
Global Work

Mary O'Hara-Devereaux

The Institute for the Future is a spinoff from the Rand Corporation of about 30 years ago, and Mary O'Hara-Devereaux is co-author of *Global Work: Bridging Distance, Culture & Time* (Jossey-Bass, 1994). She spoke on the "shifts, shadows and guideposts" to 10 years out, and their implications for project management in the next millennium. She organized her presentation under six topics.

1. Global Context. Over the next few years we expect to see the rise of the third-world economies, especially in Asia. Thus, expect more multinational firms, joint ventures and alliances. International agreements will be more common on projects.
2. Organizational Shifts. In contrast to oldline American organizations, today's company is only half focused on core business; 38% of company functions are contracted out and another 12% are working in space, not in place. Is the new fishnet organization flexible or fragmented?
3. Transformation of Work: Expect to work more, not less, than 40 hours per week in this highly charged competitive economy. Unions or brokers will bundle workers who are loyal to jobs, not employers.
4. Cultural Challenge. Instead of command and control, expect more teamwork, more diversity

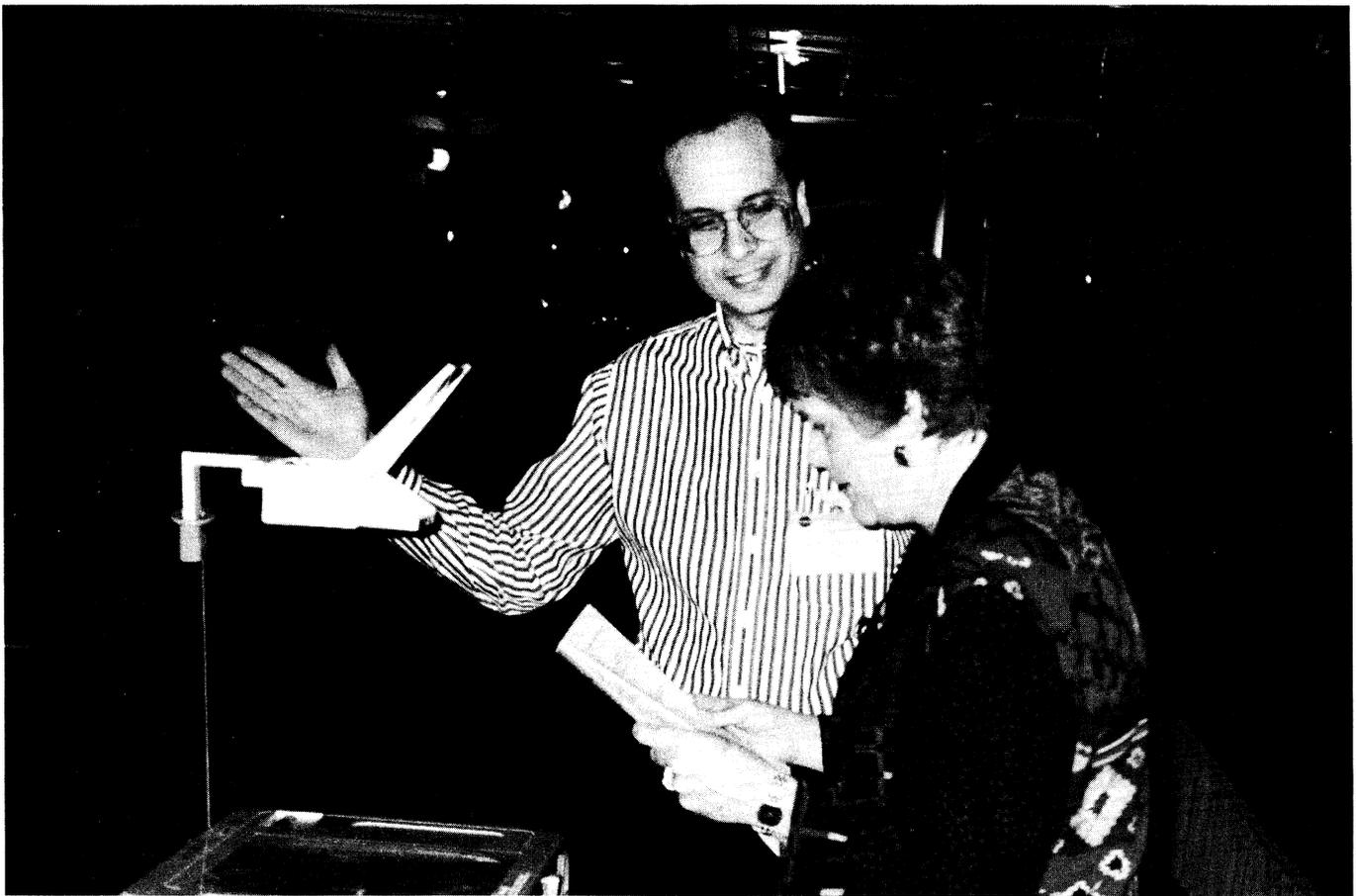


Figure 15. Dr. Edward J. Hoffman and Mary O'Hara-Devereaux at the PMSEP

in the workplace, more “process facilitation” and more emphasis on information management in a cross-cultural environment.

5. **Teams and Technology Challenges.** Managing people in global teams will involve a process that begins with orientation and trust building to goal/role selection and commitment to high performance and renewal.
6. **Guiding Principles.** The new project manager will have to learn how to communicate more effectively, use cultural guides, build trust, beware the absence of context, redesign the work processes, manage with milestones, be creative with technology, be fluent with cross-cultures and create “third way” strategies (blend, cobble).

In her book, O’Hara-Devereaux describes four new competencies of the global manager. First and foremost is a multicultural perspective, transcending the barriers of language and behavior. Technical competence will still be important, but teams will have to be managed with “groupware,” software for groups in a computer-mediated society.

A third core competency for tomorrow’s project manager will be process facilitation, easing the sometimes painful but always complex processes by which teams and organizations set out to do their work. Finally, team leadership skills will become increasingly important to accomplish time driven, task-oriented, cross-functional jobs. Top-down companies and isolated individuals working on common goals cannot handle these jobs as well as a real project team.

O’Hara-Devereaux ended with an observation that the happiest people she has encountered recently in the course of her research have been “RIFed.” The saddest were those who were left behind in a downsized organization.

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