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Sustaining Conflict-Free Team Leadership in a Cross-Cultural Project Management Setting: Observational Evidence from China

Jules Harris Danarson

College of Public Administration, Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST), Wuhan, Hubei, P.R. China, 430074.

Abstract

Conflict management typically follows one of these two methods: prevention of conflicts and resolution of on-going conflicts. As a curative measure usually taken with some strategies in communication, the second method is often used in a cross-cultural project management setting where team members are susceptible to misunderstanding. To sustain conflict-free team leadership, however, communication remedies alone are not effective; considerations of socio-emotional and cultural contexts and flexibility of leadership style have to be made as part of the strategy. This paper outlines a proactive and eclectic approach to conflict prevention (rather than cure) in a predominantly high-context culture setting using a qualitative method that has been developed through a survey of three giant companies in China. From the present observational evidence, Project Managers (PMs) from low-context cultures need to build a geocentric mindset and adapt to the Chinese 'guanxi' system, whereas those from high-context cultures should be flexible in their use of leadership styles as demanded by situations; they also need to clearly articulate communication norms before being engaged in strategic planning and execution. Besides meeting these requirements, PMs of both cultures ought to develop and use positive emotional intelligence (EI) and create a vibrant support system for team culture in order to promote team members' synergy and efforts in reaching project deadlines and producing fruitful deliverables.

Keywords: project management, cross-cultural communication, team leadership, conflict prevention, socio-emotional considerations, style flexibility, cultural support.

1. INTRODUCTION

Building the pyramids, discovering a cure for polio and landing men on the moon are among the most memorable and often-quoted accomplishments in human history. The Great Wall, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, and the Forbidden City are also on the list of achievements of mankind and, in the recent years, the Three Gorges Dam has also received the world's attention and recognition. All of these memorable outcomes were projects or began as projects. In light of these, it is worthwhile to note that the Chinese have been familiar with and involved in project works from the ancient times starting as early as the Warring States Periods (476 BC - 221 BC) until today as proved by the mounting numbers of urbanization projects including the on-going infrastructural and residential constructions in most big cities in China.

Thus, PM is not a new concept to the Chinese and it has been part of their working habit given the fact that teamwork, an important aspect of project management (PM) success, is the national and organizational culture in the country. This is evidenced by the companies selected for the case study of this paper, Lenovo Group Corp. (Wuhan), HP (Wuhan Branch) and DongFeng Commercial Vehicle (ShiYan). Yet, it seems that PM success depends on team leadership success, which often has its roots in something other than national or corporate culture.

Successful team leadership and teamwork require the presence of chemistry and different facets of understanding among the team members by means of communication, otherwise, conflicts are inevitable. Surprisingly, however, the present survey revealed that about 90% of team conflicts found in team leadership was intensified by "misunderstanding" from lack of clear-cut communication. Yet, disagreement and the higher intensity levels of conflicts are less than 5%. Thus, belonging to high-context communication culture, the Chinese must have a unique teamwork culture allowing them to manage their projects without any high-intensity conflicts. This paper will show what that unique culture is among other important elements of success.

With the 'opening-up policy' introduced in 1979 by Deng Xiao Ping, China has continuously attracted investors and work forces from countries all over the world. Its human and business interaction within the global environment and diverse manpower requires adjustment in people management and projects management. This adjustment includes communication drives and flexibility of leadership styles. Still, despite a high rate of misunderstanding, it maintains a low level of conflict. A question that should be asked by PMs from other countries is "how have the Chinese successfully and peacefully managed their projects despite the fact that they belong to high-context communication?" The host country, on the other hand, should consider what kind of lessons should be learned from past experiences that make management suitable for both Chinese and foreign team members or managers maximizing production from their talents and expertise while minimizing misunderstanding.

The overall objective of the present paper is to help executives and managers in China avoid possible conflict in a team comprised of people from different cultural backgrounds and build a harmonious work environment while embracing a diverse global workforce, an unavoidable circumstance for a country moving upward from an 'opening-up policy' to 'market economy.'

2. Conceptual Framework

As marked by Richard L. Hughes and his colleagues (2012:662) "researchers have found that first-line supervisors and midlevel managers can spend more than 25 percent of their time dealing with conflict, and resolving conflict has been found to be an important factor in leadership effectiveness." Blanchard (2010:167) has listed the top 10 reasons why teams fail, and said that the "inability to deal with conflict" is one of them. Being aware of that fact, Barbara Bulleit (2006:2) said, "When dealing with conflict, there are four major questions that should be asked: (1) What are the symptoms of team conflict? (2) What causes team conflict? (3) How do I address team conflict? (4) What tools and aids can I use to help my team deal with conflict quickly and effectively?" Of course, these are the right questions to be asked for resolution of on-going conflicts, but when our task is to prevent conflicts from happening, which is the subject matter of this paper, we do not even wait to see any "symptom" before we engage ourselves in lasting peace-building and maintenance work. In order to prevent any conflicts in the context of PM, a clear understanding of what the variables such as "project management," and "project team conflict" are and their unfavorable association with forming roadblocks to harmonious team is a key to success in avoiding team conflict.

2.1 Projects and Project Management

This paper deals with the strategies and skills that should be possessed for building, sustaining and supporting a conflict-free team leadership in a cross-cultural project management setting of a short or long duration. This requires a review of what a project is, which is not to be confused with non-project work.

2.1.1 Projects

If a backup of database and billing customers are done on a daily basis, they are considered routine works rather than a project. A project for such a systems administration service can be related to the creation of a script for a daily backup of the database and a creation of an application to bill customers.

Basically, a creation of a product, service or result for a limited period of time is a project as opposed to daily work, which does not aim to deliver any product or service within a specified time limit. "A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result" (PMI, 2008:5). In some organizations, the PM and projects team members are the same all year around while in others they are formed on a temporary basis as projects are by nature. However, as PMI (2008:5) marked, "the temporary nature of projects indicates a definite beginning and end," which "does not necessarily mean short in duration."

2.1.2 Project Management

PMI, which is used as the main reference in this paper, defined project management as "the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements" (2008:6). In this work, I take cultural knowledge and leadership skills as parts of the application. However, if the team members are fixed or the project is of a long duration (e.g. constructing a large building or subway line), the PM has a bigger chance to build a unique culture incorporated to his/her leadership of the team, the Chinese guanxi system with a geocentric mindset can be an example of that. On the other hand, if the duration is short (e.g. setting up a choir, which can last for a few hours or days), building a specific culture may not be possible but such skills as situational leadership and EI can be of service to avoid conflict situations. Still, in any case, communication is the backbone of project management of any setting and duration given the fact that each and every kind of barriers seen in communication can block the function of any systems, skills, and concepts referred to above. These different application requirements as framed by communication urged the present work to take the form of an eclectic approach to conflict prevention based on effective distribution and exchange of messages.

2.2 Conflicts within PM Team Leadership

Conflict is defined as "any situation in which people have incompatible interests, goals, principles, or feelings" (Capobianco et al., 2001 in Runde & Flanagan, 2007:19). Samples are given below.

2.2.1 Sample Conflict Situations

Dick Billows (2011) gave an account of the following cases relating to conflict situations:

Conflict Case 1:

Two engineers have had a three day long debate over which of their technical solutions should be used in the project. Very few people on the project team actually understand the differences between the two approaches. But the conflict is wasting people's time in status meetings and may soon delay a number of dependent tasks in the project. Both of the combatants have separately and privately apologized to the other team members blaming the other combatant.

Conflict Case 2:

A project team member from marketing and a team member from operations are engaged in a nasty dispute about the costs of features of a new product the project will deliver. Those two departments have a long history of conflict, which is not unusual given the different perspectives of each functional area. The project manager is aware that each of the combatants is being encouraged by their "home department" managers who don't want their representative to lose.

2.2.2 The Standard Approach to Conflict Situations

Billows (2011:1) said, the first conflict can be solved using the five standard techniques approaching conflict situations, which are:

1. **Accommodation:** the PM persuades one party to sacrifice his /her needs and wishes to accommodate the other party.
2. **Avoidance:** The PM ignores the conflict, changes the subject of talks or discussions.
3. **Problem solving**: The PM works with the parties in conflict to find a mutually beneficial solution, a win-win solution to the conflict.
4. **Compromise:** The PM brings the problem out into the open and acts as an arbitrator to fashion a settlement where both parties possibly lose a little.
5. **Competition:** The PM gives each party an opportunity to present their position and then decides who wins.

As many project management experts might agree, Billows (2011:2) said that, "these five techniques are useful in resolving many conflicts but there are some conflicts, like the second one above, for which none of our five techniques are likely to succeed." And "the more intense conflicts are easier to spot but are also potentially more complex" (Runde & Flanagan, 2007:79). This is where the saying "prevention is better than cure" shows its entire credibility, at least in the context of project management. The five techniques above listed, with a slight change of appellation (being *accommodating*, *avoiding*, *collaborating*, *compromising*, and *competing*), were developed by Thomas-Kilmann, which were originally built by Blake and Mouton as problem-solving, smoothing, forcing, withdrawal and sharing as Umar K. Mohammed and his colleagues (2008:4) recorded. Built on the same framework, Aritzeta and his colleagues (2005:162) used the terms *integrating*, *obliging*, *compromising*, *dominating* and *avoiding*. All of these terminologies indicate what Ana-Paula Correia (2008:21) discovered as Thomas' model, which is organized around two dimensions: (1) cooperativeness as an attempt to satisfy the other's concerns, and (2) assertiveness as an attempt to satisfy one's own concerns. The combination of these attempts to satisfy the overall concerns is what we have in the conflict prevention method herein recommended as a proactive measure for conflict management.

2.2.3 The Needs to Be Proactive

Project managers need to be more than "conflict competent" as Runde and Flanagan (2007) said. For the objective of this paper, I would say, project managers need to be conflict-proof competent. That is, project managers need to be pro-active rather than reactive in order to not allow conflicts spiral into unsolvable messes, and to avoid damaging the working environment that misunderstanding among project team members can cause.

The *Conflict Case 2* above-given is not a problem if the PM is ready to put in place a team culture based on collective values, norms, principle, rules and regulations that has to be made known to everyone on the 1st hour of the first day they join a team and that the PMs strategically and interactively communicate those values to the members. Knowing that the two members come from feuding departments and would contaminate the others with their grasp of power over the other, the PM should have a private conversation with the two of them and respectfully request their commitment to continue peaceful relations with one another and everyone. This should be done before the confirmation of who will be part of the team, and it should be done with an emotional intelligence that digs into the prospective team members' personalities rather than their technical skills alone. Assembling a functionally diverse project team is important in so many ways, including tapping a vast store of knowledge and expertise, but if this psychological dialog does not receive any indication of peace-caring commitment from the two conflict-prone parties, there are only two other ways to go about preventing conflicts: (1) hire one of them for the project, or (2) hire none of them and find somebody else. In the long term, if the project timeline is long enough for acculturation, the combination of the strategies outlined here can make a good approach to avoid any problem. That is, such a delicate case as seen in *Conflict Case 2* can be approached with prevention rather than cure. With two of the members being from different rival departments, "the second conflict may defy resolution," as Billows said referring to *Conflict Case 2*, but another case of conflicts that is hard to solve is related to differences residing in people belonging to different nationalities, cultures, backgrounds of whatever forms. Like the two feuding departments, low-context culture and high-context culture are likely to create a dispute-driven environment, or at least "misunderstanding" due to different communication styles, which is a preliminary step to a full-blown conflict known as "Polarization," the highest intensity of conflict situations as explained below.

2.2.4 Intensity Levels Related to Conflict Situations

Runde and Flanagan (2007:67) identified five intensity levels related to conflict situations.

Level One: Differences. When the parties involved look at a situation from different perspectives but understand the other party's position and interests well, and feel no discomfort regarding the difference.

Level Two: Misunderstandings. Misunderstandings are created when two or more parties interpret a situation differently.

Level Three: Disagreements. When two people see a situation differently and, regardless of how well they understand the other's position and interests, feel discomfort that the other party disagrees.

Level Four: Discord. Situations where the conflict causes difficulties in the relationship of the people involved even when they are not dealing with the original conflict. Typical signs of discord are when the parties start to criticize, avoid and block each other.

Level Five: Polarization. Conflict situations characterized by severe negative emotions and behavior with little or no hope for reconciliation. At this level the parties start to recruit others to join their cause. In the worst case scenario the parties involved start to use destructive behaviors.

As Runde and Flanagan explained regarding "level one" on the conflict scales, "a conflict at this level of intensity seldom escalates into anything damaging" (2007:68). In fact, in the early stage, "level 1," conflict can be constructive when the "differences" bring concession where a sense of creativity and innovation are shared through successful communication amongst team members. Thus, with a proactive action to stop conflict, "differences" should not turn into any "misunderstandings," where the destructive aspect of conflicts starts. A proactive approach is herein referring to an attempt to stop a conflict on the first stage, ideally even before it begins. This being part of a project manager's competence, a conflict-free team leadership is sustained and roadblocks to harmonious team environment are dismantled. That being said, an awareness of those roadblocks can help the members and leaders to proactively address the conflict issues.

2.3 Roadblocks to Harmonious Team Work

Increased understanding of what the possible sources of conflicts are (rather than symptoms) and how they are prevented can contribute to success in sustaining conflict-free team leadership in a multi-cultural PM setting.

