



IIT ROORKEE



NPTEL ONLINE
CERTIFICATION COURSE

LEADERSHIP AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

LECTURE – 45

Virtual Teams

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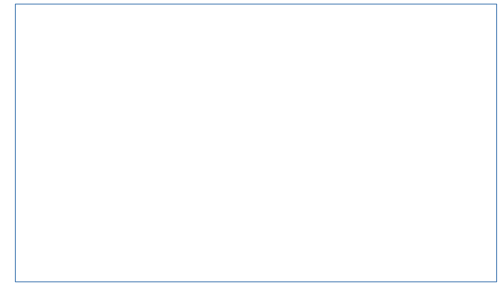


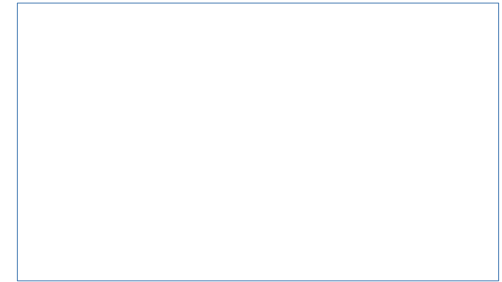
Image source; https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/imported_images/promo/img/virtual_teams.jpg

Virtual Teams

- Virtual teams take many forms, have different objectives, and solve various types of tasks. However, they all have in common two necessary elements:
 - two or more people work together to achieve common goals
 - at least one of the team members works in a different location or at a different time.
- Because of these two defining characteristics, virtual teams communicate and co-ordinate at least partially by means of electronic media.



Image Source: https://www.projectmanager.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/200717_Blog_Feature_Virtual_Teams.jpg



Definition of Virtual Team

**Gassmann and
Von Zedtwitz,
2003**

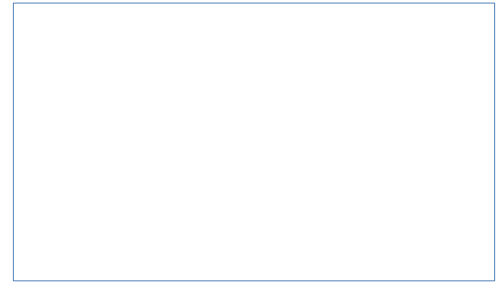
Virtual team as a group of people and sub-teams who interact through interdependent tasks guided by common purpose and work across links strengthened by information, communication, and transport technologies.

**Leenders et
al., 2003**

Virtual teams are groups of individuals collaborating in the execution of a specific project while geographically and often temporally distributed, possibly anywhere within (and beyond) their parent organization.

**Powell e t al.,
2004**

Define virtual teams as groups of geographically, organizationally and/or time dispersed workers brought together by information technologies to accomplish one or more organization tasks”.



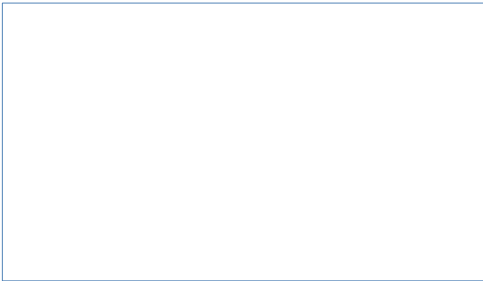
Physical vs. Virtual Teams

Activity	Physical Teams	Virtual Teams
Nature of interaction	Opportunity to share work and non-work related information	The extent of informal exchange of information is minimal
Utilization of resources	Increases the opportunity for allocation and sharing of resources	Each collaborating body will have to have access to similar technical and non-technical infrastructure
Working environment	They encountered constraints accessing information and interacting with others outside the collocated team within the company	Sometimes not able to share ideas or dilemmas with other partners



Physical vs. Virtual Teams

Activity	Physical Teams	Virtual Teams
Control and accountability	The project manager provides the Context for ongoing monitoring of activities and events and thus enhances their ability to respond to requirements.	The collaborating bodies were accountable to the task leaders and the project coordinator who had limited authority to enforce any penalties for failure to achieve their tasks
Cultural and educational background	Members of the team are likely to have similar and complementary cultural and educational background	The team members varied in their education, culture, language, time orientation and expertise
Technology compatibility	Situated and operating within a single organization faces minimal incompatibility of the technological systems	Compatibility between different systems in collaborating organizations ought to be negotiated at the outset



Ale Ebrahim, Nader & Mohammed Shahadat, Shamsuddin Ahmed & Taha, Zahari. (2011). Virtual Teams And Management Challenges. Academic Leadership Journal. 9. 1-7. 10.5281/zenodo.185825.

