Chapter 10

E-Mentoring in Global Software Development Teams: Success Factors to Develop a Common Culture

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ABSTRACT

Global Software Development (GSD) teams face communication and coordination problems due to spatial, temporal, and cultural separation between team members. Cultural diversity and cross-cultural management are significant issues among GSD teams. In software development projects, mentoring dramatically reduces the learning curve for novice human resources. Due to the large amount of electronic communication instruments, a remarkable number of different e-Mentoring concepts have emerged, which provides opportunity for mentoring that would not otherwise be possible. This chapter presents key success factors to enable e-Mentoring as a tool to develop a common culture in GSD scenarios. These success factors enable the correct application of mentoring programmes and the use of this to build a common culture in organizations that perform GSD.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a business fact, expanded world-wide beyond domestic boundaries, that is creating an interconnected world economy in which companies do their business and compete with each other anywhere in the world, regardless of national boundaries (Cullen, 1999). Globalization of the world economies has successfully brought significant changes to nearly all industries, and in particular, it includes software development (Smite, et al., 2010). One effect of economy globalization takes place in software development, where software products are developed by teams geographically distributed on a worldwide scale (Yu & Mishra, 2010). Moreover, according to Jaakkola (2009), one of the trends that is changing the characteristics of the software industry very strongly is globalization. In this environment, the software organization, once a close-knit and typically collocated entity, now requires remote collaboration across great distances and often has a multinational and multicultural makeup (Milewski, 2007). As a result of this, software development is considered a globally sourced commodity (Hayes, 2002; Herbsleb, 2007). Jaakkola (2009) stated that globalization has meaningful consequences for the software industry:

- Software companies are establishing branch offices abroad;
- Software companies are offshoring their processes, outsourcing their work, and subcontracting abroad;
- Ownership of companies is becoming global.

These factors require the easy flow of a workforce over geographical borders and also meaningful changes in software organizations, which are becoming multicultural (Jaakkola, 2009).

As a result of these trends, software development is evolving from a single site development to multiple localization team environments (Hernández-López, et al., 2010). Thus, software development evolved in order to adopt some Globalization characteristics; as a result, a new field called Global Software Development (GSD) emerged to cover specific aspects of global distributed software development (Oshri, Kotlarsky, & Willcocks, 2007). The challenges relate to aspects such as economical, technical, organizational, and cultural issues to those arising from different time zones, languages, and geographical locations (Damian & Moitra, 2006a). However, according to Smite et al. (2010), at the same time as development goes global there is an ambition to minimize geographical, temporal, and cultural separation.

This chapter focuses on cultural separation in GSD teams. Moreover, this work presents the success factors to build a common culture by means of the application of e-mentoring in GSD scenarios.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 surveys the relevant literature about GSD. Section 3 describes relevant literature about mentoring and e-Mentoring. Section 4 presents success factors about the use of e-mentoring in GSD environments in order to build a common culture. Finally, Section 5 concludes the chapter and draws future research trends.

GLOBAL SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

GSD involves the development of application software through interactions of people, organizations, and technology across nations with different backgrounds, languages, and working styles (Herbsleb & Mockus, 2003). In the early 1990s, offshoring of software work to development centers in low wage countries pertained to large Western companies such as IBM and SAP who systematically attempted to take a hold of wage differences and resources of a global market (Winkler, Dibbern, & Heinzl, 2008). Now, many Fortune 500 companies produce their business
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