2.3.1 The Basic Source of Conflict in a PM

Kezsbom (1992), as recalled by Mohammed and his colleagues (2008:4), "identifies potential sources of conflicts in a project including scheduling, managerial and administrative procedures, communication, goal definition, resource allocation, reward methods, personalities, cost, technical knowledge, politics, leadership style and presence of ambiguity." These sources yield different conflict intensity levels, depending on situations. And "of these factors contributing to the level of conflict within or between groups, teams, or committees, probably the most important source of conflict is the lack of communication between parties" (Hughes et al., 2012:662); that is, almost all of the conflicts on the list given by Kezsbom above can be a product of communication problem. "Projects mostly fail because of communication breakdown" as Shankar Jha (2010:2) recorded. "Poor or no communication" is also on the top list of what Barbara Bulleit (2006:4) found as causes of team conflict, or at least frustration, which is often experienced by foreigners in Chinese companies or in China as a country. Consequently, communication is herein considered as the cornerstone of peace-building strategy, yet without the other concepts safeguarding people's emotions or feelings that strategy is doomed to fail. In PM, a specific example of communication problem might relate to what Blanchard (2010:167) listed number 1 on "the top 10 reasons why teams fail," which is "not taking time to clarify purpose and goals." This problem is typically caused by individuals or a team with no attention to details or no focus on specificity. This issue is difficult to solve because its origin is not only related to lack of qualification, attention or intention but also to culture and personal values as well as personality traits or behaviors, such as not being detail-oriented. For example, "to support an idea, we need to understand why the decision was made" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009:209). If the team does not value the importance of detailed information, purpose or goals-related message clarification might not be part of the team members' commitment and, as often observed, the behavior shown in this kind of work environment opens rooms for a blame game or shifting responsibilities, which eventually results in disturbing work environment if not a conflict of high intensity.

According to Runde and Flanagan (2007:42), there are nine behaviors that seem to be particularly prevalent or disturbing in workplace settings:

- **Unreliable—**when people miss deadlines or cannot be counted on
- **Overly analytical—**when people focus too much on minor issues or are perfectionists
- **Unappreciative**—when people fail to give credit to others or seldom praise good performance
- **Aloof—**when people isolate themselves, do not seek input, or are hard to approach
- **Micro-managing—**when people constantly monitor and check up on the work of others
- **Self-centered—**when people believe they are always correct or care only about themselves
- **Abrasive**—when people are arrogant, sarcastic, and demeaning
- **Untrustworthy**—when people exploit others, take undeserved credit, or cannot be trusted
- **Hostile—**when people lose their tempers, become angry, or yell at others.

These are personality-related sources of conflicts, which can be seen in any culture and any country. Apart from these, selection of team members under such criteria as qualification (for quality work) is important but personality traits (displaying interpersonal skills and sense of cooperation) are also crucially important in a project. In addition, in their findings, Richard L. Hughes and his colleagues (2012:662) highlighted that "conflict can occur when group or team members (1) have strong differences in values, beliefs, or goals; (2) have high levels of task or lateral interdependence; (3) are competing for scarce resources or rewards; (4) are under high levels of stress; or (5) face uncertain or incompatible demands—that is, role ambiguity and role conflict." Apart from these, they mentioned that "conflict can also occur when leaders act in a manner inconsistent with the vision and goals they have articulated for the organization" (Hughes et al., 2012:662). All these above-mentioned differences, deviative behavior, and other pressing circumstances as well as leadership crises can create conflicts kept in a battle field unless proactively taken care of, that battle field can be a meeting where team members might see one another on a regular basis. As meetings among team members of different personality traits and backgrounds are unavoidable in project managements, conflicts can arise at any time, which identifies a winner from a loser, a fascination a lot of people in today's competitive world crave for.

2.3.2 Meetings: The Win-Lose Fascination among Team Members

Meetings can be a major roadblock if not well-controlled, yet they are instrumental in accomplishing project goals. Project management is about execution or implementation of what has been planned, shared as tasks and generally accepted through different kinds of communication methods, which include meetings where decisions are usually made. Nowadays those decision-makings tend to be participatory or collaborative due to the usual complex nature of the undertaken project tasks and uncertainty of producing the targeted deliverables, which often require input from team members of different qualifications, experience, calibers, cultural and organizational backgrounds and settings.

Project management usually gives birth to a conflict following each member's position on decision-making gradient in meetings if, for example, the decision-makers collectively share authorities but originally from different departments, agencies and cultures like in *Conflict Case 2* in the previous section. Without the understanding of both cross-cultural issues and the personal concerns and feelings of team members, decision-making might face the challenge of a "strong objection," as shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Team Decision Making Gradients of Agreement

Level of Team Support	Position of Team Members	Communication Phrases
Enthusiastic Support	1. Fully support	"I like it."
	2. Endorsement with minor concerns	"Basically, I like it."
Lukewarm Support	3. Agree with reservations	"I can live with it."
	4. Abstain	"I have no opinion."
	5. Stand aside	"I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group."
Meager Support	6. Disagreement, but willing to go with majority	"I want my disagreement noted, but I'll support the decision."
	7. Disagreement, with request not to be involved in implementation	"I don't want to stop anyone else, but I don't want to be involved in implementing it."
Strong Objection	8. Can't support the proposal	"It can't be done, I'll veto it!"

Source: Adopted from Community AT Work[3] (1996)

Community AT Work (1996) has developed eight gradients of agreement from "Strong Objection" to "Enthusiastic Support," with which team members show their level of support for a proposal through verbal communication or thinking. In the same vein, Jim Highsmith (2006:201) presented a decision gradient of formal meetings showing preferences ranging from a possibility of a "veto" against an idea or action to "in favor." Between those two extreme ends are such variations of opinions about the motion as "not in favor, but will commit," "mixed feelings," and "OK, but with reservations." Elaborating on the drawbacks of meetings, Highsmith (2006:199) said that, "participatory decision-making is a process of reconceiving a solution to a problem based on formation from all team members." Yet, it happens that "participants in process have a preconceived view of the right answer, and their approach is to argue as loudly as possible until the opposition gives up" (Highsmith, 2006:199). Thus, "in many organizations, decision making is viewed as a win-lose proposition" (Highsmith, 2006:199), with which some members seek the pleasure of their ability to offer a counter-argument to others' proposal. These people see how fascinating it is to make others give in to their ideas and propositions. All these deviative behaviors are blocking the way for the team to move forward. If the PM has no strategy or communication skills suitable for the individual members' personality traits or the culture 'context' the team members belong to (being high or low), then the PM should at least be able to identify those important characteristics.

2.4 The Cross-Cultural Setting: High-Context vs. Low-Context

"In general, project managers (PMs) spend 90 percent of their time in communication. No wonder why communication skill is the single most desirable skill of a PM" (Jha, 2010:2). In today's fast-paced world, communication helps in delivering fruitful results in a punctual fashion and peaceful manner; lack of it is conducive to a waste of time for reconciliation and peace-making negotiation in the aftermath of a conflict. The Chinese utterance "mei you wei shenme!" which can be transliterated to "no why!" and is frequently used by people who are not willing to give any details of an account or not committed to clarifying any points for discussion. It is a perfect indication of the so-called "high-context" culture. If this communication style is heard on a work-related telephone conversation (which is sometimes the case) or gets into a project meeting room, some team members who are not accustomed to guessing from a context would be frustrated or even infuriated while trying to understand where the discussion is heading or what the discussant is (not) getting at. On the other hand, a candid or outspoken remark from someone of a low-context culture like "*to me*, what you're saying is complete nonsense!" surely put people of high-context culture like the Chinese in a situation where they feel that their integrity is being attacked. That utterance can be interpreted as "I do not understand what you are saying" or "what you're saying is really stupid." If the last interpretation is considered by the message receiver (which likely to be the case when someone is angry), the situation can bring a hostile or vengeful environment because s/he might perceive the message as a loss of "face," especially when it is heard by a third party. In other words, forthright communication with honest remarks does not ensure peace at a workplace, but rather, some socio-

[3] Community AT Work (1996) Accessible on March 3, 2015 at http://www.trg-inc.com/our-insights/aidstar/team-decision-making-the-gradients-of-agreement/

emotional and cultural considerations need to be used with the message, otherwise conflict arises.

Insightful understanding of the characteristic of each culture in terms of communication is necessary. As reflected in the two examples above-given, "a high-context language transmits very little in the explicit message; instead, the nonverbal and cultural aspects of what is not said are very important" while "in a low-context language and culture, the message is explicit; it may be given in more than one way to ensure understanding by the receiver" (Chaney & Martin, 2002:82-83). Linda Beamer and Iris Varner gave reasons to these differences by saying that:

> Members of low-cultures put their thoughts into words. They tend to think that if thoughts are not in words, the thoughts will not be understood correctly or completely. When messages are in explicit words, the other side can act on them. But high-context cultures have less tendency to trust words to communicate. They rely on context to help clarify and complete the message (Beamer & Varner, 2009:35).

"High-context languages tend to be indirect and nonverbal whereas low-context languages tend to be direct and verbal" (Chaney & Martin, 2002:83). Communication born from a low-context culture can be aggression-prone or confrontational if certain emotional control or management is not made by the communicator or the moderator of a discussion; this may end up in unnecessary interruption of project management activities, hence a possible loss of time. Similarly, "since people of low-context cultures favor directness, they are likely to consider high-context communications as a waste of time" (Chaney & Martin, 2002:83). The working atmosphere can be tense despite the fact that verbal aggression is rare. Thus, in either case, productivity can be hampered because of some communication barriers or the so-called "noise."

2.4.1 Communication Barrier

Project complexities sometimes arise or endure if communication does not pass. That is, the messages conveyed to team members meet what communication experts might judge as bad "decoding" because of "noise." *Noise* can affect any culture, and is undeniable in *high-context culture* especially when that culture is crossing with another, *low-context culture*. Western business leaders, for example, are not accustomed to what Gina Qiao and Yolanda Conyers (2014:73) call "the secretive, noncommunicative approach," which they said, is "more typical of the Eastern workplace culture." The Easterners belong to low-context culture.

To successfully remove any roadblock in the work environment, project managers need to build a unique business culture and be equipped not only with communication skills and strategies but also flexible, situational leadership styles, the 'guanxi' protocols, notion of 'geocentrism' and positive use of EI. If these four elements are considered with specific norms, well-structured and strategic project communication planning and execution, some sort of a built-up emotion guard is put in place and the team members are protected from conflict situations; in turn, the project being managed is successful.

2.4.1.1 The Standard Model of Communication

"The components in the communications model need to be taken into account when discussing project communications" said the PMI (2008:255). As seen in figure 1, the key components of the model include:

- **Encode:** To translate thoughts or ideas into a language that is understood by others.
- **Message and feedback-message:** The output of encoding.
- **Medium:** The method used to convey the message.
- **Noise:** Anything that interferes with the transmission and understanding of the message
- **Decode:** to translate the message back into meaningful thoughts or ideas.

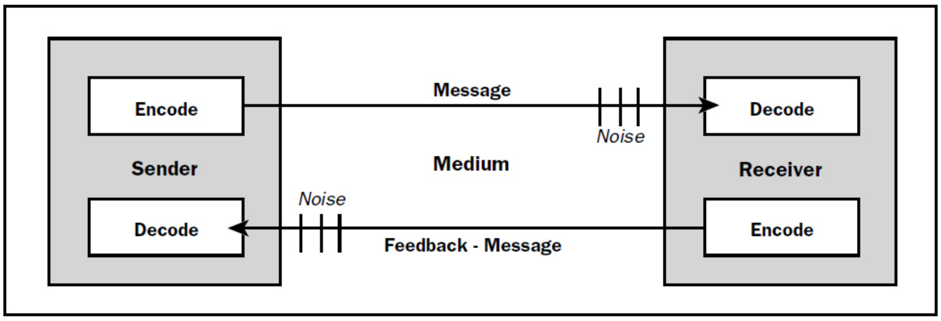

Figure: 1 Basic Communication Model

Source: PMI (2008: 255)

One of the biggest roadblocks to PM among team members is *noise* in the communication process.

2.4.1.2 Noise

"Noise is anything that distorts the message. Different perceptions of the message, language barriers, interruptions, emotions, and attitudes are examples of noise," said Fred C. Lunenburg (2010:2). The PMI (2008:255) includes distance, unfamiliar technology, and lack of background information to its list of examples. "The smell of popcorn in the next room may be enough to shut down receipt of a message. A butterfly outside a window can be 'noisy' enough to visually distract everyone in a meeting" said Carl Pritchard (2004:5). Thus, *noise* can be:

- **Environmental:** a humming sound in a workshop, distance (e.g. being seated far from the speaker), bad smell that can divert attention paid for a message.
- **Physiological:** hearing loss of the message decoder.
- **Attentional:** the decoder does not direct his/her mind to the message sent to him/her and fails to hear or read it.
- **Psychosocial:** when a decoder has biases (e.g. traditional, gender), prejudices (e.g. racial, religious), bad emotion or feelings (e.g. hatred, irritation) of the person who transmitted the message.
- **Semantic:** when the encoder is using different dialects or languages, specialized jargon that the decoder is not able to grasp, or using ambiguous, abstract words with several possible meanings.
- **Technical:** unfamiliar technology (e.g. inability to use QQ group messaging), or unfamiliar system (the e-mail system transcribes the message into unintelligible language) software problem (The message came with an attachment in an incompatible format)

These six elements are the most common sources of noise that might interfere in the transmission of our message, but as outlined in this work, *noise* can also be **cultural**; that is, resulting from the negligence of background information or lack of commitment to details or verbal elaboration. This explains a culture's tendency to use high context messages in communication. For instance, "the Chinese employees at Lenovo" wrote Qiao and Conyers (2014:85) "[are] regarded as performance-driven and accountable, yet they [are] also perceived as 'unyielding and unwilling to communicate.'" Thus, the suggestions contained in the present paper might help the Chinese executives, PMs, and project team leaders associate the performance drive with communication drive so as to sustain their project management and leadership in a peaceful cross-cultural context.

3. METHOD

Overall, the method used in the paper was a combination of a literature review and qualitative, multiple case study in China with the prime objective to explore the basic causes of conflicts in a project team leadership and provide a pro-active measure to manage any conflict-prone setting, which is the management setting in which team members are originally from different cultures.

