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**DESIGNING AND FORMING
GLOBAL TEAMS**

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Chapter 2

Designing and Forming Global Teams

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Introduction

There are many reasons why companies form global teams to work internationally and interdependently towards a common goal. Global teams can be created to develop global strategies, or to work locally to execute these strategies, or both. Multinational corporations often create global research and development teams to benefit from site-specific scientific expertise that is not available in one location, but is spread around the world. Still other companies create global teams in specific functional areas, like sales and marketing, and then have representatives of that function from around the world collaborate in teams. This enables the organization to benefit from a diversity of perspectives and services that can match or fulfill the needs of a global client, wherever that client might be located.

No matter what the reason for the formation of a global team or what form the team takes, leaders and team members must address the complexity of global teamwork by architecting new ways of collaborating. This chapter is about how managers can create conditions in the pre-start and start-up phases of global teaming that will enhance the chances that a team will succeed.

Dimensions of Complexity

Whatever the type of global team an organization creates, the complexity the team faces in meeting its objective can be characterized along five different dimensions: task, context, people, time and technology.¹ This section of the chapter contains a discussion of these five dimensions and how they interact with one another to contribute to complexity in global teams. A series of suggested actions for designing global teams to help manage complexity follows the discussion.

Task

The primary tasks that global teams undertake can be grouped into a typology according to their complexity.² Task complexity is a continuum that is comprised of four major elements: workflow interdependence, task environment, and external and internal coupling. The degree of workflow interdependence varies according to the structure of the activities that need to be performed to accomplish a task. Tasks are at the low end of interdependence when they can be performed separately by team members and then pooled into a finished product. Moving up the continuum of interdependence, work activities can become sequential and flow unidirectionally from one member to the next. When activities flow back and forth between members they take on a reciprocal character over time and become even more interdependent. At the high end of the continuum, when team members must make sense together of events or issues, problem-solve or collaborate together simultaneously to complete a task, workflow becomes intensely interdependent.

A team's task environment can also be placed on a continuum that varies from static to dynamic. A static environment is one that is predictable and stable and is one unlikely to disrupt team tasks or to require much monitoring. Many manufacturing settings have static environments. At the other end of the continuum, a team's task environment can be very dynamic and contain many uncertainties. Research and development teams and new product development teams often face very dynamic environments. The environment has to be monitored constantly and new information must be brought into the team for interpretation and action on a continuing basis. A dynamic environment can greatly affect a team's ability to accomplish its task.

External coupling refers to how tightly a team is linked to or affected by what goes on in its task environment, varying on a continuum from loose coupling to tight. For example, firms can purposely shield teams in what are known as “think tanks” or “skunk works” so they can work on special research and development projects protected from the disruptions that might arise from fluctuations in day-to-day operational demands, organizational politics, and customer requirements. Or teams may be loosely coupled to their environments because they are working on routine functions, such as some accounting or financial reporting, that need to be performed on a regular basis regardless of what happens in the external organizational or marketplace environment. Teams working on new product introductions, new work ventures, or customer-driven initiatives could be characterized as tightly coupled with their external environments because they would be greatly affected by consumer and economic trends or changes in the organization, such as changes in personnel, internal politics or strategies.

Internal coupling describes the team’s members’ relationships with one another, and can vary from weak to strong. Team members who are weakly coupled do not have to integrate with one another socially to accomplish their task. Many software development teams are weakly coupled, especially those working on open-source software. Individuals working separately complete the great majority of the team’s tasks (as much as 80% - 90%) without exchanging information with other team members.³ The organization of work allows for coordination through code repositories that are shared across boundaries and provide a common context even if individuals focus on separate aspects of the programming. On the other end of the continuum are teams whose members must make an effort to understand one another well, uncovering, negotiating and integrating different perspectives to resolve a complex problem. A top management team responsible for creating a joint venture is an example of a strongly coupled

team. Another example of a strongly coupled team is a new product development team in the auto industry that is working across national and organizational boundaries on a new vehicle platform design. The team members must work closely with each other to understand different perspectives and get to know local practices. They have to negotiate a common global architecture to achieve economies by sharing basic components of the vehicle, yet the common architecture must still allow for customization in local markets and distinct brand identities.

These four characteristics – workflow interdependence, task environment, external and internal coupling – together make up task complexity. Interestingly, teams who are at the low end of one continuum generally are also on the low end of the others. For example, teams that work on low complexity tasks are generally working in a relatively static environment, are loosely coupled to that environment, have members who are weakly coupled with one another and whose workflow is characterized by independent tasks that are pooled or done sequentially. An international team responsible for tracking and reporting sales in different regions in a standardized format could be called a team with a low complexity task. As long as all the members of the team are working independently to gather data, and as long as each of them delivers their part of the report, their overall task requires little collaboration. On the other hand, in a team with high task complexity, like a new product development team in a high tech industry, the team is likely to be tightly coupled with an environment that is quite dynamic with innovations and new competitors entering the marketplace daily, affecting the nature and the pace of work. Workflow is likely to be highly interdependent, requiring greater levels of knowledge sharing and real time collaboration.

Task complexity puts demands on team structure and processes and therefore influences the leadership functions and membership interactions that will be critical for the team's

effectiveness. As team tasks become more complex, the effective coordination of knowledge and carefully interrelated actions among team members become more important.⁴ Complex work requires managers to pay careful attention to the selection of team members, to the organizational support systems within which the team will work, to the training and development and reward and recognition systems they put in place and to the technical resources, particularly information technology, they make available to the team so that these systems will encourage rather than work against collaboration.

Complex tasks mean information needs to be gathered, the task needs to be well defined and the scope of work has to be clearly outlined. Complex and uncertain tasks take much more interaction and collaboration than tasks that are more routine. This impacts the processes the team members will need to engage in, the efficiency with which they are able to work, and the outcomes that are likely. Successful interaction and outcomes are more likely when teams are able to achieve an equilibrium between too much complexity and uncertainty on the one hand and too much routine on the other.⁵ If a task is too complex it can paralyze a team because members are unable to determine or agree on what actions to take. Or too much complexity can result in chaos when team members are doing so many different things in an attempt to get control of their work that they are unable to coordinate their activities any longer. It is easy for team members to quickly experience information overload and shut down when faced with more complexity than they can handle. In contrast, too much certainty and routine can cause team members to lose interest and motivation, becoming complacent. Processes can become too rigid and team members may stop seeking out or paying attention to necessary information, slowing or halting progress on their task. They may even stop interacting altogether if they see no need for coordination.

Context

Beyond task characteristics, global teams are also complex based on context differences. Context is a way of life and work in a specific geographic area with its own set of business conditions, cultural assumptions, and unique history.⁶ Some of the dimensions of context are climate, nationality, education, politics, judicial systems, economic systems, corporate governance, management systems, and incentive, motivation or reward schemes.⁷ Context greatly influences how teams operate, and can quickly become problematic in global work that requires team members to work together, synchronously or asynchronously, across boundaries of many types.⁸ The greater the number of contexts team members must cross to accomplish their tasks, and the greater the differences represented on the team, the more complex their work becomes. Crossing context increases complexity in many ways. Table 1 offers a comparison on the dimension of context between traditional teams, who typically work within a single context, and global teams, who are likely to work across multiple contexts.

