Factors Impacting Effectiveness in Virtual Teams

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ABSTRACT

Advancement and progression are the key constituents of the success in global business. Virtual team and its members are now the virtue of the organizations that work across the countries. There is no doubt that virtual team’s give a competitive advantage to the organization but simultaneously faces challenge in its working. Working in virtual team becomes complex as its members have language difficulties, time and distance challenges, absence of face-to-face contact, and cultural differences. The important factor that has been emerged and examined in the preceding studies which builds a virtual team is trust. Only depending on emails and telephones doesn’t merely build the trust, especially when members are far apart and belong to totally different culture. Even though a large repository of literature is available on virtual teams and trust but still many of the questions are still left unanswered. The paper focus on identifying the factors those are important for the functioning of the virtual team. A set of 45 questions from the available literature were prepared and responses on likert scale are collected, analysed and summarized in the paper.

Keywords: Communications, Effectiveness in Teams, Information Sharing, Communications, Trust, Virtual Team

INTRODUCTION

Virtual teams are becoming more evident in organizations, leading to a strong impact on the traditional working styles. Virtual teams have now become an ever-growing component of a complete business. It is the level of trust amongst the individuals which supports the associations in the virtual team. This progression in the virtual teams has been marked in organization all around the globe. Working through geographically distant location has now become the trend in the modern workplace because it not only saves on costs but also adds on the efficiency in the task. It is the consequence of these dynamics in teams which makes trust building a challenging job and the future of such team is at stake. It is the arrangement and structure of virtual teams, for example working on single specific task, short duration tenure and geographic distance that create hindrance in the success of virtual team building. It is found in many of the researches that managing conflicts, making decisions,
and optimum use of resources are more challenging in virtual team than in face-to-face working team. Building trust is challenging in traditional set up, but it becomes more difficult when it comes to the virtual environment, where members usually work with each other they haven’t met personally. So they will not be able to accomplish the task well if co-workers don’t trust each other. These also include not realizing the verbal clues, non-appreciation of ideas, not able to comprehend with the vision of the team and finally not able to match up to the level of technology being used. All these aspects create a sense of isolation in members of team. For establishing an effective virtual team efforts from both organization and individuals are required. As the team develops, members themselves can also do quite a bit to build trust. As the team members are able to depend on each other trust develops quickly. Every member in the team must be the capable to play a prominent role when asked to, which in turn can demonstrate that they can be fair and reliable even. Good channel of communication amongst team members, effectively managing the differences in time zones, cultures, languages, easy access to technology as well as creating and maintaining trust have marked as essential for virtual team success.

Unlike these many other factors contribute to the trust building process in virtual team. Be it a virtual team or daily meeting team, information sharing is important for team’s increased productivity, growth and success. Information sharing is hard when the team are spread out in distant geographical location. Virtual team allowed more people to plug and play, collaborate and compete, share knowledge and share work, than anything we have ever seen in the history of the world (Friedman, 2005). Since information sharing is a vital part of team’s success, organizations interchange the persons within virtual team to minimize the effects of loss of technical or non-technical information. Various studies have also highlighted communication as a vital issue in the success of virtual team. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) technology, such as the Internet, has the potential to overcome spatial and temporal barriers in human communication (Feng-yang Kuo, Chia-ping Yu Trust, 2009) and communication have a positive correlation. (Jarvenpaa et al, 1998). Computer-mediated communication is associated with superior performance (Torben Juul Andersen,2005). Opportunities for building trust and communication if neglected can make adverse impact on future of virtual teams. It is renowned fact that people in organizations who have known each other for a long time trust more and leads to effective teamwork. Reading through the websites and literature drove me towards the important question, why practitioners say trust is difficult to build in virtual teams and what primary research’s indicate. Every researcher initially assumes that trust is hard to build in virtual teams as compared to face to face teams. As traditional teams have the advantage of informal everyday interactions amongst themselves, the weekend’s party, sharing stories about the kids, or going to restaurants or other places to hangout. But these informal interactions are not at all feasible for the individuals working in virtual team. So how can trust develop in virtual teams? What are the important factors on which trust depends? Apart from these factors what role information sharing and communication play in building trust? It is clear from the researches that trust is not that hard to build in virtual teams. The purpose of this paper is to identify the main factors that impact the trust building process in virtual teams. All it takes is reliability on each other. When virtual team members feel comfortable with each other and can count on one another, trust builds quickly. Various other crucial factors also count while building trust in virtual team. Virtual team members tend to work together for limited amounts of time, which adversely impacts trust. Since beginning, members of virtual team are clear of a limited length of interaction, so how will trust grow within the team? So we in this paper have focused only on information sharing and communication as the crucial factor in development of trust.
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