



# The **Four Steps To Solving the Remote and Cross-Cultural Management Challenges** of Offshoring





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# This is article 5 of Beepo's 5 part **Education Series**

By now you have onboarded your offshore team and integrated them with your local staff. Everyone knows each other and all are completely comfortable with the new arrangement - now it's ACTION time. It's time to reap all of the benefits you deserve.

To do this, offshoring should be viewed as a long-term strategy. It does take a bit of effort to get going, but once it is underway, you will see incredible, transformational results for your business. On top of the initial gains, the results will continue to grow over time as offshoring becomes fully integrated in your business model.

In saying that, one area where we at Beepo see businesses fail is in the ongoing management of their offshore team. Overtime, it is not unusual to become complacent and fall into the trap of 'set and forget'. Set and forget happens when you get everything up and running and performing to the desired standard, and then you stop monitoring it, and move onto another project within your business. A few months down the track, you circle back to review performance of your offshore arrangement and notice performance dwindling, staff engagement low and retention dropping off. After all the work you put into setting things up, this is the last place you expected to be.

## **This article will:**

1. Provide you with a framework you can use with your offshore team to avoid complacency
2. Give you 3 rules for communicating effectively with your offshore team
3. Show you how you can easily learn more about the key cultural differences you need to be aware of to effectively work with a Philippines-based offshore team.



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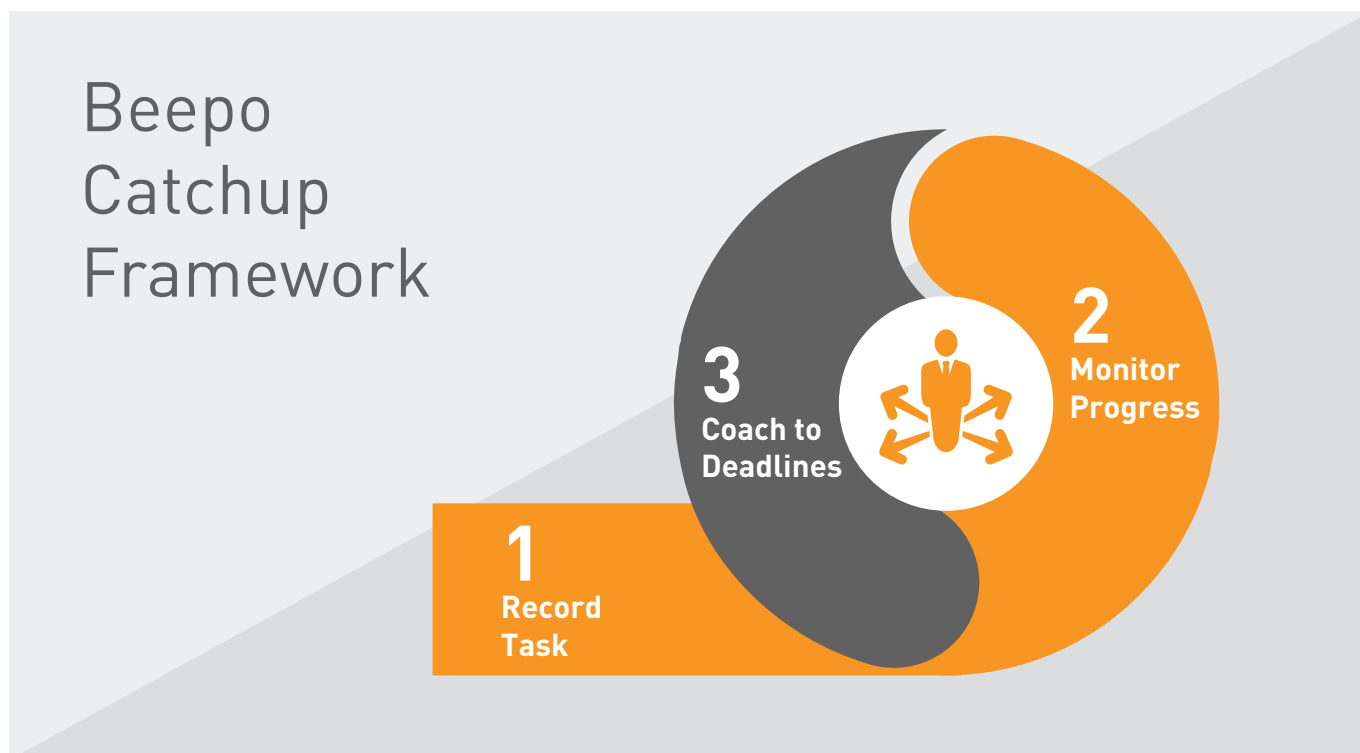
# Step One: Avoid complacency and set your offshore team up for long-term success