Insert Table 1

It is easily apparent how working across context adds dramatically to the complexity of work in global teams. When team members work in a single or common context, they share a taken-for-granted set of working conditions that form the backdrop for their work. They share common physical conditions, corporate work environments, and economic and political conditions; and a single national culture frames their work, e.g., U.S., Chinese, French. Even when team members themselves may come from diverse national cultures, their working conditions and general business situation are shared. It is also likely that team members share a common language. Tasks are generally contained within organizational and national boundaries,

and team members have the opportunity for frequent, face-to face and informal interactions that allow them to share knowledge which requires an understanding of the context and to stay abreast of events as they occur. In this way, they can maintain alignment around the task and environmental challenges they face.

Complexity increases dramatically when team members primarily live--and thus work--in different contexts. Multiple work environments, national cultures and economic and political conditions can affect team members differentially and have varying relevance and impact on the team's task. Team members are often constrained by distance, language differences and restricted information technology in their ability to communicate with one another frequently or informally. Because context is generally taken for granted, they may not even consciously consider the impact of context on their work, and therefore, are unlikely to share important or relevant information. Contextual knowledge is not easily transferred; thus cross-cultural competence and adaptability can be more important to the team's ability to achieve its task than professional expertise. A major challenge in global teamwork is making multiple contexts explicit and then co-creating a new "hybrid" context all team members can share.⁹ This contextual complexity means that work in global teams is significantly more challenging than in traditional teams. Balancing multiple perspectives and demands in continuously fluctuating circumstances, and keeping the team members integrated and focused on a common objective are the real challenges. These challenges are compounded when the team task is complex (highly interdependent, dynamic), which as per the previous section, is generally the case in global teams¹⁰

People

A primary strategy for creating global teams is to involve a variety of expertise and perspectives that are likely required to accomplish the work and achieve objectives. This requirement means that the people who design and support, lead or work in global teams bring with them varying degrees of commitment, motivation, expectations, skills and identities that come from their own (unique) work roles and their national, occupational and organizational cultures. As a result, global teams are internally diverse on many dimensions, and these differences can add considerable complexity to the teaming situation in multiple ways.

People who work in global teams often do so on a part-time basis and have commitments not just to the global team, but also to other organizational roles or jobs, including primary functional assignments and even other teams. People are motivated to participate in the team to varying degrees depending upon their workload, the degree of organizational support they receive, the level of endorsement from others to whom they are linked organizationally, or their own personal interest in the work to be done. For example, motivation for members to participate can be based more on their professional influences, through their organizational network, than on any shared allegiance to the team.¹¹ It is often the case in virtual teams that members are required to perform numerous tasks and hold various roles to facilitate more flexible responses across different organizational contexts. These multiple demands can create role conflict and ambiguity and make decision-making responsibility unclear. This is similar to the effects found in matrixed organizations and further adds to the complexity in global teams, especially when people do not have the opportunity to interact frequently.¹² Therefore, motivating the team members means first recognizing the importance of their own unique network. Understanding the priorities and values of the members' networks can be key to

achieving early commitment from the members, as well as support from the networks for the benefit of the team's overall objectives.

Likewise, individuals come to the global team with different skills and abilities related both to professional expertise and to interpersonal and cross-cultural communication competencies. People's experiences with international work, especially in global teams, can vary widely as well. In many cases, complexity is created due to the fact that members were selected simply because they were the only people with available time to work on the team when it is formed! Or members may be selected because they are in a particular formal job role within the organization, regardless of whether or not they have the skills necessary for the task, or for working with diverse people in uncertain situations. Status differences in the team may result from differential expertise or formal and informal organizational roles, which further exacerbates an already complex teaming situation.¹³ As a result, authority and power may not be distributed clearly or rationally. People's language skill is another personal attribute that influences the team's ability to work together well and which can add considerably to the complexity the team has to manage. In addition to the obvious difficulties in understanding, there are also complications created by differences in speaking norms, for example in turn-taking, in the use of silence, or in when it is appropriate to speak up.

As discussed in previous chapters, belonging to different cultural groups has a significant impact on what people think is important in their work and how they interact with and relate to others in a work situation.¹⁴ People's identities are formed in large part through the influence of membership in cultural groups both at work and outside of work, such as national culture, religious groups, occupational groups such as engineering, or organizational groups, such as the purchasing or sales and marketing departments. People carry these multiple identities with them

when they come to the team. Culture exerts subtle influences that create expectations about leadership and status, about appropriate work practices, such as communication with superiors or subordinates or meeting participation, about the use of time and what constitutes a deadline, about quality, decision-making, and problem solving.

Culture even has an impact on what it means to be a team.¹⁵ Different cultures and organizations can have different models of teamwork, or “metaphors” that influence team members’ behaviors, for example, a family, community, military or sport metaphor, that coincides with national and organizational values. In countries like Mexico and Brazil that might have a family or community model of teamwork, a good team member is expected to help teammates and be very involved in their lives. The model is "all for one and one for all," and suggests that team members are nurturing, supportive, and depending on the urgency and importance of the task, may directly jump in and perform the task for a member in need. In countries like the U.S. and Australia, workers might conceive of a team using a sport metaphor, and good team members are expected to focus on their area of responsibilities (their own “position”). The motto of the team might be something like, “Let everyone take care of their own tasks and we will win against the competition.” These differing expectations in what good teamwork looks like means that members are likely to disagree on the best way to structure work, set objectives, reward and monitor performance. Without some negotiation and compromise, someone on the team will likely be unsatisfied and possibly unproductive, since their expectations are not being met.¹⁶

Thus, while there are clear benefits of increased diversity on teams for accomplishing complex work, there are drawbacks as well. Diversity among team members can make

integration especially difficult, resulting in poorer rather than improved performance. However, as we will discuss later, if diversity is handled appropriately, the benefits can be realized.¹⁷

Time

A fourth component of global team complexity is time. Specifically, the amount of time a global team will be working together has an effect on team performance so it is an important contingency in global team design.¹⁸ Groups operating under tight time constraints have little room to adjust to the interaction styles of others or negotiate new norms for working. Further, when the pace of work is accelerated, there is often less attention given to interpersonal relationships.¹⁹ Global teams also experience time compression due to time zone differences, and this restricts communication. Distance can very well equal delay in providing needed information or acting on decisions.²⁰ Because of these factors, global teams ironically may need more time than a traditional collocated team to accomplish the same task, although the likelihood is that they will have less time, given their role in the multinational firm.

The duration of global teams varies, and some have a very dynamic membership. A global team can have a very short lifecycle of just a few days or weeks, such as a temporary task force team formed to solve a specific global customer problem. Or global teams can work on projects that take more than a year to complete, such as new product development teams. Some global teams are permanent, such as those within a specific function, but crossing numerous country subsidiaries of the same company. The lifecycles of global teams are largely determined by the nature of tasks these teams perform.²¹ Less complex tasks requiring less interdependence usually take less time to complete and can accommodate a more dynamic team membership. The more complex a task becomes, the more a stable membership and continuous lifecycle becomes important to team functioning.

