# KEY SUCCESSES TO BE EFFECTIVE FOR COMMUNICATION CROSS CULTURAL IN ORGANIZATION

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**KEY SUCCESSES TO BE EFFECTIVE FOR COMMUNICATION CROSS CULTURAL IN ORGANIZATION**

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ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural communication skills arise from different languages and culture in the organization. Communication is a tool which builds relationship between management and employees in an international level. The global company which has many expatriates can be caused by miscommunication and conflict in the company. There could be some challenges that management and manager can prevent cultural misunderstanding.

The purpose of this study to understand how Expatriate managers and Thais manage the conflict of intercultural.

The research findings result of key success factors are communication and collaboration, Cross-cultural leadership style, Task assignment and Time management, Generation gaps and language deficiency.

KEY WORDS: expatriate management/ intercultural communication/ Cross cultural
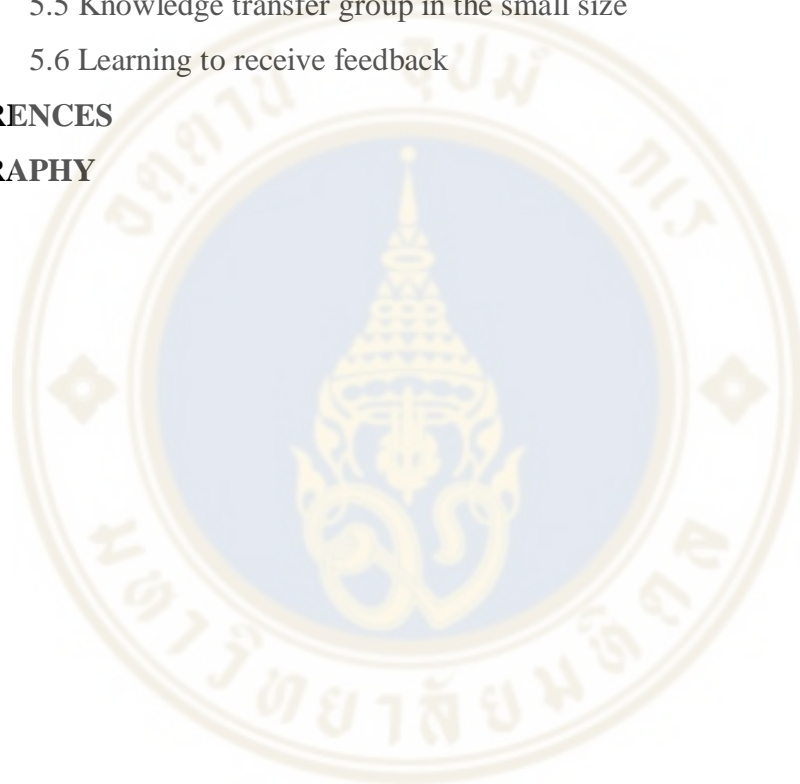communication

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# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Background of study

Nowadays, there are many international companies running the business in Thailand because Thailand is one of the countries that have attracted the investor from the around the world. The economic globalization and communication between nations has become more and more frequently. In digital age, technology, trading and investment are the main factor that forces driving globalization.

Culture is the characteristic and a particular group of people that encompass language, religion and behavior. Each of countries has the unique cultures which lead to factors of language and communication and the conceptual style of negotiation. Different culture in each countries show the form of thinking, language and behavior especially Asian and Western are completely different in terms of relation and formal agreement. So culture is an essential part that helps to understanding between group conflicts in the organization. Communication with different culture an individual needs to understand beliefs, norms and stereotype with their culture.

Communication is a tool that builds the relationship between management and employees to be a more international level. Due to it is a global company, so there is a different meaning and context that can cause miscommunication and conflicts in the company. Thus, the global management should understanding of differentiation culture for making the relationship with the employees. To be effective the communication is managing and misconception on multicultural in each division.

