

## managing worldwide skills

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### Editorial

Based on our customers' experience, managing operations in India poses several kinds of difficulties to Western head-office teams. Let me focus on the top 3 where cultural misunderstandings are heavily involved. From the perspective of the head office, their Indian colleagues:

- seem less and less motivated over time (related to high personnel turnover)
- rarely fill the full scope of what is expected from them (don't feel empowered, don't understand, etc.)
- do not deliver on time while meeting quality requirements

For the first two items, we generally work closely with our customer to:

- build employee loyalty programs which encompass both national and corporate culture
- redefine roles, goals and KPI's
- improve the communication skills of operational managers & communication departments

In the case presented by Sunita in this newsletter, time management was probably the most tricky issue. It was only in the last hours of a two-day training seminar that Indian teams dared say *'We regularly work long hours, long nights and week-ends on projects driven by head-office. All they seem to remember is when we missed a deadline by a few days, or when we delivered on time but the quality was not quite what they had expected.'* And another person added *'...we all know that, over there, in head-office, they are having their week-ends and don't work more than 40 to 45 hours (dixit) per week'*.

At that point, we knew that trust had been fully established with us, but also that future training sessions were going to take a different flavor! From there on, we worked on how to convey trust across the ocean. Back in head-office training rooms, we started working on how to convey the fact that Indians were fully part of the team. Great results!



Laurent Lepez, Managing Partner

## " Offshoring: managing an Indian team from headquarters "

by Sunita Nichani, Senior Consultant

It is a widely acknowledged fact that offshoring to India has many advantages: a young, skilled and abundant workforce eager to gain knowledge, lower wage costs, value-added services, etc. However, managing a team that sits half-way across the globe definitely poses logistical challenges due to a heavy reliance on virtual communication. Yet another factor that impacts the efficiency of offshoring operations is the confrontation of different world views that must be understood by all concerned.

### More about pleasing than pleasure

Let's examine an Indian work practice that seems incomprehensible to the Western world. The Indian concept of time certainly has been a frustration for many managers at headquarters. The joke often goes that IST (Indian Standard Time) refers to Indian stretchable time, where deadlines do not get met and very often the bad news is delivered at the last moment. From the Indian point of view, they do their best to complete the work within the required time frame which they secretly consider unrealistic but they are willing to try to please their headquarters. To Indians, business is more about pleasing than pleasure. Their sense of let down is real when their effort to deliver on time is judged purely on results and not on effort. Indian teams sometimes confide their resentment over this issue by saying that they are working with deadlines that the workforce in the West would never accept. Their deadlines, which are often committed to by team leaders in India, require them to work late and even on weekends, while their Western counterparts cannot be contacted over the weekend or on holidays. This is therefore clearly an emotionally charged situation for both teams that inevitably affects productivity.

### Pushback = risky + inefficient + disrespectful

In the particular case of one European customer, after we had delivered intercultural training first in headquarters and then in India,...tbc

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