Global teams who have only a short time together (less than six months) in which to accomplish a complex task pose the greatest challenges to team design because these teams are not likely to have the luxury of time to sort out differences and problems as they arise, nor can they take their time to develop processes or an infrastructure of resources to support their work. Therefore, it is especially important for these teams to pay careful attention to putting in place a structure that will minimize the complexity that they will have to manage.

Technology

Almost all workers in today's information technology rich environment and knowledge-based economy use communication technologies.²² Thus, we cannot say that the distinguishing feature that differentiates traditional teams from global teams is the use of information technologies to communicate. Rather, it is the team's position on a continuum of virtuality, how much of the team's work is accomplished using virtual technologies, that distinguishes global teams.²³ A global team can be considered highly "virtual" (at the extreme end of the virtuality continuum) when members must rely on information technology to communicate. That is, they have little or no choice, and are restrained (often by resources or design) from meeting face to face. Team members who are more distributed will have to rely more on communication technologies than on face-to-face interaction; however, not all global teams are highly virtual. Some meet face to face regularly, and most global teams use a mix of information technologies as well as face-to-face communication depending upon the number of contexts that a team crosses and the time zones it spans. Many global teams are composed of members who interact according to the needs of the moment through a differing mix of media (email, phone, video

conferencing), with the amount of face-to-face contact determined by their own adaptations and the structures they create in their teaming processes.

A team's patterns of technology use result from the interplay between the structures and capabilities provided by the technology, the demands of the task, the characteristics of the people in the team, and the circumstances in the team's task environment or contexts.²⁴ As task complexity increases, communication and collaboration demands increase dramatically, and information richness (the depth and intricacy of the knowledge) becomes critical.²⁵ The team's lifecycle can also have an effect on the appropriateness of the technology. Teams with short life cycles may rely only on simple technologies that are tried and true like the telephone or email, simply because they do not have time to put into place or to learn anything more complex.²⁶

In addition, a team's technology needs may change as the team progresses through the lifecycle. In research and development teams, for example, information technology demands early in a project are for establishing informal networks and promoting creativity, while in the later phases the demands are more likely to be information exchange and coordination support.²⁷ Particularly early in a team's life, members' familiarity and skill levels with technology will constrain technology use, as will people's cultural preferences for communicating.²⁸ If a team crosses several contexts that are very different from one another, for example teams which include members both from developed and developing countries, selecting the right technology can become especially complex, since infrastructure and access issues can restrict a team members' ability to use technology. Status-related technology issues can also be created in crossing contexts. People who know how to use the technology can achieve dominance quickly. Status differences that arise from cultural membership or organizational role create complexity as well. In some cases status differences are not as noticeable when people are communicating

through technology because culture is not as visible; however, studies indicate that status differences can persist in both face-to-face and electronic groups. Status labels and impressions based on them can have a larger impact on participation and influence than do communication media.²⁹

Encouraging people to work together effectively in global teams involves more than simply connecting them via hard technologies. The phone, fax, video-conferencing and other technologies are important means of facilitating communication from one team member to the next, but these electronic communication devices cannot (and are not intended to) deal with the social and behavioral issues that arise when individuals from multiple cultures are asked to work together. While some problems still exist with respect to hard technologies (especially with respect to video-conferencing), the major stumbling blocks that remain revolve around finding means of facilitating interpersonal interaction among team members.³⁰

Media choices in global teams are complex and illustrate perfectly the dynamic interaction of the design dimensions discussed above: task, context, people, time and technology. When it comes to technologies for information sharing and collaboration, the old axiom “one size fits all” does not apply. Rather a more apt expression might be “it depends.” Good technology choices depend on uncovering the contextual and task issues a team is facing, and learning to avoid the technology pitfalls that can derail a global team.³¹ However, effective teams do display some common characteristics in their use of communication technologies. They choose media and the content of their messages based upon the nature of the task and the characteristics and preferences of the group members. When the need for collaboration increases as tasks become more interdependent, global team members interact more frequently and need to use richer and more synchronous technology (audio conferencing) to accommodate the need for more complex

messages. As the number of different contexts to be spanned (cultural, professional, organizational or country boundary) increases, effective global teams choose richer media, and generally begin their interactions together face-to-face. Successful global teams focus primarily on building relationships and on increasing trust to develop a shared view of their task and a hybrid culture to achieve that task. As team members become more comfortable with one another and with their work, however, they can often rely on less rich media to communicate (email) because their shared frameworks and working norms help them make the correct interpretations of both messages and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, matching technology to task is a dynamic process. Time pressure and deadlines may necessitate rich technologies at some future juncture in the team's life.

Team Design Pre-Start

Given the dynamic complexity of the five key design considerations, structuring a team to manage complexity is the first and most important step to achieving successful teaming outcomes. Research has shown that managers should create a design that will keep the team “at the edge of order and chaos.” Waves of disorder, catalysts to change, restructuring, and again disorder will likely unfold in global teams.³² Managers should strive to help teams regain an equilibrium between an inflexible, rigid structure, and a disorderly, tumbling foundation. If task complexity is likely to be high, managers may need to do more to structure the task and determine workable expectations at the outset, before the team members are brought together for the first time. Some initial structure can reduce the anxiety and frustration that will arise if team members feel they are being asked to undertake a task that is unbounded, and perhaps impossible to achieve. Managers should be careful not to make the team too large in an effort to match the complexity of the task. It is tempting to assign too many different people, representing all

possible organizations or groups. However, the more the people, the more the resources required – and all of this means much more coordination, increasing complexity. Adding too many people or resources can actually make things worse, not better. Managers should provide enough structure and diversity of membership to provide the team direction but also allow the members enough flexibility to develop an emerging structure that will address changing conditions and new information as they arise. Even if the overall strategy teams are asked to tackle is very complex, managers are advised to limit complexity of the team initially so that coordination will be manageable with the resources available. Start simple and increase complexity as the team develops. Managers should avoid “biting off more than they can chew” initially, allowing the team to seek progressively more complex activities as the team can handle them.³³

So how can a manager structure a global team to manage complexity? There are four key design techniques that help create a supportive environment for global teams: 1) clearly specify the task objective and align it with organizational strategic initiatives; 2) make appropriate resources available; 3) select team members who have the skills, abilities and experience to work in a global team, including the team leader if appropriate; and 4) create a sense of urgency.³⁴

Clearly specify the task objective and align with organizational strategic initiatives

It is important to establish a clear task objective and to align the objective with organizational initiatives, whether those initiatives are tied to global efficiency, local responsiveness or organizational learning or knowledge creation. If team members do not know how their task fits with overall objectives as well as with their own priorities, it will be more difficult for them to commit and hence, to participate fully in the team’s task. As emphasized earlier in this chapter, it takes time for team members to come to an understanding of their task, especially when the task is complex and diversity in the team is high. The more clearly and

specifically managers can define the task, the greater the likelihood that teams with short life cycles and urgent deadlines meet with success. Organizational leaders who will have a stake in the outcome of the team's work should be identified early and should all participate in the task definition to achieve alignment across organizational boundaries. For example, in a cross-functional global team charged with process improvements, the key stakeholders may be each of the functional department heads who will be responsible for implementing the solutions generated by the team. One of the most difficult challenges for a global team to overcome is conflict among the various stakeholders about the team's objective. Prior to the start of a team, stakeholders and leaders should come together and agree on the team's objective, particularly if that objective will require the team to cross several boundaries to complete their work. It can be an insurmountable hurdle and a death knoll for teams, as well as an unprofitable venture for the organizations involved, if the team's direction is not clearly supported and articulated before team members begin their work together, to the greatest extent possible based on the mandate of the team. Realistically, some objectives may be loosely structured by their very nature, but the point remains that even in these circumstances, the overall mission of the team should be clear. Stakeholders should also be actively involved in explaining the team's objective and its strategic intent to the team leader and members. Endorsement and involvement that is visible, especially if it comes from organizational leaders that team members know and respect, can create a strong message the task is important, which can create quick buy-in among members and sustain the team during difficult times.

