**Scenario:**

You are a project manager in the corporate headquarters finance department for a global investment management firm, 1995 Financial. The finance department consists of three different teams, one in headquarters (Chicago) and two regional offices (Topeka Kansas and Longmont, Colorado). Each regional office used to be its own company but was then bought up by 1995. You are managing a project that will result in a large number of operating processes and procedures being updated and standardized in response to recent legislation. The project will involve documenting processes and procedures from all the offices, analyzing each one for effectiveness and adherence, making changes, and then training all the offices on the finalized processes and procedures. The project’s sponsor, Katy (Chief Operating Officer), has stressed to all the offices that headquarters’ procedures are not the default; something better may exist in the regional offices. The sizes of the Longmont and Topeka departments are the same size 50 respectively and the size of the Chicago department is 115.

This is the first project you are managing with the regional offices. You have heard from your peers that it is very difficult to get the regional offices to participate—they do not dial in for meetings, do not respond to e-mails, and only finish deliverables late (if at all). In many cases, your peers had to replace those team members with people from headquarters. You know this project will be difficult from a people perspective—the ways people work are going to be analyzed and evaluated. This is a perfect opportunity to completely destroy working relationships among the different groups if it is not done right!

What Katy knows (and your peers do not) is that you used to work in one of the regional offices before it was purchased by 1995. Nine months before the purchase, you left that company, moved from Longmont to Chicago, and joined 1995. You used to work in the purchasing department, but you took the job as the finance department manager when you joined 1995. You suspect that Katy thinks your past experience in the Longmont office will make you a more inclusive project manager, resulting in better business value from the project.

**PROBLEM:**

You have spoken with the managers of the Finance departments in the Topeka and Longmont offices. You were talking with them about their communication styles and how their team’s best work together. You wanted to make sure that they knew you were interested in their teams’ active involvement in the project, and that they have critical roles in making sure their departments’ processes and procedures are considered equal inputs to the project.

The manager from Topeka, Bud, told you that his staff prefers face-to-face, informal conversations. They are a small, closely-knit group that has worked together for years with little turn-over. Meetings are not scheduled—when people need something, they just go up to the person and ask. E-mail is seldom used to communicate decisions. They are always amused at the e-mails they get from corporate because it seems that everything is done via e-mail. They feel that they are looked down on by the people at corporate, are never asked for their input, and are seldom told the final decision/outcome of anything. They “know they are the third-class citizens” of the company; the staff at Longmont is the “second-class” staff. They think they are being included in the project so that corporate can gloat and show how their processes are superior to the ones in place in Topeka. They believe that corporate procedures will be very cumbersome and make it very difficult for the staff in Topeka to get any work done moving forward.

The conversation with the manager from Longmont, Betty, was not much better. She and her staff also feel that they are only involved in this project from a checklist perspective. Giving her staff nonimpact roles on the project is just one of the things on your checklist to get done. The culture at Longmont is very different from Topeka; meetings are scheduled for any significant discussion, and meeting minutes are always produced and approved. Project directories are always established on the directory, and deliverables are version-controlled. E-mail is not used much. Their views on the people at corporate are very much in line with their views at Topeka. Interestingly, though, the Longmont staff thinks they are the third-class citizens and the staff in Topeka is the favorite!

You know that the culture in Chicago is very different. Everyone is working on multiple projects (their assumption is that they do twice as many projects as the people in the regional offices), is too busy all the time, and has a lot of pressure from the internal customers. They think the people in the regional offices have the easy jobs and just do not understand the pressures the Chicago department is facing. Meetings, when they are held, generally start late. There is seldom an agenda, and any follow-up is documented via a series of e-mails (not minutes). E-mail is the preferred method of communication and people sitting next to each other will send a note instead of talking to their neighbor. The staff seems to thrive on the pressured, rushed atmosphere.

**Prepare an e-mail to Katy describing the results of the meetings and your concerns about the project team. Identify your top three communication challenges, and explain how you think you will overcome them.**