

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Michèle Barbier, Ocean Synergies, strategies and innovative partnerships in sciences, Nice, France (mbarbier@gmx.com)

Scientific projects have increased in complexity, requiring more multidisciplinary, multi-sectors collaboration and a broader international cooperation including participants from non European countries.

Effective team building is one of the prime responsibilities of the project manager and has to take into consideration the various cultures, values, budget availability, beliefs and social usages. A real communication style will participate in the success of the project and the best managers are flexible, adaptable, and closely attuned to their environment.

This Effective Team Building process could be defined in terms of « core values », and this poster presents some of the tips assembled after 10 years of research management in various cultural environment.

Accompany the scientific community

“The free and responsible practice of science is fundamental to scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being. Such practice, in all its aspects, requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for scientists.”* Managers should accompany the scientists in this role.

** The Principle of Universality (freedom and responsibility) of Science, ICSU*

Understand before being understood, be a good listener

Communication is an important skill. The best managers are flexible, adaptable, and closely attuned to their environment. They're always looking for opportunities. Be a good listener. Many of the best ideas routinely come from members of your networks, as they are the ones closest to the actual research field. Listening is also intending to understand what the other is trying to communicate. As each person is unique, there are some aspects of diversity that can be seen and taken into account such as Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Scientific discipline, sectors. Listen and you will understand.

Communicate but stop email overload, be careful with cc/cii

Communicate regularly by providing meaningful feedback in real time but be careful to not overload emails. The result will be the opposite of what you wish to accomplish. Well prepared email, with appropriate and clear subjects, with no more than 3 key messages, with selected wording, with all the information but no more, with the right persons in cc, is worth. Taking 30 min or 1h for an important email will save you time in the following days

Transparency

Communicate clearly the scientific objectives and the proposed research that will be carried out to implement the project; Ensure common definition and harmonization of terms, ensure that the role of each is clearly defined and understood.

Cultural respect, open mind

To be culturally competent doesn't mean you are an authority in the values and beliefs of every culture. What it means is that you hold a deep respect for cultural differences and are eager to learn, and are willing to accept, that there are many ways of viewing the world.

Adopt a global vision

A scientific research project is a whole, integrating many actors across disciplines, sectors, nations. The role of each participant is essential as it includes a diversity of actors. The global understanding is also essential and help to prioritize some tasks within the project Management process, to improve recommendations and ease of implementation of the project.

Reciprocal Relations: give and expect excellence

A reciprocal relationship is one in which each party bears a responsibility for the welfare, wellbeing of the other. The stability of the relationship comes from the extent to which those responsibilities are balanced. In some sense, in project management, each person has rights because of responsibilities to the other. The best managers are ultimately not those who are “toughest” or “nicest,” but those who get the best results from people in their network. Once your network recognizes you have unfailingly high standards, that's key data they won't forget. If the participants know you demand excellence from yourself, they're more likely to find it in themselves.

Anticipate conflicts or deal with it directly and fairly

Conflicts occur when people perceive that, as a consequence of a disagreement, there is a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Participants in conflicts tend to respond on the basis of their perceptions of the situation, rather than an objective review of it. As such, people filter their perceptions (and reactions) through their values, culture, beliefs, information, experience, gender, and other variables. Conflict responses are both filled with ideas and feelings that can be very strong and powerful guides to our sense of possible solutions.

Efficiency

each task in a cost effective way.

管理

обходиться

beheren

bewältigen

לנהל

coordonne

maneggiare

إدارة

Manage