PLANTA

Whitepaper

# Successful Working in Dispersed Teams

Strategies, tools and best practices for modern project management

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LEARN MORE

# Here you will find more information for your projects:

## Resource Management

What are the time wasters in project management and how can efficient resource management help you save costs? We show you using specific examples from our customers.

To the whitepaper

## Hybrid Project Management

Hybrid systems let you respond to any project situation more flexibly than purely agile or traditional methods. Learn everything about this topic.

To the whitepaper

## Multi-Project Management

Managing multiple projects at the same time is demanding. We have summarized the most important basics for a good framework.

To the whitepaper


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01

CHAPTER

# Task Planning in Dispersed Teams

Task planning is a central aspect of project work – and it becomes even more important in dispersed teams.

Without physical proximity and direct coordination on site, misunderstandings and delays quickly arise if the distribution of tasks is not clearly defined. **Transparency, structure and clear responsibilities** ensure that everyone works efficiently, tasks are completed on time and bottlenecks are identified early.

## Clear Responsibilities and Roles

Every team member must know their role and tasks exactly. Otherwise, tasks are done twice or overlooked. Tools such as PLANTA Project or Jira distribute tasks and make responsibilities visible – this creates structure and promotes **personal responsibility**.



**Clear responsibilities**

Tasks and owners are visible to everyone in the tool



**Setting priorities**

Highlight critical tasks, set deadlines and review them regularly



**WIP limits**

Limiting parallel tasks prevents overload

## Time Management and Flexibility

Dispersed teams often work in different time zones. Tasks should therefore be organized so that they can be completed **without immediate coordination**. Clear handovers and defined dependencies between tasks keep the project moving – even when team members are not working at the same time.

02

CHAPTER

# Project Planning and Coordination

Project planning and coordination are the basis for successful project completion – especially in dispersed teams.

While task planning focuses on individual tasks, project planning is about **planning and managing the overall project strategically**: tasks and resources are efficiently aligned, progress is kept in view and everyone pursues the same goals.

## Rough Planning: Creating Structure and Overview

Rough planning forms the strategic foundation: it divides the project into understandable units, sets milestones and creates a transparent structure.

### Work breakdown structure (WBS)

Breaks the project down into subtasks, makes progress measurable and shows work packages and dependencies to all locations.

### Gantt chart

Visualizes the timeframe, sequence and progress of work packages and makes delays visible early.

### Milestones

Mark important interim goals and serve as checkpoints. Reviewed regularly in project meetings – synchronously or asynchronously – they give the team clear orientation.

## Detailed Planning: Resources and Capacities

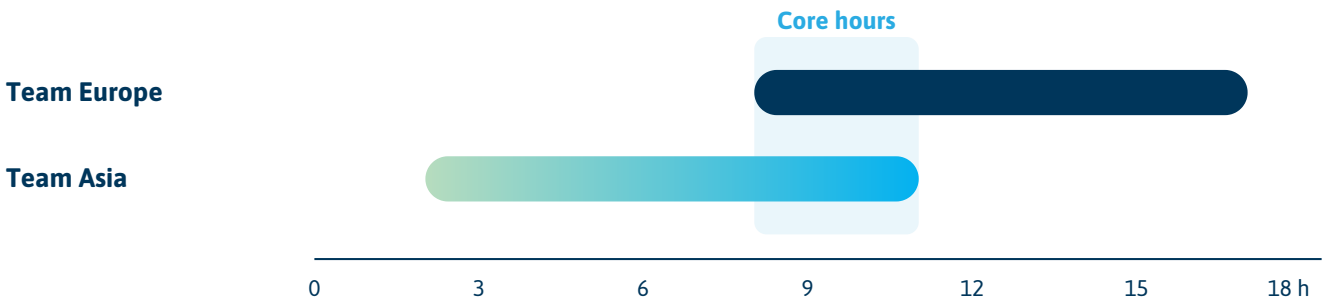
In detailed planning, capacities and resources are organized in detail. This includes materials and equipment as well as workforce and expertise (skill management) to avoid bottlenecks.

