Introduction to Virtual Teams and How to Manage them

Anders (安德斯) Hjalmarsso
Industrial Researcher / Assistant Professor
anders@viktoria.se
anders.hjalmarssson@hb.se
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Dr. Anders Hjalmarsson, PhD etc.
University of Borås, Sweden
School of Business and Informatics
Viktoria Swedish ICT
Lindholmen Science Park, Göteborg
Sweden

Contact information:
Anders.hjalmarsson@hb.se
+46(0)70 75 67 870
Anders.hjalmarsson@viktoria.se

Social media:
twitter.com/anders_reflects
skype: contact_anders

Web pages:
www hb se/hit
www viktoria se
iTRACT
Improving Transport and Accessibility through new Communication Technologies
How do you organize the collaboration in a virtual team?
VIRTUAL TEAMS
is a group of individuals...
...who work across time, space and organizational boundaries...
...with links strengthened by webs of communication technology

Collaboration beyond borders

Communication technologies

Organizational tasks

Dispersed workers

Collaboration beyond borders
follows the same process as collaboration...
...but the parties involved in virtual collaboration do not physically interact...
...and communicate exclusively through technological channels

The Bright and Dark Sides of Dispersion

Opportunities

Liabilities

• Heterogeneous knowledge resources

Opportunities

Liabilities

• Utilization of cost advantages
• Heterogeneous knowledge resources
- Access to diverse skills and experience
- Utilization of cost advantages
- Heterogeneous knowledge resources

- Knowledge about diverse markets
- Access to diverse skills and experience
- Utilization of cost advantages
- Heterogeneous knowledge resources
• “Follow the sun” working
• Knowledge about diverse markets
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- Language differences

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• Cultural incompatibilities
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- Difficulties establishing “common ground”
- Cultural incompatibilities
- Language differences

Opportunities

- "Follow the sun" working
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Liabilities

- Fewer synchronous face-to-face interactions
- Difficulties establishing "common ground"
- Cultural incompatibilities
- Language differences

Opportunities

- “Follow the sun” working
- Knowledge about diverse markets
- Access to diverse skills and experience
- Utilization of cost advantages
- Heterogeneous knowledge resources

Liabilities

- Good teamwork more difficult to achieve
- Fewer synchronous face-to-face interactions
- Difficulties establishing “common ground”
- Cultural incompatibilities
- Language differences

How should companies manage dispersed teams?
The Structure of Virtual Teams

Anne Powell, Gabriele Piccoli, and Blake Ives. Virtual teams: a review of current literature and directions for future research. The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems - Winter Vol. 35, issue 1, 2004
Anne Powell, Gabriele Piccoli, and Blake Ives. Virtual teams: a review of current literature and directions for future research. The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems - Winter Vol. 35, issue 1, 2004

- Design
- Cultural differences
- Technical expertise
- Training

• Structural components in Virtual Teams
• Social-emotional processes
• Task processes
• Outputs

Inputs
Anne Powell, Gabriele Piccoli, and Blake Ives. Virtual teams: a review of current literature and directions for future research. The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems - Winter Vol. 35, issue 1, 2004

- Relationship building
- Cohesion
- Trust
Anne Powell, Gabriele Piccoli, and Blake Ives. Virtual teams: a review of current literature and directions for future research. The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems - Winter Vol. 35, issue 1, 2004

- Communication
- Coordination
- Task-Technology-Structure fit
Anne Powell, Gabriele Piccoli, and Blake Ives. Virtual teams: a review of current literature and directions for future research. The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems - Winter Vol. 35, issue 1, 2004
• Satisfaction
• Performance

Anne Powell, Gabriele Piccoli, and Blake Ives. Virtual teams: a review of current literature and directions for future research. The DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems - Winter Vol. 35, issue 1, 2004
Small Distances Matter

The Importance Of Task-related Processes

Four advice to manage virtual teams
Periodic
Initiate and maintain social processes
Align agendas
Participants should view themselves as crucial members of an integrated network
Understand the complexity of virtual teams
Ability to self-manage their own work
Emphasize teamwork skills
Mutual support, coordination and communication
Expertise: "yes", but not only when staffing
Promote self-leadership across the team
Provide for face-to-face meetings
Foster a "global culture"
Summary of key lessons

- Definitions of Virtual Team and Virtual Collaboration
- The Bright and Dark Sides of Dispersion
- Four Structural Components of Virtual Team Management: input, social and task processes and output
- Current lessons regarding virtual team performance: small distance matters and the importance of tasks
- Four advice to manage a virtual team: staffing, self-leadership, face-to-face meetings and global culture
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