Chapter 12

Towards an Integrated Approach for Leading and Managing Transcultural Virtual Teams

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ABSTRACT

Many industries have observed the rise of Virtual Teams (VTs) as highly productive team structures taking advantage of members scattered around the globe while being able to accomplish assigned tasks by communicating through internet based technologies. Nonetheless, the looked-for achievable gains of VTs working heavily rest on meeting the requirements prescribed by the antecedents and critical success factors associated with specific idiosyncrasies of VTs such as the multiculturalism dominating their working environment. In this regard, it is widely recognized that when it comes to adopting VTs, the managerial/leadership matters are among the main challenges facing organisations. The major parts of foregoing issues are stemmed from the limitations of mediums of communications exacerbated by cultural diversity and disparity of members. This chapter first aims at critically analysing the different approaches of managing and leading virtual teams and ascertaining the main influential variables. This is followed by presenting a management/leadership model for VTs based on a dynamic integrated approach, thus labelled, 'Leading and Managing Virtual Teams' (LeManViT).

INTRODUCTION

Many novel team working structures have been emerged due to the push from the industry to improve the performance (Atrostic & Nguyen, 2005). The pressure on organisations to use more effective team working structures have been mounted considerably by the invasive globalization (Duarte & Snyder, 2006) and decentralisation trend (Algesheimer et al., 2011). Likewise, researchers have conducted a noticeable number of studies aimed at harnessing the capabilities of technology for satisfying the requirements of different industries in team working. Outcomes of the foregoing publications and the reports of successful cases within various industries have catalysed the trend of merging technology into team working procedures (Rezgui & Zarli, 2006; Bal & Teo, 2000; Reed & Knight, 2010). Specifically, many methods relied on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been introduced in recent years as effective strategies to improve different aspects of team performance and facilitate getting along with the globalization invasion (Duyshart et al., 2003; Nesbit, 2002; Hosseini et al., 2012; Peansupap, 2004). Utilizing internet based technologies have received special attention within organizations in which team members might happen to be located in different geographical areas (Joseph, 2005; Abudayyeh et al., 2001; Ahmad et al., 2002; Skibniewski & Abduh, 2000; Sriprasert & Dawood, 2002; Yacine, 2007). As the result, we have witnessed the emergence of Virtual Teams (VTs) as effective, efficient, and innovative team structure comprising of members scattered over different locations and time zones while working and communication through ICTs. On the one hand, the existing literature recommends adopting VTs in organizations due to many advantages they bring about for the organization. On the other hand, industries seem to be obliged to embark on using VTs as an available option to overcome the fierce competitive globalized business atmosphere eventually (Chen & Messner,

2010; Algesheimer et al., 2011; Yacine, 2007). On top of that, forecasts and predictions by the experts, practitioners and governmental institutes from many countries overwhelmingly show an increasing trend for using VTs as a part of future organizations' structures (Duarte & Snyder, 2006; Chang, 2011; Mukherjee et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, the major parts of literatures widely argue that any kind of VT comes with some particular challenges. Should the challenges not managed properly, the VTs have the potential for presenting worse effectiveness than that of the traditional ones. The positive outcome of VTs heavily relies on addressing the issues and resolving these challenges in due course. Any negligence in recognizing, addressing and taking appropriate measures to resolve the inherent challenges will jeopardize the efforts and investments by any organization to adopt virtual teams (Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2003; Gignac, 2005; Zenun et al., 2007; Chang, 2011). Therefore, any kind of effective strategy encompassing utilizing ICTs in teams with dispersed members requires a deeper understanding along with identification of the various critical factors that may not be found or be as important in traditional teamwork.

Above all, there is a common belief in the literature that research on utilizing VTs is not mature enough for providing the industry with necessary information (Van Pelt, 2010; Algesheimer et al., 2011; Booth, 2011; Martins & Schilpzand, 2011; Schweitzer & Duxbury, 2010). As the result, along with obvious necessity of further research, there is also a need for considering all the aspects of VTs in the industry and synthesizing the fragmented results of previous studies (Martins & Schilpzand, 2011). Otherwise, the industry will be deprived of considerable benefits VTs are able of offering for organizations due to the lack of knowledge (Joseph, 2005: Zhang et al., 2008). Nevertheless, some of the challenges of implementing VTs have been addressed in the literature more frequently. Obviously, the emphasis is on variables playing crucial role in successful

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