



I've had the pleasure of working with offshore colleagues in the Philippines for 20 years.

THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG-DISTANCE PROJECT MANAGER

by Simon Bates, UK Project Manager

The DDC Group—an onshore manager runs the marathon with you

The prospect of working with an offshore team—not least during the transition from in-house to remote operation—may be a new experience for you. This is why we have onshore project managers like myself, to get this long-distance relationship off to the right start and to help transfer or formulate processes that will make your outsourcing venture a success. And, we stay in touch to support you as the marathon runs its course.

What kind of support can we expect onshore? Pretty broad support is the answer. The transferability of your in-house process 'as it is' is never assumed. Adaptations are likely to be needed for interfacing and file transfer, and to procedures that control workflow, quality assurance and audit. We work through these with you, exploring the options. We also document agreed workflows and technical requirements for the offshore team to build its system around when manuals are not readily to hand at your offices, or if the process is to be fully developed offshore. What we're providing here is the opportunity for you to work face-to-face with someone who knows what will work and what details within the offshore system should be given fullest attention in advance.



Now listen—imagine the cigarettes are the problem and each drink is a solution.

And then? Well, during the development and testing phase we plan to continue as your primary contact until such point as a handover to the offshore Project Co-ordinator (PC) makes sense. During this phase, communication will be conducted through the onshore team—this is an ideal way for all

In Manila and Leyte, 3,500 staff are engaged in BPO services to companies and government. The Philippines team's group of Project Co-ordinators runs these projects directly with clients—a policy we promote for cost and efficiency, and which our clients find works admirably. And there is always an onshore project manager too who will support you.

involved to assess progress and to know whether or not you are feeling comfortable with the whole process. English is the language of communication in the Philippines.

So it's TTFN? No way. We remain copied on all email correspondence between yourselves and the offshore team and keep up-to-date through private communications with the PC. We butt in and out again if the situation demands but our expectation at this time is that the PC will manage the service and ensure that the agreed service levels are

continually met. Importantly, we're on the end of a phone line for your team and happy to make visits to your office to discuss progress, any escalated matters and the future of the service. Not only is the *operation* often a hybrid solution of onshore and offshore processes, but so is the *project management*.

What about visiting the offshore team? Please do! And on the first trip out we'll accompany you as well as helping out with offshore expenses. Visits to the Philippines are to be encouraged—they are sure to help you understand the implemented system and working methods even better, and to strengthen corporate and individual bonds. Filipino hospitality is warm and commitment inspiring.



*Where's the refreshments kiosk?
We're ready for another buko juice.*

We don't need onshore support and we don't want to pay for it, thank you. That's up to you but DDC is unlikely to impose onshore-style consultancy fees that will undermine the cost advantage of having an offshore workforce. Onshore project managers are there to help those involved to begin on the front foot. Nevertheless, direct contact with the Philippines team from the word go is an option for you—this works in practice because the offshore team has customer-facing staff of its own.

The DDC Group has onshore support teams in the United States, UK and Netherlands.

What you need to consider is the advantage of an onshore helper who will think through the transition with you, anticipating the pitfalls and ensuring that work instructions are clearly transferred. Cultural differences should not be left off the agenda either. In the best BPO ventures the relationship is a sound one based on co-operation and mutual understanding. An onshore manager with experience of offshore communication can certainly help you make the most of the opportunity.



*What's the difference between onshore and offshore?
Nothing, really. Onshore, I sometimes wear a coat.*

The joy of transferring a project offshore with the DDC Group is the knowledge that this new stakeholder in your business—so many time zones and landfalls away—can speak your language both literally and technologically. An offshore office is no different from an onshore one. How much easier still to have a guide near at hand who will help you make sure that the race to keep your business competitive was worth running.

***You'll never feel lonely
with the DDC Group.***



The DDC Group