I'm working in IT Services Company which is a global company that has many expats who from other continent which are Europe, South East Asia and United States. It seems that the conflict between Thais and expats which causes from the cultural diversity and communication. I have been working here for 9 months. I used to work in Thai Company for 6 years that was different from here especially the

cultural. For Global Company management cultural conflicts usually have an impact on the operation. The management styles mainly focused on improves productivity and finish task which can lead employees to quit the job and has high turnover in the company. Thais' preferences are high context, collective and high power distance. But there are many characteristics of Thai culture that needs to be explored. It will be the good ideas that understand how Thais manage the conflict of intercultural. If the organization manages constructively, it will not have the conflict between management and employees. Communication cross cultural is an interesting issue that can be cause from decision group decision-making that leads to conflict in the team and impact the organization that unable to operate the company smoothly and inefficient may lead to business failure.

To be more understand this organization and perspective between Thais and expats management this study focuses on communication cross cultural in this company which is large company and many expats. Each organization has different culture and unique that consists of employees from various backgrounds and cultural. So, communication cross cultural will be focus on perspective working with Indian and European. There are many researches that studied and compare about Americans and Thais in various context. This study will compare Thai interacting with European and Indian or European's and Indian's perspective working with Thais in the different culture. Thus, the study involves cultural differences in the preference of conflict style of Expats management communication styles in context in Thailand.

The question of this research will be:

1) What is the most conflict between Thais and Expats in the organization?

2) How to deal with other employee in the organization from different culture?

The objective is to see a clear picture for both expatriate's management and Thais employee for dealing with intercultural communication in the organization. Moreover, this objective to develop and implement how to reduce the turnover rate in this organization.

# CHAPTER II
# LITERATURE REVIEW

From this chapter have 2 dimensions that link to this study. First, the definition of communication that refers to cross cultural interactions between expatriate and local. Second, Cross cultural which uses Hofstede's theory for mapping of countries across cultural dimension that help understanding each culture of each country.

## 2.1 Definition of communication in the organization

By definition, communication is the expression of information by speech, writing and gesture that links between people to coordinate with (Gudykunst, 2003). There are more than 1,000 languages that are used in the world today. There is a barrier language that comes from differences in spoken language which cause the conflict in the organization. Miscommunication and cross cultural still happen in many global companies. To prevent this happening, management and manager need to be able to communicate and understand Thai's culture. It is an essential in management and manager's interpersonal dealing with other persons from different culture. Even though many people use the English language in the business world, but for working in global company should speak in the language of the employees. Moreover, communication can be creating culture between people from different cultures.

### 2.1.1 Expatriate

Expatriate is the person who works outside from their home country in the same company but located in a foreign country. From Harvard Business Review also mention that Global Company assigns overseas posts to people who not only the necessary technical skills but also have indicated they would like to live in comfortably in the different cultures. (Black & Gregersen, 1999). "Legally working

individuals who reside temporarily in county of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career related goal, being relocated aboard either by an organization, by self-initiation, or directly employed within the host country, some of whom are paid on enhanced term and conditions to recognize their being foreigners in that country" (McNulty & Brewster, 2017)

As of today, managers in multicultural in the global business encounter in differences culture which is not easy to complete and success in their projects because of communication between the local employees in different culture. The other research told that "the range of competencies required for successful living in aboard which produced a three-factor model of intercultural effectiveness; (a) the ability to manage psychological stress (b) the ability to communicate effectively and (c) the ability to establish interpersonal relationships". (C.-Y. Chiu, W. J. Lonner, D. Matsumoto, & C. Ward, 2013; C. Y. Chiu, W. Lonner, D. Matsumoto, & C. Ward, 2013)

