



ISM/IKON SEMINAR

Autumn 2010

Speaker: Dr Natalia Levina (Stern School of Business, New York University)
Title: When present meets past: Onshore immigrants managing offshored software development and engineering projects
Date: Tuesday 23rd November 2010
Venue: B3.19, Warwick Business School, Scarman Road
Time: 10.00am

Abstract: The sourcing of projects from high-cost (onshore) to lower-cost (offshore) countries requires overcoming challenges broadly classified as coordination issues and status differences. Increasingly, onshore firms are turning to immigrants from offshore destinations, assuming they will enable effective collaboration by leveraging their bicultural backgrounds. We investigate the role of onshore immigrants in addressing collaboration challenges on such projects. Using data from interviews with onshore and offshore IT professionals, we illustrate that the practice of assigning onshore immigrant managers to boundary spanning roles can be either beneficial or seriously problematic. While, by and large, immigrant managers are able to address coordination challenges by translating across cultures, some of them significantly exacerbate status differences often already present on offshore projects. These immigrants no longer identify with the offshore group, sometimes even refusing to speak their mother tongue.

Keywords: boundary spanning, biculturals, social identity theory, offshoring, immigrants, immigrant managers, software development, cross-cultural collaboration, qualitative research

Biography: Dr Natalia Levina is an Associate Professor at the Stern School of Business, New York University. Her main research interest is in understanding how people produce and span organizational, professional, cultural, and other boundaries in the process of developing and using Information Systems (IS). She has studied IS outsourcing for more than a decade examining both vendors' and clients' perspectives as well as large scale trends in IT workforce. Recently, her work has focused on the roles of organizational boundary, country contexts, and onshore managers in negotiating differences in global sourcing of IT work to India, Russia, and Eastern Europe. Her work on global sourcing has been supported by Alfred P. Sloan Industry Studies Fellowship and IBM research grants. Her research has been published in *ISR*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of MIS*, *Decision Sciences*, and *Organization Science* among others. Natalia serves on the editorial boards of *ISR* and *Organization Science* and is special issue editor for the *European Journal of IS*. She also serves as Academy of Management's Organizational Communication and Information Systems (OCIS) division representative-at-large and a vice-chair of AIS Special Interest Group on Grounded Theory Methods.

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