

Chapter 13

Millennial Teamwork and Technical Proficiency's Impact on Virtual Team Effectiveness: Implications for Business Educators and Leaders

C. Matt Graham

University of Maine, USA

Harold Daniel

University of Maine, USA

Brian Doore

University of Maine, USA

ABSTRACT

The successful completion of information systems projects is already a difficult process that many times ends with projects failing to meet the information systems requirements. These requirements typically center on completing projects that perform the way initially envisioned, and delivering completed projects on time and within budget. Pressures around communication and leadership style are now compounded by the use of virtual teams. The goal of this study was to determine whether or not technical proficiency in the project-based skills, facility with database management systems development, and greater technical proficiency in coping within the virtual environment contributed to the development of greater virtual team effectiveness. This study targeted millennial students at the Maine Business School who were assigned to virtual teams tasked with developing a database management system

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within a virtual environment. Findings suggest that increased proficiencies in project skills will contribute to greater team effectiveness and more importantly, increased proficiencies within the virtual environment will contribute to greater virtual team effectiveness. These findings have implications for business educators and by natural extension, business practitioners as they suggest that training students and workers how to communicate, collaborate, exchange ideas, and share information better within virtual environments will improve virtual team effectiveness which should translate into greater virtual teams project outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, organizations are using virtual teams to accomplish business goals (Zivick, 2012). Martins, Gilson, and Maynard (2004) reported that the use of virtual teams that use technology to interact with each other across geographic, organizational, and other boundaries are becoming very common in organizations (p. 805). Not only are virtual teams used more frequently in organizations, Brandt, England, and Ward (2011) stated that firms report these teams must have the ability to be constructed rapidly and be extremely adaptable to meet each individual project's goals. Kayworth and Leidner (2000) reported that many benefits are derived from these virtual teams: cost reductions, cycle-time reductions, integration of distant members, and improved decision-making and problem-solving skills. Arguably, the significance of virtual teams is best stated by Hargrove (1998) who stated: "in the future, the source of human achievement will not be extraordinary individuals, but extraordinary combinations of people." Despite the increased use of virtual teams, they experience many of the same problems of face-to-face teams. Blackburn, Furst, and Rosen (2003) stated that there is "no guarantee that virtual teams will reach their full potential and that as many virtual teams fail as succeed in completing assigned tasks / projects. According to Marks, Sabella, Burke, and Zaccaro (2002) a few of the problems facing any team include: poor team member composition, incomplete knowledge of project goals, and poor coordination processes. As research on virtual teams continues to grow, an acknowledgement of the lack of interpersonal skills and human relations in virtual teams persists. This fact was acknowledged by Gonzales, Nardi, and Mark (2009) when they found that while collaborative technology had improved over the years through better human-computer-interaction (HCI) design, strategies that explored how to "work better" within these collaborative environments were still not adequately addressed.

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