The burritos, tortilla chips, and guacamole left a heavy feeling in my stomach, so I decided to skip the remainder of the party and take a walk. There was a small wine shop about a block south of the Mega Manufacturing building, and I figured a quick walk there and back would do me good. Of course, one cannot just walk to a wine shop without taking a quick look around, so I factored a quick stop into my schedule as well. I figured I could make it there and back in 30 minutes, which was when the Cinco de Mayo party was scheduled to end.

The Wine Depot was owned by Brent Bonds, and it carried a nice variety of “everyday” wines, as well as a few hard-to-find gems. I was not a wine snob, but Pam and I enjoyed a bottle every now and again. I liked the place because Brent was very knowledgeable and always made good recommendations. A tiny bell atop the door rang as I entered, and Brent poked his head over the top row of bottles in the Merlot section to say hello.

I browsed amongst the wines on display in the store for a few minutes, and decided to buy a bottle of Columbia Crest Grand Estates Chardonnay on sale for $11.99. Pam mentioned she was making fish for dinner, and Brent said the chardonnay would go perfectly with the meal. At $12, I decided to take his word for it.

When I returned to my office, I was surprised to find Reyna Andersen waiting outside my door. Reyna and I had spoken only occasionally since Wayne introduced us, and she explained she had just come from a meeting with her sponsor. Going into the meeting, she was working on a straightforward project to implement a customer relationship management (CRM) package. After the meeting, however, the project had become much more complex, and she immediately wanted to talk to me about it. I tucked my bottle of wine into my workbag and asked Reyna to come in and sit down.
“My sponsor just informed me their division has reorganized,” she began. “We need to implement this CRM package in our Canadian and Mexican operations as well.”

“Wow, that’s a major change!” I replied. “I’ll bet you want to talk to me about scope change management.”

“Actually, I don’t,” she replied. “I explained to the sponsor her request was way outside the scope we agreed to. She agreed and asked us to come up with a new estimated budget and end date. My biggest concern is being able to communicate and work successfully in the other countries. I have never been to either country, and I don’t know what to expect.”

“I think I would have the same concerns,” I agreed. “There are no specific problems right now, but when you are working internationally, communication cannot be taken for granted. The good news is the change in scope has come before the project has gone too far. You should have time to deal with it.”

“Exactly!” Reyna replied. “But I don’t know what to do next. This CRM initiative requires a culture change for the sales staff. Communication was already critical, and now it is even more so. I need to call a team meeting to try to get a handle on the communication needs, and work with my team to plan how we can successfully operate in these different cultures.”

“Bingo!” I said approvingly. “You have solved your own problem.”

LESSON 22
DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN TO ADDRESS COMPLEX COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

Culture change refers to changing the way people perform their jobs. Implementing a culture change initiative in one organization requires a multifaceted communication strategy to be successful. Add a widely dispersed client base, including stakeholders in foreign countries, and it can really be scary.

All the potential problems can usually be overcome with enough planning and proactive project management. Risk management can be invoked to address these potential problems, but the key item for resolving the risk is a formal Communication Plan. Creating a Communication Plan involves following a simple process: