

Managing Teams In A Non-Flat World

Presented To The Silicon Valley Chapter Of
The IEEE TEMS

Oct 5th, 2017

Prashant Shamarao

Prashant.Shamarao@Synaptics.com

ADVANCING
THE
HUMAN
INTERFACE



Agenda

- My Background
- The Team
- Team Goals
- The Challenges of Remote Teams and Tips to Overcome Them
- Closing Comments



My Background

- Moved to the US 23 years ago
- Worked at a remote design center in Atlanta, GA for 11 years after MSEE from North Carolina State University
- Moved back to Bangalore in 2007 and worked at TI & Cypress for 2 years before returning to the US to work at Headquarters
- Can speak 4 languages and am learning Mandarin as a 5th



The Team

- **~100 engineers** focused on all aspects of ASIC development
 - Digital design, Functional verification, Analog design, AMS verification, Physical design, FPGA implementation, Test FW development, Silicon characterization/validation, Product & Test
 - **Approximately 5 chips per year**
 - **Multiple US locations** (SJ, Austin, Atlanta, Home offices) and **multiple international locations** (Hyderabad, Taipei). No experience with European or South American teams.
 - Some **inherited teams** and some **grown from scratch**
- Collaboration with approximately **100 engineers in parallel teams reporting into other leaders in Japan and Taiwan**



Team Goals

Define and Communicate Roles and Goals for Each Regional Team

US teams:

Innovation Centers with limited future headcount expansion possibilities

Goal: Pioneer cutting edge product development each year

Asia teams:

Execution Centers - close to the *needs of the customers* and scale capacity with business needs

Goal: Proliferate key technology into multiple products required to support business roadmaps



Synaptics®

The Challenge: Cultural Differences

- Asian teams tend to:
 - Avoid direct confrontation
 - Resolve issues in private conversations
 - Rely on personal relationships and after work meetings
 - Avoid uncertainty
 - Emphasize religious or other holidays
 - Assign value to perks and other gestures that recognize people for contributions (except maybe in Japan)
- Asian teams can be aggressive in their long term goals (India) and impatient to get there
 - Individual recognition and titles mean a lot in India. Team recognition is important in Japan and Taiwan.
- Teams in India can disintegrate into cliques
 - India consists of many separate nations joined together somewhat artificially



Tips to Address Cultural Differences

- Be a **Cultural Chameleon**
 - If you can speak the language that is a big head start!
 - Relate to some of their past experiences
 - Do what locals do – don't hesitate to imitate!
- Understand **what motivates key individuals** in your team
 - Education history
 - Family background
 - Goals
 - Strengths and weaknesses
 - Interests outside work



The Challenge: Working with Remote Teams

- Rumors spread faster than wildfire
 - Hallway conversations amplify the negative
 - Can feel like somebody's out to get them
- Every decision will be scrutinized in the most negative light possible (this is possible in local teams as well)
- Don't do well with idle time
- Larger and more diverse teams tend to be more secure in their roles compared to smaller remote teams focused on a single function
 - Small remote teams need constant reassurance of their importance in the big picture



Tips for Working with Teams: *Vision & Strategy Alignment*

- Consistently provide company updates
 - What are the strategic goals for the next 2-3 years?
 - What are the tactical goals for the upcoming year? What products will enable the revenue/profit goals?
- How does each team fit in the vision and strategy?
 - How can their success help the success of the company?
 - How does their failure impact the company?
 - Does each employee have goals that align to the strategic priorities and goals?
- Does the leadership at remote teams understand the company vision?



Tips for Working with Remote Teams: *Communication & Trust*

- Ensure Collaborative Decision Making
 - Emphasize that leaders are trying to do the right thing - it is possible they miss certain points of view when making decisions
 - Try focus groups in remote teams for important decisions
 - When decisions are communicated – provide context and rationale
- Address rumors and encourage team members to dispel them as much as possible and seek answers instead
- Encourage remote team members to ask clarifying questions
- Periodic skip level 1:1s are very helpful
 - Encourage 1:1s with everyone when you visit
 - Follow up diligently on issues raised during the 1:1s

Visit regularly even if the team is small if you consider them critical to success!

Tips for Working With Remote Teams:

Local Leadership and Understanding

- Hire (*or designate*) a strong *local* leader who is aligned with the mission of the team and with company values and goals
- Understand and plan for efficiency differences between geographic locations
- Understand the insecurities of each team
 - Speak with individual team members in addition to the leaders
 - Understand history from prior organizations or companies they were part of
 - Avoid patterns of behavior or conversations that exacerbate their insecurities
- Ensure each remote team feel sense of purpose and challenge (keep them busy) and feel recognized for their contribution

Closing Comments

- Making a global team productive is hard work!
- If the goals are clear remote teams can contribute significantly
- Travel to meet face to face is the best way to **build trust**



ADVANCING THE HUMAN INTERFACE

Questions?



© 2017 Synaptics Incorporated

Synaptics, the Synaptics logo, TouchPad, ClickPad, SecurePad, ClearPad, ClearView, Synaptics TouchView, Natural ID, ClearForce, SentryPoint, Design Studio, Image Studio and SafeSense are trademarks or registered trademarks of Synaptics Incorporated or its affiliates in the United States and/or other countries. All other brands and names may be trademarks of their respective owners.

