

Collaboration is Key



Mitrais is a world-class technology company based in Indonesia and part of the global CAC Holdings Group. Founded in 1991, we have developed and implemented software for over 700 clients, and we are committed to building long-term and high-trust relationships.

Introduction

Having decided to expand your software development capacity and capability by engaging a software development partner, the next question that is critical to your success is “How should I work with my remote team?”

The decision to grow your existing team with remote resources can be a fruitful one, and plenty of companies have been proving that for many years. But, equally, you have no doubt heard anecdotes regarding situations where it hasn't been as successful.

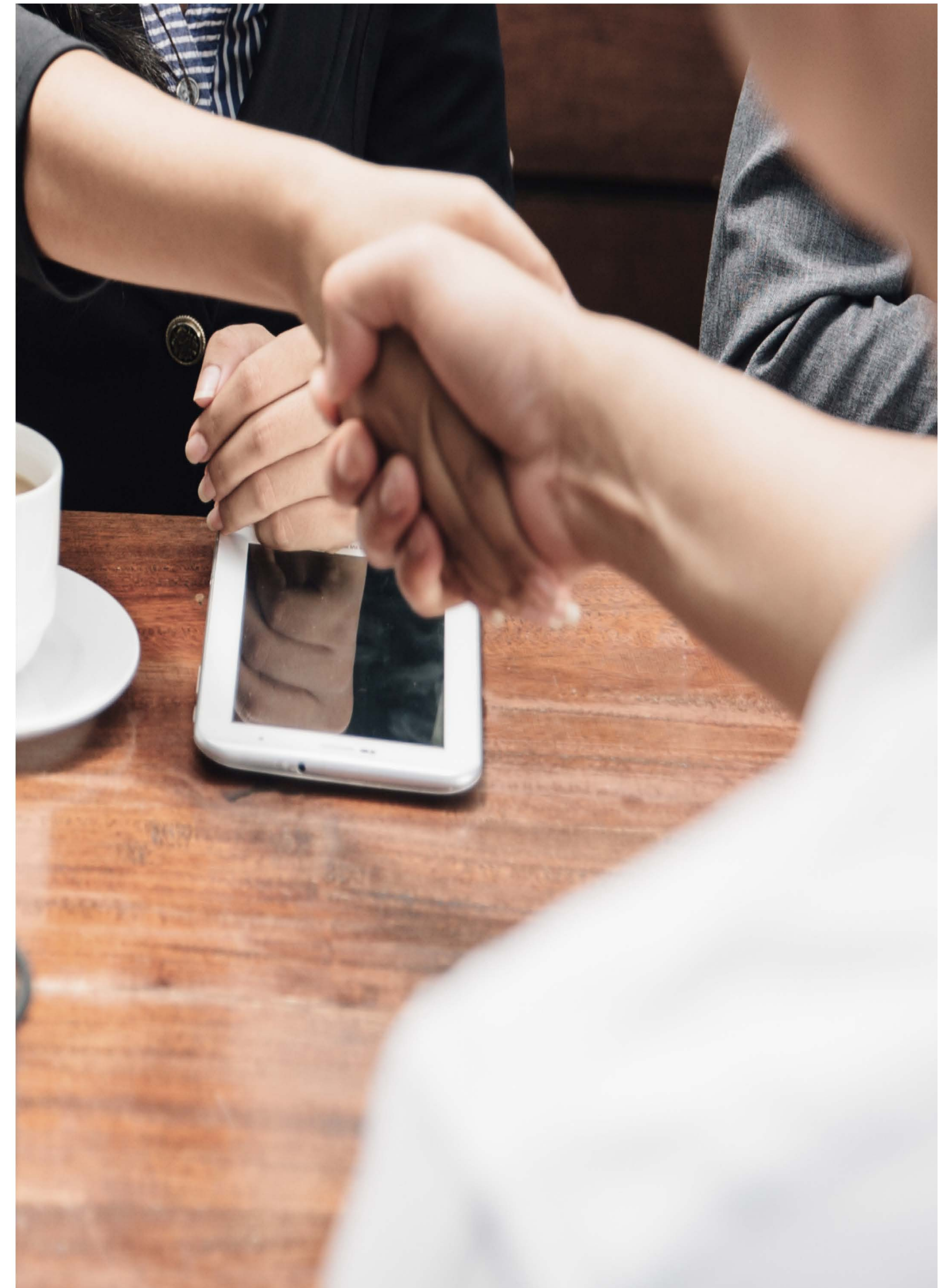
In the early days of outsourcing, a popular strategy was the so-called “Black Box” approach. A specification for a discrete piece of software was handed to an outsourced team for them to develop from start to finish, often with very little communication during the process. It was like popping the specification into a Black Box and hoping for the best. Development houses often went to great pains to silo their local and outsourced teams from each other, each often unaware of what the other was doing. Unsurprisingly, this strategy was almost universally unsuccessful.