Some basic task boundaries and process guidelines can help teams begin their work with reduced complexity. Managers should provide the team a basic outline for their scope of work and offer some teaming templates and recommended processes that team members can start

with. Particularly if they are new to global teaming, team members need to begin their work with some minimal structure and then adapt it to their needs. Offering guidelines that can help team members understand where decision authority lies and what their reporting relationships are helps to avoid the confusion that ambiguous reporting relationships can create. These boundaries are important even if the team members will be working together on a part-time basis or only for a short while. In fact, more structure may be necessary when teams will be of short duration and with tight deadlines since the team does not have time to create this structure themselves. In sum, as a first step in pre start-up organizational leaders can manage task complexity by taking four key steps:

- Provide the team with a well-defined, strategically aligned objective;
- Actively endorse the team's objective;
- Offer a minimal structure for the team's scope of work and some general process guidelines;
- Give the team basic guidance regarding organizational responsibility and decision-authority related to their objective.

Make resources available

Global teams are embedded not just in one, but in many contexts that may possess quite different systems of organizational support, including budgets, work processes, human resource policies and support people, such as facilitators, administrative support, and information technology tools and facilities. Incompatible or insufficient resources are a major source of complexity and frustration for global team collaboration. To manage this complexity before a team is formed, the appropriate stakeholders or managers should conduct a resource assessment to determine the state of available resources, including the degree of overlap in the type and

availability of resources across organizational and country boundaries. If there is a great deal of disparity or imbalance, with “rich” and “poor” resources in different contexts, managers may want to invest in resources before the team begins or reallocate resources that are available elsewhere. For example, perhaps facilitators or other support people for training and ongoing help are available in one context and could be shared with other contexts in which they are not readily available, prior to start-up. A substantial initial investment may be necessary, and companies will need to evaluate whether the objective is worthy of the expense in time, money and energy if resources are clearly a problem.³⁵ In a globalized world, however, if the firm wants to remain competitive, investment in global collaboration support systems will eventually be necessary. While it is not always possible to level the playing field entirely, managers should attempt to secure as many resources as possible in advance of the team’s formation, or specify a clear path to accessible resources, so that team members do not have to spend valuable time searching for essential support people, information or technology, or worse yet, become so frustrated they are unable to execute their objective.

There is one caveat about resources: while information technology is a critical resource for global teaming, the availability of technology resources is not sufficient for successful performance. Members must also be comfortable with the technology, and it should be reliable in each location where it is deployed. Simple technologies like email and audio-conferencing may suffice, and constitute the best technology choices for teams, especially when time is short. Team members do not have time to learn new technology if they are under pressure. At start up, team members should be well acquainted with the technology and have enough “media dexterity” to use the technology effectively to avoid the technology downtime that can distract team members from their task. At the same time, technology use is a process of adaptation.

Team members must be allowed to negotiate and come to a set of shared norms about how to communicate and which technology to rely on most heavily. In fact, the eventual performance of short-term teams working on high-stakes tasks is strongly influenced by members' ability to come to early agreement on communication processes. Ideally, they need to have a number of readily accessible communication channels that allow them to match their communication needs with the media available.³⁶ In summary, managers can control resource complexity, especially the complexity that can result from incompatible or imbalanced human resource and information technology systems, if they keep these points in mind:

- Conduct a resource and information technology assessment prior to the start-up of the team.
- Make an investment decision to acquire or reallocate support resources if necessary, or if resources are not available, postpone the team start-up if possible.
- Specify for the team a path to available resources.
- It is management's job to make resources available to the team; however, the team should make the decision about the best match of resources and technology to match their needs as circumstances require and as team member skills, abilities and preferences are negotiated.

Select team members who have the skills, abilities and experience to work in a global team

Global team members need to be adept at working with task uncertainty, member diversity, and a variety of team situations.³⁷ Team members too often are selected based only upon professional expertise or job roles alone, or upon their availability to do the technical work. However, whenever possible, it is advisable to select team members who already have demonstrated the global competencies discussed in Section 3. Research indicates that employees

tend to be more comfortable and effective in a global teaming situation if they are capable of performing the core tasks for their roles, are self-disciplined and goal-directed, are flexible, collaborative and willing to share and exchange information, and remain open to feedback.³⁸

Global team members should be perceptive and receptive to differences in people and culture, ways of thinking, and alternative approaches to processes. They need to be capable of handling the uncertainty. They should also be committed and connected to the business and competent in using technology required for their roles. These skills, while desirable in many work settings in multinational corporations, are particularly crucial to the viability of global teamwork.³⁹

There are selection tools, such as the *Global Personality Inventory (GPI)*, which is a measurement tool specifically developed for work-related use by psychologists working in or with global organizations.⁴⁰ It was designed for applications such as pre-employment selection, developmental assessment, coaching, and succession management. Measures such as this one can help managers to select team members who can work well at the global level. The *Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory* is a self-assessment tool that can help team members determine the likelihood that they will adjust well to a global teaming situation.⁴¹ Team members can assess themselves on four dimensions that research has shown to be important in adapting to cross-cultural situations: flexibility-openness, emotional resilience, personal autonomy, and perceptual acuity. The instrument offers suggestions for what team members can do to increase their abilities on these dimensions as well.

It is particularly important to select people to be members of global teams who are capable intercultural communicators, because effective communication is especially critical for integrating diversity in global teams. Team members should be motivated to communicate with

unlike individuals and be able to take on each other's perspectives so they can make correct interpretations of behavior, especially when they encounter difficulties.⁴²

In selecting people for work in global teams it is important to remember that cultural biases, especially those derived from national culture, can have marked effects on team performance. There are taken-for-granted assumptions in every culture about the desirable qualities of the global manager and about how a good team member behaves, with some particularly strong contrasts between Eastern and Western cultures in the criteria for what constitutes an effective team member. Even the most sophisticated global executives are subject to biased assessments of these criteria. It is necessary to get more than just a monocultural perspective on the selection criteria and to use differences of opinion as a way of exposing implicit biases.⁴³

When managers are designing a team for short-duration or temporary task work, it is especially important to select the right team members. Members who already know one another, who may have worked together well on previous projects and are comfortable with one another, are more likely to have some shared understanding of each other as people. A precondition for a fast start is enough of a shared reality among team members to enable effective communication without spending too much time surfacing differences and negotiating a shared resolution, especially when the differences have to do with how people relate to one another. There is also likely to be a foundation of trust and shared knowledge of each other's work habits if people have worked together previously. They do not have to spend time getting to know one another's working styles. Even if not all of the team members know each other, if a core group has had previous experience working together successfully, they can get off to a speedy start. If the team members do not know one another at all, it is possible for "swift trust" to develop and a "swift

start” to occur if channels and norms for communication are pre-specified. For example, team members can draw upon shared occupational or functional rules or processes to help develop trust and norms.⁴⁴ Having a common language about process in product development has allowed automobile manufacturers to bridge many other differences as they partner across contexts. Among other things, they share values around the importance of process to quality events and outcomes. A shared cohort culture can also help to develop swift trust. This was a key element in a short-term team (with a 2-month lifecycle) that the first author worked with. They had a complex project to do across several national boundaries. The fact that all the team members were high-potential managers who had been highly socialized in the same manner (although separately), allowed them all to come together and understand one another very quickly. Without this common frame of reference, it would have taken a lot longer for them to get started on their work. Finally, team members will have to spend less time planning their task if they already know who knows what, who is good at what, and who does what.⁴⁵ Being able to adapt quickly to one another, to changing circumstances, and to a quick exchange of ideas is a prerequisite for successful short-term teams, especially when the stakes are high and the task is complex.

To maximize their chances of successful teaming outcomes, organizational leaders and managers should remember these key points when they are selecting people to work in global teams:

- Team members should be selected for professional expertise and roles related to the task, but they should also be selected based on their ability to handle task uncertainty, to integrate diverse perspectives and work practices, and to adapt to a variety of team situations.

- Engage the help of human resource professionals who can use selection tools that will provide some measure of an individual's global competencies and also allow team members to assess their own level of comfort with a global team assignment.
- Be especially mindful to select members who are effective communicators, particularly interculturally.
- If at all possible, select team members who know one another or who have worked together well on previous assignments, especially if the team will have a short deadline and a high priority task.

Create a sense of urgency

Managers can maintain task focus, and reduce complexity if they structure the team to convey a sense of urgency. There is nothing like a deadline to help focus minds. Research indicates that tight deadlines can get a group moving.⁴⁶ As with complexity and uncertainty, however, managers must be careful not to assign so much urgency that the members feel anxious about their ability to achieve.⁴⁷ Pressure from outside the team that has the potential to affect members' livelihoods, careers or rewards, can be a motivating force if it is not extreme. A significant challenge with significant consequences, tied directly to everyone's interests, skills, abilities, and professions, has the capacity to concentrate team members' attention and to motivate them to work together. Pressure can push people to find solutions to differences and to come to agreement for the sake of protecting their mutual self-interest. A sense of urgency can come from environmental factors in the marketplace or in the organization, such as new competitive pressures, new requirements from higher level managers, poor business results, or pressure from a global customer everyone serves. Managers can convey a sense of urgency in the way they frame the goals for the team, by obtaining top level endorsement for the goals, by

bringing the voice of a credible customer into the task rationale, or by making a good business case for the goals, such as demonstrating a large investment that may be at risk. However, it is important that managers realize that it may take multiple sources of evidence to achieve a shared sense of urgency. This is due to the different understandings and perspectives about the task, different values or priorities, and different perspectives about time horizons that team members likely bring with them based on their cultural, professional, and organizational backgrounds. Understanding what is likely to appeal to team members' sense of urgency and then exerting positive pressure to engage in collaborative work are key to framing the goals to energize global teamwork.

In summary, managers can help team members align with their task objective by taking the following actions:

- Frame the objective as important to the organization by selecting credible sources to endorse the objective;
- Connect the team's objective to pressure from outside organizational boundaries, from competitors or customers in the marketplace;
- Provide deadlines;
- Connect the objective to people's careers or to rewards that will motivate participation.

Team Formation at Start-Up

At team formation the leader of a team plays a significant role in getting the team off to a positive start. Because leadership of a global team is highly related to a team's ultimate performance, team leaders are generally chosen by managers and other stakeholders who have a direct interest in the team's objective. New teams are merely a collection of individuals. The leader's functional role is to develop them into a well-integrated and high performance work

team. However, the ability of team leaders to perform key leadership functions in global teams is limited by the fact that team members are usually spread across space and time and therefore have fewer opportunities to meet face-to-face with the leader. This limitation means that leaders of global teams are more likely than leaders of traditional teams to create structures and routine processes that substitute for many of the usual leadership functions and to distribute a good deal of leadership to the team members themselves. Leaders are likely to create self-managing teams by providing direction and specific goals, monitoring environmental conditions, updating and revising goals and strategies as environmental contingencies require, and facilitating collaboration and cohesion among team members.⁴⁸ Habitual routines are necessary early on in the team's lifecycle. They have to be established and reinforced by leaders at team formation. Leaders who set explicit objectives, create a clear mission, and develop an appropriate climate or tone can enhance team member self-regulation by creating a team context that forms the backdrop for the team's work.⁴⁹

Establishing the right team context at start-up is critical to later team performance. The leader and team members together must build a context that includes internal norms, structures for coordination and collaboration, and a negotiated “hybrid culture” that bridges multiple cultural boundaries and allows team members to take advantage of their diversity for goal accomplishment.⁵⁰ Social processes are those that motivate team members to commit to a shared goal, that create a positive working climate and that connect team members to each other and to the team's mission. Task processes include the development of individual goals that are linked with one another, strategies for executing tasks, and expectations for roles that are compatible across team members.

Global team members need to develop their own methods of working together in order to deal with the uncertainty and complexity inherent in their work. Since the rules for collaboration are not embedded in the operating procedures or shared cultural norms of a given organization, team members cannot take for granted their collaboration.⁵¹ The processes that leaders and team members actively negotiate together will help them cut across multiple boundaries to develop a common focus and will provide the dynamic interdependencies that are the context for self-management as the team members move from start-up to ongoing collaboration⁵²

There is clear and strong evidence that to create conditions for effective global team performance, it is necessary for team members to spend time together face-to-face when the team is first formed.⁵³ It is particularly critical when the team's task is complex, diversity is high, team members have not worked together previously, and there is time pressure. Global teams may need to “slow down to speed up,”⁵⁴ spending more time in formation activities to ensure their continued development and their ability to withstand environmental changes that can disrupt the team and cause disintegration. Providing teams an enriched environment at start-up can actually speed development.⁵⁵

