


Chapter 7


Designing a Supportive Creative Climate for Human–Centered Virtual Teams: The Role of Rituals

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ABSTRACT

Fostering a creative environment in virtual teams is possible, but it is more difficult than for traditional face-to-face teams. In order to support creativity in virtual teams we need to deliberately create a human-centered team. The most effective way to do that is to build that is built social connectedness and team cohesion, solid team processes, and psychological safety and trust. This can be done through the creation and use of rituals for a virtual environment. This chapter provides guidance to create rituals for virtual teams that support creativity.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching students to work with technology, in addition to teaching core concepts, has become the reality in higher education. Educators must be aware of new technologies and be able to help students use technology effectively to be competitive in today's rapidly changing work environments due to the pace of digital transformation. Digital transformation is defined as the "use of new digital technologies to enable significant business environments" (Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Vuchkovski et al., 2023, p. 1) and has helped to increase the presence and importance of virtual teams in organizations. While virtual teams and remote work have existed for years, these particular ways of doing work saw rapid adoption during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Existing research on virtual teams describes them based on geographic dispersion and dependence on electronic communication (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Gilson et al., 2021; Malhotra et al., 2007; Nemiro, 2004, 2023), and research suggests a series of critical skills needed for team effectiveness in virtual teams (Nemiro, 2004, 2026; Saad & Agogue, 2023). Changing work norms and rapid technological advances require students in higher education and employees to learn these new skills.

While educators have already been working with students to prepare them to work on virtual teams (Hu & Chan, 2024; Ma & Leman, 2023; Nemiro et al., 2023), we propose faculty must be ready to help students learn to work in what we refer to as *human-centered virtual teams* in which students learn how to exhibit collaboration, empathy, and perspective-taking skills (Leman & Mott, 2023; Nemiro, 2026) while working virtually.

In addition, in these human-centered virtual teams, faculty must help students learn how to foster and support team creativity because contemporary organizations are concerned with facilitating creativity and innovation due to their impact on organizational performance. To understand the vital factors needed for creativity in virtual teams, Saad and Agogue (2023) created a framework based on a systematic literature review of virtual teams and creativity that highlighted three areas: (1) the relevant inputs that directly affect a team's creative performance on the individual and team levels, leadership, and technology factors; (2) the general work climate shaping creative conditions such as teamwork and social connectedness; and (3) the virtual collaboration process that guides group interaction and knowledge exchange. Further, Nemiro (2004, 2026) conceptualized a five-component model for ensuring high levels of creativity in virtual teams in business. This model highlighted design, climate, resources, norms and protocols, and continued assessment and learning. Both models have areas of overlap that are important considerations for skill set development.

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