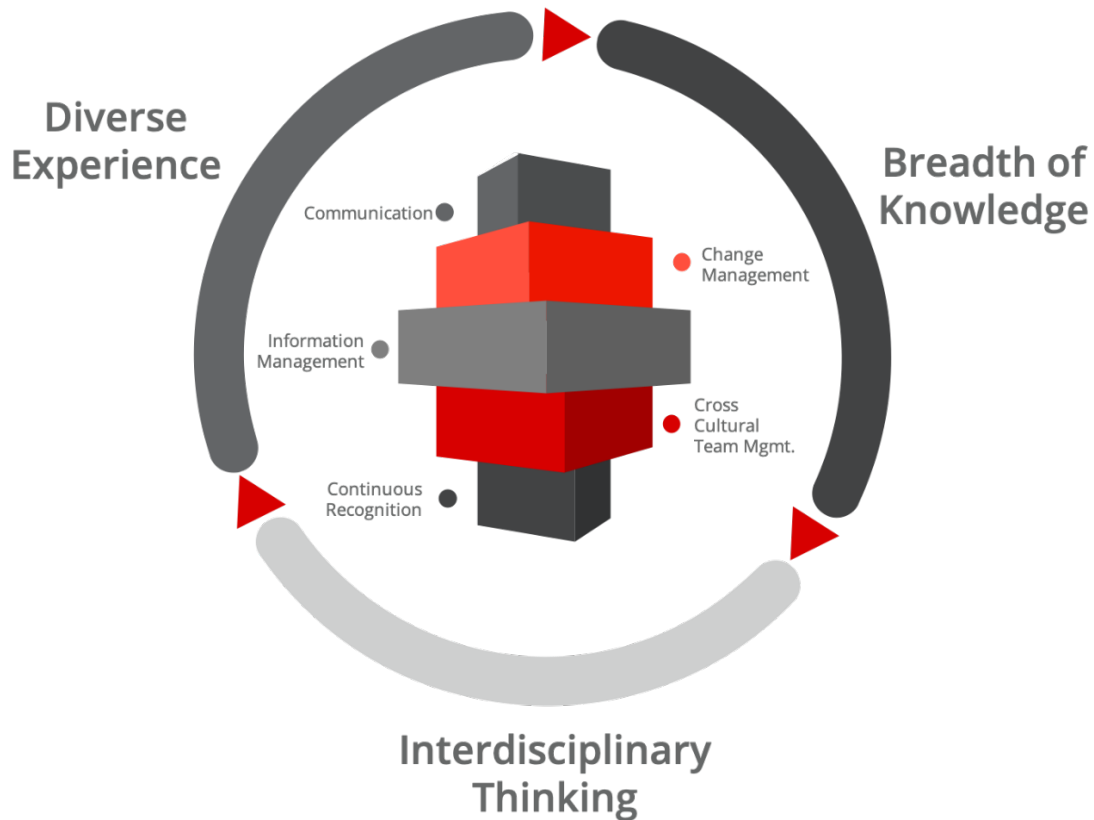




Framework for Global Contingent Workforce Program Implementation Team Selection and Management



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“Reality is composed of multiple-simultaneous, interdependent cause-effect-cause relationships. From this reality, normal verbal language extracts simple, linear cause-effort chains. This accounts for a great deal of why managers are so drawn to low leverage interventions.”

Charles Kiefer, Management Consultant

As Business Organizations working with their respective Managed Services Providers (MSP) expand their Contingent Workforce Management (CWM) Programs globally, many of them facing some challenges. Two key reasons for the hurdles are the implementation team skills and experience, plus the dynamics involved in global team management. Based on our experience with global MSP Implementations, we are sharing a model which can help with getting the right team members in place along with five tactics that help in managing and leading the implementation teams.

In CWM Programs, the rules of the game are often unclear or incomplete, there may or may not be repetitive patterns and they may not be obvious, and feedback is often delayed, inaccurate or both. Pushing harder and harder on familiar solutions, while fundamental problems persist or worsen, is a symptom of “Non-Systematic” thinking – what is often known as “what we need is a bigger hammer” syndrome.

The Three Strategic Competencies for the Implementation Team

When people in an organization focus only on their role and deliverables, they have little sense of responsibility for the results produced when all positions interact. What is required is the leadership to have benefits of breadth, diverse experience and interdisciplinary thinking. These are the three attributes that the team leading the Global Implementations leadership teams have to possess in order for the implementation to be successful.

Diverse Experience

“When seeking innovation in knowledge-based industries, it is best to find one ‘super’ individual. If no individual with the necessary combination of diverse knowledge is available, one should form a ‘fantastic’ team”

Taylor and Greve, Superman or the Fantastic Four?

Everyone has a different way of thinking and solving problems, and individual experiences then help formulate the approach adopted by teams. Global CWM program implementations generally involve working with people from different cultural and national backgrounds with varied expertise. Global implementations usually have a plethora of issues like different regulations across countries, talent availability, Vendor Management System (VMS) integration problems and so on. A diverse team has the privilege of being able to look at problems from different perspectives provide guidance and solutions that are impactful across national boundaries and cultures.