The stakeholders and team members will also need to decide whether to employ a skilled, cross-culturally competent facilitator to help them with their negotiation of taskwork and teamwork processes. At the first face-to-face meeting, facilitators can be helpful in structuring early discussions of the team's mission, roles and responsibilities and in the development of norms for interaction, surfacing salient cultural differences and other contextual influences that the team will need to negotiate. They can support the teams in managing their organizational context by providing ongoing skill development through coaching of the team leader and members. Ideally, facilitators help team members learn skills for communicating and interacting

effectively and can take on the facilitator's role themselves as they work together over time. In some cases, when there is conflict, flux or turbulence in the task environment, facilitators may need to remain part of the team to help the team stay aligned and make progress on their task objectives. Facilitators can also add considerable value to the team, especially when team members are inexperienced with global teaming or when there is time pressure and team members need to focus right away on the content of their taskwork. The team members may not know how to go about team integration or may not be able to pay sufficient attention themselves to teamwork processes.⁵⁶

In many global teams it may be advisable to begin work with some form of organized training that is blended with work on defining the mission and team goals.⁵⁷ Conducting “immersion training” when team members come together face-to-face at formation, especially if team members have never worked together before, can expose team members together to formal instruction that is designed to build shared knowledge of the organization's vision for the team, of how the team fits with larger strategic objectives, and of expectations for how the team members are to work together. Training can provide explicit instructions about how team members are to conceptualize a problem and how to work together to accomplish an objective.⁵⁸ Initial training can also include skills training that can enhance collaboration, particularly cross-cultural communication, and culture-specific training to surface differences and similarities and to negotiate teaming processes.

Task Processes

A team's performance and successful completion of its tasks is largely dependent on the team members' ability to make sense of the complexity they face and to come to a shared understanding early on about what their work entails and how they will accomplish it.

Specifically, there are three key components of taskwork the team leader and members need to put in place at the start of the team: 1) the vision for the team, the team's mission and objectives that will guide their interdependent taskwork; 2) team members' roles and responsibilities in relation to their objectives and their norms for interacting with one another as they work to complete tasks; and 3) the selection and adaptation of appropriate communication technology.

Establishing the team vision, mission and objectives

Establishing a clear and inspiring shared purpose and accompanying goals and expectations for performance that are consistent with the business strategy of the organizations in which the global team operates is critical.⁵⁹ This requires taking initiative to ensure that all members are involved in creating or understanding the purpose and vision of the group or a specific project. That members have sufficient opportunity to voice their respective opinions and feel that the reasons for these differences are clearly understood is important. Leaders need to be skilled facilitators themselves or employ a skilled facilitator to help the team focus on a common goal that can unite team members and be inspiring enough for team members to move beyond differences and commit to achieving objectives.

Team members should be encouraged to talk explicitly about factors in their context that support the team's objectives or that can become barriers. For example, the availability of resources or the support of managers in different contexts can be a determining factor in team members' participation. It may be especially difficult to bring sensitive or difficult issues into open discussion when there are cultural norms that inhibit this type of open discussion. A leader or facilitator may be able to engage in one-on-one discussions with team members to uncover these issues. The leader or facilitator can reframe issues for later discussion by the group in an impersonal and non-threatening manner.

Above all, it is important for team members to feel collectively that they can carry out their tasks and that they have some chance of success in achieving their objectives. They are likely to perform better if the leader can set expectations for realizing a team's objectives in the initial start-up phase.⁶⁰ Team members' early perceptions of likely success can bring about improvements in both short-term performance and in factors effecting long-term effectiveness and viability. People will be more willing to continue working as a team over a long period of time, to learn from each other and from the context of their work, and to work independently while they are within the team context, especially when they encounter obstacles, if they have a collective understanding of the team's objectives and feel they are achievable.⁶¹ Team leaders can play a critical role in establishing buy-in and positive attitudes in the way they frame the team's task and bring about collective knowledge and understanding of what it will take to achieve it by engaging in the following actions:

- Share information about the organization's strategy;
- Clarify the rationale and intent of strategies and goals;
- Provide clear expectations for team members' contributions to achieving objectives;
- Ensure that team members are involved in decisions that affect their work;
- Seek ideas and opinions from all members;
- Focus on a subordinate goal that team members can share in common;
- If possible, use the organization's core values to guide the members' planning, decisions and objectives;
- Promote creativity and innovation in undertaking new goals or opportunities;
- Help members develop positive approaches to the needs of the organization;
- Challenge assumptions that may inhibit progress;

- Demonstrate flexibility in adapting to changes in goals and expectations.

Determining roles/responsibilities/interaction norms

One of the factors that can contribute to smooth coordination early in the existence of the team is a clear definition of responsibilities. A lack of clarity may lead to confusion, frustration, and actually discourage people from participating, particularly if the work is only part of the team member's organizational responsibilities. It is helpful for the leader or facilitator to know about team members ahead of time, about both their professional and interpersonal skills, to provide guidelines in negotiating roles and responsibilities. Team members should have the opportunity to offer ideas about how they would like to contribute to achieving the team's objective as well. In many cases, it may be difficult for the team to sort out detailed roles and responsibilities at their first meeting because they are grappling with the complexities and uncertainties of their task, but if members can agree on short-term responsibilities, they can begin working and continue negotiating as they conduct further data gathering sensemaking.

If the team leader, perhaps with the help of a facilitator, can engage in a “contracting” discussion to establish norms for interaction, it will increase the predictability, and reduce the uncertainty, of the team's coordination across distance and time.⁶² Contracting can help prevent the occurrence of haphazard or halfhearted participation, and can help teams resolve conflict when it occurs.⁶³ Team members should continue talking until there is mutual agreement. If time is short and there is pressure from deadlines, the leader or facilitator can help with ongoing discussion through individual meetings while the team members continue to work on tasks.

Global teams can jump start their collaboration by understanding their roles and negotiating their responsibilities and expectations for interaction. Leaders and team members can establish clarity in the face of complexity and uncertainty by doing the following:

- Link roles and team contributions to the organization's strategy and goals;
- Ensuring that all members know how their contributions affect the team objective
- Discuss how and with what frequency members expect to be in contact with one another;
- Determine what acceptable hours are for contacting each other and what length of time constitutes an acceptable response;
- Determine priorities for responsibilities;
- Be concrete and specific about expectations: “I’d like a weekly check-in” instead of “I’d like you to communicate;”
- Establish a process for getting in contact if a crises arises.
- *Select and adapt appropriate communication technology*

At start up, is important to collectively choose the appropriate communication media.⁶⁴

As mentioned earlier, different technologies are appropriate at different times as the team carries out its work, however, the technology choices at the start of the team and how they are chosen will impact the comfort team members have with mediated communication and how effective this communication will be. For example, using audio-conferencing that permits synchronous (real time) dialogue between team members is important for developing trust early on. Audio conferencing can establish a baseline safety zone that can get technology use off to the right start. On the other hand, using computer conferencing at the start of a team project may be a poor choice because language differences and inexperience can restrict the free flow of information necessary to the formation of relationships. Because conversations may be recorded in computer conferencing, team members may be more guarded in what they say, especially if trust is not yet established.⁶⁵

“Leveling the electronic playing field” at start up is important to fostering a baseline of trust within a global team that will be working virtually. It is necessary to ensure that less knowledgeable team members are not disadvantaged in an environment that has already been stripped of traditional visual cues. Where there is a large gap among team member's knowledge and familiarity with a technology or their access to technology, training for members who are unfamiliar with a particular technology is necessary, or selecting a technology that all can use comfortably is recommended.⁶⁶

These are some key issues and questions for consideration in selecting the appropriate communication technologies for the team:⁶⁷

- Availability-- to what extent are the various technology options readily available to everyone involved in a geographically dispersed work group? Which technologies can be used regularly without putting anyone at a disadvantage?
- User skills – how skilled are the team members and how comfortable are they with the different technology options?
- Culture – what are the cultural requirements or preferences?
- Sense of community – how well do people who are communicating know one another and is there enough of a sense of shared understanding to keep misinterpretation of messages at a minimum?
- Importance of the message – the more important the message the richer should be the communication medium.
- Virtual context – are there ways to create a shared virtual context that can enhance participation and help develop shared mental models, such as multiple media, ways to communicate formally and informally, and virtual facilitation?

