

Outsourcing Destination: Remote Project Managers Perspective

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Introduction

Outsourcing is a creative solution for coping with the demands of a competitive market. Business Process Outsourcing in all sectors/industry has become a strategic business tool that has grown tremendously over the past couple of years and has allowed organizations to successfully overcome the shortage of qualified and skilled workforce. In IT field/sector such resources are managed efficiently and customers are provided with critical time-to-market software solutions. India's role in off shoring and outsourcing has expanded and flourished in these recent decades. India continues to be the undisputed most popular location for outsourcing and offshoring software development [1],[2]. An enormous magnitude of studies has been carried out from the outsourcing customer perspective. The poster will highlight and focus on Global Software Development (GSD) and the Indian approach/outlook/viewpoint as a major outsourcing centre. Success of India as a major outsourcing and offshoring destination is attributed by many competitive advantages within the Indian software Industry. While India's economic success is recognized around the world today from the Western perspective the nation is often perceived as a homogenous society. This view is reinforced by the media who frequently portray India in a stereotypical fashion. The reality is quite different. India is a large and diverse nation which is often referred to as the 'Subcontinent' because of its size. It is made up of 28 States and has 22 recognised languages and has many religious and culturally diverse groups. Its major religions include the Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh faiths. The Indian nation has successfully accommodated diversity and is per head of population the largest democracy in the world [3]. It is of interest to note India's linguistic, cultural, and genetic diversity is only exceeded by that of the continent of Africa [4]. As a result it is not surprising to discover that the Indian software industry reflects the nation's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

Research Focus

As members of the Global Software Development (GSD) Research group with Lero- Irish Software Engineering Research Centre, having reviewed the literature it was recognized that a large proportion of the published research in the area of GSD has centred on the requirements of organisations outsourcing or offshoring software development. We decided that it would be value to undertake research which considered the specific issues that were relevant for the recipients of this work. Given India's position as the primary location for undertaking offshored and outsourced software development Indian based software organisations were considered the ideal focus for undertaking this type of research.

Our research has centred on the perspective of the Indian Project Manager and the issues they consider and the problems which they and their teams experience. In this context it was considered of value to focus on the specific issues which are relevant for the establishment and operation of Indian based GSD teams. Our findings published are preliminary and part of a larger study which we are currently undertaking..

Research Methodology

For our research cases, qualitative research allowed us to categorize data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results. This was combined with the grounded theory approach. [5] The genre of research which we were carrying out, it was necessary that the respondents should feel free and be able to articulate their practical experience and views.

We developed a set of hypotheses to conduct the interviews. Questionnaire were developed to gather information on these variables and tested for their content. Two multinational and one small 1st generation software company responded, agreed and gave consent to conduct interviews with their Project Managers.

The participants included Vice-President (Financial Software Projects), Chief Consultant, 2 Senior Project Managers and a Project manager. Initially the questionnaire was distributed online among them and request was made to answer the questions. The response to this was quick, wholehearted and admiring. We then carried ahead our work by conducting Telephonic interviews with the participants of these software companies. Each interview was conducted for more than 90 minutes and the participants felt very free to express themselves and narrated/shared their experiences with us along with few ideas and suggestions. Each interview was recorded with the interviewee's permission. These were then transliterated so as to analyse. We used factual coding, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding so as to facilitate the identification of thoughts, ideas and concepts. The interviews provided helpful focus on the issues which we were trying to research.

Results:

Our results to data have shown:

- Selecting the correct team is seen as the most important success factor in remote software development.
- Technical ability, communication skills and attitude to work are all relevant for team selection regardless of whether is it collocated or globally distributed.
- Cultural and religious factors have no relevance in the team selection process.
- Female team members are 'dependable when it comes to deliverables'
- Project managers need to be available all day every day.
- Meeting details need to be written down and agreed.
- Continuous feedback is required and not always forthcoming from Western colleagues.

Conclusion

One of the important contributions which this research makes is that it focuses on the project manager within the Indian, as distinct from the Western software company. The issues which have been presented were highlighted by those who are responsible for doing the work and this is consistent with our objective of providing voice to the respondents. Our work recognises that Indian project managers are faced with challenges similar to those of managers working with collocated teams in Western based organisations, but, in addition face other which are particularly relevant or unique to the Indian situation. Our findings as outlined in the poster are preliminary and our research in this area is on going. The focus of this investigation is the perspective of the Indian Project Manager and the issues they consider and the problems which they and their teams experience. We have been very

fortunate to have the support and cooperation of a number of Indian software organisations who have granted us access to their employees. It is planned to expand our research to include interviews with additional software organisations and gain as wide a perspective as possible. It is also envisaged that the results from this study will be triangulated with a Yin (1994) based case study undertaken with Malaysian GSD teams [6][7][8] with the objective of providing this work with a broader Far Eastern perspective. We will also contrast its outcome with our research which was carried out between US teams who were outsourcing there work to Ireland [9]. We believe the research we present here is of value to both to academic and industrial communities and our objective is to develop this work further.

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