Advantages of Virtual Teaming

- Reducing relocation time and costs, reduced travel costs
- Able to tap selectively into center of excellence, using the best talent regardless of location
- Greater degree of freedom to individuals involved with the development project
- Higher degree of cohesion (Teams can be organized whether or not members are in proximity to one another)
- Provide organizations with unprecedented level of flexibility and responsiveness.
- Respond quickly to changing business environments
- Self-assessed performance and high performance.
- Cultivating and managing creativity
- Provide a vehicle for global collaboration and coordination of R&D-related activities



Disadvantages of Virtual Teaming

- Lack of physical interaction
- Everything to be reinforced in a much more structured, formal process
- Challenges of project management are more related to the distance between team members than to their cultural or language differences
- Challenges of determining the appropriate task technology fit
- Cultural and functional diversity in virtual teams lead to differences in the members' thought processes. Develop trust among the members are challenging
- Will create challenges and obstacles like technophobia (employees who are uncomfortable with computer and other telecommunications technologies)



E-Leadership

E-leadership was coined to reflect the new working environment where human interactions are mediated by information and communication technology (ICTs), and where leaders may lead entire projects from a distance.

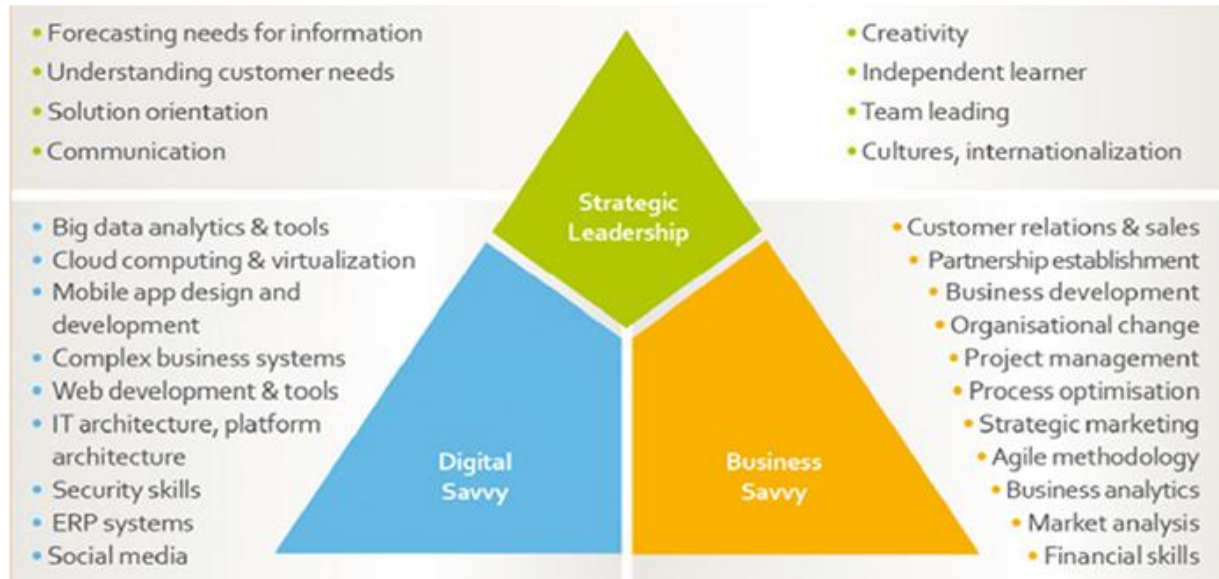
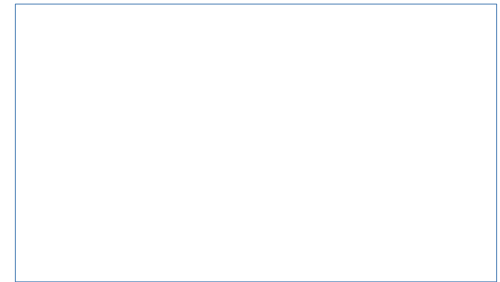