So, what is the common thread running through the stories of those organisations for whom a remote software development partner has worked? Evidence from years of providing software development services to global clients suggests that it may come down to one key concept – how well do the local and remote team members collaborate?

Collaboration through Communication

The first (and easiest) method to enable collaboration between local and remote team members is to recognise that they collectively constitute one team, not many. These days, it is not unusual for an on-shore corporate team to have one or more members working remotely. Family responsibilities and lifestyle choices mean that key team members may not always be physically located in the office, but most companies recognise that technology now means that remote work is very possible. Adding remote development team members from a Software Development partner is the same.

Like any team, the success of a hybrid local-remote team is likely to be how often and how well they communicate. It is essential that all team members understand the goals of any particular project, how their parts play into its success and the changes that will inevitably happen mid-project (and how they should react to them).



In an office environment where all the team are collocated in relatively close range of each other, the natural office intercommunications and “watercooler chat” generally suffice, although most have formal team meetings periodically. When you expand your team’s capacity and capability by adding team members from a software development partner, it needs to be recognised that those informal communication channels are not available to your remote developers. Building trust and rapport within your hybrid team is vital. It is easy to forget that the staff sitting overseas are just as integral to your project’s success as those sitting outside your office. It’s not the distance between your remote and local teams that matters here – it’s the time-zone. The more real-time the communication can be, the better it will work.

