Chapter VII

Best Practices for Virtual Team Effectiveness

D. Sandy Staples
Queen's University, Canada

Ian K. Wong
Queen's University, Canada

Ann Frances Cameron
Queen's University, Canada

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to improve the understanding of what makes virtual teams effective. This is done by identifying the best practices for individual team members, the best practices for leaders and sponsors of virtual teams, and the best practices for the organizations that the virtual teams are a part of. Best practices in these categories were identified from: (1) empirical evidence from case studies of six existing virtual teams; (2) the existing literature related to virtual teams; and, (3) traditional team (i.e., collocated) and telework literature. The chapter concludes with implications for organizations and potential research directions.

Introduction

The use of teams as fundamental building blocks in organizations is growing (Furst, Blackburn, & Rosen, 1999), as is the frequency of teams to be distributed geographically (which we call virtual teams). Virtual teams are now being used by many organizations to enhance the productivity of their employees and to reach a diversity of skills and resources. Virtual teams are groups of individuals who work on interdependent tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, and who work together from different locations. Information technology can support their activities by reducing travel costs, enabling expertise to be captured where it is located, and speeding up team communication and coordination processes. Unfortunately, these distributed teams are not always productive. For example, team members may have difficulties in coordinating work with their remote colleagues, or they may not be comfortable using the technology.

Although working in geographically distributed teams is becoming more wide-spread in organizations today, how to do it effectively is not fully understood. The purpose of this chapter is to improve our understanding of what makes virtual teams effective. This will be done by identifying the best practices that individuals on virtual teams should follow (i.e., the team members), the best practices for leaders and sponsors of virtual teams, and the best practices for the organizations of which the virtual teams are a part.

Ideas for best practice were identified from three major sources:

1. Ideas were gathered from case studies of existing virtual teams.

2. The business press and academic literature related to virtual teams were reviewed for best practice ideas.

3. We examined literature from two other areas related to virtual teams. Specifically, these were traditional team (i.e., collocated) literature and telecommuting literature (i.e., research on virtual work at the individual level).

We suggest that there is value in combining the best practice perspectives from the multiple sources. A synthesis of ideas from the tradition team literature, individual-level virtual work literature, virtual team literature, and our own empirical research can potentially offer a relatively complete picture of virtual team best practices.

Our chapter is organized as follows. The chapter presents more background on the sources of the best practices. The best practices are presented in the following sections: "Organizational Best Practices", "Management and Team Leader Best Practices", and "Team Member Best Practices". Presented in the last section is a summary of the findings and concluding remarks.

24 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/best-practices-virtual-team-effectiveness/30899

Related Content

Metaverse in Business and Commerce
Muhammad Usman Tariq (2024). *Exploring the Use of Metaverse in Business and Education (pp. 47-72).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/metaverse-in-business-and-commerce/343974

Lessons Learned from the Design and Development of Vehicle Simulators: A Case Study with Three Different Simulators
Sergio Casasand Silvia Rueda (2018). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 59-80).*
www.irma-international.org/article/lessons-learned-from-the-design-and-development-of-vehicle-simulators/203068

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Its Mixed Reality in the Learning Sphere: A South African Perspective
Ntokozo Mthembu (2018). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 26-37).*
www.irma-international.org/article/information-and-communication-technology-ict-and-its-mixed-reality-in-the-learning-sphere/214987

Why Virtual Worlds Matter
Angela Adrian (2010). *Law and Order in Virtual Worlds: Exploring Avatars, Their Ownership and Rights (pp. 198-202).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/virtual-worlds-matter/43120

Instructional Design Meets Politeness Issues in Virtual Worlds
Yueh-Hui Vanessa Chiangand Diane L. Schallert (2013). *Immersive Environments, Augmented Realities, and Virtual Worlds: Assessing Future Trends in Education (pp. 123-148).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/instructional-design-meets-politeness-issues/74050