

# Human Resource Basics

## Creating, Developing & Evaluating Virtual Teams



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# Introduction

There is relatively **little** information specifically about human resources in virtual teams.

This presentation is meant to convey the basics of human resources of virtual teams.

But first we need to cover the basics of virtual teams...

# What is a Virtual Team?

There are numerous definitions of virtual teams! And there is much debate about the definitions.

One definition is:

“... a group of knowledge workers who are geographically dispersed but not necessarily distributed across expansive geographic locations. They are working together toward a common purpose and goal using electronic communication as their primary medium.” (Gignac, 2005).

# **Types of Virtual Teams**

**There are numerous types of virtual teams. There is also much debate on how virtual teams should be classified**

**One widely accepted classification includes 7 distinct types of teams:**

- 1. Networked – lack of clear definition between organization and team; members rotate on and off team; all members do not know each other**
- 2. Parallel – has clear boundaries and distinct membership, for a specific short-term purpose, usually making a recommendation**
- 3. Project/Product Developing – lasts longer than parallel and has decision making capabilities; ie: developing a product**

# Types of Virtual Teams Ctd.

4. **Functional/Production** – perform regular and ongoing work usually in one functional area such as accounting or R&D
5. **Service** – has distinct membership & works on regular basis to aid customer or organizational activity
6. **Management** – distinct membership that works regularly to lead organization
7. **Action** – fluid and distinct membership; offer immediate responses often to emergency situations (Duarte & Snyder, 2006).

# HR Advantages of VTs

- *Ability to hire the right person regardless of location* – reduce hiring expenses, & eliminate relocation expenses
- *Safety & Security* – organizations are more vulnerable if co-located when disasters or accidents happen (9/11, SARS, Natural Disasters)
- *Facilitates Part-time Work* – negative dynamics associated with part-time work are reduced (specifically thoughts that employees are not available when needed)
- *Improves Quality of Life* – team members can live near family & friends or in a desired location (Jones, Oyung, Pace, 2005).

# HR Disadvantages of VTs

Not every role is suited for virtual work. HR must closely examine each role – sometimes it is hard to determine if virtual work is possible

Things to consider:

*Security of work* – sensitive material may be too risky to be in remote location

*Equipment* – may be too large or needs to be shared

*Insurance* – company's insurance may not cover equipment or information stored remote location

Not every person is suited for virtual work - must evaluate carefully

Difficult to tell if employees are being disturbed/distracted by family members, friends, pets (Jones, Oyung, Pace, 2005).

# Will VTs Work Here?

**Not** every organization should “go virtual”

Every organization should complete a self-assessment:

Readiness – preparedness for a virtual environment

Willingness – desire to have virtual teams

Ability – capability in terms of infrastructure, people, processes, & systems

Consider how a virtual team will effect the organizational culture.

(Hoefling, 2003).

# Team Building: Virtual Managers

The first thing an HR manager should do is select one or more individuals to be virtual team manager(s).

Ultimately a virtual manager has the responsibility of building and maintaining a productive and functional virtual team.

Virtual managers should **not** do everything the same as they would do in an office. “Employees need feedback, coaching, and development. Everyone needs to feel they are important and appreciated. Sending out a lot of emails and expecting it all to get done is not going to work as a long-term solution.” (Garton & Wegryn, 2006).

# **KSA's for Selecting Virtual Managers**

*General Management* – organization, leadership, prioritization

*People Management* – evaluating performance, resolving conflict, coaching

*Communication* – communicating change, issue reporting

*Technical Knowledge* – computer and network setup

*Decision Making* – communicate decisions effectively

*Problem Solving* – recognize and address problems efficiently

*Team Building* – connect team members at a distance

*Administration* – complete clerical tasks (Garton & Wegryn, 2006)

# Advice for Virtual Managers



**Build Commitment, Not Control – create a supportive environment for the team, trust the team until they give you reason not to trust**

**Focus, Coordinate, & Communicate; Not Authorize, Command & Plan – guide the team, do not dictate**

**Connect, not Gatekeep – Network up, down and across organizations**

# Advice for Virtual Managers

**Manage by Results, Not by Sight – Focus on outcomes**

**Coach not “Handle” – guide team into effective performance**

**Dialogue, not Dictate – create sharing & open environment**

**Blend Technology and People, Not Juggle Between – use technology to support people**

**Integrate, Not Comply – develop guidelines, processes, and infrastructure to meet team’s needs (Hoefling, 2003).**



# Selecting Virtual Team Members

There are six core competencies for virtual team members that should be considered when selecting virtual team members.

1. **Project Management** – collaboration, coordination & autonomy
2. **Networking** – ability to connect with others across geography
3. **Use of Technology** – to communicate, coordinate & collaborate
4. **Self-Management** – prioritization of tasks, goals
5. **Spanning Boundaries** – competent in spanning cultural, functional and organizational boundaries
6. **Interpersonal Awareness** – aware of interpersonal style & impact

(Duarte & Snyder, 2006)

# Developing the Team

Development – change, growth, & progression of a team to a more mature state

**\* Key \*** Ensure team members have opportunities comparable to traditional workers for career development (best to create a policy stating equality)

Special Assignments

Promotions or Position Changes

Training – on-site or distance

Technology & Equipment

Money & Perks



# How to Measure Virtual Performance?

Virtual Organizations are ideal for 360 degree evaluations

Performance measures must be multi-dimensional – evaluate both outcome and process components of performance

Meyer (1994) suggested using a team dashboard to assess team performance

The dashboard should help the team gauge performance, indicate corrective action is necessary

Teams must design their own measurement system

Teams must create measures to track processes

Teams should only adopt a handful of measures

(Gibson & Cohen, 2003)

# Conclusion

This presentation only introduced and explored some important aspects of “virtual HR” but there are many more aspects a virtual HR manager needs to learn.

Additional research on the subject also needs to be conducted, as there is a lack of good Virtual HR information.

The following resources can provide some additional information.

Questions? Feel free to email me! [trisha@unc.edu](mailto:trisha@unc.edu)

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