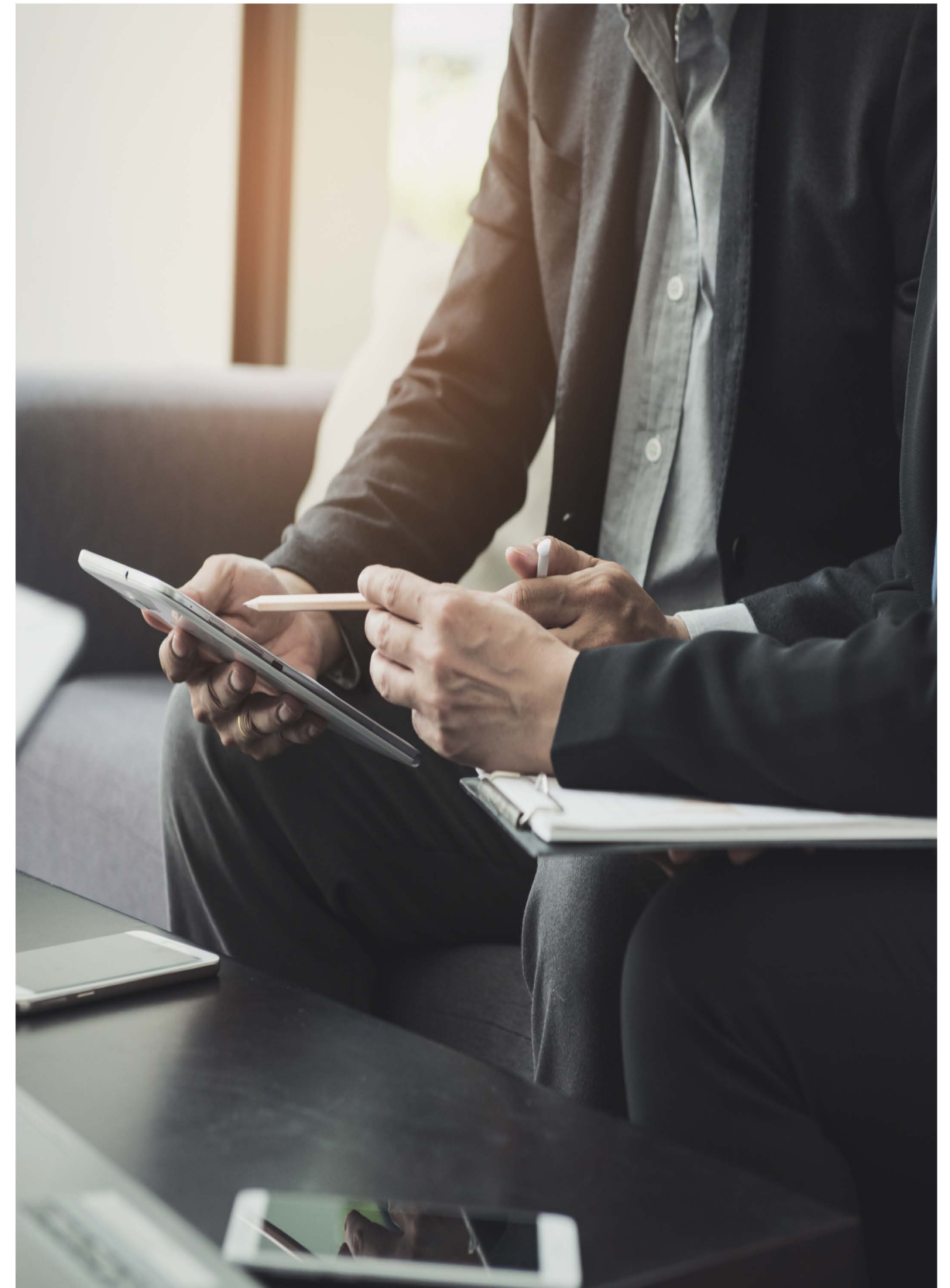
To mitigate this, a more formal communication plan is usually required to ensure that everyone on the team remains in sync. Many development teams these days operate using some type of Agile methodology, often SCRUM (or a variation). The daily stand-up meetings represent an ideal opportunity to kill two birds with one stone – meeting the needs of both the SCRUM model and your need to keep your entire team on the same page. By mandating attendance for all team members, regardless of location, at these meetings, many of these risks are mitigated effectively. There are so many great collaborative video/voice/screen sharing tools available that this becomes easier to maintain.

If your software development partner is in a time-zone that allows a significant overlap with your local team members, these tools can extend your options even further. Many organisations enjoy the advantage of having all the team in real-time communication through the business day via Zoom, Skype for Business, GoToMeeting etc. All the small questions that present themselves throughout the day can generally be discussed by the team as they arise, and solutions agreed without any delays in the project timeline.