The empirical evidence gathered from the questionnaire surveys was converted into a set of strategy recommendations for both Chinese and foreign executives or managers to set a core standard and reach common ground in project leadership so as to have a peaceful work environment .

3.1 Data Collection Methods and Process

The data collection took place from October 2010 to September 2011 of HP; June to October 2012, DongFeng Commercial Vehicle; and July 2014 to mid-May 2015, Lenovo Group Inc. A case study of those 3 companies was used as the research method with data being collected through (1) observations, (2) e-document analysis (3) questionnaire surveys and (4) semi-structured interviews. These 4 methods gave way to the so-called 'triangulation of data.'

The observations by means of team member meetings and interactions with team members on a daily basis and e-mail collection were done during the periods of time above mentioned, but the interviews and questionnaires were completed at the time the paper was being written (from August 2014 to mid-May 2015). Thirty one team meetings with an average duration of 45 minutes each were observed, predominantly taking place at HP and Lenovo, while none were observed at DongFeng. One round of semi-structured *interview* along with the *questionnaire* completion was conducted with the individual team members. A total of 60 interviews were conducted, 42 on-site and 18 by phones. Similarly, 42 of the questionnaire respondents were approached on-site and the others filled it in by e-mail (off-site) and phone messages (with a mere reference of the number of the questionnaire item). Both on-site and off-site interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Team members were interviewed based on what they expect from a project manager's and team leader's conduct and their behavioral responses to their boss and supervisor's leadership.

3.2 Sampling and Sample Size

Managers, team leaders and team members of different projects were selected, and 20 of them including the PMs and PM team leaders of each company accepted to be surveyed. Selective (or convenience) sampling was used due to the impossibility of having access to many people as information sources. Other reasons were related to the fact that periodical projects team members were not many in one given project. However, for an equal representation, 20 respondents from each company were pinpointed for the data analysis though more than 20 questionnaires were distributed.

The sample size was particularly small, consisting of 60 respondents. However, the selected samples were the most participatory team members in projects, making up about 90% of their department represented in some on-going projects. These were the ones that made heterogeneous teams of different nationalities (with Chinese majority), gender (with male majority), age group, social backgrounds, professional experience and teamwork contribution records.

3.3 Survey Tools and Instrumentation

As seen in the appendices, questionnaire and interview questions were designed as survey tools and instrument to collect data for the paper, and a group of research questions was formulated to guide the study. Those questions were:

1. What kind of conflict is common in those workplaces?
2. Why are there any such conflicts?
3. How to avoid them?

Data collected from the questionnaire, interview questions, personal observation and e-document analysis helped answer those three research questions.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

This instrument is used to identify the conflicts of frequent occurrence within the leadership of all the surveyed team members by asking them to choose the most frequent intensity levels (differences, misunderstandings, disagreements, discord, polarization) experienced in their team related to conflict situations identified by Runde and Flanagan (2007:67) (in appendix 1).

3.3.2 Interview Questions

For the interview questions (in appendix 2), first the respondents were reminded that conflicts have 5 intensity levels according to Runde and Flanagan (2007), one of which they selected defining what kind of conflict is frequently seen in their team. That being clear, they were given some follow-up questions which were used as reference in finding out about their communication issues: common complaints of conflicts, perceived cause of conflicts, nature of conflicts as witnessed, and the parties involved. From the data collected on the coding, the characteristics of "noise" being in frequent occurrence were detected (as seen in Table 3).

3.4 Data Procedure and Analysis

3.4.1 Data Procedure

The qualitative data was organized into documents belonging to each company. For each company's sets of interviews (which were transcribed and sanitized), a cross-analysis table was created to allow for data comparison and subsequent coding in reference to the cases of conflict situations and complaints received. A total of 41 emails were exchanged with members of companies' teams, imported into a Microsoft Word document and sanitized[4]. After that, sequences of emails for each team were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and the research objectives of the paper. The contents (subject to communication issues) of the e-mails were printed and organized chronologically per company and team into a catalog of electronic documents. In order not to receive any biased account of *for* or *against* their leaders, supervisors or company, respondent's identities were promised to be kept confidential and the selection of respondents was made by myself from the team I work or worked with and my all-time correspondence with those who work or used to work in those 3 companies.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

An iterative and inductive process of analysis was used to formulate a set of qualitative accounts. Data chunks were copied and pasted from the observation notes, interview transcriptions, e-mail sequences as electronic documents into a matrix of categories generated during a preliminary analysis. Finally, each data chunk was transformed into a coding system. Through this process codes were refined (broken into less inclusive headings) to eliminate redundancy, and some of the sample communication issues to be resolved in the paper were taken from that refinement. Content analysis was done in reference to the flows, accuracy and punctuality of the e-documents exchanged among the multicultural project team members in three companies in China, which are of U.S. and Chinese ownership.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Company Profiles

The three companies used as case studies for the paper are all located in Hubei province of China but in different cities, they are *HP Co., Ltd* (Wuhan), *Dongfeng Commercial Vehicle Co.* (ShiYan) and *Lenovo Group Inc.* (Wuhan).

4.1.1 China HP Co., Ltd

Hewlett-Packard's operations in China include sales, manufacturing, research and development, and service units. Its broad array of offerings include personal computers, servers, data storage devices, printing and imaging products, networking equipment, enterprise software, and IT services.

Established on June 2, 1998, the U.S-based, HP Wuhan Branch is a Customer' Support Service Office with employees working in project teams in China and overseas. Respondents of this study were software engineers dealing with systems analysis and design (using, e.g. OS/390, Cobol/JCL/DB2/IMS DB/File-Aid/Endevor/CA view/ CA-7) providing services for payroll system; supporting HR and financial batch processing; monitoring batch job run, fixing abends; dealing with change requests (from customers); modifying programs and JCLs (as required); and performing UAT (User Acceptance Testing) and implementing changes.

4.1.2 Dongfeng Commercial Vehicle Co., Ltd.

Established on Jul. 8, 2003, Dongfeng Commercial Vehicle Co. is a medium and heavy-duty commercial vehicle business division under Dongfeng Motor Co., Ltd. The company engages in production and sale of medium and heavy duty trucks, passenger vehicle and passenger vehicle chassis, military vehicle, engine, driver's cab, vehicle frame, axle, gear box and other key assemblies.

Through truck-producing joint venture(s) (e.g. Dongfeng Nissan-Diesel Company) or some other capacity enhancement projects, employees at Dongfeng Motor Corporation work with people of different nationalities for various projects management. Those who participated in the research were PM team members from constructions of frames and other related-technical skills.

4.1.3 Lenovo Group Inc.

The China-based group is a global supplier of Think-branded commercial PCs and Idea-branded consumer PCs. The company makes tablets, smartphones, laptops, desktops, workstations, servers, software, and accessories,

[4] Carefully arranged and classified for the selective disclosure of information containing the problems to be solved.

and it is developing and launching mini ultrabooks and ideapads.

Lenovo, China's largest personal computer maker, bought IBM's PC division in 2005 to become the world's third largest PC giant. This was a great milestone in Lenovo's expansion, but another step was taken in October, 2014 when the company acquired Motorola mobility from Google, making "Motorola, a Lenovo Company" by name and operation but also positioning Lenovo as the world's third-largest smartphone manufacturer. The company as a whole changed its culture following these acquisitions and globalization of the Chinese job market, which led to the diversity of employees. Respondents of the survey were from project teams of 'Product Certification Documentation' and 'Moto Integration.'

Established on May 7, 2012, Lenovo (Wuhan) Group Inc. is an Operation Support, known as MBG (Mobile Business Group) Supply Chain Manufacturing where Chinese employees work with people of other nationalities like those from Motorola and myself as an intern in Project Management.

4.2. Common Characteristics of the Case Companies

The dominant feature of these companies is that they belong to or are influenced by the national culture, which is of high-context communication. However, internationalization has taken place or is taking place because of the cooperation with foreign-born or foreign educated employees the companies receive on a temporary or permanent basis. This has made the companies or specifically the project teams in various departments classified as multi-cultural.

They all meet the same challenge and risk for conflict in project team leadership where team members are from different nationalities or different geographical locations.

4.3 Intensity Levels of Conflict Situations in Team Leadership

The intensity levels of conflicts in leadership of PM teams in the 3 Chinese companies surveyed were as follows:

Table 2: Frequency of Conflict Occurrence

Intensity levels of conflict situations (**Variables used**)		Frequency (**n_i**)	Percentage (**f_i**)
Valid	Differences (D1)	3	5.0
	Misunderstandings (M)	55	91.7
	Disagreements (D2)	2	3.3
	Discord (D3)	0	0.0
	Polarization (P)	0	0.0
	Total (**N**)	60	100.0

Where **n_i**= frequency of chosen variables
f_i= percentage of chosen variables
N= total number of person surveyed

Hence, $\mathrm{fi} = \frac{\mathrm{ni}}{N} \mathrm{x} 100$

The findings received from the interview shows no discrepancies between the respondents' opinions on "misunderstanding" being the most common source of conflicts at work and the hypothesis associating that fact with high-context communication discussed in the opening chapter of this paper.

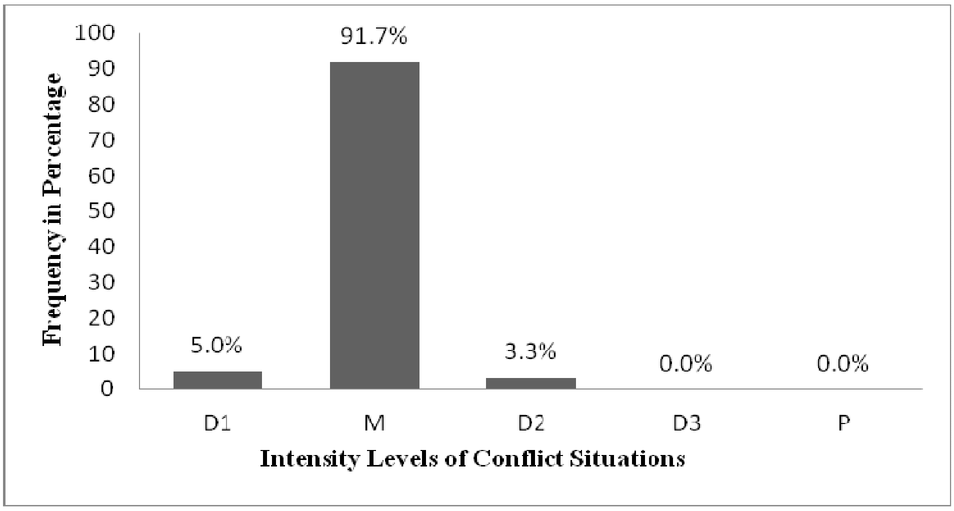

Figure 2: The Dominant Level of Conflicts

Figure 2 reports that the highest levels of conflict detected among team members is "**M**" (misunderstanding), of 91.7%. The two lowest points in rankings are "$\mathbf{D_1}$" (Differences) 5.0% and "$\mathbf{D_2}$" (Disagreements) 3.3%. "$\mathbf{D_3}$" (Discord) and "**P**" (Polarization), being 0% each, have not been a problem in the teams of 20 people of any of the companies, 3 in total. While the projects teams in those 3 companies have no concern with level 1, 3, 4, and 5 in the hierarchical order of conflicts, the findings have shown that the rate of "misunderstanding" is extremely high (91.7%) for the majority team members from the same culture, given the fact that many of them (89%) are Chinese. This result implies that reliance on the common sense created by a shared national culture is not an effective way of sustaining a conflict-free team leadership in project management; the team itself should have its own culture, put it into practice in order to sustain itself, otherwise the other cultures (discussed later) functions as roadblocks to project's success. Removing the roadblocks requires more than a prescription for communication, yet positive results heavily rely on communication.

4.4 Detected Noise in Communication

The complaints received by PMs, Team Leaders and Team Members are of different causes, 7 of them were selected to formulate solutions that will be further discussed in the later sections of the paper.

Table 3: "Noise" as Observed in Conflict Situations Experienced by Respondents

Common Complaints of conflicts	Cause of Conflicts (As Perceived)	Nature of Conflicts (As Witnessed)	The Parties Involved (HCC, LCC, PM, TM[5])	"Noise" Characteristics
Being rejected and neglected	Uncaring	The PM was being blunt, forthright or candid about his reason of declining a request	HCC vs. LCC (PM)	Cultural
Being discriminated against because of race based on ethnicity	Ethnic Discrimination	Frequent reference on ethnicity from the PM (the one who complained does not belong to "Han"	HCC vs. HCC (PM)	Psychosocial
Being neglectful	Negligence	Not answering e-mail or returning phone calls without being reminded	LCC vs. HCC	Attentional
Being a bad listener	Impaired hearing (maybe)	The team member always has to ask the speaker to repeat what s/he says	HCC(TM) vs. HCC(TM)	Physiological
The team leader always shouts when talking.	Demeaning character	The noise pollution in the surrounding area (car factory)	HCC (TM) vs. HCC (TM)	Environmental
Being abandoned/ forsaken	Lack of language training	Oral and written English, not understood and supervisor avoids asking his opinions	HCC (TM) vs. LCC (TL)	Semantic
Not being trusted	Inappropriate Leadership Styles	The project manager is micro-managing	LCC (TM) vs. HCC (PM)	Technical

Other complaints received from the interview questions were:

- Being under pressure for social values (obligation to drink alcohol during outings)
- Individual team role ambiguity resulting in shifting responsibilities, hence delay of results with a "blame game."
- Use of the wrong subject line in e-mails, such as placing the primary receiver in the "Cc:" line (one particular instance resulted in a heated argument).
- Not expressing opinion in the meeting, but raising the issue in informal talk after the meeting.
- Receiving an e-mail with a strange subject, resulting in recipients' reluctance to open the said e-mail and confusion as to why information was not received.
- The encoder failing to send the message (the project manager believed he sent an email, but the e-mail was never sent.)