## 2.2 Cross cultural dimension

As we known that culture is too broad to capture and understand all of various cultures. There are different culture dimensions setting in the system in the company that can affect thinking, feeling and behavior in the organization. Communication international business and organization is the key problem of working in the global company between expatriate and local. Cross cultural interactions are the thing that challenge between employees and managers from disparate cultures. "It is worthwhile investigating that shared multicultural norms and value can be developed and acted upon among people working in the organization in which business structures and cultural environments characterized as multinational, global or transactional" Rajpal, S., Onyusheva, I., 2018). Studying cross cultural can help understanding more expatriate managers and local employees. Other journal of business research (Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, 2007) mention that Hofstede's fives dimensions of national culture which is power distance, Uncertainly avoidance, Individualism versus collectivism, Masculinity versus femininity and Long term versus short term orientation. Moreover, Hofstede's analyzed and gave the score for each dimension of

each country. For this theory is useful to compare the cultural difference and understand more in the scope of countries that studying.
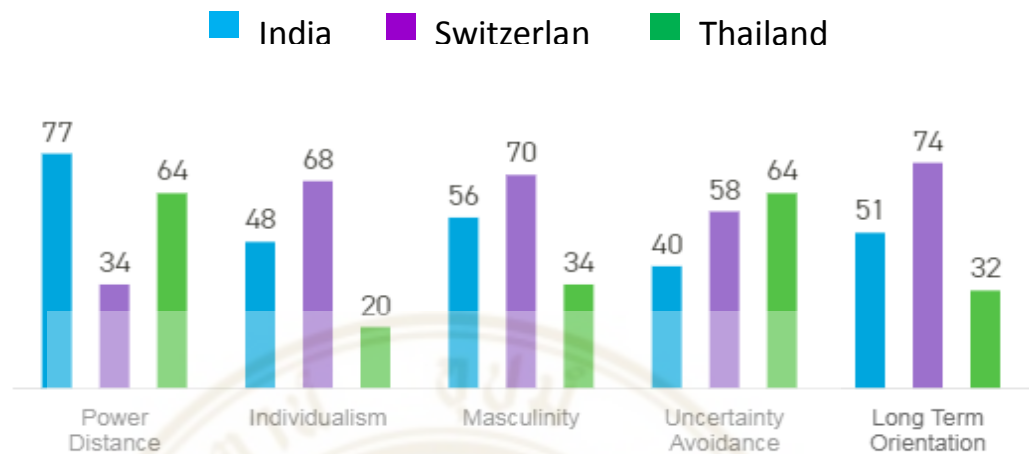


**Figure 2.1 Hofstede's cultural dimension comparing India, Switzerland and Thailand**

According to figure 2.2.1, the information from Hofstede's cultural dimension compared between India, Switzerland and Thailand. To understand more context of each dimension as follow:

**2.2.1 Power distance** is the different of acceptance unequal distribution of power in the organization which influence hierarchy and dependences relationship. It shows that Switzerland has low power distance, while Asian (India and Thailand) has high power distance. In the organization with high power distance, people accept strong hierarchy base on status easily because they don't want to have problem with the high power or status.

**2.2.2 Uncertainty avoidance** relates to people who feel stress and threatened by unknown situations (Hofstede, 1994). Moreover, as the result from the figure shows that Switzerland and Thailand have high uncertainly avoidance rather than India has medium low uncertainty avoidance.

**2.2.3 Individualism versus collectivism;** Individualism is a self-interest, look for themselves only whereas; collectivism is a harmony and love staying in a group. As Switzerland and India is the individualism society. Some mentioned that

"Collectivist oriented culture have tight social network and people show strong loyalty and strong support for their group" like Thailand is the collectivism society that they want to support from their group of work.

**2.2.4 Masculinity versus femininity;** Masculinity is societies have a preference for competitiveness and achievement. Femininity is a society that caring for others and quality of life. The low masculinity in Thailand compared to Indian and Switzerland can imply that Switzerland and India want to get the job done.

**2.2.5 Long term and short-term orientation**: Long term is focused on the future that concern about more longtime whereas, short term is focused on the present that concern about effective and get things done.