Image Source: <https://eskills.org.mt/en/news/Pages/2017/e-Leadership-Skills.aspx>



E-Leadership

- It is argued that the great transition of the global economy, with the inherent changes in organizations, require a significant adaptation on the part of the leadership, and a new leadership approach.
- Typically, hence, e-leadership is seen as a response and solution to global changes generated by the technological development. As virtual and flexible work options continue to evolve, more employers are attempting to formalize their virtual work policies and get a better grasp on how to manage virtual workforces.
- It is widely recognized that e-leadership differs from conventional way of perceiving and explaining leadership as well as form leadership practiced in traditional teams where leadership is grounded on face-to-face interactions.
- E-leadership can be understood as a process of social influence where changes in attitudes, feelings, thoughts, behavior and organization are brought about with the help of advanced information and communication technology.

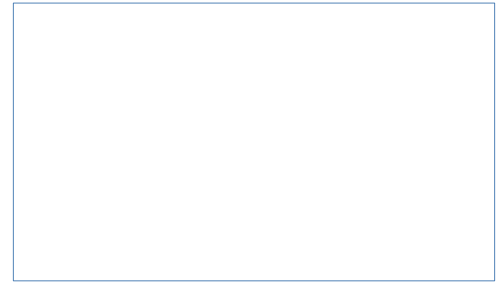


Common Challenges For Leaders In A Virtual Team Environment

Seven common challenges that leaders encounter in virtual teams.

1. Geography and Isolation as Challenges: Geography makes the team members see themselves as separate from one another. The complications of time zones and travel pressures make it even more challenging to ensure team members clearly comprehend goals and begin to develop a bond of trust and understanding among one another. Lack of physical interaction is one of the major challenges of virtual teams.

2. Communication as Challenge: One major challenge within the virtual environment is communication. Virtual teams are greatly influenced by the effectiveness of communication. Even within a face-to-face correspondence, communication is highly important. Without it, the group cannot accomplish the tasks set before them.



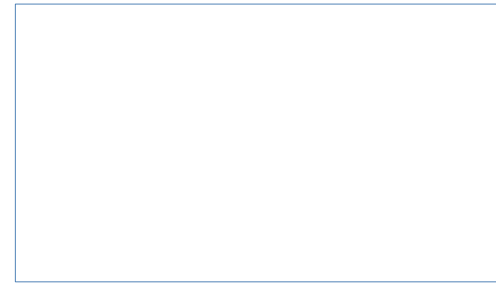
Common Challenges For Leaders In A Virtual Team Environment

3. Technology as Challenge: An important issue in regards to virtual teams is that the leader must take into account what technology hardware and software are available to the members of the team. This information will be handy to make sure that software is compatible as well as up to date with the same versions for all team members.



4. Security as Challenge: A virtual team session is often set up between entities residing in different administrative sites, each having a different security policy. In order for a secure session to be set up, it may require administrative authorities of the collaborating sites to cooperate together to develop a consistent and uniform security policy across the participating sites.

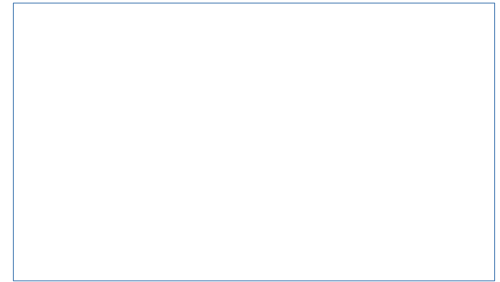
Image Source: https://hbr.org/resources/images/article_assets/2014/11/R1412J_A2.jpg