Here are a few essential steps to ensure that offshoring is going to provide your business with long term benefits.

## The Regular Catch-up

Effective performance management is not a once-a-year meeting with individuals in your business, where you give feedback on the entire year's work in one go; the notion of a performance appraisal like this is archaic and ineffective. There is a wide scope of research out there which supports the view that performance management should always be ongoing, occurring at every second of every work day. This is especially important for your offshore team.

Due to the remote nature of your offshore team, regular catch ups take a small amount of planning, simply because they require an arranged time to meet. The frequency of these catch-ups is entirely up to you, but experience has shown the most effective solution involves regular (daily) meetings within the early stages of the relationship, which can be gradually stretched out to weekly overtime. Catch-up meetings are simple to run; at Beepo we tend to use the following framework:



The objective of the regular catch up is to keep open communication between yourself and your offshore team. It will avoid complacency and keep all staff working towards the objectives of the business.





Team Leaders and Managers

## Record Tasks

This is self-explanatory. If you need your remote staff member to complete a specific job, then you need to brief them on the task. The more information you can provide them at this stage, the better- especially if it is the first time they have completed this task. You might frame the conversation with a statement like:

'I need you to do X for me, and as part of that, you will need to follow A, B and C steps.'

Once you have explained the task and the deadline required, ask them to explain it back to you, what they need to do, and then ask them if they have any questions.

## Monitor Progress

During your regular catch up meetings, it is important to go through all of the tasks or projects your staff member is working on, and make sure they have everything they need to complete them by the deadline. It is critical to ensure you are not asking closed questions. For example, do not ask things like:

'Are you going to complete job X by the deadline?'

Of course the answer to this question is going to be 'yes.' Instead, ask open questions to engage in an informative conversation, such as:

'Tell me what you have done so far on project X' or 'explain what you still have to do to complete project X.'



**DO NOT ASK  
CLOSED QUESTIONS**

By asking an open question at this point, you are forcing the staff member to cognitively think about what they have achieved to date and what is left to do. You will not only gain important insight into the project itself, but you will also begin to develop a good understanding as to how they are performing and whether more training is required. Make sure you give constructive feedback on the quality of work, what could be done better, what has been done well, and so on. Monitoring progress tends to naturally run into the next stage, hence the feedback loops in the diagram above.





Beepo's 3rd Anniversary

### Coaching to Deadline

Once you have an understanding of the progress to date, it is important to make an assessment as to whether or not the deadline will be met. This is a great opportunity to coach your staff member to work toward a successful outcome.

There are two key questions to be asked at this point:

1. Is there anything stopping you from completing project X by the deadline?

If the answer is 'yes,' then drill down further. Identify the blockage, and then troubleshoot it with the staff member to work out an effective solution.

If the answer is 'no,' you should still investigate if you suspect the deadline will be missed. However, if it is a genuine 'no' then that is fantastic, because the staff member has taken ownership of not only the task, but the deadline too.