In conclusion, the different between India, Switzerland and Thailand compared to India and Switzerland has shown that they are similar in some respects and different in others. So, Hofstede's cultural dimension can be grouped by relation between people that have been identified by individualism and collectivism.

Moreover, this study can relate to the effectiveness of cross-cultural leadership from the perspective of expatriate Indian and Swiss managers. From the research into cross cultural leadership suggest that cross cultural interaction, language barriers and attitudes are primary cultural challenge for leaders who working in cross cultural contexts. (Ko, 2015)

To add more background about the company that I have worked is the global company that is IT Solution and Services which is a global leader in digital services. This company provides various business and technology consulting and solutions. There is global team who come from different culture and has unique experiences of work. Especially, the international project manager who has the special skills, tools and techniques to manage and achieve the project objectives is the main obstacle in cultural difference in the team. I would like to define the "International project management team. It is stated that projects can be global, involving the entire world. International project are multicultural project relating to diverse cultural or functional cultures (Köster, 2009). So these differences have seen in the different communication style. It will challenge for the organization in cultural communication barrier.

# CHAPTER III
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this case study the situation of IT Services Company, global company will be discussed about communication cross cultural in this organization. The information is gathered by interview which related the case study and research from Emerald insight. The interview session was with manager, Head of HR, Project manager and Head of Sale that are the representative Thais and expatriates who work in Global company in Thailand. To understand the perspective of working in this organization, we will analyze the case applying with Hofstede's theory to see the problems of this organization.

## Interview:

The data was collected from one Thais and three expatriates who have managerial level and had been working in Thailand more than ten years. I interviewed 4 persons who are involved in this organization with different nationalities. For interviewing the participants were one female Thai manager and three males' expatriates. The range in age is from 31 to 45 years. Each interview was asked about the personal information; current position, the length of work experience and the length of living in Thailand for expatriates. Then I interviewed by asking the nature of job responsibilities and work among different division.

| No. | Position | Nationality | Age |
|-----|----------|-------------|-----|
| 1. | Manager of Budget and Controlling Department | Thai | 31 |
| 2. | Head of Human Resources | Nepalese | 42 |
| 3. | Head of Sale Departments | Swiss | 39 |
| 4. | Head of Project manager | Indian | 45 |

**Figure 3.1 Data of interviewers**

## 3.1 Manager of Budget and Controlling Department

**Interview date:** October 14, 2019 at 4.30 pm.

**Location:** Meeting room in the office

**Duration of interview:** 30 minutes

**Personal information:** She has been worked for 7 years. Her duty is responsible to offer calculation for assigned projects. She is coordinating with sale team and delivery team in the process from many countries. She aimed to control the project smoothly with project management. So, I interview her with open questions as follow:

- When you had to communicate with cross-cultural, what method of communication that would you use?
- What is the most memorable experience that you have had communicating with a person from a different culture?
- How can you handle member in the team have problems with the project manager?

## 3.2 *Head of Human Resources*

**Interview date:** October 15, 2019 at 1.00 pm.

**Location:** HR's office

**Duration of interview:** 45 minutes

**Personal information:** She is from Nepal. she has been worked over 7 years. Her duty is selection the employees which will be match with company culture and qualification. Moreover, she is responsible for gathering the information and background of employees to the APAC

- What is your method of communication with Thais?
- As your work experiences, what has been the greatest obstacle in developing a multi-culture-staff?
- How do you deal with conflict at work?

- When you interact with person from different culture, how do you ensure that communicate is effective?
- How do your selection the candidate to match with the organization?

## 3.3 Head of Sale Departments

**Interview date:** October 14, 2019 at 5.00 pm.

**Location:** his room at the office

**Duration of interview:** 30 minutes

**Personal information:** He is from Switzerland. He has been worked more than 10 years. His duty plan to ensure achievement of division and personal target, meet with the customer and motivate and ensure that work cross functionally with executives from other division.

