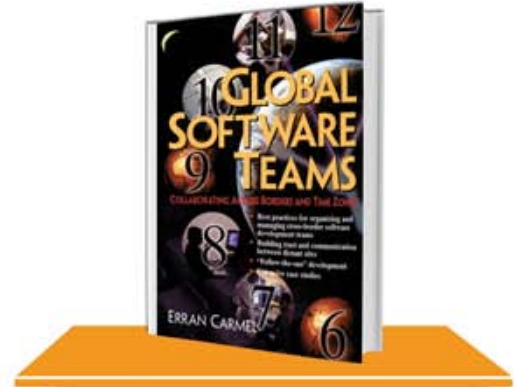


GLOBAL SOFTWARE TEAMS

A Beautiful Book by Erran Carmel



Building Streamlined Global Teams

A Book Review by Jennifer Kumar

Back in 1997, setting up and using a video conferencing platform for global software team meeting could cost anywhere from US\$4,000 to US\$45,000. Not a drop in the bucket for companies setting up in remote and foreign locations with the express aim of saving money. While in 2015 technologies like Skype or Citrix or other web-based videoconferencing webinar platforms have reduced the cost of video conferencing, has the world really become flatter? Have the challenges of setting up and maintaining successful global teams evolved with the times?

When a colleague in the cross-cultural expat consulting arena suggested me to read *Global Software Teams: Collaborating Across Borders and Time Zones*, I wondered if this almost twenty year old book was still going to be relevant in today's fast-paced, globalized world. With all the talk of the flattening of the world, would I notice glaring differences in this book that we have been able to solve in the last twenty years? Would I learn about management problems that no longer exist today?

In a nutshell, I feel that every single global software professional can learn something worthwhile from this book. While the book does demonstrate the amazing progress we have made technologically and how the progress of technology has helped global teams work more effectively (often within more affordable budgets) over the last two decades, it also highlights how far we have yet to come to overcome some of the basic communication and cultural gaps we face when interacting with those from diverse backgrounds.

While the author shares stories of global software teams from various countries, direction to manage people and time appears to be very Western in its approach. We initially see this through the ideal of follow-the-sun development, which proposes that when teams are dispersed throughout the world, developers and team members can work around the clock. So, when someone in New York is sleeping, someone in India is working. The authors often give the impression that work and time marches on in a linear, organized fashion even when offices in one part of the world have shut down for the night and team members there are sleeping, work continues to move forward in locations where the sun has risen and the working hours are in progress. It gives the impression that team workers are working only during their local business hours. As we now know in 2015, this is rarely the case, as those on global teams can work strange hours throughout the day and night to attend meetings across time zones, put out fires that happen at any time of the day or night, or even work from remote locations, even on their vacations.

The other overarching tone of the book is that somehow working across global borders can bring a new kind of world peace. When people work across global borders, learn to adjust to each other, and solve problems using different approaches and techniques, we learn to understand and appreciate each other on a new level. This interaction can tear down walls, break down stereotypes and lead to a better understanding. This is world peace bought about through the global software team. While there is some truth that global teams can bring cross-cultural understanding, the author shares other elements of cultural understanding that he believes can transcend national culture – such as corporate cultures and the professional working culture of software developers.

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This book is a must read for anyone wanting to know the history of global software teams and outsourcing. This book is also relevant for those managing dispersed, global teams in 2015 and beyond as some of the human and cultural elements apply to today's situation and some could argue, are timeless. As an American living and working in India, training Indians to work on dispersed teams, I hope to see such a book written by a non-Westerner or an Indian from their unique perspective to see how some of these ideals would be posed differently. ■

About the author:

Jennifer Kumar is the Managing Director at Authentic Journeys based in Kochi, India. Authentic Journeys provides cross-cultural business solutions and consulting to Indians working with Americans. More at <http://authenticjourneys.info>.



Jennifer Kumar

Copies of this book are available on Amazon.com.