Distributed & Outsourced Software Engineering

Challenges and Practical Advice for Distributed and Outsourced Software Engineering

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Challenges of DOSE

Project Management

Cultural Differences

Time zones

Communication and Language skills
Challenges for DOSE:

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Project management

Project management is difficult

In a traditional one-site setting, the manager can just go to a developer’s office and ask to see the current state.

It is difficult for the project manager to form a good picture of the project’s progress.

Configuration management plays an important role.
Practical advice for project management

Provide templates

Monitor the tasks constantly

Maintain regular communication
   For example, one hour weekly meetings

Remind the team about deadlines and double check with the developers if the deadline is still realistic
Practical advice for project management

Require the developers to show a proof of progress (for example by showing a demo, asking deep questions about the implementation, monitoring the code, etc)

Define commit rules

- Code must compile before commit
- Test must run before commit
- Code must review before commit

Apply code reviews:

- Review-to-commit
- Commit-then-review
Challenges for DOSE:

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
Cultural differences

Working in the same culture – common knowledge
  Swiss national day
  Being on time is important

Different cultures
  Different cultural backgrounds
  Different national holydays
  Different interpretations
Cultural differences: train in India
Cultural differences: traffic in Hanoi
Cultural differences: Cambodia
Illustrative Examples (these examples are only illustrative examples)

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
Indian Culture

For example, for Indians:
  “yes” means “yes, I have heard you”
  “done” means “I will start to do it tomorrow”

Negative feedback is giving by
  not responding
  Trying not to answer
  Suggesting alternatives

[Examples from: Working with India – Wolfgang Messner]
Negative feedback

Company C in Germany sends a feedback form to Company D in India

After 5 days: C contacts D asking about the feedback

Company D: feedback form? When?

[Examples from: Working with India – Wolfgang Messner]
A chat with Vietnam

hi

hi

how are you

good, and you?

not very well 😊

I'm sorry I didn't commit my report 😊

no problem, are you going to commit it now?

yes 😊

ok, then I wait, and I can take a look now

I've just committed 😊

I see it; give me 5 minutes to take a look

You have an abstract, and chapter 1; do you plan to write an extended abstract of 1-2 pages or to write the whole thesis in English?

I intend to write the whole thesis in English 😊

I intend to write some chapter; please give me a minute to add some chapter 😊

when is the deadline to finish the report?

in Hanoi I have to handle in the report at 23/05/2010 😊

ok
A meeting between two Swiss

A: Hi B, can we meet next week?
B: Wednesday 2:00 pm?
A: ok, Wednesday at 2pm

-Wednesday-
1:55 pm - the meeting room is empty
1:59 pm - the meeting room is still empty
2:00 pm - A and B arrive to the meeting room and the meeting starts
A meeting between two Argentineans

M: Hi C, can we meet next week?
C: Wednesday **around** 2pm?
M: ok, Wednesday at 2pm

-Wednesday-
1:55 pm - M: Hi C, I am going to be 10 minutes late
2:15 pm - M arrives to his office
2:20 pm - C: Hi M, do not worry, I will also be late
2:30 pm - the meeting starts
Name and family name (Vietnam)

Lê Minh Đức

Do Lê Minh
Working with Vietnam

M: Can you finish the requirements document by next week?
V: Yes.

M: But there is a lot to do, do you have time?
V: Yes.

M: Can you finish the requirement document by Saturday?
V: Yes

M: Ok, and what about tomorrow, can you finish it by tomorrow?
V: Yes, yes, yes.
Person A is hired in company C to start on November 1st

Company C contacts A on October 29th to check if A still plans to start to work at C

On Monday November 1st, A decides to start to work in another company
Practical advice: cultural differences

Be aware of the cultural differences and learn about the counterpart’s cultures

Indicate the country holidays in a common calendar

Take into account the country holidays when defining a deadline
Challenges for DOSE:

TIME ZONES
Challenges: time zones

- Switzerland: 13:00
- Ukraine: 14:00
- Russia: 15:00
- China: 19:00
- Korea: 20:00
- Vietnam: 18:00
- Argentina: 8 AM
- New Delhi: 16:30 AM
Practical advice: time zones

Keep meetings on schedule

Keep in mind the Daylight Saving Time

Do not wait to send an e-mail (even if it is late or early in the other time zones)
Challenges: communication and language skills

E-mail is not enough - need for voice communication

Communication through phone/skype and video conference is difficult

Heavy accents

Different English mistakes to the ones one is used to

Tools are important
More practical advice

Use several forms of communications: e-mail, voice conferences, wikis, docs

Create mailing lists

Send the important information in writing

Write minutes of the meetings recording decisions taken, and action items (todos)