Common Challenges For Leaders In A Virtual Team Environment

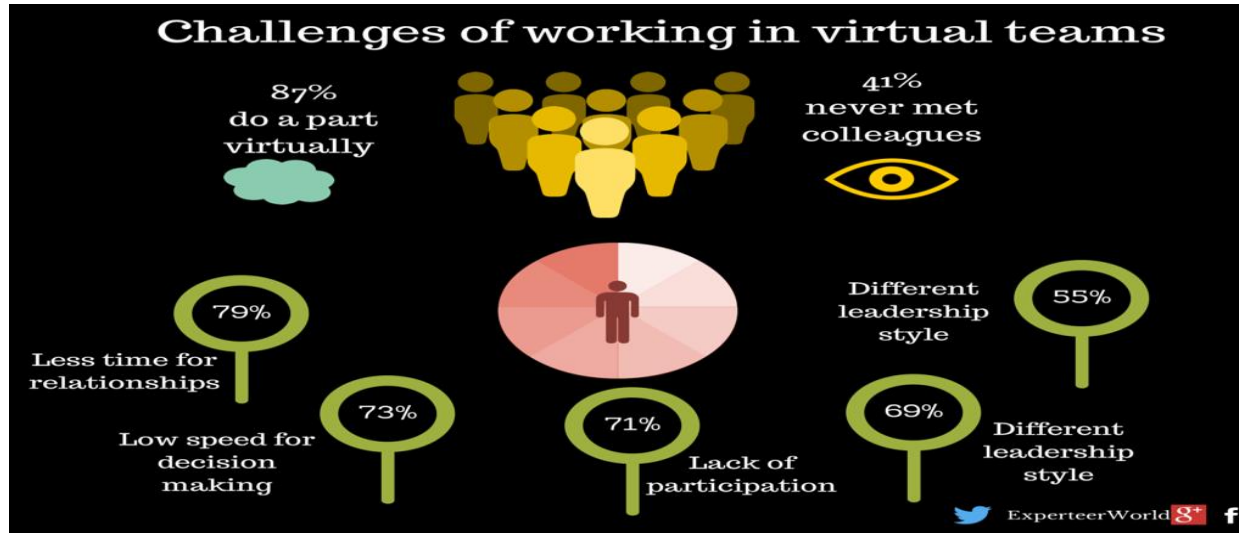
5. Motivation as Challenge: With the advancement of information technology group work is now becoming increasingly virtual. However, when moving into new territories it is important to carefully examine how the displacement of face-to-face work affects different aspects of group work. One such aspect that is currently largely neglected is motivation. Virtual team with lack of motivation of its members will poorly perform.

6. Trust as Challenge: The key way to build high performance across distance (to give the leader and the team power and control over the result) is to build trust. Building trust across distance is easier said than done. In the virtual context, social control and direct supervision are hard to realize. Other factors such as different locations, members' feeling of isolation and detachment and complex time zones are also barriers for building trust.

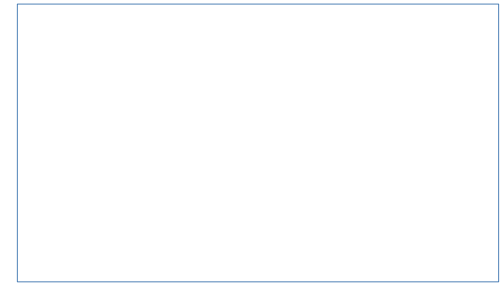


Common Challenges For Leaders In A Virtual Team Environment

7. Relationship as Challenge: Group dynamics as one of the criteria in measuring team process, are the foundation upon which other teamwork proceeds. If the team is ultimately to achieve the three valued outcome measures of effectiveness, a firm foundation of effective group dynamics will be critical. The relationship building helps the team to achieve effective group dynamics.



Source: <https://us.experteer.com/wp-content/uploads/challenges-of-working-in-virtual-teams.png>



Building Trust

- Trust is easier to destroy than to build. To appear and develop, it requires that certain conditions be met, such as a shared culture, social context, and values; physical proximity; information exchange; and time.
- Needless to say, most of these conditions are not easily met in the context of virtual teams. In a virtual environment, trust is based more on (ability and) delivery of the task at hand than on interpersonal relationships.
- Members of virtual teams need to be sure that all others will fulfill their obligations with competence and integrity and behave in a consistent, predictable manner with a concern for the well-being of others.
- Trust is a much more limiting factor in virtual teams, compared with face-to-face teams, it is therefore helpful to recognize the types that exist in professional relationships.



