GEOTEMPORALLY DISTRIBUTED PROJECT TEAMS

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Forms of Virtual Teams
- Temporal Influences
- Geotemporally Distributed Project Teams
"I understand that the PM has addressed this in a press conference in Turkey in the last few hours. I haven't seen what she said, but let me say I support what it is that she said."

Bill Shorten MP, speaking to the media, 26th April 2012.
Forms of Virtual Teams
Virtual Teams

‘Groups of geographically and/or organizationally dispersed coworkers that are assembled using a combination of telecommunications and information technologies to accomplish an organizational task.’

*Townsend, DeMarie, and Hendrickson 1998, 17*

But, not all virtual teams are alike…
Forms of virtual team

A “hub and spoke” model often used for projects
Forms of virtual team

A “Peer to Peer” model – typical of IT where work circulates the globe
Forms of virtual team

A “Collaborative” model – typically used in research.
Forms of virtual team

A large hub with very small remote groups or individual remote personnel
Forms of virtual team
Forms of virtual team

- Even as researchers we are occasionally working in forms of virtual teaming;
  - Collaboration with academics at other facilities
  - Communicating with supervisors or students when remote from campus
  - Outsourcing transcription of interviews
Forms of virtual team

And that is just the structure of the virtual team…

Some virtual teams are run as part of the base organisation’s operational model, a part of the normal way of doing business.

Some are formed for between days and months/years to undertake a particular developmental project.

Yet the term “Virtual Team” is used to cover all of these.
Temporal Influences
Temporal diversity

Takes many forms;
• Separation
• Scheduling
• Precision
• Pacing
• Present time perspective
• Future time perspective
• Flexibility
• Linearity
• Scarcity
• Urgency

Ballard & Seibold (2003)
Temporal symmetry & asymmetry

- Proposes that different individuals and groups/cultures perceive time differently and that they relate better to those with similar perspectives
  
  Zerubavel (1981)
Time zone separation

A number of researchers have investigated the impact of time zone separation on stress and communication.

Findings and recommendations are:

- Even a few metre’s separation can affect communications. 
  *Espinosa et al. (2012)*

- Stick to a limited number of forms of communication.
  *Kayworth & Liedner (2000)*

- Asynchronous is more stressful.
  
  *Espinosa et al. (2012)*
Geotemporal leadership

Leading a distributed team is more complex than leading a co-located one.

*Buedorn & Denhardt* (1988)

These leaders need a greater tolerance for ambiguity, understanding of temporal diversity and be able to build trust at a distance.

*Lu et al. (2006) and others (see paper)*
Geotemporally distributed project teams

A sub set of the traditional Virtual Team
Geotemporally Distributed Project Teams

‘Groups of geographically and/or organizationally dispersed coworkers that are assembled using a combination of telecommunications and information technologies to accomplish an organizational task.’ (Townsend, DeMarie, and Hendrickson 1998, 17)

+ “A temporary endeavour undertaken to achieve a unique product, service or result” (PMI 2008, 5)

= “A group of geographically and/or temporally dispersed coworkers, temporarily assembled using appropriately selected communication techniques to undertake or create a unique product, service or result”
What makes them different

• Formed for only a brief period of between days and months to complete their scope in a specific project.

• Typically all from a single company but could be employees of several company’s in a Joint Venture.

• Typically in large groups but with the occasional individual working in isolation from the single or multiple large groups.
Input - Mediator - Outcomes model of Geotemporally Distributed Project Teams (after Mathieu et al. 2008)
Propositions

1. There are some forms of communication that are more effective between geotemporally distributed teams who are separated by fewer time zones and others that are better suited for teams separated by greater distance or time zones, and that it is better for teams to adopt these forms of communication and either discard or use sparingly other forms.

2. There are particular characteristics and skills of both leaders and team members that make them more suited and more effective as participants in geotemporally dispersed project teams, that these characteristics and skills can be identified, developed and leveraged to make the projects these individuals are engaged in more effective.
References

Thank You