Collaboration through Process

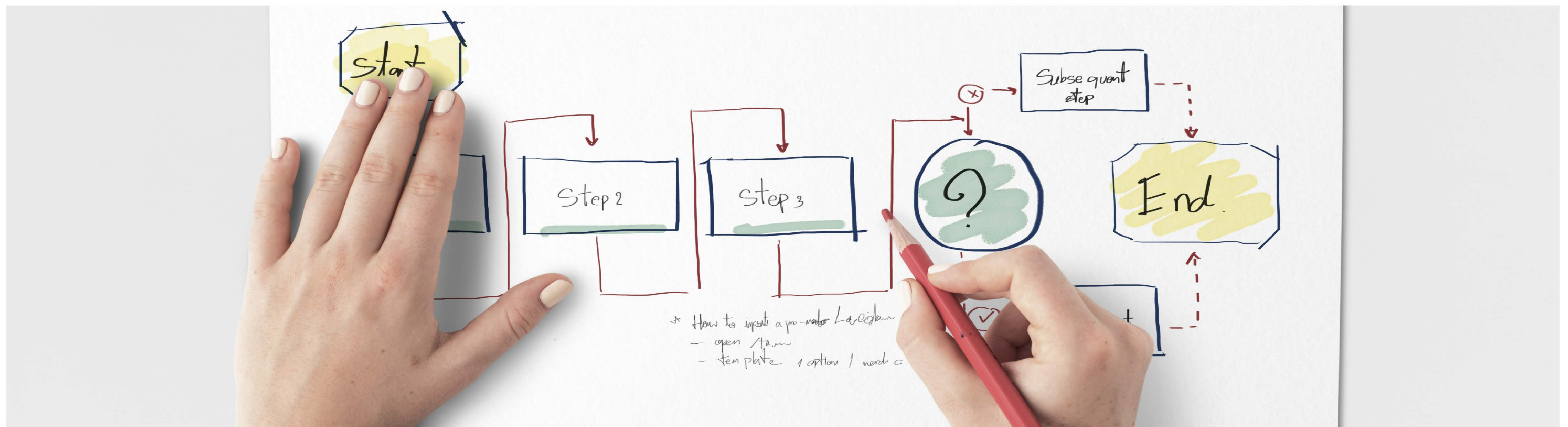
There is nothing more frustrating than working with a team, some of whom are following one process or standard, whilst others seem to be on another path entirely. You would never accept this in a local team.

When augmenting your team with remote developers through a partner, it is essential to try to have them work in exactly the same way as your local team. Ideally, every team member should use the same processes and tools. This way, everyone can see clearly where other team members are at in their work, everyone is working off the same priority list and timetable, and team members are much less likely to be stepping on each other's toes.



As well as the communications tools mentioned earlier, consider having your team (local and remote) running off the same code repositories, versioning system, issue tracking system, documentation management system, and so on. The closer that the team members work together, the more likely it is that the project will succeed.

The roles played by key stakeholders should be clear to all team members. Your local team members may be in no doubt as to who the Product Owner is, but it is important that the remote team members are as well. You need to commit to having your Product Owner actively involved in regular team meetings if at all possible. Sometimes that is impossible, of course, and if so you should plan to have a proxy involved on the Product Owner's behalf (and advise the team of this). This means that the communication lines are always clear to all team members. And don't forget – if the people in these key roles change for whatever reason, the entire team needs to be updated immediately.



Collaboration through Team Integration

As the manager of a software development team, you know that great outcomes rely on having an integrated team all working toward the same goals and adapting to changes and issues that inevitably arise.

There are plenty of very successful companies who have been using team augmentation from a Software Development Partner to drive success in their development programs for years.



The challenge is to realise the benefits that flexible and cost-effective team augmentation brings, while not compromising the team integration that is such a vital part of the equation. The tools you select to facilitate that integration matter – a lot! With a wealth of such collaborative tools available on the market now, take the time to select those that work best within your team.

By thinking about and planning for effective collaborative strategies as part of your move to a geographically distributed development team structure, it is very possible to achieve the balanced, integrated team you need to reach your company's goals.



About Mitrais

Mitrais is a world-class technology company based in Indonesia and a part of the global CAC Holdings Group. We have been recognized as Indonesia's leading provider of offshore development services by Forrester Research, and our goal is to help your business meet and exceed your expectations. Combining Western innovation with Eastern productivity, Mitrais maintains its preeminent position in the Asia Pacific region. As a member of the Microsoft Partner Network with a Gold Application Development competency, we demonstrate the highest level of competence and expertise with Microsoft technologies. Our close working relationship with Microsoft enables us to deliver exceptional software development services.

Through collaboration with trusted partners and our team of talented software engineers, we are committed to providing outstanding solutions to our valued clients.

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Terima Kasih

Thank You

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