Offshore Project Management : The Business to Technical Communication (Part II)

written by Manoj Khanna | August 26, 2004

As a project manager there are many things going through PM's mind. Many tasks – knowledge bank – technical and as well as business wise. If one understands correctly not all the information which he/she has in his/her knowledge bank is supposedly meant for every stakeholder. Otherwise there will be a zillion questions from business – "Why are we doing it this way?" or "Why weren't our department included as part of this discussion?" or "This does not meet our requirements" or "That's not the way we do business here?" or "Who'll do all this documentation?" and many more. The bottom-line is some information hiding is necessary and is fruitful in the long run.

Now the point is, at what level there should be interaction between business users and technical team. To throw technical team in front of business users – is not a wise idea. There are many complications. There are many whys and wherefores. There are many confusions. Business people – pure business people do not understand our world of tables, records, JSP page, queries, stored procedures or the alike terms. Should you bring this in front of them? Not if its intended to amuse them with these tech-o-items. There are several layers of communication between technical team and business users. You see it and we see it – as technical people – but what the business world sees it – that is purely business. Their objective is simplification and the solution to their problem – absolute, fast and crystal. There is no complicated world – unless or until we create it otherwise.

So how does this communication should happen? The technical aspect of the project cannot be hidden completely from the business – sometimes they need to know what they need to know. PM cannot and should not deny the information at any point to any stakeholder. Presenting the facts and correct figures that’s the right thing to do. Or otherwise it’s going to come back and haunt the PM himself/herself. There is no full-fledged technique for this sort of communication – everyone follows his/her individual style. For certain people – communication through channeled sources work well. Having a BA which translates exactly what the business needs to know and wants to know – helps a lot. As business is not interested in 10101 gibberish. The BA and the PM some times play hand-in-hand and in certain cases PM has to adopt and wear the hat of a BA – to smooth things out. In certain cases – PM himself/herself has quite an understanding of the business world with years of experience in that domain where the project is. In other cases – a pre-identified project lead from the technical side – plays the role of BA and brings out the best of the technical jargon. At the same time, that project lead is expected to posses business skills and should be proficient in the business that project is dealing in.

To summarize, to have pure business and pure technical team face to face and each of them making an effort to understand what each other means is sort of communication overkill. And this shouldn’t happen in a proficiently managed offshore project.

More to follow…