Building Trust

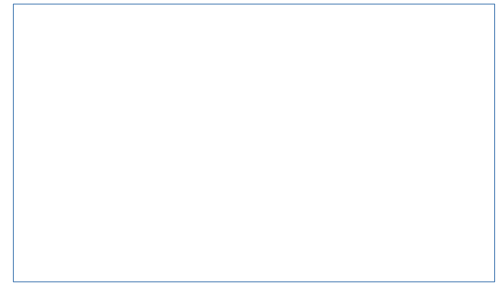
1. **Deterrence-Based Trust.** This basic type of trust hinges on adoption of consistent behavior and the threat of punishment if people do not follow through on what they are supposed to do, or committed themselves to doing. It is not well suited to the work of a virtual team.
2. **Calculus-Based Trust.** This basic type of trust is grounded not only in fear of punishment for violating trust but also in rewards for preserving it. Such trust is based on comparison of the costs and benefits of creating and sustaining a relationship over the costs and benefits of severing it. This level of trust is easily broken by a violation of expectations and cannot meaningfully sustain a virtual team's relationship.
3. **Knowledge-Based Trust.** This type of trust occurs when an individual has enough information and understanding about another person to predict that person's behavior.



Building Trust

- 4. Identification-Based Trust.** This type of trust develops when parties understand and endorse one another, and can act on behalf of one another in interpersonal transactions. This requires that they fully internalize and harmonize with one another's desires and intentions

To build trust in virtual teams, it is essential to ask effective questions; generate clear and concise objectives, including a project implementation plan; talk (and walk) the talk; build tell-and-ask patterns; enable the free flow of data and information for constant, grow the virtual team's own culture and identity, including the promotion of virtual socializing skills; and make, share, and celebrate good news.



Toward New Management Mind-Sets

From	To
Face-to-face is the best environment for interaction and anything else is a compromise.	Different kinds of environments can support high-quality interaction. What matters is how you use them.
When the communication process breaks down, blame the technology.	When the communication process breaks down, evaluate management and interaction strategies, not just the technical tool.
Learning to manage virtual teams is about learning how to use the technology.	Learning to manage virtual teams is about understanding more about teams and the collaboration process.
Being people-oriented is incompatible with using technology	Using technology in a people-oriented way is possible and desirable

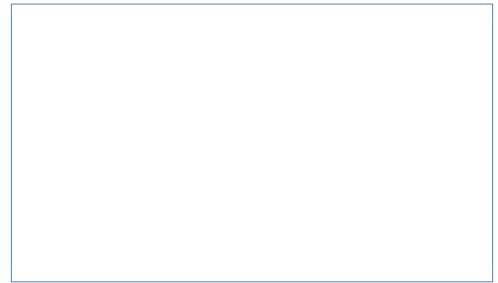
Source: Lisa Kimball. 1997. Managing Virtual Teams. Speech delivered at the Team Strategies Conference sponsored by Federated Press, Toronto, Canada.



Making Virtual Teams Work: Basic Principles

1. Get the team together physically early-on. It may seem paradoxical to say in a post on virtual teams, but face-to-face communication is still better than virtual when it comes to building relationships and fostering trust, an essential foundation for effective team work. If you can't do it, it's not the end of the world (focus on doing some virtual team building)

2. Clarify tasks and processes, not just goals and roles. With virtual teams, however, coordination is inherently more of a challenge because people are not co-located. So it's important to focus more attention on the details of task design and the processes that will be used to complete them. Simplify the work to the greatest extent possible, ideally so tasks are assigned to sub-groups of two or three team members. And make sure that there is clarity about work process, with specifics about who does what and when.



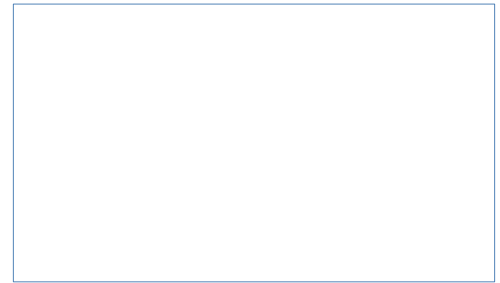
Source: <https://hbr.org/2013/06/making-virtual-teams-work-ten>



3. Commit to a communication charter. Communication on virtual teams is often less frequent, and always is less rich than face-to-face interaction. The only way to avoid the pitfalls is to be extremely clear and disciplined about how the team will communicate. Create a charter that establishes norms of behavior when participating in virtual meetings, such as limiting background noise and side conversations, talking clearly and at a reasonable pace, listening attentively and not dominating the conversation, and so on.