2. What do you need from me to help you achieve the deadline?

In some cultures, asking for help can be seen to be an admission of failure. This question goes some way to circumventing that problem, by indirectly offering to assist.

To some people, this process may look like micro-management, but overtime as trust builds and you begin to understand the mindblowing capability of your offshore team, you may not need as much detail. This framework is as much for your comfort as it is for ensuring work is completed on time.

**RECOMMENDATION:** You need somewhere to record each staff member's jobs, progress and deadlines. There are plenty of project management systems out there, but we have found a simple work in progress (WIP) document works just as well. As well as tracking jobs, progress and deadlines, WIPs can also act as the meeting agenda for your regular catch up.



Remember to use Beepo's Work In Progress (WIP) Template that you downloaded with this article



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# Step Two: Understand these 3 rules for communicating effectively with your offshore team

Communication is key to success in any relationship, and this is especially true when working across borders with people from different cultures. You can use the following three rules to ensure you are communicating effectively with your offshore team.

## 1. The Slang Trap

Although English is the most commonly spoken language on Earth, each culture and region have developed their own dialect and slang terms. In the early stages of working with your offshore team, try to avoid using slang, as it is likely your Philippines-based team will likely never have heard it before. To compound this further, Filipino's speak American English, so be prepared for the usual, yet minor differences between American and British English.

The slang trap also applies to acronyms. You'd be surprised how often we tend to use acronyms in daily conversation. Steer clear of these as well or slowly introduce them over time, explaining to your team what they mean, otherwise you'll be creating another roadblock to clear communication.

## 2. The Passive 'Yes'

In the West, we are generally quite comfortable asking for help or asking clarifying questions to ensure a job gets done correctly. This is not always the case in countries like the Philippines. Often, asking for help is seen as 'a loss of face', and if not managed correctly, can result in massive inefficiencies. Fortunately, this phenomenon can be easily overcome by following the Beep catch up Framework and questioning style covered in the first half of this article.

## 3. Never Assume- it makes an ASS of U and ME

This could not be truer when it comes to practical cross-cultural management. Different cultures look at the world differently. Different things are important to your offshore team, and they may prioritise outcomes differently. With this in mind, do not fall into the trap of assuming complete understanding from your offshore team. When giving instructions or briefing in a job, go into as much detail as possible, especially in the early stages. Over time, as the relationship with your team develops and you all begin to learn each other's 'work styles', you can begin to relax on the level of detail, but until then, it's best to provide as much as possible.

By following these three simple rules you can easily avoid confusion and gross inefficiencies created by communication breakdown.



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# Step Three: Learn more about the cultural differences you need to be aware of to effectively work with a Philippines-based offshore team.

There is an incredibly comprehensive body of research which outlines the high level cultural differences across countries throughout the entire world. The most prominent research is by Geert Hofstede and is generally referred to as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions.

Essentially, this research can be used to compare cultures across six dimensions and, in a nutshell, is an excellent and simple tool to utilise when trying to understand your Philippines-based team. To learn more use the easy online tool here:

<https://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>

Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov, Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. Revised and Expanded 3rd Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill USA, 2010

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# Step Four: How Beepo can help you with all of this

At Beepo, we appreciate that working with other cultures across borders in a remote environment can be as challenging as it is rewarding. However, you can rest assured knowing that we've done this successfully countless times, and have learned a lot from encountering almost every scenario. Our goal is to work with you from the beginning to ensure you achieve fantastic success in your Offshoring initiatives. After all, everything we do is for your success!

We offer all interested businesses the opportunity to talk to our team, obligation-free, so we can discuss the options available to you, and find the best solution to see your business grow.



You have now completed Beepo's 5 part Education Series teaching you how to build an Offshore Team end-to-end. You have learnt how to transform your business and realise true growth potential. Now is the time to put these learnings into practice.



# GET IN TOUCH TODAY FOR A FREE BUSINESS CONSULTATION

Let us help identify the best way for you to get started.



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