

Managing International Virtual Project Teams

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Abstract. Given the fact that project work organization becomes more popular in all types of organizations, managing international virtual project teams becomes one of the challenges of modern business. Asynchronous communication, dispersed locations, variety of roles, and cultural diversity impose specific requirements on managers and leaders. Potential technological, organizational, and psychological barriers must be controlled in order to successfully accomplish tasks and to maintain benefits of such work organization, among other organizational flexibility and the access to highly qualified specialists from different countries. Not only must the managers acquire advanced leadership skills, but also digital competence enabling them operations in such a virtual environment. Especially that leadership style appears to be one of the key factors determining international virtual project teams performance.

In management theory and practice two opposite approaches to leading international virtual project teams are available and described: micromanagement with a strong impact of a leader on team members, and shared leadership, characterized by the alternating managerial commitment of all team members. The main goal of the presented study is the analysis of consequences of these two different leadership styles for the performance of international virtual project teams. Moreover, apart from theoretical considerations, some basic conclusions from an own pilot study will be presented.

The study was based on the analysis of the performance of 40 virtual project teams composed of the students of the University of Economics in Cracow (Poland) and FORE School of Management from New Delhi (India). Each team worked on a project regarding a chosen topic related to management and business communication. Empirical data includes teams' demography (gender, citizenship) and their size, description of the leaders' behavior, and the evaluation of teamwork outcomes. The conclusions drawn from the study deepen the understanding of the effective management of international virtual project teams and are valuable for developing leadership skills.

Keywords: international virtual project teams, project team management, effectiveness of project teams, leadership styles