One of the team members I talked to gave a term "boss-culture," referring to the fact that, in order to establish or extend a 'guanxi' tie with a supervisor, it is important to do what the "boss" does. When being out for dinner, for example, you drink when your boss drinks, you smoke when your boss smokes. Here, the alcohol drinking pressure is related to culture. Differing senses of urgency in replying to emails and returning phone calls can lead to conflict, but the lack of commitment to explain why there was a delay is another problem. I have seen some PMs who prefer not to answer any e-mails instead of saying "no" to a request or explaining why they have to decline the request, which is not only annoying but condescending as well. Yet, lack of obligation to do any explaining is part of the culture with high hierarchy and high context, thus cultural awareness is important in order not to suffer an emotional shock and be able to effectively solve the resolvable aspects of an impending problem .

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[5] Abbreviations and terms used: Low-Context Communicators (LCC) = Non-Chinese TM or PM/ High-Context Communicators; (HCC) = Chinese TM or PM; TM = Team Members; PM = Project Managers; TL = Team Leader

4.5 Eclectic Approach to "Noise" Eradication

From the interesting experience I have gained from those companies, I witnessed the fact that communication tended to be reserved (not only between a subordinate and supervisor but among co-workers as well). The Chinese work ethic relies heavily on a heightened sense of responsibility, insightful observation and prediction of the consequences of one's action (be it positive or negative), including guessing what others expect you to invest your time and effort on. Pictured from the Chinese pop culture, it is akin to Kung Fu training during which the "Shi fu," or Master, keeps his student focused on a particular movement without telling that student why it is necessary. In "Karate Kid," a Chinese-American martial arts movie directed by Harald Zwart (2010), Dre Parker (Jaden Smith) got tired of "jacket up, jacket down" movements commanded by his Master, Mr. Han (Jacky Chan), predominantly due to his lack of communication, Dre Parker did not know why he had to constantly repeat such a movement. Yet, the result eventually justified how worthwhile the time invested in the movement was. With the skills developed from the seemingly boring movement, Drei won the Karate contest and earned the respect of his peers. This gives credit to the statement that "in high-context cultures, reading between the lines in order to understand the intended meaning of the message is needed" (Chaney & Martin, 2002:83). That being the case, clear instruction on what to do and, apart from all the Wh- questions that might be in need of answers, changing of methods (of doing something) is not a natural process in Chinese project management. However, without such clarification, some team members may feel frustrated, especially foreigners (e.g. those from the West and South). These are not necessarily experienced because of a language obstacle, but rather due to a cultural barrier (interference of national culture with the so expected to be business culture and communication styles). For this end, I propose the following classification of communication barrier with practical suggestions of anti-noise approach as summarized in the followings:

- **Environmental:** strategic communication with the right methods and tools.
- **Physiological:** strategic communication with the right methods and tools.
- **Attentional:** communication norms and principles
- **Psychosocial:** Guanxi and EI competence
- **Semantic:** Situational Leadership skills (training, which is related to development level)
- **Technical:** Situational Leadership skills (training, which is related to development level)
- **Cultural:** Geocentrism and other interconnected remedies

Awareness of the barriers listed above, a PM's receptive, flexible and considerate behaviors can help, provided that those behaviors are driven by on-going practice of communication skills. These behaviors are herein explored in reference to guanxi, geocentrism, strategic communication, situational leadership, emotional intelligence and team culture support. Communication is part of the strategy, but even within the strategy usage itself, communication is to be functional; as such, then, communication serves as a tool and objective in PM.

These six remedies are the recommendations herein given to cover the noise holes that are conducive to team conflicts.

5. Recommendations on How To Remove the Roadblocks.

Removing the roadblocks should starts with a thorough identification of those blocks, especially those concerned with culture. "Group-oriented, collectivistic cultures tend to use high-context languages; individualistic cultures tend to use low-context languages" (Chaney & Martin, 2002:83). Obvious examples of these are China and the United States, the former belonging to culture of high-context communication and the latter fitting itself into the culture of low-context communication. Europe, Australia and Africa are generally of low-culture communication. People who originally come from those places or others (if any) of low-context culture, and are in China or planning to be in China for jobs, are in need of the recommendations herein given.

Roadblocks can endure if team members are not open to two-way communication. In the case of China, the "opening-up policy" has allowed the development of FDI, which has brought lots of foreign employees (engineers and technicians) to different companies of a national and international profile, Lenovo Group Inc., DongFeng and HP are apt examples of those companies. With the recent acquisition of Motorola smart phone division, for example, some of the Lenovo's engineering teams are in constant contact with the Motorola engineers based in the U.S. and many have even moved to Wuhan, China. These employees can benefit from the present suggestions to make their stay and work efforts worthwhile and fulfilling on the condition that both the high-culture and low-culture context communicators comply with the recommendations.

5.1 Recommendations to Low- Context Communicators

Building a geocentric mindset is certainly going to be high on the list, but adaption to Chinese Guanxi system also has been proven of some importance.

5.1.1 Building a Geocentric Mindset

Looking at cultural differences in an organizational context, Topping (2002) framed his analysis within three perspectives: ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric.

- **Ethnocentric perspective** views the world as being similar to the home country. In essence, ethnocentrists significantly undervalue the importance of cultural differences in conducting business outside their home country.
- **Polycentric perspective** views every country or culture as completely unique. "This orientation operates with the motto of 'Think local, act local,' where cultural differences are overemphasized.
- **Geocentric perspective**, where the individual recognizes similarities and contrasts between and across cultures. Geocentrists neither underestimate nor exaggerate the challenges that cultural differences present in conducting business across national boundaries.

To be in a safer, conflict-proof workplace, managers should adopt a geocentric attitude (if not a polycentric one) not only in a global context, but in domestic operation as well. As Topping said, geocentric disciplines also apply to managing diversity in domestic settings (2002:168).

Referring to Furakawa's *Transcultural Management,* Topping identified seven "mental disciplines" that are important in the development of geocentric managers:

1. Observe without judgment. Observation is the key to increasing your understanding of other cultures, but turn off the judgmental switch when learning how others think.

2. Tolerate ambiguity. Realize that there will be times when behaviors are erratic and rules are unclear.

3. Practice style shifting. Similar to the concept of 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do,' you should work on adopting some new behaviors that fit the local culture.

4. Flip your perception. It is certainly true that you cannot really understand other people until you see the world through their eyes. Our perceptions are obviously culturally biased. When you catch yourself making assumptions about another culture, look at the situation from a different angle.

5. Reprogram your questions. To understand how another culture operates, you need to begin thinking as if you were a member of that culture.

6. Work interdependently. Seek ways in which cultural differences can be leveraged to improve performance. There will be synergistic connections where the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts when both parties contribute.

7. Keep mental stability and growth. Perhaps it is self-evident that operating across cultures can be challenging and disorienting. Living and working outside your home country can be, and should be, a significant learning experience. However, it does require a certain level of emotional maturity and mental stability in order to move across cultural settings.

Generally, these "mental disciplines" help in coping with the psychosocial noises described above. However, in the context of team leadership in project management, we do not need to worry about our (in)capability to comply with them if our team has its culture based on work-related communication values and that the newly adopted culture (if any) is supported by each and every team member. Yet, geocentric perspective is still of great importance. Concluding his points, Topping (2002:170) aptly said that "the geocentric mindset, as proposed by Furakawa, has consistent elements with *emotional intelligence*, particularly with regard to empathy and self-regulation." This EI and culture support will be dealt with in the closing sections of this paper. Getting familiar with the Chinese Guanxi system can be a prerequisite for an effective use of EI in China.

5.1.2 Adapting to the Chinese 'Guanxi' System

"Conflict can involve uncomfortable emotions and threaten relationships" (Runde & Flanagan, 2007: xii); conversely, guanxi is about building new relationships and managing existing relationships. "Westerners aiming to do business in China need to understand the Chinese culture as a relationship oriented culture," this is what *guanxi* is about. Guanxi has no equivalent in the western society" Ruprecht and Schmid (2002:2) marked, "yet could be translated with: deep relationship supported by mutual trust and a reciprocity of services and favors." It takes flexibility and tolerance to establish guanxi, yet even a short-term relationship needs a certain level of it.

5.1.2.1 Flexibility of Attitude

A case in point: fried lobsters on a bed of rice noodles and bear's paw as an extreme delicacy can be ordered from a menu held by people (foreigner or local) doing business in China. This table etiquette, as observed by Laurence J. Brahm (2007), is associated with *Ganbei* meaning "bottoms up" in drinking cupfuls of alcohol, being a critical part of negotiation "courtship" you have to accept so as to establish *Guanxi* and successfully close business deals. He marked that,

> if your host tops up your cup with fiery Maotai or your water glass with XO, and proposes a toast screaming ganbei, to the chagrin of all the waiters, it is best for you to down whatever is in the glass. Excessive rounds of ganbei (often mixing first Maotai, then Cognac, then white wine, then beer, and then back to the Maotai) often send even the stoutest Western businessman reeling to the men's room (Brahm, 2007:26).

Like it was seen in the complaints made by one of the survey respondents, this part of Chinese culture is often found offensive or simply misunderstood by Western businessmen, so they often give "I can't eat/drink this" responses. However, "you cannot apply Western logic to an issue in an Asian cultural context" (Topping, 2002:169). "One must therefore adopt a *flexible attitude* when embarking on social aspects of doing a Chinese deal – especially when dining with the power elites who can make or break – in other words, approve or stop – your deal" (Brahm, 2007:26). That is the context of a deal, but the implication of this is that adapting to the local culture's customs mitigates the impediment of cultural clashes in an organization. Also, it fosters effective organizational integration, which is often desperately needed for a harmonious work-environment in young or newly acquired companies. The same applies to companies operating across borders and continents that are in constant need of cross-cultural interactions.

Applied to the team leadership setting, raising the team member's attention to the importance of accepting other people's differences is important. Such an ability of tolerance helps in bringing a group to an agreement, concession or, at least, to a disagreement without being disagreeable. Cultural tolerance can establish and enhance *guanxi* and this, in turn, can boost respect and admiration from followers or business partners.

Guanxi is associated with four constructs: bonding, empathy, reciprocity, and trust (Geddie et al., 2005). The 3rd construct (empathy) makes the notion of Guanxi compatible with the concept of Emotional Intelligence, which will be dealt with in a later section of the paper. It is rooted in Confucianism, the code of ethics for the Chinese. Confucianism encompasses six core values: moral cultivation; importance of interpersonal relationships; family orientation; respect for seniority and hierarchy; and the concept of face; pursuit of harmony and avoidance of conflict (Fang, 1999 in St. Clair & Norris, 2012:3). Given this natural condition of escape from conflict, the Chinese are rarely seen engaged in disputes, discord, polarization or brutality, regardless of whether their communication style is indirect or high in context with the high level of misunderstanding that style incorporates. The notion of "face" (mianzi) within the concept of "power distance" somehow explains why the Chinese have some peaceful work environments and why the high rate of misunderstanding does not lead to a higher level of conflict.

5.1.2.2 The "Power Distance" and "Mianzi"

"Power distance refers to the gap that is accepted when power is unequally distributed between the powerful and less powerful" (Gandolfi & Bekker, 2008:6). Borrowing ideas from Jon Alston, Franco Gandolfi and Corné j. Bekker explained that,

> guanxi links two persons of unequal rank so that the weaker partner can call for favors which need not be equally reciprocated. This generates the expectation that those with a powerful position help those with inferior positions. In return for their generosity they receive face and a positive reputation. Therefore, an important implication of the Confucian influence in guanxi is the act of constructing an established connection to receive potential favors through personal relationships (Gandolfi & Bekker, 2008:6).

Power distance can apply to the relationship between a PM or team leader and team members. With this power distance principle, the leader's failure to honor an exchange of obligation might result in a potential damage to his or her "face," which covers such attributes as respect, admiration and honor. "The preservation of one's face and the gathering of favors owed (renqing) are the basis of the concept of Guanxi" (St. Clair & Norris, 2012:3), akin to what French and Raven (1959) call "referent power, " which is based on the follower's liking and admiration of the leader. A PM, who is willing to cherish a peaceful and harmonious working environment would adhere to the system of guanxi in China. Yet, being a host of foreign talented workforce of different culture and temperament, the Chinese, as high-context communicators need to adjust to their management style in terms of communication and leadership.

5.2 Recommendations to High- Context Communicators

High-context communicators, like many of the low-context communicators, would capitalize on the use of strategic, multi-way communication and flexible use of leadership styles. These recommendations will keep the work environment free from the 'psychological projection' (denial of responsibility) and 'blame game,' often played in the field of project management and they will also protect project team members and leaders from frustration, aggression, or even retaliation of some sort.

5.2.1 Adopting a Strategic Project Management Communication (PMC)

From the collected data, 65% of the respondents said that managers are so engrossed with the technical aspect of the project they are managing that they tend to forget the other important aspects, which is to insure a natural flow of information, or, in other word: communication. Yet, "project managers play the role of communication coordinator and thus they are responsible for both the success and failure of communication inside the project" (Jha, 2010:2). Strategic project communication starts with a set-up of some norms.

5.2.1.1 Setting Norms

Giving direction or not can be associated with one's leadership, but it is also connected to whether or not we have a well-structured Project Communication Management. The data collected from the foreigners belonging to a project team in 2 of the companies surveyed showed that communication has to be given more importance and its structure has yet to be improved.

As one project team member put it, "despite the fact that project leader-followers had a good relationship and almost 100% of the projects being taken care of were completed on schedule and on budget, projects information was not punctually delivered, nor was it recorded in detail or addressed to a clear target audience." In terms of timing, some members complained of not receiving information unless it was at the very last minute or requested. As for precision of the target audience, they gave an example of mass e-mailing without a clear indication of who the message was primarily addressed to, they said "everyone is on the 'To' line rather than being separated into 'To' and 'Cc' or 'Bcc' in message reception.