4. Leverage the best communication technologies.

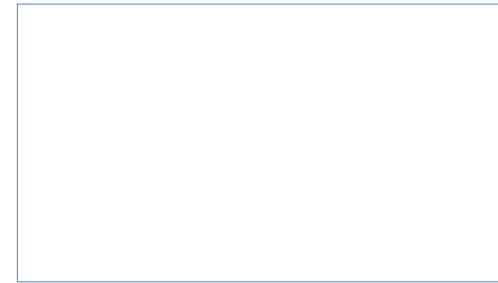
Developments in collaborative technologies — ranging from shared workspaces to multi-point video conferencing — unquestionably are making virtual teaming easier. However, selecting the “best” technologies does not necessarily mean going with the newest or most feature-laden. It’s essential not to sacrifice reliability in a quest to be on the cutting edge.



Making Virtual Teams Work: Basic Principles

5. Build a team with rhythm: When some or all the members of a team are working separately, it's all-too-easy to get disconnected from the normal rhythms of work life. One antidote is to be disciplined in creating and enforcing rhythms in virtual team work.

6. Create a “virtual water cooler”: The image of co-workers gathering around a water cooler is a metaphor for informal interactions that share information and reinforce social bonds. Absent explicit efforts to create a “virtual water cooler,” team meetings tend to become very task-focused; this means important information may not be shared and team cohesion may weaken. One simple way to avoid this: start each meeting with a check-in, having each member take a couple of minutes to discuss what they are doing and what’s going well.

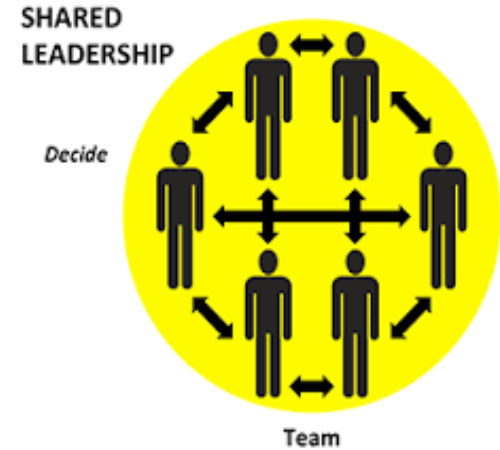


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Making Virtual Teams Work: Basic Principles

7. Foster shared leadership. Defining deliverables and tracking commitments provides “push” to keep team members focused and productive; shared leadership provides crucial “pull.” Find ways to involve others in leading the team. By sharing leadership, you will not only increase engagement, but will also take some of the burden off your shoulders.

8. Don't forget the 1:1s. Leaders' one-to-one performance management and coaching interactions with their team members are a fundamental part of making any team work. Make these interactions a regular part of the virtual team rhythm, using them not only to check status and provide feedback, but to keep members connected to the vision and to highlight their part of “the story” of what you are doing together.

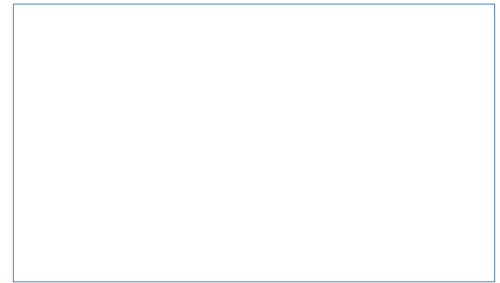


<https://wikispaces.psu.edu/download/thumbnails/339411827/SharedLeadership-Med.png?version=1&modificationDate=1492451546000&api=v2>

Case Study: Trusting someone you cannot see

- One of the greatest determinants of a successful team is trust. For a team to be successful, employees must trust that their team members are reliable and capable. They have to have faith that their teammates will work toward the team's goals rather than their own goals. Trust can be built in the teams by creating an environment where team members are not scared to admit that they have made a mistake and feel comfortable providing their input rather than agreeing with the team leader or assertive team members. Building trust among teammates is important, but what if you never see your teammates?

