

  
**Stanwick**

Management Consultants

  
LIVINGstone

# Workshop Take Aways Intercultural Project Management

November 9, 2010

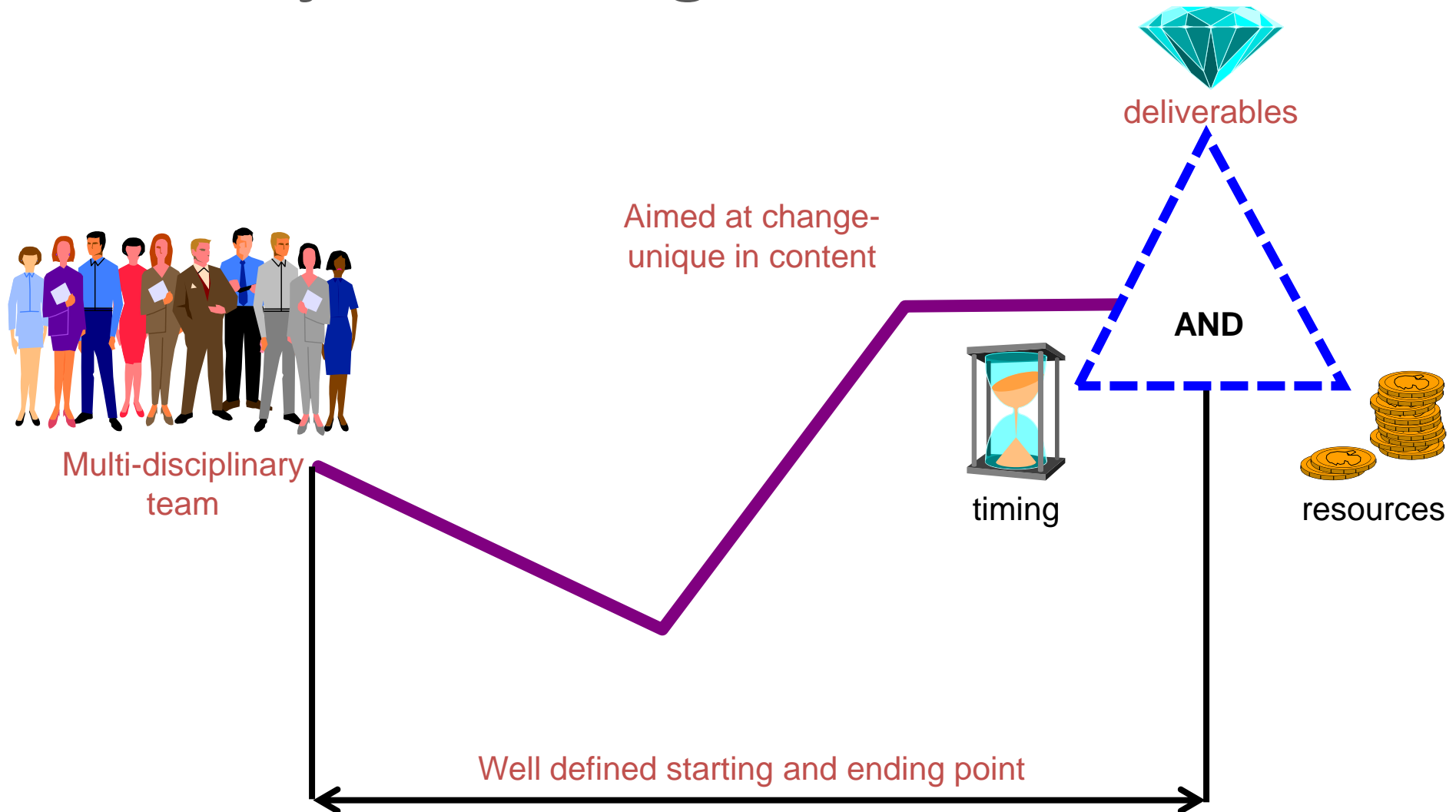
LeuvenInc

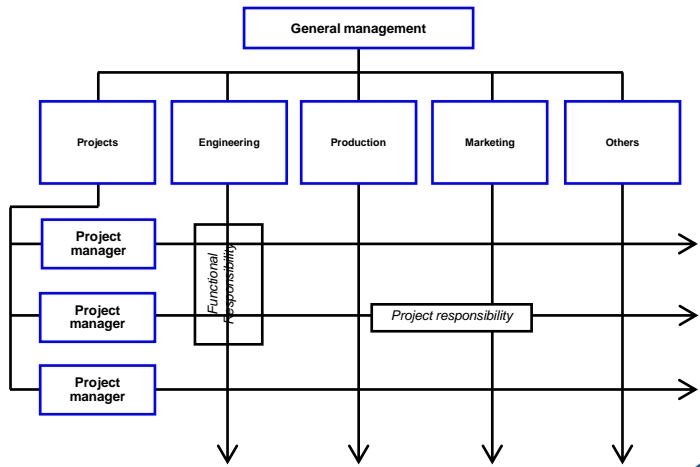
[www.stanwick.be](http://www.stanwick.be) (Jean-Paul Nauwelaers)  
[www.lscope.com](http://www.lscope.com) (lutgart.dusar@lscope.com)