As the core content of this paper, culture might be a factor in this delay or lacking of detailed information, but when it comes to project management, attention should be raised as to what the project requirements are. If attention to detail is required for project completion, then that is what we need to set as a norm and incorporate in a team culture. In mass e-mailing, the "To" line is needed to be used even though the "Cc" and "Bcc" lines/fields are there for sending a copy to other audiences as the team work culture often requires. The mass-emailing problem often experienced by the respondents of the present paper, for example, can be solved by means of simple explanation to team members that "To" line is required for primary addressee(s), then the "Cc" (carbon copy) line is used when you want to send a copy of the email to another person who is not the primary addressee and who is not required to reply or take any direct action in response. "Bcc" (blind carbon copy) is of the same feature as "Cc" but the difference is their functional impact in terms of secrecy or other functions. The "Bcc" addresses and recipients are hidden, so the e-mail sent through it is making someone else aware of the matter without the team members knowing about it. It is invisible to all of the other recipients of the message (including other Bcc recipients). Mixing the main target and optional receivers of the message creates confusion to the primary recipients, which might end up in a broken chain of communication or a delay of responses. That confusion was the example of the above-mentioned complaint by the team members surveyed.

After a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) is put in place, communication takes its routes to detailed branches from its hub. To ensure effectiveness of communication, the time for setting communication norms and team organizational rules should be prior to a project kick-off. *Conflict Case 2* (in the second section of this work) would have been prevented, had such a norm been put in place before starting the project.

In project management, effective communication system takes into consideration the whole PM stakeholders which include the project team, project board, project department, the HR etc. Leaving out any of the identified stakeholders can leave a bad influence on a team member, which may result in negligence of communication. We often see this when messages are not only blocked, but also distorted or misinterpreted in a team or in a project stakeholders' networking; in this way, the so-called 'noise' prevails in the team working environment.

In brief, the "ASAP" rule of communication flow should be considered as a proper code of conduct and is to be put in place and made clear to everyone on the prospective team before the project team membership is confirmed. Such a code might state that feedbacks and minutes from meetings should be sent with no delay; e-mails are answered, phone calls are returned on time, and requests for information are responded; finger pointing is not allowed, and criticism should be constructive rather than destructive (by intention), meetings are attended otherwise, everyone should be informed of an excused absence (with substitute or not); gossiping, aggressive behavior, hostility and workplace violence of any form is not tolerated and is dealt with severe sanctions, according to the damage created. Complaints should be filed with objectivity, honesty and solid evidence (if necessary or possible) after an attempt to discuss some behavioral changes with the one who is troublesome (if possible).

Only after having set some simple but important norms or rules can a well-structured project communication management be fully planned and executed to success.

5.2.1.2 Planning: Project Communications Management

"Project communications management includes the processes required to ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, distribution, storage, retrieval, and ultimate disposition of project information" (PMI, 2008:243). The PMI specifies five basic communication processes, namely to (1) identify stakeholders, (2) plan communications, (3) distribute information, (4) manage stakeholders' expectations, and (5) report performances. In terms of the attempt to establish or sustain a free-conflict team, at least the 3 first elements are to be considered with priority and caution.

(1) Stakeholders' Identification

Stakeholders can be internal (people within the project, e.g. the PM, the team members) or external (people who are not part of the team and project, e.g. customer, the media, the public).

While doing the task of identification, we make the so-called **stakeholder register**. For that, the PMI (2008:250) made 3 main points:

- **Identification Information:** Name, organizational position, location, role in the project, contact information;
- **Assessment information:** Major requirements, main expectations, potential influence in the project, phase in the life cycle with the most interest;
- **Stakeholder classification:** Internal/external, supporter/neutral/resistor, etc.

Then, with what might be perceived as an attempt to noise-proof communication, we select the appropriate methods of communication to be used targeting the concerned stakeholder(s).

(2) Communication Planning

Planning is about having the intention to do things right and to follow through with that intention by doing the right thing. A well-structured communication plan is a linchpin document in a project communications management that serves right from different angles. In so-doing, however, consideration is given to different communication audience and it is to be updated regularly, as some stakeholders, structures and delivery conditions change as time progresses. The plan outlines how to deliver the right message, from the right sender to the right receiver (audience), by the right method, within the right time frame and to the right impact, without any noise. Considering those requirements, according to PMI (2008:257), communications management plan usually provides:

- Stakeholder communication requirements;
- Information to be communicated, including language, format, content, and level of detail;
- Reason for the distribution of that information;
- Time frame and frequency for the distribution of required information;
- Person responsible for communicating the information;
- Person responsible for authorizing release of confidential information;
- Person or groups who will receive the information;
- Methods of technologies used to convey the information, such as memos, e-mail, and/or press release;
- Resources allocated for communication activities, including time and budget;
- Escalation process identifying time frames and the management chain (names) for escalation of issues that cannot be resolved at a lower staff level;
- Method for updating and refining the communications management plan as the project progresses and develops;

- Glossary of common terminology;
- Flow charts of the information flow in the project, workflows with possible sequence of authorization, list of reports, and meeting plans, etc.;
- Communication constraints, usually derived from specific legislation or regulation, technology, and organizational policies, etc.
- Guidelines and templates for project status meetings, project team meetings, e-meetings, and e-mail;
- The use of project website and project management software.

Communication planning takes into account full preparation of the communication methods and tools to be used for information distribution.

Methods

Examples of those methods, be it formal (official) or informal (unofficial), vertical (up and down the organization) or horizontal (with peers), are in one of the three forms below:

1. **Written:** memos, letters, e-mails, text messages, fax, instant messages, (annual/periodical/weekly) reports, stakeholder notifications, briefings, bulletin boards, handbooks, newsletters, press release, meeting minutes, lesson learned document, project record, on-line posts, and the like.
2. **Verbal**: choices include face-to-face conversations, project presentations, telephone conversations, public address systems, closed-circuit television, tape-recorded messages, sound/slide shows, meetings, ad-hoc discussions, conference calls, voice mail, video and web conferencing, and so on.
3. **Non verbal:** body language.

The PMI (2008:256) classified the above mentioned methods into (1) *interactive communication*, which is between two or more parties performing a multidirectional exchange of information (e.g. meetings, phone calls, video conferencing, etc.), (2) *push communication*, sent to a specific recipient who needs to know the information, of which the success of the distribution is made certain, as opposed to the audience's understanding of its content (e.g. letters, memos, reports, emails, faxes, voice mails, press releases, etc.) and (3) *pull communication*, used for very large volumes of information, or very large audiences required to access the communication content at their own discretion (e.g. intranet sites, e-learning, and knowledge repertoires, etc.).

The choice of those methods should meet the demands of situation, time (restriction) and professional needs of the receivers. Pritchard (2004:4) rightly remarked that, though the message is the same as used in the other method, "firing a team member via e-mail is considered a violation of conventional business protocol. Firing a team member over a loudspeaker would be even worse. Firing a team member in a one-on-one conversation, off-site, might be considered reasonable and fair." Thus, selecting the right method for communication is important, and that should be done according to the situation and the audience.

In consideration of the stakeholder (receiver), we should match the communication methods with the situations for which the communication is designed for. Samples are given below.

Table 4: Matching PM Communication Methods with Situations

Situation or Information Item	Communication Method	Status/Style	Audience[6]
Distributing WBS status report	Written	Formal	PT
Solving a complex problem (e.g. breakdown of communication technology)	Written/Verbal	Formal	PT
Making changes on contract (e.g. request for deadline extension)	Written	Formal	PS
Informing on project overview status	Written	Formal	AS
Informing on change control status	Written	Formal	PB

[6] Abbreviations: PT= Project Team; PS= Project Sponsor; AS= All Stakeholders; PB= Project Board; C= Customers or Clients; HR= Human Resources; SM= Senior Management; TM= Team Member

Reporting on technical deliverables	Written	Formal	AS
Requesting additional information (e.g. to meet customer/client needs)	Written/Verbal	Formal	C/ PS
Requesting additional resources (e.g. more team members)	Written	Formal	HR
Sending manpower report	Written	Formal	HR
Requesting a Senior Management Review (e.g. before final phase)	Verbal /Written	Formal	SM
Requesting a Senior Management Approval (e.g. before going public)	Written/Verbal	Formal	SM
Delivering monthly status report	Written	Formal	PS
Sending a reminder of project milestones & deadlines	Written	Formal	PT
Informing a team member of poor performance (e.g. first time making a mistake)	Verbal	Informal	TM
Informing a team member of poor performance (e.g. second time making mistakes)	Written	Formal	TM
Clarifying a work package (e.g. roles & responsibilities not clear)	Written	Formal	PT
Announcing project document updates (e.g. project schedule, stakeholder register, stakeholder requirements)	Written	Formal	PT
Announcement for Risk Review Session	Verbal	Formal	PT
Announcing a change in Project Management Plan (e.g. changes of sites)	Written	Formal	PT
Scheduling a meeting (e.g. irregular session)	Written	Informal	PT
Sharing project newsletter	Written	Informal	PT
Informing team members of training (e.g. communication training)	Written	Formal	PT
Informing team members of social event/ activities (e.g. going on a picnic)	Written	Informal	PT

In terms of style, the notion and requirement for formality can be varied from one country to another. Situations which require formality in France, for example, may be done in an informal way in the U.S., or in China. Consequently, stakeholders' identification and determination in reference to what communication methods are appropriate can be part of the planning.

Tools

Information distribution tools can be:

- Hard-copy document, manual filing systems
- Electronic communication tools (e.g. Shared-access electronic databases, websites and web publishing)
- Conferencing tools (e.g. video and web conferencing)
- Others (e.g. web interfaces to scheduling and project management software, meeting and virtual office support software, portals, and collaborative work management tools).

(3) Distribution of Information

Distribution of information is about the execution or putting into practice what has been planned. The communication matrix given below shows some specific example from the list Jha established.

Table 5: Communication Matrix

Audience	Message	Method/Channel	Timing/Frequency
Core Project Team	Details; Task-related; Project progress	Team meetings, task-related meetings; Individual meetings; Task/review-specific e-mail	Regularly-scheduled team meetings (weekly); And as needed
Project Steering Committee	Policy-related issues; Project progress	Groundwork via e-mail; consensus work via team meetings, Status Report document	Monthly
Governing Board	Project overview (basic understanding, high-level timeline)	Board meeting	Monthly
Technical Review Board	Technical Design	Technical Review Board meeting; Document versioning tool; E-mail	At least once in the Project Life Cycle; And as needed
Customer/User Group	Impact Analysis; Status; Issues, Risks; Testing plans	User Meetings; E-mails	Weekly; As needed
PMO	Project Status; Guidance and feedback; Risks and Issues	PMO status meeting; Status Report document; E-mail	Weekly; As needed
Maintenance and Operation	Handover details; Issues and Risks	Meeting; E-mail; Handover document	Weekly meeting, one month before the project deployment; Daily meeting for one week after deployment
Supplier/ Vendor	Inventory details; Issues	Meetings; E-mails	Weekly, till all the items are supplied; Monthly after all the items are supplied till project end date; As needed

Source: Jha (2010:125)

In two of the companies investigated where the PM and team leaders were predominantly Chinese, despite the frequent problems of information delivery, communication was well-structured. A well-structure method of communication implies having almost all of the elements above enumerated, however complications may still arise. In these instances, foreign team members complained about being harassed via e-mails or phone calls regarding deadlines for report submissions. On the other hand, other team members complained about having to describe too much details of what they were doing through the process of a project execution. These complaints were made from the leadership where PM was "micro-managing" and "overly analytical" was the factor of misunderstanding.

What was contradictory was that some members of the same team complained about receiving few requests for information about their tasks before reaching the deadline that when the task completion was due, they had no time for self-correction or corrective feedback. In this case, they judged their PM or leaders as being "too lenient" or "abandoning" them within the process. Such complaints were from team members who belonged to both Chinese and foreign supervisors. Some team members found out that training was necessary for new projects (of large size and scope) but they felt that there would be no chance to put this into effect because their "managers think that former practices and experience can always be used to meet new challenges," which is "not always the case," as some respondents said. Some respondents voiced their concerns about not being consulted for decision-making regarding choices that might affect their future (e.g. transfer to other project that does not match their career development plans).

To solve these problems, PMs need to consider the individual needs of his/her team members in terms of personal development and personality. Hersey and Blanchard's *Situational Leadership* is among the techniques that should be considered in order to solve these problems. That is, PMs need to build an integrative, inclusive and flexible style of leadership to manage team members, regardless of whether they are foreigners or local.

5.2.2 Flexible Use of Leadership Styles

Paul Hersey and his colleagues (2008) wrote,

> The number one reason people stay with an organization – working with a good leader. The number one reason people leave an organization – working for bad leader. People don't leave an organization; they leave people (leaders) (Hersey et al., 2008:1)

Similar to other fields, bad leaders are common in the field of project management, but the leader is lucky if the angered subordinate only decides to leave a company instead of being troublesome in retaliation. "My first experience of a bad leader was in a job where I experienced a team leader who was highly controlling, who never wanted to try out anything new, who always wanted things done his way and who never listened to me or the others in the team," recalled Fiona Elsa Dent. In her case, "this man was simply a manager and not a very good one at that!" (Dent, 2003:22). This traces the dividing lines between a manager and a leader but it also tells us that even a manager nowadays is in need of considerate and caring leadership skills to be a good one. The definition of what makes a manager today is being in charge of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Robbins & Judge, 2013:6). Successful management requires possession of the ability to avoid team members' boredom, frustration and resentment by means of flexibility of leadership styles. Dent's leader, for example, did not have that ability, hence her frustration. Bad leaders cannot change their leadership styles when circumstances require that change and they never correct their inconsideration as well as their careless leadership behaviors. Dent's resentment toward her leader is similarly felt by foreigners working in high context cultures if the leaders do not consider implementing a management style other than that of the old command-and-control.