- **Availability of experts**: Specialists are often only available to a limited extent. Forward-looking planning and capacity planning tools ensure that they work on the right tasks at the right time.
- **Equipment and technology**: Special tools and systems must be available in good time so that everyone can work effectively regardless of location.
- **Resource buffers**: Buffers absorb local holidays, illness or technical problems and prevent the project from stalling.

## Time Management Across Time Zones

Different time zones make coordination more difficult – especially for tasks that several team members work on one after the other.

- **Core working hours**: Define overlapping working hours in which everyone can be reached. This is when critical coordination, team meetings and important handovers take place.
- **Asynchronous work and handovers**: Clear documentation, handovers and checklists enable effective collaboration without constant coordination. Collaboration tools visualize handovers and dependencies.
- **Automation and tool integration**: Automatic task assignment, deadline reminders and status updates save time. Integrating task management, communication and document management – such as PLANTA Project and Slack – avoids redundant processes.




Example: A team in Europe and one in Asia use the late morning (Europe) and early afternoon (Asia) as shared core working hours.

## Balancing Flexibility and Deadlines

Some projects have fixed deadlines, others leave room for changes during the project. In a dispersed team, it is important to **communicate this transparently**, because different working hours, vacation plans and bottlenecks affect implementation. Deadlines should be ambitious but realistic.

Agile methods such as **Scrum or Kanban** offer dispersed teams a high degree of flexibility: with short sprints or task boards, they plan their work flexibly, while fixed sprint reviews secure the timeframe for handover to stakeholders.

03

CHAPTER

# Communication, Tools and Technologies

Effective communication is the key to success in any team – in dispersed teams, it becomes the biggest challenge.

Without the option of simply talking to colleagues in the office, new ways of communicating are needed. Decisions and information must be **clearly documented and accessible to everyone**.

## Combining Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication

### Synchronous

Video conferences and stand-up meetings enable discussions and joint decisions in real time – ideal for complex questions and important alignment. Across many time zones, however, synchronous communication reaches its limits.

### Asynchronous

Emails, chats and task management software with activity tracking and notifications keep information available at all times. This way, everyone moves their tasks forward at their own pace.

## Task Management and Communication in One Tool

It is particularly effective to integrate communication directly into task management. PLANTA Project combines both on one platform:



### Integrated comment function

Feedback and questions directly on the task – traceable and without separate emails



### Transparency in project status

Real-time progress: who is working on what, supported by checklists and WIP limits



### Notification system

Automatic alerts about important changes draw attention to urgent issues



### Central document storage

Files directly attached to tasks and projects – all relevant information in one place

## Fostering an Open Communication Culture

Tools alone are not enough: team members should feel encouraged to **ask questions, give feedback and address challenges openly**. This builds trust and avoids misunderstandings. Regular stand-up meetings – synchronously via video conference or asynchronously via status updates in PLANTA Project – keep the team together and project progress in view.

## Using Different Communication Channels

PLANTA Project is the central platform for tasks and projects. In addition, **Slack or Microsoft Teams** offer space for spontaneous exchange, brainstorming and open issues. Video conferences via **Zoom or Microsoft Teams** remain indispensable: they give the exchange a personal touch and are suitable for complex or creative discussions that are difficult to conduct in writing.

## Tools and Technologies for Remote Work

Without physical proximity, dispersed teams depend on reliable technical solutions. The right selection increases efficiency and improves collaboration.

### Project management tools

Plan, control and monitor projects with data that is always up to date. PLANTA Project supports single and multi-project management, central planning of parallel projects and resource planning that makes overloads and unused capacities visible – with clear structures, milestones and dependencies.

### Communication and collaboration tools

Ensure fast, uncomplicated information exchange – regardless of location. PLANTA Project combines agile task management with direct communication: comment on tasks and share documents without switching platforms.


**Have a look at our**

# Webinars

**Project Management Knowledge for Everyone**

To the webinars

04

CHAPTER

# Challenges and Solutions

Time zones, cultural differences, a lack of personal contact and technical dependencies – with the right strategies and tools, they can be mastered.