- Regular pattern – have team members agreed on a regular pattern of virtual messaging, when to expect them and in what form?
- Language -- if one language is used as the team language, are the native speakers considerate in their speech and transmission of written materials to nonnative speakers?
- Time – do team members know and respect the most convenient times to send and receive messages across time zones? Are there ways to share private contact numbers that will improve communication while respecting people's personal lives?
- User choice – have team members been given the opportunity to say how they would prefer to communicate in a given transaction?

Social Processes

First impressions are critical in global teamwork because there is little opportunity for informal personal interaction when most of the communication is restricted and mediated by technology.⁶⁸ Initial messages need to be handled well. Face-to-face initial interactions are important for this reason alone. They set the stage for the development of trust in ongoing interactions and help establish the shared understanding and a shared team identity that will sustain team members when they can be pulled in different directions by demands in their local work contexts. When a team is formed and first comes together at start-up, leaders need to pay particular attention to accomplishing three things that can significantly affect teamwork, either positively or negatively, through their initial interactions together: 1) create a safe environment; 2) develop shared “mental models”; and 3) create a sense of community.

Creating a safe environment

In teams which develop high levels of trust, there is usually a willingness to express ideas openly and there are explicit verbal statements about commitment, support, and willingness to do

the work. If this kind of expression can be achieved, it increases the attraction to the group and the tendency for agreement and cooperation⁶⁹ However, for expressions of ideas and commitment to occur, a safe environment must be created first, whether that environment occurs in a face-to-face setting or in a virtual environment. While people are first getting to know one another and ideas are being tested and options are being discussed, team members may be reluctant to share work in progress, especially if it is in an "electronic place" that is open to all members of the team. To do so means that they expose themselves by testing ideas or admitting a lack of knowledge in public.⁷⁰

Team members may also have different ideas about when it is appropriate to share information. Some cultures, such as the French, place a great deal of emphasis on thinking through ideas thoroughly and writing well, making it unlikely that French team members would feel comfortable sharing an idea that is less than completely formulated. There is always risk in sharing ideas or work in teams; nevertheless, the team environment requires that members feel a certain level of security and safety for them to express ideas and offer to share their knowledge or their work with others.

In global teams, creating a safe environment may take more time and multiple approaches. If possible, the team leader should try to understand what criteria the team members believe distinguish between "safe" work and "risky" work by talking with them individually. This requires getting to know something of the team members' cultural values and practices regarding work. However, this may not be possible in many global team situations. In most cases, safe work involves more objective tasks such as helping to establish the project goals and management process, such as schedules. Initially, risky work might be the presentation of a new approach or idea, or engaging in a creative problem solving task, or anything for which the team

member will be held personally accountable, requiring that the team member trust that the others will receive the work positively. It is also risky to present ideas in a public team forum before team members have enough knowledge of one another to correctly interpret the responses of others. There may be too much uncertainty for some team members to feel comfortable enough to share ideas fully.

Creating a safe environment for the expression of new ideas and commitment to following through on task work, means doing the following:

- Start out with “safe” work, and then moving to “risky” work, especially if people have not yet had the opportunity to interact face-to-face and get to know one another.
- Allow team members to work in smaller groups initially with people of their own choosing with whom they feel most comfortable, to flush out ideas.
- Create and take every opportunity to socialize face-to-face in initial interactions. Socializing increases shared experiences, which more fully integrates the people into the team and helps them better interpret each other’s behaviors when they are apart.
- If team members cannot meet face-to-face initially, the team leader should engage in inclusive social messages at the start of the team’s virtual interaction. Social communication that complements task communication may help strengthen team bonds and significantly increase the likelihood that people will develop a level of trust that will support the exchange of ideas.⁷¹

Developing shared “mental models”

In many global organizations, teams that cross boundaries do so in order to create knowledge that will provide solutions to pressing business problems or that will foster development of new products and services. Research indicates that the development of shared

team “mental models” or shared frameworks, a kind of “collective mind”, is a critical step in facilitating the team learning that allows team members to come together to contribute their diverse knowledge and expertise to solve problems. Mental models of the external task environment, of the organization and organizational strategy, and of the definition of the team’s situation are necessary for effective team functioning. So are models of team knowledge, skills and abilities of teammates. Team members need knowledge about work, about the group, and about group members to develop organized knowledge and shared expectations.⁷²

If team members are unaware of similarities or if they do not know what their colleagues "know," they will not be able to develop a team mental model. Just having every member independently recognize a problem is not sufficient for problem identification at the team level. Team members need to do a lot of communicating with one another in the early stage of teaming to share knowledge about their task, their contexts, and themselves. This shared knowledge then becomes the basis for developing shared team mental models that will contribute to successful performance. These team models become a point of reference for sensemaking and for incorporating new information into the team’s processes, enabling team members to work more efficiently and effectively together in later stages of their work without the need to communicate with one another quite as much or as often.⁷³

One of the most important tasks a team leader or facilitator can perform at team formation is directing group interaction to surface what people know, who they know, what their differences and similarities are in perspectives and practices, and what their shared understanding of their situation is. Teamwork is likely to proceed in a well-coordinated manner if group members' definitions of the situation are alike. Similarly, shared situation models assure that all participants are solving the same problem and help exploit the capabilities of the entire

team. Common expectations of the task and the team allow team members to predict the behavior and resources needs of team members more accurately.⁷⁴ Shared mental models are assumed to enhance the quality of teamwork skills and team effectiveness. Common expectations of the task and team allow members to predict each other's behavior and resource needs more accurately.⁷⁵

It is easier to develop team mental models if the people who are selected to be members of the team are similar in their orientation toward work and working, based around shared values and work habits. However, in most global teams such member recruiting and selection that will ensure shared perspectives is not possible. It may not even be desirable, if taking advantage of diverse perspectives is one of the reasons the team is being formed. Stakeholders and team leaders can draw on strong corporate cultures in global companies, or strong occupational cultures when possible, to facilitate the development of a common work orientation. Yet it is most likely that team members need to come together face-to-face in the early formation stage, particularly if they have no history of working together, if they are to have an opportunity to create for themselves shared team models. This takes time. Time that would ordinarily be spent on task will have to be diverted and used to allow team members to surface their mutual perceptions, assumptions, options and preferences. If teams do not take the necessary time for initial face-to-face interactions in “real time” to surface and discuss perceptions, assumptions, options and preferences, there is an increased likelihood that false starts will occur and that added costs will occur, quality will suffer, and valuable time will be lost. Team members with critical information may not be heard. Inferior or inefficient strategies for work accomplishment may be adopted. The chances are great that conflict will arise later in the team's work and

interpersonal relationships might be damaged, and the team's collective effort will be lower as a result.⁷⁶