Trust is especially important but also more difficult to build in virtual teams. In a recent review of 52 independent studies, researchers found that the link between trust and team performance is stronger for teams than face-to-face teams!



Case Study: Trusting someone you cannot see

- According to the same review, managers can counteract some of the negative effects of low trust in virtual teams by carefully documenting team interactions. This practice shows that team members are held accountable for the work they do in virtual teams and makes sure that team members are recognized for their contributions.
- Compensating for lack of trust may only be a Band-Aid for a larger problem because trust is one of the most important factors in determining team effectiveness. Another review of 112 separate studies found that trust was one of the strongest predictors of team performance, regardless of the team members' past performance or trust in the team's manager. The same research found that trust may be especially important in teams with varied skills sets or independent roles.



Case Study: Trusting someone you cannot see

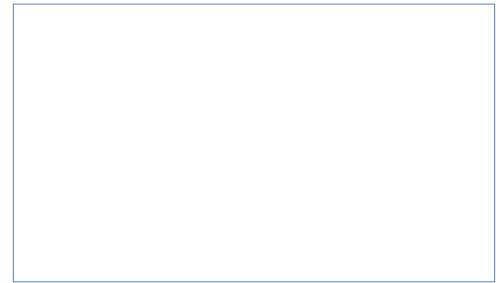
- Trust is also just as important for short-term teams because team members do not have the same adjustment period to learn more about their teammates before having faith that they will contribute to team goals.

Questions:

Q1) Recall a time when you felt like you could not trust team members on your team. Why do you feel that way? How did that affect the team's performance?

Q2) Can you think of strategies that can help build their trust among virtual team members?

Q3) Imagine you are a manager at a national corporation. You have been asked to select employees for a virtual problem-solving team. What types of employees would you include and why





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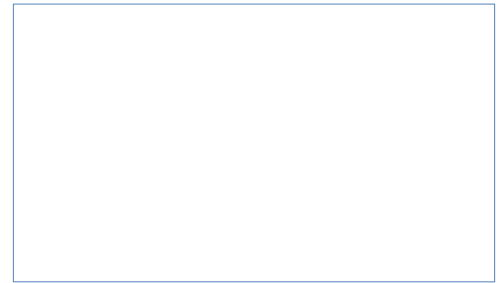
Virtual team working: making it happen

Stephen Morris

Journal name: Industrial and Commercial Training

Purpose

The paper seeks to discuss virtual working, technology utilization and how technology can be used to enhance human interaction rather than replace it. It is often the fabric of virtual human relationships that remains sadly neglected. This viewpoint paper aims to stimulate a more comprehensive debate about how to work effectively with and through others in our virtual world.



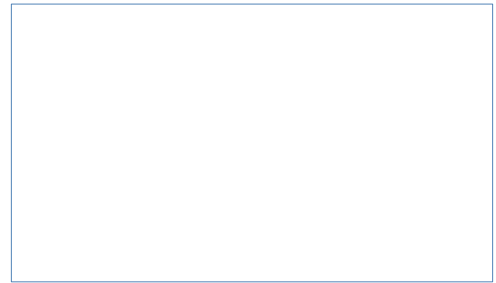
Research Paper

Design/methodology/approach

Working closely with global corporations, the author studied both permanent and project-based virtual teams. Through observation and diagnostics, a comparison of the effectiveness of these teams was made against that of traditional co-located teams.

Findings

Many businesses attempt to treat virtual working in the same way as co-located working. The human impact and implications of virtual working are not fully understood or dealt with. The cultural retention of practices and policies that are relevant to co-located traditional work but often counter-productive for virtual working can result in tensions, conflicts and the ultimate disengagement of the workforce.