© Original Artist  
Reproduction rights obtainable from  
[www.CartoonStock.com](http://www.CartoonStock.com)



# Project Management, what it **is**





**1. WAY OF THINKING**  
 (linear, sequential vs. iterative)  
 (high risk avoidance, control vs. flexibility)



DEFINE

EXECUTE

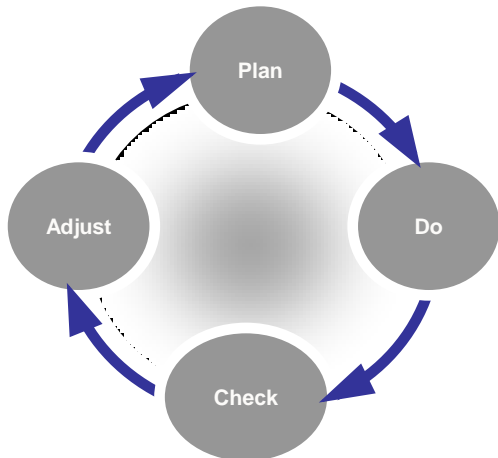
CLOSE

**Project Management,**  
 what they all talk about  
 but hardly know  
*it's cultural*

**2. COMMUNICATION PATTERNS**  
 (explicit vs. implicit)  
 (direct vs. indirect)  
 (low vs. high context)



**4. HOW FEEDBACK & LEARNING FROM MISTAKES IS ACCEPTED**  
 ('I' versus 'We')  
 (guilt vs. shame)



**3. HOW POWER IS HANDLED IN A MATRIX STRUCTURE**  
 (hierarchy issue)

Key features of Western management systems are central to success

Most things that go wrong can be attributed to a breakdown in communication

Issues of  
intercultural  
project  
management

What works in one situation may have negative effects in other contexts ...

The forces of economic exchange are hard to resist, cultural connections inescapably complex

# Inter-culture Issues

- PLANNING

- Complexity of working with multicultural, virtual teams
- Resistance to the roll-out of systems, the 'not invented here'-syndrom
- Roles: who is my boss? Project manager (far away, short term) or functional boss (locally, long term)
- Talent sourcing and retention: +20% leaves before completion of project

- COMMUNICATION

- Giving and receiving feedback. Non verbal language is the most difficult language (silence, eye contact or not, ..)
- More virtual, less face-to-face communication (language use, perceived level of formality)
- Not what you say but how you are heard, not what you show but how you are seen.

# When in trouble:

- 'Never assume'. The real message is in the CONTEXT
- 'Grand cultural theories' (country specific do's & don'ts) are useful but also quite false
- Tolerance for ambiguity: sliding on the continuum between 'we' and 'I', 'large and small power distance, high and low uncertainty avoidance
- Consensus does not mean a superfluous yes. Consensus means the absolute clarity and whole-hearted participation.

# End Note

- Improving Communication & Planning in terms of bridging the corporate/general cultural divide is a process & not a one-stop thing.
- Results/returns will be gradual & growing. It takes time in terms of warming up to it, implementing it and practising it.
- Regular coaching, workshops, exercise will channelise in bridging the corporate/general cultural divide.

# Go!

- You get an assignment in a new country. The bad news: there is no map. The good news: you are the map maker.
- Trust your intuition, dare to take a chance, you'll reach your goals quicker!

- **Asterix en de Belgen. Astérix chez les Belges.**  
uit de [Asterix](#)-serie van [René Goscinny](#) en [Albert Uderzo](#) uit [1979](#)
- **Allemaal andersdenkenden. Omgaan met cultuurverschillen**
  - Geert Hofstede, Gert-Jan Hofstede (ISBN 90 254 2681 6)
- **International Dimensions Of Organizational Behavior**  
- Nancy J. Adler (5th edition 2008, [www.thomsonedu.com](http://www.thomsonedu.com) (ISBN-13:978-0-324-36075-2)
- **The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently - And Why**
  - Richard E. Nesbitt (ISBN 978-1857883282)
- **De kunst van het oorlogsvoeren (The Art of War).** Oudst bekende meesterwerk over strategieën en tactieken
  - Sun Tzu (ISBN 9021532123) (ISBN 978-90-417-20245) (Libero bv: 978-90-8998-002-1)
- **Managing Across Cultures**
  - Susan C. Schneider & Jean-Louis Barsoux, Prentice Hall (Pearson) (ISBN 978-0-273-64663-1)
- **Business Across Cultures**  
- Fons Trompenaars & Peter Woolliams, Capstone (Wiley) (ISBN 1-84112-474-5)
- **<http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/countryinsights-apercuspays-eng.asp>**  
Centre for Intercultural Learning, Canada: [most interesting cultural country ID's](#)