

## Preface

Back in the early 1990s, I was working as a consultant in ISO-9000 certification projects (International Organization for Standardization) for several organizations. One of the key components of those projects was the creation of rules and procedures, as well as the appropriate technological infrastructure, to allow groups of employees to address nonconformities in business processes. “Addressing nonconformities” is simply another way of saying that the employees were doing business process improvement. In business process improvement, usually a group of people analyzes a business process and solves the problems they discover in the process. Since the original ISO-9000 set of standards was based on total quality management ideas, we needed continuous and incremental process improvement across each organization, which meant many business process improvement groups addressing local quality-related issues.

Documenting the work of many business process improvement groups generates a lot of paperwork and is a tedious process. So I was looking into the idea of conducting business process improvement groups supported by simple e-mail-based e-collaboration systems. In that way, the e-collaboration systems themselves would automatically generate and archive the records of each group’s work. That meant, also, that most of the communication in each group would take place electronically.

After running a few groups where most of the interaction took place through an electronic communication medium, it became clear that the key determinant of the success of those groups was the quality of their distributed (or virtual) project management. In other words, if the leader and/or facilitator of an e-collaboration-supported business process improvement group were to do the wrong things (e.g., not stick closely to a well-defined group process structure), then the group could easily derail and fail to accomplish its task. It seems that with groups that interact primarily through electronic media, it is particularly difficult to bring a group back to the right track after it goes on a tangent or gets into a polarized discussion; apparently, it is much more difficult than with face-to-face groups.

The importance of distributed project management has only increased since the early 1990s. Much research has been conducted in the area in the 1990s and early 2000s, culminating with a special issue on collaborative project management published in the *International Journal of e-Collaboration* in 2006. The special issue was published in two parts (Issues 3 and 4 of the journal’s second volume) and was guest-edited by two outstanding researchers and colleagues: Jerry Fjermestad and Nicholas C. Romano, Jr. Several of the articles published in that special issue have been included in this book.

This book is a collection of chapters covering topics related to e-collaboration in modern organizations. Its emphasis is on topics relevant to those involved in initiating and managing distributed projects. The book is organized in three main parts: Section I, “Conceptual and Theoretical Issues”; Section II, “Distributed Project Management”; and Section III, “Emerging Issues and Debate.” Each of these three parts contains five chapters. Most of the chapters in this book are revised versions of selected articles published in the *International Journal of e-Collaboration*. I have been serving as founding editor in chief of that journal since its first issue was published in 2005.

Section I of the book is made up of Chapters I to V and is dedicated to the discussion of conceptual and theoretical issues that have implications for distributed project management. Chapter I, by Kock and Garza, reviews theoretical research on e-communication and e-collaboration behavior and proposes a new theoretical framework based on human evolutionary ideas. In Chapter II, by Kendall, a methodology built on the conceptual foundation of metaphor research is used to review the Web presences of 15 nonprofit theatres in southern New Jersey. Chapter III, by Wong, Dow, Turel, and Serenko, describes an application of the American Customer Satisfaction Index to model the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction with e-mail systems. Chapter IV, by Blanchard, examines how a Listserv affects its members' sense of community with the sponsoring organization, challenging previous theories about the development of a sense of community and demonstrating the positive effects of Listserv membership. Chapter V, by Roussev, introduces a project management framework that arguably creates optimal conditions for the successful implementation of large software projects when those projects are outsourced either offshore or onshore.

Section II of the book, which comprises Chapters VI to X, addresses issues in connection with initiating and managing distributed projects in e-collaborative environments. Chapter VI, by Kock and Corner, describes an action research study of a computer-mediated business process redesign group conducted in a New Zealand university. In Chapter VII, Zigurs and Khazanchi propose a unified theoretical view of virtual project management and summarize data in connection with patterns of the effective management of virtual projects. Chapter VIII, by Becerra-Fernandez, Del Alto, and Stewart, presents a case study describing the development and use of the first Web-based collaborative and knowledge management platform deployed at NASA. In Chapter IX, Prikladnicki, Evaristo, Audy, and Yamaguti, discuss an integrated risk management process for distributed software development and report the results of an exploratory case study conducted in a software development center of a U.S. corporation's Brazilian subsidiary. Chapter X, by Schwaig, Gillam, and Leeds, identifies project management issues associated with offshore information technology outsourcing projects and provides specific recommendations for addressing those issues.

Section III of the book consists of Chapters XI to XV, and focuses on the discussion of emerging issues and debate related directly and indirectly to e-collaboration support for distributed project management. In Chapter XI, Baskerville develops an analytical framework for new forms of information warfare that may threaten commercial and government computing systems by using e-collaboration in new ways. Baskerville's engaging chapter is a revised version of an award-winning article, selected as the best article published in the *International Journal of e-Collaboration* in 2006. Chapter XII, by Kahai and Avolio, discusses a laboratory experiment involving 42 student groups and evaluates the effects of transactional vs. transformational leadership styles and anonymity when groups supported by an electronic meeting system discussed the ethical issue of copying copyrighted software. Chapter XIII, by Leidner, Alavi, and Kayworth, uses a case-study approach to compare and contrast the cultures and knowledge management approaches of two organizations; the study suggests the ways in which organizational culture influences knowledge management initiatives. Chapter XIV, by McAvoy and Butler, presents a longitudinal participant observation study of a virtual software development team where a strange paradox was noted: A new software development methodology was introduced to the project, and the developers were initially committed to its use; over time, however, the commitment gradually decreased to the stage where aspects of the new methodology were practically ignored. In Chapter XV, Vaidyanathan discusses a framework that provides a synergistic approach to collect, share, and manage distributed corporate knowledge.

The contributing authors are among the most accomplished researchers in the world today in the areas of e-collaboration and distributed (or virtual) project management. I am most grateful for their hard work

in connection with the development of this book, which has been a great pleasure to edit together with my colleagues at IGI Global. The blend of conceptual, theoretical, and applied chapters found here makes me confident that this book will serve both academics and practitioners very well. I hope that the book will stimulate further research on distributed project management and related e-collaboration issues, and help project managers successfully lead virtual projects enabled by e-collaboration technologies.