- What is your method of communication with Thais?
- As your work experiences, what has been the greatest obstacle in developing a multi-culture-staff?
- How do you deal with conflict at work?
- When you interact with person from different culture, how do you ensure that communicate is effective?

## 3.4 Head of Project manager

**Interview date:** October 15, 2019 at 2.30 pm.

**Location:** his room at the office

**Duration of interview:** 1 hour

**Personal information:** He is from India. He has been worked more than 10 years. Therefore, his duty is consultancy. So, he dealt with many people from many countries; Singapore, Philippines etc. Now, he has the higher position as head of Project manager and coordinates with many divisions.

- What is your method of communication with Thais?

- As your work experiences, what has been the greatest obstacle in developing a multi-culture-staff?
- How do you deal with conflict at work?
- When you interact with person from different culture, how do you ensure that communicate is effective?

From this study, we will understand clearly about the expatriates' perspective toward how they manage communication with Thais employees. We will ask to give the guideline or clarify the point of communication skills which Thais should be develop or improve more efficiency and effectively in the organization. And also, expatriates describe their personal communication strategies to be acceptance for Thais employees.

# CHAPTER IV
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter is presented the results of the case study which based on the collective data by the interview. The research questions identify the problem or framework of communication in the organization which is the basic factors that organization needs to develop and achieve success of communication. The research findings result of the key success factors are communication and collaboration, Cross-cultural leadership style, Task assignment and Time management, Generation gaps: Employees' age, Language deficiency.

## 4.1 Communication and Collaboration

Communication is the main key factor for this company. This organization communicated by skype and circuit for meeting and communication. Due to there are many functions and divisions in the IT Services global company such as project manager, consultant, commercial, finance and HR. Even though the company uses the portal, circuit and SAP as the main tool and function in their business, communication between divisions is very important. The roles of each division of employees must collaborate and communicate together. The significant of information of this organization is requirement of work, quotation, meeting and due date that need to communicate and collaborate before the projects done.

Misunderstanding of the communication can be affected the inefficiency of work. Due to it can make the work delayed because of complicated in the job assignment. Working in a team, everybody has the roles and tasks with different skills and different background that can be the barrier to understand the scope of work and processes that will challenge in cross-cultural project team. From the Economist Intelligent Unit mentioned the impact of poor communication that can lead to

miscommunication and misunderstanding can cause the delay or failure to complete the project.



**Figure 4.1 Most significant consequences of poor work communication in the year 2018**

From the figure The Economist Intelligent Unit said cited that the seniority and employees of all levels must consider the number of factor in order to improve workplace communication. (The Economist Intelligent Unit, 2018)

The issue is originated from the culture among the speaker and receiver which is the use of verbal and nonverbal communication to the team member. For example, nonverbal; body language as nodding head, for Thais means "yes" but for Indian means "no". Sometimes it happened some conflict because of the different meaning of body language.

For solving the problem of cross functional team should be formed the staff from different divisions of each projects by responsible in specific tasks and share the background of project together. Each of projects required the data for example, the estimated cost and actual cost that has to share to the team depends on the person to share the information. As, the results from the interview reported that the critical problem is Thai employees when working as a team. Moreover, Thais local employees are dissatisfaction when they play politics and not get along well with each other.

### 4.1.1 Miscommunication

For this organization English is a common international language. So, communicating English with Thais and expatriate sometimes may lead to misunderstanding. As the results from expatriate interview that Thais have low English skills comparing with other countries in Asia such as Philippines. They said that maybe know the limited of English vocabulary or communication failure due to several of English accent, idioms and slang that cause to be language barrier. Moreover, Thais are indirect communication; they will not tell the truth what they think, and they will tell you "yes" as per your request to avoid the conflict. For example, when we have committee meeting for reviewing the projects every month, the most obstacles for Thais manager is how to explain to recognize the revenue and cost to Indian manager to understand the way she recognizes. The project manager understood the way of method project manager's calculation. So, it took for long time and fight in the meeting every time. Due to the way of commercial and project manager use the different system which can lead to miscommunication.