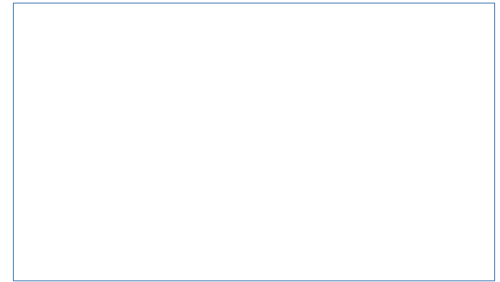
Research Paper

Practical implications

This paper offers a sample of the pragmatic tips and approaches the author's organizations brings to its clients. The most practical outcome of reading this paper is the recognition that virtual working has some subtle and key differences that need to be understood and managed by all those involved.

Originality/value

This paper is intended to be thought-provoking for executive leaders, leaders, human resource professionals, change management agents and – most importantly – members of virtual teams.



Book Recommendation

Virtual Teams: Mastering Communication and Collaboration in the Digital Age

Authors: Terri R. Kurtzberg

Publisher: Praeger Publishers Inc (28 March 2014)

Language: English

Paperback: 212 pages

ISBN-10: 1440828377

ISBN-13: 978-1440828379

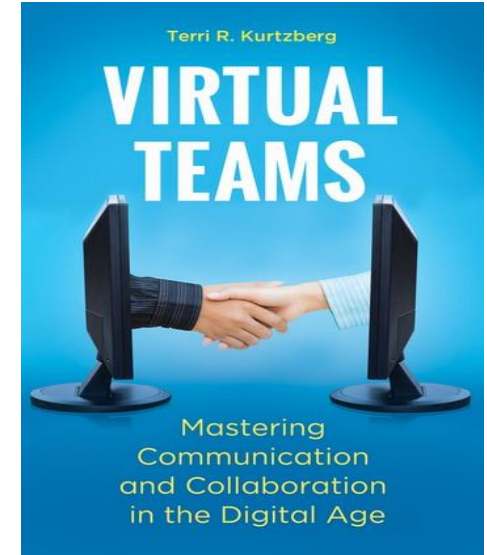


Image Source: <https://www.kobo.com/in/en/ebook/virtual-teams-mastering-communication-and-collaboration-in-the-digital-age>

Book Recommendation

- The author first analyzes the subtle but significant changes that result when conversations are moved online, providing examples and tips to avoid common pitfalls, then discusses how team behavior and decision making can best be guided in this realm.
- Readers will fully understand what makes teams "click"—what inspires trust, how to get a team "off on the right foot," and what steps to take in order to make good collaborative decisions—as well as other key topics for virtual teamwork, such as best practices for working in the cross-cultural environment.
- The book serves as an ideal guide for anyone who participates in or manages a virtual team but is also suitable as a supplemental textbook in a business school course on organizational behavior or business communication.

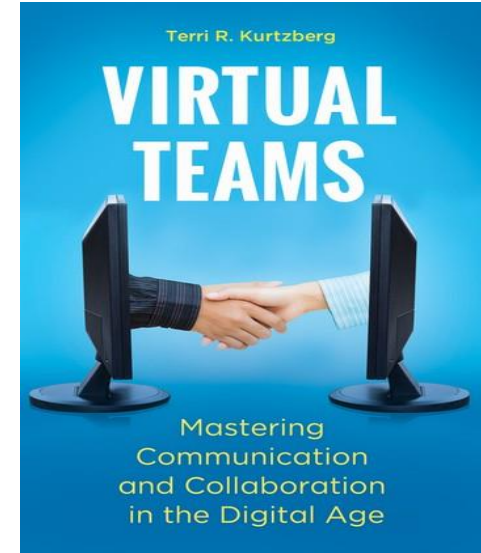
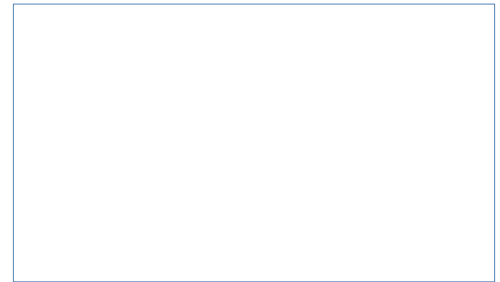


Image Source: <https://www.kobo.com/in/en/ebook/virtual-teams-mastering-communication-and-collaboration-in-the-digital-age>

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Thank You