5.2.2.1 Situational Leadership Model

Though using slightly different terminologies[7], Hersey (SL®) and Blanchard (SL® II) identified a three-dimensional approach for assessing leadership effectiveness. In this paper, SL® II is used as a reference:

- **The Leader's Behaviors:** Leaders exhibit *directive behavior*, that is the extent to which leaders engage in spelling out the duties and responsibilities of an individual or group and direct the work (e.g. have you finished writing the report? I need it before the set deadline because…!!) and socio-emotional *supportive behavior*, which is the extent to which leaders engage in two-way or multi-way communication and be responsive to follower's needs (e.g. How is your daughter John? ...Now, about the project, we need to…)
- **The Follower's Development Level:** The *commitment* and *competence* of an employee to do a particular task is an important situational factor.
- **Leadership Style Adaptability:** The effectiveness of the leader depends on how his or her leadership style interrelates with the situation.

5.2.2.1.1 Identifying Leader's Dominant Behavior and Style

Basically, there are four leadership styles in existence guided by the leader's dominant behavior; a leader can have a high or low supportive (social) behavior, and high or low directive (task) behavior. *Directive behavior* includes telling people what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who is to do it while *supportive behavior* includes listening, encouraging, facilitating, and explaining why a task is important and giving support. Table 6 gives an overview of the 4 styles in SL, leaders' traits and behaviors corresponding to each style and the possible communication status for each style.

[7] SL Terminologies: SL® and SL® II are the same in concepts and utility, but slightly different in usage of terminologies. In Hersey's Model (SL®), S1 is Telling, S2 Selling, S3 Participating, and S4 Delegating, while in Blanchard's (SL® II), S1 is Directing, S2 Coaching, S3 Supporting, and S4 Delegating (with no change). R1, R2, R3, R4 (SL®), are D1, D2, D3, D4 (SL® II) (R=readiness level; D=development level). Willingness (SL®) is Commitment (SL® II). Task Behavior and Relationship Behavior (SL®) are labeled "Directive Behavior" and "Supportive Behavior" (SL® II). In this work, SL® II labeling is used.

Table 6: Leader' Style, Traits, Behaviors and Communication Status

Styles of Leadership[8]	Leader's Traits	Leader's Behavior		Communication Status
		Supportive (Social)	Directive (Task)	
S1 Directing	-The leader retains as much power and decision-making authority as possible; s/he does not consult followers, nor openly allow them to give any input. -S/he expects followers to obey orders without receiving any or much explanation. -S/he does not nurture followers; neither being concerned nor sympathetic about followers' personal matters. S/he assigns tasks and set strict deadlines with close supervision for accomplishments.	**Low**	**High**	Communication is largely one way, the leader takes it as a give-and-take instrument of command
S2 Coaching	-The leader socially and professionally gets involved in followers' life; attentive to followers' emotional problems and professional needs, -S/he rewards people for hard work, and gives incentive programs to address the problems from weak performances. -Decisions are still made by the leader, but with inputs from the followers. -The leader still defines roles and tasks	**High**	**High**	Communication is more of two-way causal effect than one-way, the leader's commitment to verbal interaction is of a variable level
S3 Supporting	-The leader allows followers to establish goals, recognizes and encourages achievement. -Shares tasks and asks for questions, comments, feedback from followers and treats them as colleagues rather than subordinates -Some decisions are made by the followers, but facilitated by the leader.	**High**	**Low**	Communication is of two-way effect, the leader takes verbal interaction as a tool for exchange
S4 Delegating	-The leader provides little or no direction and gives followers as much freedom, authority or power as possible. -Lets followers determine goals, make decisions, and resolve problems on their own; s/he neither assigns tasks, nor sets deadlines. -The control is with the follower(s), and the leader is only involved at the followers' requests and needs	**Low**	**Low**	Communication is for giving green light, the leader is more of a listener (receiver) than a communicator (sender)

Source: Developed from Toastmasters International (1991) and Blanchard (2010)

The use of SL enables leaders to make an assessment of the situation and choose what leadership style is appropriate. Generally, the right leadership style depends on the situation and the follower's development level.

5.2.2.1.2 Detecting Employees' Development level

Within the style flexibility, Hersey and Blanchard set up four groups, considering the follower's level of competence and commitment; in other words, their development levels as follows:

D1: Low competence, high commitment. Lack specific skills to complete the task, but are motivated and willing to take order or instruction.

D2: Some competence, low commitment. Do have some relevant skills, but cannot complete the task without guidance.

[8] The leadership styles named "Directing," "Coaching," "Supporting," "Delegating" used by Blanchard are referred to as "Direction, " "Influence, " "Collaboration, " "Delegation" are the equivalent terms given by the Toast Masters' International.

D3: High competence, variable commitment. Experienced people who might lack confidence or motivation.

D4: High Competence, high commitment. Experienced people who are able to do the job on their own.

5.2.2.1.3 Matching the Development Level with Leadership Style

SL Model can be conflict-proof depending on whether or not the development level and the leadership style are appropriately matched. Matching D1-D4 with S1-S4, a manager will be able to adapt the way s/he works with followers and optimize the outcomes with the awareness that a follower's development level is not static or fixed. Over time, a follower change(s) and has another requirement. The level of development is also situational – namely depending on the task the follower is assigned to do. S/he might have a lot of experience in one area, but none in another, thus the leader might need to provide more support to a follower until some skills have been built. In brief, the employee's development level should dictate the changes in leadership style, if necessary. Table 7 sums this up.

Table 7: Adopting Leader' Style

Development Level	Competence (Skills)	Commitment (Motivation)	Leadership Style
D1	Low	High	S1
D2	Low/Some	Low	S2
D3	Moderate/High	Variable	S3
D4	High	High	S4

Source: Blanchard (2010:116)

A mismatch during the process will cause conflicts and security risk in a work environment. "A directing style" for example "is for the orientation stage. It's a start-up style and should be used to build the Team Charter, share necessary information, explain initial goals and tasks and help the team develop the skills necessary to become more effective. If a leader stays in a highly directive style for too long, however, team members will soon feel *resentment* about being told over and over what to do and how to do it" (Blanchard et al., 2009: 83). This unravels the mystery behind the feelings of "not being trusted" discovered by the respondents of the present survey. Dent's frustration and resentment of her boss is also a product of the same command-and-control style of leadership. As a result of such misuse/overuse of directing style, Blanchard said, team members, "will be less inclined to contribute their ideas and opinions. Productivity, satisfaction and creativity will all suffer" (Blanchard et al., 2009: 83). However, as often observed in today's emotional workplace, such a negative feeling as *resentment* can often result in some rather dramatic consequences. Rather than just some absences of productivity, satisfaction and creativity at work, resentment often leads to arguments, discord or even violence. Accordingly, it is important to offer the support which is needed and to allow the inexperienced to learn. On the other hand, watching over those who have loads of experience will be conducive to conflict-driven work environment. Adopting the right leadership style to the right development level will get the work done while peaceful relations are built or maintained.

5.2.2.2 Communication in SL® II

Despite the fact that it is not elaborately dealt with in literature published on SL, communication is an important element of SL. SL communication might essentially be seen in the status shown in Table 6, but an abrupt change of leadership style requires a change of communication status as well.

5.2.2.2.1 Abrupt Changes of Style

When a person develops, s/he will take small steps from S1 to S4, and the leader should adapt and change his/her direction to support. It is, however, very important for the leader to keep in mind not to change his/her approach abruptly. In a case of an emergency situation demanding an abrupt change, communication (explaining the change) is needed, otherwise the leader is perceived to be exploitive or uncaring. For example, we can imagine a manager using a new style of leadership shifting from S3 (Supporting) as his dominant style to S1 (Directing) as a secondary style saying (for the S1) "this month, you *have to* work overtime to get the BABT and ULE Product Certifications documents ready for application. I mean everyone, OK?" The two styles (S3, S1) are opposed in the way that S3 is characterized by low *directive behavior* and high *supportive behavior*, whereas S1 is the reverse, with high *directive behavior* and low *supportive behavior*. With a manager's sudden change of style, team members are encountering an unfamiliar request, which might lead to a direct or indirect refusal like "We are not your slaves!" Keeping this in mind, the PM should always keep the chemistry alive despite the challenges the team members are facing in terms of time constraints, budget cuts, shortage of resources etc. This is done by communication of the reasons for the changes.

5.2.2.2.2 Matching Development Levels with Communication Methods

The most efficient way to ensure a common understanding by all participants is "interactive communication" (PMI, 2008: 256). Identification of the levels of interaction with reference to the development levels is important in order to avoid such conflict prone-behavior as, for example, being too explanatory or instructive about things people already know. This is the case when someone says "tell me what I don't know" or "be careful with the lecture!" Those interaction levels vary from high to variable or low, and self-awareness of that fact is important in order to be able to adjust when circumstances demand it.

Table 8: Interactive Communication within SL

Development Level	Level of Interaction in Communication
D1	Low
D2	Variable
D3	High
D4	Low

In order to avoid conflict, development levels of followers should be considered in defining what information a follower needs and how much of the information at hand will satisfy the needs. Having high interaction level of communication with someone of **D4** (*high competence* and *high commitment*) will be criticized as micro-managing. A leader who lacks interactive communication with a team member of **D1** (*low competence* and *high commitment*) is likely to be judged neglectful.

Based on these situational variations, leader can assess his/her followers and adapt his/her style to match their level of development, adjusting the amount of direction and support as well as information to the followers' needs.

5.3 Recommendations to Both Low-Context and High-Context Communicators

Case in Point: In "the Apprentice[9]," a reality show produced by Mark Burnett (2005), when being assigned to create and promote a sales advertorial for the Pontiac Solstice car, a Magna team member named Craig Williams complained about his team not having created a concept, a theme or an idea after a long day's work, and felt "frustrated about that." In response, Kendra Todd, the Project Manager of the team, found Craig's frustration unjustified which, in turn, led to her frustration. "I had a theme, and I had communicated it to Craig. Craig just doesn't listen. I was getting so frustrated with Craig at this point, I really felt like I was all alone in the process!!" she said.

In this case, before frustration and misunderstanding caused a breakdown of communication, an eclectic approach to conflict prevention might have been helpful in Kendra's leadership. First, unlike the other kinds of conflicts that have been referenced, the magna conflict is between the PM (the leader) and a team member. Knowing that Craig throughout the season has not had a good relationship with Kendra, we can see that the situation they were in has turned into *discord***.** Thus, seeing him supportive of Kendra's ideas would be a miracle without her having paid him special attention, like giving him full explanation that such a point is the theme that could be used with his agreement. Getting that agreement might take some humility and compromise on Kendra's part, but it would give Craig a sense of consideration and respect from the PM. Of course, in the video, there was no sign of disrespect from Kendra's behavior but in many cases, this feeling of being considered, recognized, paid attention to and respected is what emotionally demanding team members expect to get from a leader.

[9] A reality, TV-based show in which contestants compete for a job as an apprentice to the American billionaire, Donald Trump.

5.3.1 Adopting Leadership Style with Positive EI

Nowadays, among the other questions the HR staff asks a prospective employee before joining a company is whether or not the applicant has some interpersonal and communication skills. This interpersonal competence definitely need to be set as a criteria for a PM selecting team members who are going to be part of a project management which, by nature, involves team work. Catherine McLoughlin and Joe Luca (2002:572) explained that "employers expect not only a strong knowledge base, but also diversified social, communication and cooperation skills, flexibility to work in different contexts and the capacity to manage information and self and others." For PMs themselves, the management of self and others come from the so-called EI, where communication or information management is the key to success in conflict or violence prevention.

EI has some important role in curbing workplace violence (Danarson, 2014). "Customs and manners do vary markedly from country to country, as well as within regions of larger or diverse nations. But the case of emotions is a special one. We know that cultural universals exist in emotions. A happy face is seen as a happy face by people all over the globe" (Caruso & Salovey, 2004:21). By logic, a team leadership with positive use of EI should be able to detect changes of behavior and an impending conflict. This is made possible by means of self-regulation and empathy (understanding others). "When we engage empathically," explained Hughes and his colleagues, "we are motivated to pay attention to other people. We attend to them by noticing their communications from multiple dimensions" (Hughes et al., 2005:66). This, in turn, helps in controlling our behavior, which might also be conflict-prone at times. The intrapersonal and interpersonal skills are presented in Table 9.

5.3.1.1 Emotional Intelligence Abilities.

According to Caruso & Salovey (2004:26) the EI approach includes four different skills arranged in a hierarchical fashion: to *identify* how people feel, to *use* emotions to help you think, to *understand* the causes of emotions, and to *include and manage* emotions in your decision making to make optimal choices in life. Within the process of understanding others, in order to build an emotionally intelligent manager, the ability to manage one's emotions is required.

5.3.1.2 Emotion Management

Managing emotions—that is, "having the ability to incorporate one's feelings and the feelings of others into thinking" (Caruso & Salovey, 2004:62) is an important part of an EI competence, which has a considerable role in curbing workplace violence (Danarson, 2014), but it can also be a crucial tool to sustain peaceful team leadership. According to Sparrow and Amanda (2006), EI competence is composed of two complementary intelligences: *intra*personal intelligence (to do with our relationship with ourselves) and *inter*personal intelligence (to do with our relationships with others):

Table 9: EI Competences

Intelligence	***Intrapersonal intelligence***	***Interpersonal intelligence***
	- Being intelligent in picking up what is going on inside us and doing what we need to do about it - Helps us make sense of the things we do, the thoughts we have, the feelings we feel – and the relationships between them all. - With it you can learn how to stay in charge of yourself and your emotions.	- Being intelligent in picking up what is going on in other people and between people and doing what we need to do about it. - Helps us tune into other people, empathize with them, communicate clearly with them, inspire and motivate them and understand our relationships with them and the relationships between them. - With it you can inspire other people, develop their trust in you very quickly, create a team that performs rather than storms and is effective and creative.
What you need	**for effective self management** - mood management - self motivation - dealing with setbacks - using your intuition - managing your energy - dealing with stress - avoiding depressions and addictive behavior	**for effective relationship management** - motivating others - leading others - developing others - collaborating with others - confronting others - facilitating relationships between others.

Source: Sparrow and Amanda (2006:14-16)

Table 9 contains some of what we need to manage our relationships with ourselves and others in order to avoid conflicts, but these management elements are not sufficient if China is the leadership arena where they are put to work. In China, the other concepts like "mian zi" and "guanxi" are to be included in the chart we have in mind. Yet, with EI, those two Chinese notions are even more effective because EI takes strategic communication into considerations.

5.3.2 Communicating with EI

Some examples of situations where EI is crucially needed are: getting support in meetings, making and declining requests as well as giving feed-backs, sharing information through e-mails, and correcting deviant behaviors or reprimanding. These are emotion-related situations requiring a certain level of EI to avoid conflicts. Runde and Flanagan (2007:58) put it rightly that, "in some ways, conflict is all about emotions." Accordingly, conflict management requires self-awareness and self-control (Runde & Flanagan, 2007:37), and this is where leadership with Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a necessity. Communication management (planning and execution) should take into consideration the emotional impact of the delivered information to the receiver.

Of course, communication is not restricted to verbal interaction, as has been demonstrated so far. Facial expressions, gestures, among others, also effectively convey meanings. Qiao and Conyers (2014:48) said, "when there is a language barrier, [that kind of] body language takes on even more significance as a nonverbal cue." "The body communicates nonstop and is an abundant source of information" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009:142). However, when it comes to oral medium, one should know that what you say may not be a problem if you say it with positive emotional intelligence. That is, thinking about how your interlocutor would feel when hearing your words. To do that, we should take the place of your interlocutor before uttering the words by asking ourselves, would I be happy if someone else said this to me? Is it said to my interest or connected to my core values and fundamental beliefs? When the answer is "yes," you can go ahead with what you want to say.

The popular joke about smoking while praying reflects the importance of putting yourself into your listener's shoes to get what you want in communication.

Box 1: "Smoke While Praying" Vs. "Pray While Smoking"

Two friends are walking to a religious service. The first friend wonders whether it would be all right to smoke while praying. The second friend says, "Why don't you ask the priest?" So the first friend goes up to the priest and asks, "Father, may I smoke while I pray?" The priest replies, "Oh no, my son, you should not! That is disrespect to God. That is sinful and outrageous." He goes back to his friend and tells him what the priest advised. His friend says, "I am not surprised. You asked the wrong question. Let me try." And so the second friend goes up to the priest and asks, "Father, may I pray while I smoke?" To which the priest happily replies, "Absolutely, my son! Absolutely! You can always pray whenever and wherever you want to.

Source: Jha (2010:1-2)

In terms of EI, this story shows the importance of considering others' feelings and beliefs, but also it highlights the fact that showing personal interests should not be part of the communication techniques you use to get good results. For a priest or a true Christian, as the example shows, it is acceptable if doing what you want gives you an opportunity to worship God, not the reverse (worshiping God gives you an opportunity to do what you want). Resistance is what you encounter if your request for service is driven by personal interest and greed. Humility, compassion and selflessness should be part of your technique while planning a strategic EI communication, which applies for any context, including mobilization of supporters, fishing for an agreement or getting a service from a team member. All these take persuasion rather than coercion or intimidation.

5.3.2.1 Getting Support in Meetings

In a meeting, EI should be used with persuasion or vise-versa, yet it is a process to be followed with an identification of participants' position using the gradients of agreement seen in Table 10.

Table 10: Gradients of Agreement

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
✓	✓		✓	✓			
✓	✓						
✓							

Source: Adopted from Community At Work[10] (1996).

The Community At Work (1996) suggested two ways to use the tool: first, at the beginning of a team meeting, that way we can see the initial level of support and agreement on the issue before engaging ourselves in lengthy discussions; second, after having invested time in exploring the issue and have given all members adequate time to express their ideas, excitement, or concerns. With the first polling in place, the team members can move on to the next item on the agenda if *enthusiastic support* (1,3) is checked; otherwise, more discussion is needed to win the votes of the *lukewarm* (3,4,5) and *meager* (6,7) as well as *strong objection* (8). In that case, be sure to let people know that the first poll is a preliminary round and that it will be followed by an in-depth discussion before making a decision. All these should be done with good communication skills and listening abilities.

Participants of the meeting can use numbers to represent the different gradients – e.g., 1 for "fully support" and 8 for "strongly object." There are different ways to capture participants' level of support said the Community AT Work (1996) **(1)** *a show of hands* (e.g. please raise your hand if you are at No.1); **(2)** *individual statement* (given while you go around the room identifying each participant's preference on the gradients and reason); **(3)** *simultaneous declaration* (each person writes the gradient – word or number – of his or her preference in block letters on a large piece of paper , and have them all shown to you at once for your record); and **(4)** *secret ballot*. Your choice of these techniques should be done according to how complicated the issue at hand is and what impact it would have on the participants in terms of feelings or emotion. "A secret ballot" is better than "a show of hands" when the decision to be taken will have a negative impact on a participant or his/her department. Thus, the use of EI can be of crucial importance within the process.

This process in decision-making is necessary rather than taking the risk of having an outsider in our leadership; an outsider is herein referred to the 7th and 8th scale in the eight gradients of agreement developed by the Community AT Work (1996). The failure to use an emotionally intelligent and persuasive communication method in a meeting might result in a physical presence with a lack of real contribution from a team member, which can be a destructive challenge for the PM. In fact, as Jha (2010:2) marked, "PMs can face challenges from all quarters—high expectations from senior management, unrealistic deadlines, scope creep, resource competition, unknown risks, uncertain dependencies, insufficient team skill, lack of accountability from key team members, conflicting interests among stakeholders, internal politics, and weak organizational processes and methodologies—just to name a few." And requesting for help whenever needed is unavoidable all along the process of a project completion. Making requests requires communication with emotional consideration, otherwise team members feel of exploited or disrespect by other project stakeholders. All these negative feelings should be avoided by using an EI communication in order to avoid confrontation. PMs can successfully handle challenging situations with the help of good communication skills (Jha, 2010:2).

5.3.2.2 Making Requests and Giving Feed-back

A good example of strategic communication with EI considers the advice given by Blanchard and his colleagues (2006) on the use of the phrase "I need" when requesting for a service or favor. They said, "human beings love to feel needed. They love to think they can help you." 'I need' is very compelling," (Blanchard et al. 2006: 123) while requesting a person's help. A leader would stand a big chance of receiving easy compliance from followers by using the phrase "I need" or "we need" instead of "you have to give me," "I want," or "you must."

Delivered orally as short speech or in a written form, an emotionally conscious way of communicating can avoid conflict between the leader and the followers (team members). A sample is given below.

[10] Community AT Work (1996) Accessible on March 3, 2015 at http://www.trg-inc.com/our-insights/aidstar/team-decision-making-the-gradients-of-agreement/

Box 2: EI Communication Sample of Requests

My friends, we are a little behind schedule with the preparation of the BABT & ULE product certifications documents. And as you might know, without an international approvals and certifications, we cannot get the market admittance license we have been dreaming of; meaning, our new products won't be brought to global markets, which will be a great loss for the company and all of us. That's being the case, to get the documents ready for application within the set timeframe and deadline, each and every one of us *needs* to work overtime for a week or so. This might sound a bit demanding (for all of us), but please remember that understanding the regulations requirements and process in the product destination countries (Europe) has taken us more time than expected. Yet, I want you to know that, we have done a great job so far!! And I am thankful for that!! Then, now that we come to the final phase of the project, let's *"strike while the iron is hot!!"* So, with your cooperation, we start the overtime work from tomorrow, but let me know if there is any suggestion for a better way to make this process go smoothly. One last thing, it goes without saying that, for this specific situation, everyone is going to be paid overtime and provided some benefits accordingly. Thank you all!!

The above-given statement opens with a (1) *guanxi protocol*, and moves on with the (2) *explanation of the problem*, then hints at the (3) *possible consequences*, which call for (4) *a solution*. It then touches on the subject of (5) *consideration of other's feelings*, and develops while noting the (6) *cause of the problem* (the delay), which is followed by a (7) *recognition of effort*, the members have made with an (8) *expression of gratitude*, and (9) *encouragement*, and announces the precise (10) *time for execution*, with an indication of the (11) *value of the members input*. Not everyone might need (12) *a reward* for extra-works, but no one would really refuse it, so mentioning what they gain in the short term can be necessary, and of course a (13) *formula of respect* is 'a must' when signing off. Depending on situation, these 13-item structures are of a great help as an emotionally intelligent way of making a request to project team members during a crisis situation, which requires a change of leadership style.

The same careful consideration should be made in giving feedback. When planning feedback, use softeners, e.g. "I think," or "I believe," or "this time" to begin a statement. "Instead of 'your report is terrible,'" said Bradberry and Greaves (2009:213), "use 'I believe there are parts of your report that could use revisions. May I walk you through some suggestions?'" and "at the end, ask the person for this or her thoughts, and thank the person for his or her willingness to consider your suggestions," they added. As sensitive as that of making requests and giving a negative feedback, declining a request can be problematic if made with no emotional considerations.

5.3.2.3 Declining a Request with "No."

As seen on the first complaints in Table 4, people feel "neglected" or "rejected" when receiving "no" for an answer for their requests. Yet, it is not rare to receive requests that are beyond the scope of a team membership and authority. Some members may ask their team mates to do them more favors than they deserve or are entitled to and others may requests extra time for extra works just because they wear the hat of a supervisor or a leader. Given that this can be problematic, saying "no" and possessing the ability to say "no" in an emotionally intelligent way are crucially important. Saying "no" can hurt a team member's feelings but uttering the word in an emotional intelligent way can heighten your reputation as being honest, principled and of moral integrity. Celestine Chua (2010), founder of Personal Excellence, found 6 reasons why we find it hard to say no: **(1)** *you want to help* **(2)** *you are afraid of being rude* **(3)** *you want to be agreeable* **(4)** *fear of conflict* **(5)** *fear of lost opportunities* **(6)** *not burning bridges* (breaking relationship). To save yourself from trouble and save your team members from hurt feelings, Chua said "it's about *how* you say "no," rather than the fact you're saying no, that affects the outcome." She proposed 7 simple groups of phrases that can be used by selecting what best meets your needs in the situation:

1. "I can't commit to this as I have other priorities at the moment."

2. "Now's not a good time as I'm in the middle of something. How about we reconnect at X time?"

3. "I'd love to do this, but …"

4. "Let me think about it first and I'll get back to you."

5. "This doesn't meet my needs now but I'll be sure to keep you in mind."

6. "I'm not the best person to help on this. Why don't you try X?"

7. "No, I can't."

For the method number 4, Chua (2010) urged that if you are not interested in what the person has to offer at all, do not lead him or her on; use the methods 5, 6 or 7, which are definitive. In the context of project team management, these are useful methods to adopt in order to avoid conflict, but again, as Chua (2010) said, considering what is appropriate for the situation is important. In addition, you should know your receiver's emotional characteristics and try your best not to offend someone by not seeming condescending, or in a discussion, being able 'to disagree without being disagreeable.' In terms of emotional characteristics, for example, it can be noticed that women, for example, are generally quick to laugh, cry or to be shocked; literary persons are also more emotional than the scientific ones. Thus, talking to these people of different genders and occupations require different communication strategies, being direct or out-spoken can be fine for men and scientists while their counterparts might prefer the diplomatic ways of talking, hence the need of a certain level of emotional intelligence skills.

5.3.2.4 Sharing Information

Positive EI in leadership can avoid conflict in so many ways, including conflicts regarding e-mailing while sharing information. An example worth-mentioning is in making a correct use of "To," "Cc" and "Bcc." For example, as a PM, if you send a message To: sandrich.dan@gpn.com (a project team member) and Bcc: aldrich.dan@gpn.com (a project team leader), then sandrich.dan will see himself as the message's only recipient, while aldrich.dan will see that you have also sent the message to sandrich.dan The Bcc: field is useful in instances when you do not wish to share your recipients' email addresses with everyone who receives your message. However, in a project team membership, sharing contact information is a preliminary step to a collective work and result. In that sense, hiding information might be an intention of avoiding bad feelings from others in the group or negative impact to the team rather than hoarding information. In the context of an impending team conflict, for instance, it is necessary to use Bcc. For example, if we want to warn someone of a misconduct, whom you have as a primary receiver of the message, while giving the same information to the victim, you use the To: line addressing to him/her but not letting him/her know that his/her victim (Bcc:) is aware of the warning. That will avoid letting her/him have the feeling of losing "face," in the Chinese context which, if not avoided, might lead to a defensive or spiteful act of the one that is guilty as charged (against you or the victim). Having the victim informed will protect you from being blamed for not taking the responsibility to solve the problem, which can create other negative feelings. In the other contexts, misconduct requires a face-to-face reprimanding to avoid re-occurrence but this too needs to be handled with care and emotional intelligence.

5.3.2.5 Reprimanding

Many people hate being reprimanded, but others feel uncomfortable facing concealed anger. For example, in his memoir, *Power Forward: My Presidential Education*, Reggie Love, a personal aide of the then-Senator Obama in 2007, referred to this when commenting on his boss's controlled feelings of anger when Love accidently got him upset. After a fundraiser in Florida, Love accidentally misplaced then-Senator Obama's Tumi briefcase containing his wallet, keys, credit cards, and notes he prepared and needed for a primary debate in South Carolina. After discovering the truth about the forgotten bag, his boss kept *silent*. Commenting on that, Love wrote in the memoir, nothing seemed to be worse than the President's silence when he was angry. He said,

> The silence, felt worse than being reprimanded.
>
> As we rode to the Columbia campaign headquarters with Kirk Wagar without another word passing between us I thought, *That's it, I'm fired*. I kept hoping he would break the tension and yell at me (Love, 2015:54).

