

# Virtual teams: benefits and challenges



Working in teams has been an old time favorite strategy done in school and in organizations. Possessing teamwork skills are very essential since, nowadays, most projects are done in groups. However, working in teams does not just involve physical presence; it is also done virtually, or specifically, in the cyberspace.

Technological advancements have allowed teamwork to evolve this way. Just like any other approach, this “ virtual team” has its own benefits and challenges. In this paper, I would like to examine the practices involving a virtual team and later on discuss the different benefits and challenges it entails. The benefit of virtual teams is that it allows flexibility among the members and the organization (Gould 1). It also reduces congestion and pollution caused by commuting. Space is also saved with this approach since the space consumed here is a virtual space.

In virtual teams, one would need a software or program (like Lotus Notes and Exchange) which will allow such communication. Websites are also a popular storage for materials and other files. About a hundred people engage in a virtual team (Gould, 2). They mostly use telephones and e-mail for their meetings. He enumerated the following characteristics of a virtual team according to his observation.

First, he said that virtual teams can successfully finish a job. The people in the team are trustworthy. Also, only a few are 100% virtual. They also try to meet up once in a while. Moreover, the structure of a virtual team is the same with the original “ face-to-face” team. In terms of leading a virtual

team, it involves a different framework as compared to a normal team because of the physical separation (Gould 3).

Giving recognition by team leaders was done through a public voice conference call. Moreover, team celebrations were viewed to be impractical due to geographic barriers, thus it made no sense to really celebrate. The team members only just wish that if ever they were at the same place, then they could celebrate. Team leaders only provide seldom support and coaching for their members (Anjum 6). Undeniably, communication problems will likely to happen.

Since, members are working in different places; they cannot seem to put together individual work properly. Sometimes, feedback is also a problem because not everyone can just go online at the same time. Meanings of texts are also quite confusing since you cannot hear the voice. You would not know how the sentence was pronounced and delivered – if the person was mad or not. However, with emoticons, it can be very helpful.

However the real intention of the person will still remain a mystery. A person can easily hide their expressions. Such problems can be solved with the following tips (Gould 5). He said that it is important if the team meets face-to-face occasionally to establish a real relationship and truly build camaraderie among them. However, sometimes this is impossible especially if the members are located in different regions of the world.

Another tip is to regularly update the members of the project. A detailed schedule of the project is really essential so that one can monitor one's

progress. Rules should also be implemented. Sometimes, not everyone respond to questions or requests. There must be time allotted to that.

Also, do not allow members who are missing in action. Sometimes, members go on vacation and they neglect that they still have responsibility. To address that problem, the members should give his or her schedule to the team leader and let everyone informed to prevent misunderstandings. Trust must be developed among the team. Gould said that it is the heart of a successful virtual team management.