of the deep causes of issues at stake

JAPAN-INDIA: Communicating effectively with our Indian colleagues Developing their sense of Quality of Service

“At a personal level, this cross culture course gave me an opportunity to put my experience into a different perspective, enabling me to synthesise fragmented and empirical information into organized knowledge. I began to apply some of the know-hows to coach my team members, especially when they should have looked at issues from different value perspectives, and it did work!

As head of HR, first of all, I was glad to know that the course was the most highly rated one since we started to record the feedbacks from the participants. The feedback we received was that the course contents were very practical with a lot of insight into culture difference and that it gave us a lot of practice sessions on how to apply knowledge on an actual situation. Because of its practical benefits, we plan not only to extend the course to the other half the employees but also to conduct a refresher course with emphasis on UK and Switzerland.

I should say thank you to my previous regional HR head who introduced me Laurent who really catalyzed cultural change in us.”



Mr Nobuo Takayama, head of the HR department of ATJ

Respect and effective communication

5 - Building respect for the Indian preferences
6 and 7 - Identifying the most essential elements of appropriate communication with Japanese customers in terms that were simple, concrete and acceptable to the Indian team

Support my colleagues = the "Growing me" and the "Growing us"

8 - Making the following questions acceptable and relevant to the Japanese team: How to help the Indian team? How to train them? How to support them from Japan when necessary? How should the expatriates do things over there?
9 and 10 - Being aware of when and how my own lack of flexibility (values, strong preferences, self-confidence) could be an obstacle. Here, a given participant does not see him/herself as the "perfect me" of step 3. Rather, he or she is ready to see room for improvement on his/her side too. He or she is ready for another journey of growing their skills in the future. He or she is ready to see himself/herself as a "Growing me"
11 - Deciding to work on it, deciding on an individual action plan. This is clearly when the development of participants' soft skills have an effect on the team at large. The "Growing me" fosters the "Growing us"

Put more simply, in the past, a degree of distrust between several managers on both sides had occasionally resulted in some unproductive confrontational situations. Thanks to the training, most individuals changed their mindset and were able to evolve towards a cooperative mode. As far as group dynamics are concerned, it seems that the seminar has contributed to a real cultural shift around the image of ATI within the ATJ team, which in turn has had a very positive impact on the Indian managers and engineers working with the Japanese team. We were lucky to be able to **impact half of the entire staff** of ATJ. Not only were the Japanese expatriates trained, but also the resident teams, and this turned out to be crucial to bringing about cultural change.

It should also be added that some participants now feel that they have been transformed to a certain degree in their personal managerial style. As one Japanese participant commented, "What we've learnt here works really well with our Japanese colleagues too".

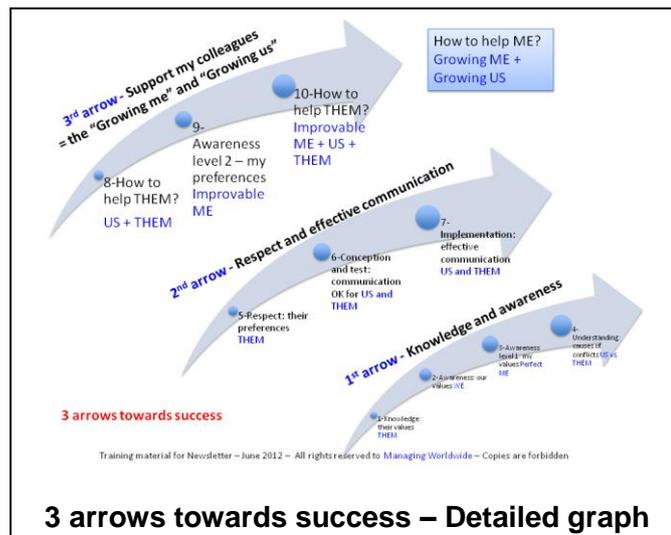
Indeed, after one full year now, we know that the team seen as an entity has grown dramatically and is now ready to tackle more complex challenges of other multicultural projects and international assignments.

But let's hear what our customers have to say. **We are honored and pleased that Mr Nobuo Takayama, head of the HR department of ATJ and Mr Hironori Goto, expatriate from ATJ to ATI, both accepted to testify about their experience.**

Enjoy the article!



Laurent Lepez, Associate Partner



"In the Tactics of Sun Tzu, who was a great Chinese strategist, he says, 'If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.'

I have learned a lot of their culture / way of thinking, conversation way, work trend... And I also could become aware of our Japanese culture.

After the training, I can change my communication way, and improved communication gaps.

For instance, I used say like "You need to do this" , "I will review your performance"..., just change "I" and "You" to "We". Example "We need to do", "Let's review our performance"....

Our relation became more close, lowering psychological barrier."



Mr Hironori Goto, expatriate from ATJ to ATI