Breadth of Knowledge

“T-Shaped people, “Those with depth of knowledge in at least one discipline and a breadth of knowledge about innovation and entrepreneurship” that allows them to work effectively with professionals on other disciplines to bring their ideas to life”

Tina Seelig, Stanford professor, speaker, and bestselling author on innovation entrepreneurship and creativity

Breadth of Knowledge comes in handy when facing uncertain environments and difficult problems. For example, an implementation involves contract and rate negotiations with suppliers, dealing with IT teams when it comes to VMS Integrations and UAT, change management expertise in helping with the adoption of the programs, Project Management for managing the entire project and so on.

These issues propagate exponentially when one takes into consideration the different countries that an implementation has to be rolled out to. Subject matter experts can be involved when required, but they can be expensive, and coordination can be an issue when dealing with so many stakeholders. Implementation leaders need to have the breadth of knowledge in the aforementioned areas as they will need to make sure that the solution being suggested meets with the local and global requirements and use their best judgements in many cases to solve problems.

Interdisciplinary Thinking

“Our greatest strength is the exact opposite of narrow specialization. It is the ability to integrate broadly”

David Epstein, Range: How Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World

CWM Programs have an array of different teams, technologies and business units that need to work together in unison with good amount of coordination and precision for a client to get the right value out of the solution. This means that the implementation needs to be able to have a handle on the various aspects in play together. And be able to integrate domains, drawing insights from multiple disciplines and apply them across the various different functions.

The Five Tactical Approaches

“A manager’s first role is the personal one. It’s the relationship with people, the development of mutual confidence...the creation of a community”

Peter Drucker

Along with the three strategic competencies that the global implementation team should possess, for the day to day functions, there are five tactical focus areas that need to be focused for a smooth functioning of the team. Many of these seem to be obvious but many very competent teams end up overlooking some of these in their quest for getting the implementation done on time. The methodology employed to help implement the solutions is also important to make an impact. A CWM implementation is quite complicated, and it requires tremendous amount of trust in the team for the project to be implemented correctly and in time, within budget. The following five factors are mission critical towards achieving a successful CWM Program Implementation:

Communication

When Bill Gore left Dupont to form the company that invented “Gore-Tex”, he designed the firm based on his observation that companies do their most impactful and creative work in a crisis, because at that time the silos created by different business units or company politics, fly out the window. “Communication happens in a car-pool”, he once said. The chain of communication must be informal, completely different from the chain of command. Team members have to trust each other and be comfortable in sharing their doubts and help each other out in an informal manner for the team to be effective.

Change Management

As change is implemented, problems get solved and results improve, which also strengthens the commitment to change. CWM Program successes involve genuine efforts to redistribute control and dealing with threats of giving up unilateral control. And this usually is a part of building a different type of relationship with suppliers and in turn helping those suppliers to grow their capabilities. This also helps building trust with and gaining confidence of the procurement teams, who usually are the ones that manage the supplier base relationships for organizations.

Information Management

The implementation teams need to be aware of what information is important and relevant, and what is not. The “Information Problem” facing managers today is not too little information, but too much information. What they need to know is “What is important” and “What is not important”, what factors to pay attention to and what factors to pay less attention to. And this needs to be done in a way that promotes group or team understanding. Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning units in modern organizations. This is where the rubber meets the road, unless the teams can discern information, learn and implement, many different factors can impact an implementation adversely.

Cross Cultural Team Management

When people from different cultures interact with each other, what matters is the relative positions of cultures to each other. For example, the US is a “low context” culture, whereas India is considered to be a very “high context” culture with people having a lot of shared history together. As one of our valued team members, Sameer Srivastava, points out the following: “Having been a part of a number of global teams, I find that a large number of my Indian compatriots leave a lot unsaid thinking that their US colleagues would have understood things, when it clearly is not the case so very often”. His advice to them is “always be as clear and specific

as you can, share exact details about the issue and follow up with an email to confirm what you understood. And most importantly do not be quite so polite, as it gives the impression of vagueness and uncertainty”.

Continuous Recognition

Recognition is an important and vastly underestimated component of employee motivation. When employees are consistently recognized by peers, a culture of gratitude is born. With clear criteria established, which ties into company goals and strategies like customer service, efficiency, cost cutting – and as example sharing it in the company newsletter can give it a lot of meaning to those who are far away in a different continent altogether such as the remote delivery teams.

In Conclusion

In Sameer’s experience, the biggest challenge in implementing global CWM Programs has been the constitution of the implementation teams. Many Implementations end up exceeding the budget and/or missing timelines. In many cases the implementation is not completed fully and due to business constraints, the program has to Go Live! This leads to sub-optimal experience for the client and a lot of problems in managing the program for the MSP.

To avoid these challenges, the global implementation teams need to be experts at change management, being able to understand the nuances of communications in different cultures. The team itself needs to be inspired to maintain the level of energy and focus required to keep an eye on the details and be strategic at the same time. There is no silver bullet, but with the framework shared here, this captures a majority of the strategic and tactical management actions that need to be followed as the implementation team is brought together and managed.



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