The team leader can provide guidance, and the facilitator with the help of other human resource professional can provide training that will help shape expectations through direct instruction or through the modeling of behavior. The leader's central function in helping the team develop shared mental models is to engage team members in information gathering activities and then to help the team integrate and interpret, negotiating their disagreements. The team needs to focus on articulating explicitly what is generally taken for granted and implicit within the members' individual work contexts. Developing shared team mental models will facilitate the creation of a team context for their interdependent work and ongoing team processes. With the support of stakeholders and a facilitator or other trainers, the leader can engage in the following activities to foster the development in team mental models at team formation:

- Create public rituals for the team, such as a ceremony to inaugurate the formation of the team, or formal announcements or training events at which all are present, even if they are not face-to-face. Team training at start-up, when everyone is present and knows who else is there, can accomplish more than just the transmission of important information or knowledge. These activities let team members know what other team members know. They help solve coordination problems in which taking action requires knowing that other people know what you know and that you know that they know that you know.⁷⁷
- Use storytelling to allow team members the opportunity to share knowledge that may be implicit, complex or embedded in context and therefore difficult to communicate, especially when language difficulties may be present.

- Use metaphors that all team members will understand to help create team mental models that will guide action. For example, a metaphor that involves food or food preparation and consumption is a one whose meaning can be unifying across contextual boundaries and can help team members talk about planning (creating recipes), gathering information or resources (shopping for ingredients), executing tasks (cooking) and delivering results (putting the meal on the table). Metaphors can help uncover similarities and differences in assumptions, knowledge, and habitual practices in a non-threatening way and can facilitate the development of a shared framework. Metaphors, because they contain both symbolic and emotional content, allow for social sharing at the same time they allow for the sharing of knowledge, creating the opportunity for informal bonds among team members to develop.⁷⁸

Creating a sense of community

A key to effective global teams is developing a sense of community that demonstrates sensitivity to differences, establishing ground rules and project team etiquette or agreement among the members for how the team will work together. Recruitment and selection of team members, defining the vision, mission and objectives, developing group working agreements and a project management process are all positive steps that will aid in the development of a sense of community in the team. However, in the unstable global environment, leaders especially have to work actively to establish and maintain a collective team identity because traditional identity-forming boundaries are no longer useful and may not even be present.⁷⁹

Again, face-to-face communication at the start of a diverse global team which is undertaking a complex task is essential to begin establishing mutual trust between members at the beginning of their work relationship.⁸⁰ It is a particularly important choice when the task is

sensitive; when there is anxiety in the team, when performance is in question, or when confusion or dissatisfaction exists. In all cases when there is high emotional content, face-to-face communication, when properly positioned and managed, can build community and connections to the business, and is especially essential at team formation.⁸¹

Team leadership can play a significant role in influencing commonality of values.⁸² The leader, and ideally one who has a facilitator to help, can model the desired behavior for the team, use language that will frame the task in common terms, subtly interrupt patterns of dysfunctional behavior and redirect actions that will orient the team's values. The leader can reinterpret task activities, issues and problems to highlight desirable team values while respecting and preserving the integrity of diverse perspectives and knowledge.

Engaging diverse people as team members requires the leader to understand that not all kinds of team member diversity influence team processes in the same manner and that members come into the teaming situation with inequalities in experience, access to resources, and ability to influence others. Demographic diversity (differences in age, gender, race, professional background and education) can produce preconceptions in team members that can affect interpersonal relationships. Diversity that is job-related, such as functional differences and status differences in the organization, can affect the levels of positive functional debate (task-related conflict) in the group.⁸³ Certain types of values have stronger relationship with particular team processes. Focusing on the development of potentially shared work values may lessen the tendency of group members to make undesirable comparisons on the basis of demographic differences. In actual team settings, similarity in work values may supplant the impact of demographic diversity in producing effective and satisfying relationships and a sense of community in the team. Here are some ways a leader can work to build community in the team:

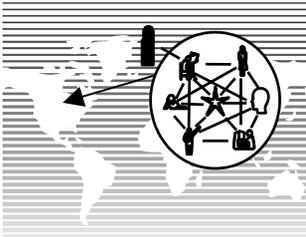
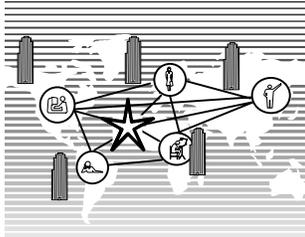
- Surface cultural, social and functional differences by using value checklist in the initial start-up phase of teamwork to consciously establish which differences, such as diverse knowledge, experience, creativity, and skills, are relevant to the team's objective.⁸⁴
- Allow team members to negotiate and agree upon their own structures for working so that team members will own these structures together as a group. If team members feel their viewpoints and preferences are considered equally, and they have had the opportunity to be part of the decision, rather than have structures imposed from outside the team, they will be more likely to engage constructively in team processes.
- Work with the team to develop a symbol, a kind of team logo, that can signify the work values the team will hold in common. The process of creating this symbol together can in itself create a feeling of community.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the key dimensions of complexity -- task, context, people, time and technology -- that interact to produce challenges for global teams beyond those in traditional teams. These factors must be considered and managed in designing and forming global teams to perform successfully. Stakeholders, team leaders and team members can actively participate in creating conditions prior to the start-up of a team that can provide and enhance the likelihood that the team will achieve its objective. They can also structure task and social processes when team members first come together that will establish a positive foundation for their ongoing work together. The next chapter will discuss ongoing task and social processes and what leaders and team members can do to sustain their development and reach their goals.

Table 1

Summary of Differences in Context Between Traditional and Global Teams

Traditional Teams Work in a Single Context	Global Teams Work Across Multiple Contexts
	
<p>Characteristics</p>	<p>Characteristics</p>
<p>1. Common physical location and work environment</p>	<p>1. Multiple physical locations and work environments</p>
<p>2. Common national culture in a single geography</p>	<p>2. Multiple national cultures in multiple geographies</p>
<p>3. Common economic and political conditions</p>	<p>3. Multiple and dissimilar economic and political conditions</p>
<p>4. Native language speakers</p>	<p>4. Native and non-native language speakers</p>
<p>5. Professional expertise and communication skills</p>	<p>5. Cross-cultural competence and adaptability in addition to professional expertise, communication skills</p>
<p>6. Task is generally contained within organizational and national boundaries</p>	<p>6. Task generally involves crossing organizational and national boundaries</p>
<p>7. Opportunity for frequent, face-to-face and informal interactions and information sharing</p>	<p>7. Opportunities for informal interaction are infrequent and interaction is generally structured and mediated by technology</p>
<p>8. Work within a single time zone</p>	<p>8. Often work across multiple time zones</p>

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