The concealed anger eventually ended up with some words of warning, which might have pleased Love, but for some people of a similar rank as Obama (at the time and now), shouting would accompany inquiring about what happened to the bag exactly followed by brutal words of reprimanding.

In the context of reprimanding, which is unavoidable in this world of imperfection, praising should be part of it. "If you end your reprimand with a praising, you will be telling the person, you are OK but your behavior isn't!" (Blanchard & Lorber, 2004:44). There is a security behind this, "when you leave, the person will be thinking about what he or she did wrong. If any reason he tries to badmouth you to coworkers, they will stop it by saying, what are you getting so excited about? He said you were one of his best people. He just doesn't want you to make that mistake again" (Blanchard & Lorber, 2004:44). This protection from a third party is gained when the basic ingredients of reprimanding are considered: "telling people what they did wrong; telling people how you feel about it; and reminding people that they are valuable and worthwhile" (Blanchard & Johnson, 2004:91). As we often see, angered employees can spread malicious rumors, which can get to a proportion of organizational crisis, but reprimanding with praising can prevent the crisis from happening, I call this graceful reprimanding. The good news here is that "When you end a reprimand with a praising, people think about their behavior, not your behavior" (Blanchard & Lorber, 2004:45). These tender words with humility and emotional considerations shown by means of strategic communication help build a vibrant support system necessary for fostering peace within project team.

5.3.3 Creating a Vibrant Team Culture Support System

As Diamond reminded us, "employee-on-employee aggression may be a consequence of management practices and workplace culture" (GAO, 1994 in Diamond, 1997:230). Team culture should be defined as a system of shared values held by members that distinguish the team from other teams. Team culture can be seen as a small envelope enclosed by other bigger envelopes of different layers presented in a hierarchical order. Those layers are department culture, company culture, societal culture, regional culture and national culture as well as universal culture, which is brought by globalization.

With team members selected from different countries, companies and departments, team culture may get blurred or disseminated by the department, company or country culture the majority of the members belong to. Thus, given its possible limited resistance to outside influence, team culture needs a strong foundation and constant support to be sustainable. "Lack of support for a team culture" is number 8 on Blanchard's list of the "top 10 reasons why teams fail" (Blanchard, 2010:167).

With strategic communication, words can be converted into actions; repeated actions can translate into habits, habits into culture. The project manager is the major player within the process, yet cooperation from subordinates and all team members is essential. In fact, "The role of the project manager is one of communications facilitator. That does not mean he or she sends all of the communications. It means that the project manager is responsible for ensuring that communications are sent, received, and (to the degree possible) understood" (Pritchard, 2004:3). "Project managers, however, have perhaps the greater challenge because of their position. All communication flows through them and, often, from them" (Kliem, 2008:1).

Team culture building and support starts from a leader's consistency in showing the values and importance of communication, which is defined by the so-called "leadership by example." If a leader does not respond to e-mails, the team will follow suit; that is, team members will neglect the value of communication. Yet, "communication is the life blood of business. No business can develop in the absence of effective communication system" (Bisen & Priya, 2009:2). And within that system, possession of information is crucial. "Information is power" (Pilger, 1991:10) and sharing that power with all team members is even more important; it is a vital tool to accomplish shared goals and produce successful deliverables.

Regardless of the duration a team has to work together, mutual understanding of the individual members' cultural differences is an important start in building and supporting a common culture for a team. After mutual understanding is in place, then follows the creation of a common one, a social fabric of leadership. At least in PM, team culture support should go hand-in-hand with certain norms or rules of team interaction and the foundation of a positive feeling among team members.

5.3.3.1 The Foundation of a Positive Feeling in a Team

The foundation of a positive feeling relies on a leader's ability to set some interaction norms and communication values to be carried out by the team members. Pat Holahan and Ann C. Mooney (2004:4) identified 3 main points of consideration regarding norms of *team interaction*:

- **Promote trust among team members.**

Develop and reinforce a high degree of openness and mutuality within the team. Hidden agendas and off-line deals cannot be part of how the team operates.

- **Control contentious communication.**

Establish constructive communication norms. Intimidation tactics, blaming, harsh language, or humiliation should not be tolerated. Reinforce respectful communication that conveys a climate of collaboration and mutual support.

- **Promote behavioral integration.**

Identify a collective goal to which the team's members hold themselves mutually accountable, institute collaborative work methods, and reward the team based on its collective performance.

In terms communication values to be respected, the list given by PMII (2008:245) are listening actively and effectively; questioning, probing ideas and situations to ensure better understanding; educating to increase team's knowledge so that they can be more effective; fact-finding to identify or confirm information; setting and managing expectations; persuading a person or organization to perform an action; negotiating to achieve mutually acceptable agreements between parties; resolving conflicts [11] to prevent disruptive impacts; and summarizing, recapping, and identifying the next steps.

5.3.3.2 Project-Related Task and Social Behaviors

The foundation of team positive feeling can be built and reinforced by developing some project-related task behavior and social behavior herein referred to as socio-professional support activities.

Table 11: Socio-Professional Support Activities

Activities	Descriptions
1. Team Culture Awareness	Provide a "road map" that states the norms, rules, and regulations governing the team.
2. Team Member Social Events	At the early stages in the project, social events and activities should be organized to help individuals know and become comfortable with one another.
3. Team Capacity Building	Increase personal competence in the subject matter covered by the current and future projects and communicate the possible outcomes
4. Team Communication Status Briefing	Provide a forum where communication flow status and team members' cooperation with one another are reported and evaluated for any necessary improvement.
5. Enhancement of Values of Team Work	Showcase an effective technique for actions and interactions by the individual members based on group dynamics
6. Team Member Relationship Assessment	Review the past history on cohesiveness of the team and monitor current chemistry and "guanxi" bonds among team members, then provide a direction for new achievement-oriented relationship.
7. Team Member Celebration of Achievements	Used later in the project closure, social events and activities take the form of celebration to uphold and sustain team members' moral and motivate them for future achievement.

Team cultural support starts from each individual member's ability to do their tasks and work at the interests of the group. If a lack of commitment to respond to requests for information or habit of hoarding information are the symptoms a team leadership's illness, a PM can address the issues by reinforcing the team culture using *activities 1, 4* and *5;* taking *activity 1,* the communication norm should stress the importance of timely dispatch, exchange and feed-back on information.

In terms of impending conflicts between members of feuding departments, *activity 1* should be the prerequisite step in preventing any malicious behavior from happening. As part of its rules and regulations, *activity 1* should clarify that, among other things, any feuds from the past or any historical disagreement between individuals, mother departments or agencies should not interfere with the current working environment, and that everyone is responsible for keeping a possible misunderstanding away from the team as a whole. *Activity 6*, then can be used as a follow-up checking the efficiency of *activity 1* in terms compliance to rules against feuding.

As for *activity 2*, this is where the guanxi system is built. In China, as seen in the three case companies (Lenovo, DongFeng and HP), social events are organized with games that enhance team-work spirit, like group singing (Karaoke); collective sports (foot-ball, basket-ball); birthday parties (for which team members are taking turns as recipients of the reward); outings for dinner, picnics, hiking etc. An important aspect of this ritual should be the celebration of the team achievements in *activity 7* by having a (big) party for a project closure. *Activity 7* functions as a reinforcement of the guanxi system previously built by *activity 2*. *Activity 3* should be covered by a PM's leadership if SL is considered; yet it can be implemented as an additional employee development package within the "socio-professional support activities," as a cultural enforcement program of a team.

6. Conclusion

The observational evidence shown in this paper marks that both high-context and low-context cultures can lead to conflict situation given the fact that, for example, lack of detailed information or sufficient instruction to execute tasks can be frustrating, but too much or unnecessary information given for task performance can be

[11] The conflict that need to be resolved here is its level one, "differences," rather than misunderstanding or those of higher levels

considered as lack of trust in someone's development level or competence. Such feelings of *frustration* or *lack of trust* can create conflicts that might take the form of annoyance with some detected *differences*, of *misunderstanding*, *disagreement*, *discord* or even *polarization* as intensity levels of conflict situations. Accordingly, a balanced judgment, paying particular attention to others' feelings and perceptions, is necessary in order to avoid the conflict. In China, teamwork value is not a new term in project management; in addition, the *guanxi* system is there to reinforce and keep the core value, but many leaders have yet to learn how to adapt their leadership styles to situations and consider people's emotions or feelings when sharing information or hoarding it. Thus, emotional intelligence with flexibility of style use in reference to leadership is crucial.

Many projects in China, as it is elsewhere in today's fast-paced IT development world, are carried out or executed by leaders (e.g. technicians, engineers, etc.) who are often concerned more with technical management challenges than people management issues, which involve emotional problems among other things. However, as PM, apart from identifying and solving technical or engineering problems, one has to identify team members' emotional issues (that might block performance and production) and development problems and then work to help the members overcoming those challenges before (new) tasks are assigned or executed.

Like some countries of low-context cultures, China has surely thrived with its cultural identity, heritage and management style. Yet, in the present studies of Chinese companies, "misunderstanding" of high percentage (91.7%) was detected despite the fact that the majority of the people surveyed were of the same nationality, Chinese. This indicates that, in project management, national culture or department culture does not guarantee a team's peaceful work environment; it is the team itself that should build and sustain its own culture. The project team is prone to conflict if communication is not strategically planned, structured and executed. Effective teams need to have several leadership components: interactive, multi-way communication; EI competence (with interpersonal and intrapersonal understanding); and *guanxi* threads among team members. Apart from the *guanxi* obligation, all these management requirements were brought into existence by the "opening-up policy" introduced by Deng Xiaoping, which led to the development of FDI and local investment of international workforce, pushing the country toward a business climate where acculturation with values of open and detail-oriented communication was (and is) key to success. In addition to that, flexibility in managerial leadership styles in reference to team members' development levels and other demanding circumstances is also indispensable for the overall project results.

It is possible that any culture (high or high-context) is in need of what the other culture is said to be lacking in this paper, and that a department or a company as a whole might have a high-context culture but a team within these bigger settings is of low-context culture through a cultural adoption of the team and its support of that newly adopted culture. Regardless of which is high or low-context, all of them need to use some positive EI and identify what is favorable to generating successful deliverables in a project and build a cultural support system based on the team members' requirements and needs. Thus, the use of 'situational leadership,' 'geocetrism,' and 'EI leadership' associated with the 'guanxi system' are worth-considering not only by the Chinese but also foreigners currently doing or planning to do business in China, that way the habit allowing easy confrontation (if any) usually caused by cultural shock do not change the current of the peaceful Chinese water. Inconsideration of these team management components explains why misunderstandings and other intensity levels related to conflict situations exist. Time is always of the essence in project management, but running with no clear direction does not help in winning the race. Accordingly, though some managers may find considerations of all these instructive steps time-consuming, the suggestions herein given are hoped to sustain peaceful leadership where PMs can speed up their team's performance by ensuring each team member has a clear understanding of the workflow and his/her position within that flow while contributing to tangible results.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Jules Harris DANARSON, from Madagascar, started his post-secondary education at the University of Antananarivo, where he received a Master of Arts Degree in English with a specialization in "American Studies" (2007). He pursued further study in Administrative Management for a Master's degree, which he completed in 2011 at the College of Public Administration (CPA) of Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST), Wuhan, P.R. China. Mr. Danarson has recently earned his Ph.D. in Administrative Management, specializing in Public Administration (June 2015) at the same institution, HUST.

He has worked as a freelance Administrative Consultant since the year 2012 but prior to that, he was a Part-time Lecturer (Feb. 2007-Sept. 2008) at the Department of Anglophone Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Antananarivo, Madagascar. Apart from that, he was an English Language Instructor (July 2006-Sept. 2008) at the American Cultural Center (ETP) of Antananarivo and an Associate Auditor (Mar. 2006-May 2008) for Africa Now: Enterprising Solutions. He was also a Journalist, reporter (Nov. 2004 - Mar. 2006) at Madagascar News and President of Friday Talk of Journalists (June 2005-Sept. 2008) at the American Press Center of the Embassy of the United States of America, Madagascar.

Most recently he has taken the role of a Project Management Intern at Lenovo Group Inc., MBG Supply Chain Manufacturing, Wuhan Plant, where he contributed from July 2014 up until the time he was writing this paper. Before joining Lenovo, he was a Business Language and Communication Trainer at HP (Hewlett-Packard) Wuhan Branch, from October 2010 to September 2011 and at Dongfeng Commercial Vehicle, ShiYan from June 2012 to October 2012.

His research interests range from Community Development, Project Management to Public Policy, although his primary focus is on Management of Organizational Behavior and Political Communication.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is used to identify the conflicts of frequent occurrence within the team leadership you belong to. Please choose the most frequent intensity levels experienced in your team related to conflict situations identified by Runde and Flanagan (2007:67) as seen in the questionnaire form (Q. Form):

Q. Form: Runde and Flanagan's Conflicts Intensity Levels

At which of these intensity levels do conflict(s) often get(s) detected or solved in your project team? Check (✓) the one that is most common among the five levels.

___ *Differences*

___ *Misunderstandings*

___ *Disagreements*

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Basically, conflicts have 5 intensity levels (differences, misunderstandings, disagreements, discord, and polarization). And you have referred to one of those levels defining what kind of conflict is frequently seen in your team. Here are some follow-up questions:

1. Why do you think the conflicts stand at/reach that level? What was perceived as the cause of conflicts?
2. What are the usual complaints from conflict situations you receive or hear from your subordinates or colleagues?
3. How do you describe the conflicts? What was/is happening exactly?
4. Who are the parties involved?
5. What do you think should be done to prevent that from happening in the future?