

Managing virtual teams



Managing Virtual Teams 1. Introduction Virtual teams have emerged to mitigate the challenges of managing teams that are distributed across different regions, and are a sustainable component of global business. A project manager managing a virtual team would have to integrate communication strategies, project management techniques including human and social processes in order to support the team, (Kimball, 1997). The author is a project manager assigned to lead a virtual team of 300 volunteers located across the globe to develop recommendations for regulating carbon emissions in the world.

As indicated Kimball (1997), this kind of a virtual team usually supports people working in the same professional field and most of the time focuses on learning. 2. The best way to structure this large virtual team The project would be divided into tasks and responsibilities. The team would be divided into sub-teams basing/depending on the regions where the individuals come from, and let these sub-teams work in isolation to deliver their completed task of the project within the stipulated time frame.

It is very important that the tasks and responsibilities are evenly distributed between the sub-teams to create the feeling of fairness among team members, (Edwards & Wilson, 2004). Sub-team leaders can hold a face-to-face meeting in the same location with the author at the start and at the end of the project. 3. Important issues that the author foresee in managing this team a) Different time for interaction Communication across time zones as indicated in OB Week2 Lecture Notes (2013) would be a worrying issue because there might be a difference of 10-12 hours between working days of regions where team members are based.

In situations where the author request for urgent response on a particular issue, the information may be sent to the location at a non working time hence causing delay. To solve this problem, the author would adopt a ' 24-hour working' as outlined in Defencom case study, (Edwards & Wilson, 2004) so that individual sub-teams can work on the recommendations during their working day. This would minimize the crossing of time zones and the process can increase team effectiveness.

The author, as a project manager can establish a common time to interact face-to-face through video conferencing. b) Different cultural and language issues Working with 300 individuals from across the globe requires a project manager to be aware of different cultural and language issues. These individuals would have different ways of working, thinking and also reporting differently. Integrating the work that has been submitted would be a challenge as there will be no time to develop a common language.

In order to solve this issue the team needs to develop an open culture so that everyone can openly share information and not tolerate a blame game. c) Learning the new technology It will be a problem if team members do not understand the virtual working process, which can hinder communication therefore affecting team relationships. Team members must be oriented to the virtual working process before the project commence so that they have enough time to ask.

The author should develop a support mechanism for the team to use when experiencing difficulties. 4. Motivating individuals to archive the project goal These volunteers can be motivated by highlighting to them that, this is an opportunity for them to sharpen their skills and knowledge through

experience of this new working strategy where they will meet different people with different experiences. The author would create a platform for social interaction to speed-up teamwork and create access rights for each of them to be aware what others are doing. The author would make time to interact with all team members during the project and make sure that they have clear understanding of goals and objectives, also finding out if they are happy.

5. References Edwards, A. & Wilson, J. R. (2004) Implementing virtual teams: a guide to organizational and human factors, University of Liverpool Online Library [Online]. Available from: <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.liv.ac.uk/lib/liverpool/docDetail.action?ocID=10048150> (Accessed: 14th February 2013).

Kimball, L. (1997) Managing Virtual Teams: text of speech given by Lisa Kimball for Team Strategies Conference sponsored by Federated Press, Toronto, Canada [Online]. Available from: <http://www.groupjazz.com> (Accessed: 15th February 2013).

University of Liverpool/Laureate Online Education (2013) Lecture notes from Organizational Behavior and People Management week 1 [online]. Available from: University of Liverpool/Laureate Online Education (Accessed: 07 February 2013)