There is another case for bidding the price document with Thai Government This case is about the detail in bidding document for submit to Thai Government Customer that mentioned the word "If any". For this word that lead the company lost the bidding. In the way of the communication our company understanding that this word is not important and not cares the detail of this part. When the day of auction came, the customer asked our company to clarify the detail of bidding document but we didn't have. The customer also blamed the company that do not blank in the document and should fill the form completely.

## 4.2 Cross cultural leadership style

Each of managers and managements' styles has different background and culture. So, the methods to manipulate employees of each division are different. For Indian leadership ordered or gave the assignment. Some Thais staffs are not willing to do the tasks as fast as he gave. Because some Thais believe the idioms that if you meet an Indian and a snake, you have to kill the Indian first. Thais not trust them easily. It's quite hard to communicate with them some projects. There are different types of project which are time and material project and percentage of completion project.

When he wanted to explain or try to speak clearly conversation, Thais are avoid listening or ignoring. When I asked Thais manager, she said that the obstacle dealing with Indian is the explanation of the project. They understood in the other side because of different system. For example, she tried to explain about the knowledge transfer finance how to recognize the revenue and cost from SAP system. But it didn't work. She took a lot of time to explain him. Even when she has the meeting with Indian, Indian presents quite long time to get to the point.

While Swiss management has more power to command or give the task, Thais staff will respond fast and finish the tasks on time. His communication style goes to the direct point. He has the direction and target. Moreover, he concentrates the quality and service of the product to make the customer pleasant So, Thais staffs can see the goal and direction of the project for achieving the projects. Due to Thais want the leader who have the clear communication and balanced the decision. The leader is an important factor for employees' decisions that leave or stay in the company.

## 4.3 Task assignment and Time management

As the result that the problem of Thais employees is culture value of "Kreng Jai". Thais employees are scare to refuse when their bosses give the task or ask them to go something whether they are not sure. Moreover, Thais are not confident to express or speak up to their bosses. For example, when their managers and management assign the project, some Thais staffs keep quiet to do their work although they don't know how to do or stuck with something. When the deadline came, the manager or management has just known that they don't finish or made some mistake

of the assignment. After, they've known that they often follow up almost every step of tasks, explain the procedure that Thais staffs get stuck and make the direction as clear as possible.

As mentioned earlier about task assignment, foreigners' perspective with Thais staffs of time management told that Thais are not punctual when the deadline of assignment. For example, the assignment was given. Thais are rarely to ask when they have the problem. When foreigners reminded before the deadline coming, Thais staffs could not finish their assignment within time expected. From Thai preferences, they are soft and fear to speak directly to their bosses.

## 4.4 Generation gaps: Employees' age

In this organization, all of the recruiters are well-educated and experiences. The staffs' ranges in age are from 26-45 years old. Each generation have different style and values. They have the different education background, experiences skills and mindset. To hire people to match with this organization, they often hire with the same range in age based on the age in the team for avoiding conflict.

From the head of HR interviewed that they less recruit for new graduates because of a lack of experience. The managers and management avoid hiring the newcomer because they had bad experiences. For example, when the newcomer came, they transferred the knowledge to them. Then they left the company within 1 year. Some of the management said that the different generation seems to be most of the problem to communicate and share the ideas. When comparing with senior staff has high skills and more experiences, they can handle the situation and fix the issue in the team smoothly. The mixed of staffs' generation can impact the communication especially the new generation and prior generation. These generation gaps will be another challenge for this organization. To be effective the manager and management should know their background, personality and style to help them to adapt themselves to work together effectively

## 4.5 Language deficiency

From the foreigners' perspective that Thais staffs have the ideas but it's difficult to express themselves in English. Thai manager mentioned that Thai's staff writing is not clear the information and understandable. So, she has to tell in team sending the email to her first to rewrite the correct information before sending to the expatriate coworkers.