## Time zone differences

**Challenge**

Teams in different time zones often have hardly any shared working hours. This makes coordination and quick decisions more difficult.

**Solution**

Define overlapping core working hours and communicate asynchronously. In PLANTA Project, team members update tasks and leave comments, while automatic notifications keep everyone up to date.

## Lack of personal contact

**Challenge**

Without regular personal contact, it is difficult to build trust. Isolation, misunderstandings and weaker team dynamics are the result.

**Solution**

Plan regular virtual meetings, for example via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, as well as team building. Virtual coffee breaks and joint online activities promote social exchange.

## Cultural differences

**Challenge**

Different communication styles, working habits and ways of making decisions lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in global teams.

**Solution**

Offer intercultural training and foster an open communication culture in which questions are addressed directly. Agree on common rules and expectations in advance.

## Unclear responsibilities

**Challenge**

If responsibilities are unclear, inefficient processes as well as duplicate or unfinished tasks arise.

**Solution**

Clearly define tasks and responsibilities in PLANTA Project and make them visible. Regular check-ins review the status.

## Technological dependencies and failures

**Challenge**

Dispersed teams depend on functioning tools. Inadequate equipment or failures significantly hinder project progress.

**Solution**

Invest in robust, reliable tools and platforms and keep backup communication channels and contingency plans ready.


One Software for Everything

**PLANTA Project**

Project Management Software

PM Methods

Plan your projects in an agile, traditional or hybrid way – just as you need

PPM

Don't take any risks – rely on project portfolio management

Integrations

Adapt the software to your needs and extend it with our interfaces

Single and Multi-Project Management

Comprehensive project management software for every project.

Learn more

05

CHAPTER

# Best Practices for Efficient Work

In addition to suitable tools and strategies, successful remote collaboration requires proven methods to make processes efficient.

01

### Retrospectives and feedback rounds

After each sprint or project phase, reflect together on what went well and where there is room for improvement. This leads to continuously better work processes.

02

### Transparency and personal responsibility

Everyone can see the progress of the entire project and takes responsibility for their own tasks and deadlines. This builds trust and reduces coordination effort.

03

### Open approach to time zones

Define overlap times for important meetings and decisions, and work asynchronously outside of them. Clear documentation and regular updates keep everyone up to date.

04

### Common working standards

Uniform rules for documentation, communication and tool usage – for example for file names, comment functions and the structure of tasks – ensure quality and avoid misunderstandings.

06

CHAPTER

# Testimonials

A hybrid project system is ideal for dispersed teams: traditional reporting with milestones and schedules for management – agile task planning and fast time recording for the project teams.

## Thyssenkrupp AG

“The PLANTA software has replaced all MS Project schedules and Excel tools. Linking all projects in multi-project management improves planning quality and significantly reduces the effort required to manage the projects.”



## Ketek GmbH

“Our greatest success is that we have a ‘tidy’ multi-project management system. All projects are centralized in PLANTA. Colleagues now have a better project overview and can plan dependencies between projects.”



## Losan Pharma GmbH

“All employees can work on their tasks in the boards and benefit from significantly better communication and collaboration.”



Read how our customers improved their projects: **planta.de/en/references**

07

CHAPTER

# FAQ and Conclusion

### How does collaboration across time zones work?

With shared core working hours for important coordination and asynchronous communication outside of them – supported by clear documentation and automatic notifications.

### Which tools do dispersed teams need?

A central project management platform such as PLANTA Project for tasks, resources and documents, complemented by chat and video conferencing tools such as Slack, Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

### How can team cohesion be strengthened at a distance?

Through regular virtual meetings, an open feedback culture and informal formats such as virtual coffee breaks or joint online activities.

# Conclusion

Dispersed teams have become an integral part of the modern working world. Companies that can organize their project work across different locations will benefit in the long term in a globalized world.

**Clearly defined processes**, the use of **suitable tools** and an **open communication culture** are the key elements for making collaboration in dispersed teams a success.

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