### Summary of findings

Working in this organization can be explained that Thais and expatriates have a different mindset about a scoop of work which related to communication expectation. Moreover, lack of language communication can be caused of conflict from the issues as following;

- Verbal and non-verbal communication is still the obstacle for communication in the team. Because of the meaning of body language.
- Culture different can cause the different meaning of the word.
- Thais prefer an indirect way or private of the communication, whereas expatriate managers prefer direct communication and open topic.
- The way to avoid the conflict between expatriate project managers and Thais staffs is Thais tend to follow project manager's decision without argument and ask the question if they have any doubt.

To be aware the cross-cultural communication at work between expatriate project manager and Thais staffs. From these findings can be helpful and guideline to see a clear picture of these issues.

# CHAPTER V
# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study is limited to Global Company in Thailand only. Communication is needed to flow in a successful organization. To have a better understanding and key success factor of the communication cross-cultural different in this organization, this is the conclusion that I've gotten from my research.

## 5.1 Characteristics (Personal background)

Characteristics are the most essential in the organization. There is the method help developing awareness of intercultural differences. For expatriate should be willing to understand Thailand where the host is country and show the respects of the local staffs. Due to expatriates' perspective the stereotype all Thais to underestimate of work ability. They should get to know each personal characteristic of Thais staffs. Moreover, they should learn to read the meaning of non-verbal such as smiling and being silent or say "yes".

For example, when expatriate assign the tasks, Thais just said "yes" or smiling. It doesn't mean that they can do it. The expatriate should be sure and check that they are willing to do or availability to do that. This is the reason that why the expatriate should know the characteristic of Thais to put the right person in the right job for avoiding the conflict in the team.

## 5.2 Provide training

Provide training will be the effective way to personal and work relationship in this organization. They should provide communication workshop that set by outside professional consultant to let the staffs' discussion about colleagues and work problems. Even this organization should provide team building activities to learn

more each other to achieve the goals. There is other training which is essential with Thais staffs, is English skills that will help them to improve and try to get better with international coworkers and work smoothly when working as a team.

## 5.3 Method of communication

We use the communication every day. It is necessary when managing the team, sharing the ideas and building the relationships. There are many communication styles that can be effective in this organization. Writing things down will be the effective way to make Thais understand better by email and chat (Skype). It can be helpful when discussing in the meeting or projects. When the communication across culture does not assume that they will understand, the effective way is be an active listener. Moreover, having the online meeting by skype will be another effective way. Because skype has the sharing screens function that Thais staff can work in the desk and can sharing the screen to the project managers to show their tasks and update the information in the same time.

## 5.4 Don't stereotype

The staffs do not assume that person is that kind of person especially expatriate project managers. It can create barriers and a lack of trust with the person you will deal with. For example, when you have to meet expatriate project manager, Thais staff should be more open their minded, feelings and be responsible for your own actions.

## 5.5 Knowledge transfer group in the small size

When the staffs get the assignment and task, the project manager should provide the information and background of the project by giving the instructions and explanation. The knowledge transfer includes SAP user training and ongoing support

to be more sufficiency which is the essential part for doing project. The staffs will prepare for the new tasks and role in the new environment.

## 5.6 Learning to receive feedback

Giving and receiving feedback is also the main problem between staffs and managers. Due to Thais fear to get the comment directly. Learning to receive feedback is the most important factor for Thais. Thais staff should be open their mind to get the feedback and comment directly. Thais staff has to know what they are doing well or not well. When done in the right way with the right direction, feedback can lead to outstanding the performance.

### Conclusion

Understanding cross-cultural communication is important this organization that has diversity in the company. Type of communication involves and understanding of how people from different culture speak. This organization deals with the different communication strategies, different language and accent. For the recommendation can implied that management should put the effort of training, workshop and team building to develop the organization that help staffs emphasize the participation and stability in the organization. Thais staff should be open mind, take responsible of own action and don't assume the people especially project manager. So this will help the organization and decrease the turnover in the organization.

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