

Virtual teamwork challenge for future

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Abstract

The paper focuses on virtual teamwork. Effective autonomous teams can be built as virtual cross boundary teams. This opportunity opens space for creating number of fully involved and motivated teams of expert, disabled people included, around the world prepared to solve tasks together at the same time. Members of the team influence each other to find the best way to solve problems.

1. Virtual teamwork opportunity

The main difference of virtual teamwork in opposite to traditional teamwork lies in the large cross boundary co-operation and high flexibility of work. Team members can work in their home organizations, but they can co-operate and solve the common problems with the colleagues from different countries immediately too. Nowadays, social software of the various types exists and new one is still in developing. Large software enterprises and companies offered a wide scale of software tools, didactic means and study platforms. An important question is how to exploit it effectively. Do we take this possibility at all? Are we able to use them in an adequate way?

What's good about virtual teamwork for disabled people? They may be able to do their job or at least parts of their job, from home wherever it is. The virtual teamwork as a form of telework can reduce travel time and costs. It is possible to meet and talk with some of the most talented and most interesting people in the world, whom you would never otherwise meet. Managers can recruit from a broader base of talent - people who are not willing to relocate, but may be more qualified or less expensive than local talent. [1]."

The optimal and effective virtual teamwork assumes the high level of competence each team

members. The communication face to face really doesn't exist in virtual space therefore it is necessary to exchange an experience, views and comments by the written form very often. But the possibilities of video and audio transmissions are increasing at present. Different kinds of audio and video transmission enlarge ways of human social communication in the cyberspace. Due to the limited communication face to face it seems to be essential to have adequate communication ability. The situation described above represents the great challenge for educators to prepare the students to work in this way.

The present experience from this kind of work shows, in fact, the importance of professional characteristics essential for it. The basic human characteristics as credibility, dependability, high level of responsibility, of course, and creativity more than the others are fundamental. A cyberspace opens not only a large space for cross boundary collaboration, but also to decrease potential barriers of various kinds of difference. Team members can be citizens from different countries, different organizations, teleworkers around the world. But this does not seem to be important in cyberspace very often.. The knowledge, skills and experience are more important. Therefore disabled especially physically handicapped people could increase their employability by this type of work too. Relative pragmatism of this kind of work pushes participants to a high level of clarity and understanding of the communicated contents.

What are the key questions that have to be answered by authors and educators about a good training of virtual teamwork? The main task seems to be to clearly define what is really important to the efficiency of virtual teamwork. The present experience shows us the importance of the team leader position. Particularly, what skills should leaders have of virtual team if any? Is it enough if he/she is a famous expert in

a specific branch or what skills he needs first of all to be successful in virtual team leadership? The other key topic in the field of effective virtual teamwork is relationship too. Is it enough to offer users friendly environment or is it important to learn how to cooperate effectively there? Quite a lot of theoretical study material in this field has been written already. The principle question is, in fact, have we had corresponding experience in this field too? "A lot of organizations create virtual teams with almost no understanding of the unique implications of that decision. Making those teams work isn't easy. "We put people in a complex virtual environment and we don't give them training, because we don't know what to train them on." [2]

2. By the own experience

Due to own experience of virtual teamwork courses producing, it is possible to say, a person-to-person interactivity increasing seems to be the one of the main tasks for educators and promoters of the collaborative work in cyberspace at present practice besides person-to-technology interactivity. We need an interaction not only between PCs and individuals, or between individuals and technology, but also and firstly among individuals themselves. A human mutual interaction seems to be a core stone of a human being. A professional preparation of potential virtual team members to this kind of co-operation supposes learning by doing, because having to understand clearly the specifics of this type of work is priority. It means we have to derive benefit from different ways of social communication to put people together. We have to develop user friendliness in communication tools and to offer user friendly environment to potential and real users, too. No less important is to focus to the virtual team building, training, team role specifying and defining, clarifying the roles and importance of virtual team leadership. Our virtual

teamwork course has been oriented to the team building skills improving and to the team member relationship and especially stabilizing. The course is multinational and multicultural.

The course participants are students from different countries all over the world. Students have learned there not only theory of social interaction and social relationship, but they can improve their social and communication skills in an untraditional space = in cyberspace. It is possible to say that we have had quite positive feedback from our students till now. But we still have to look for the right methods of effective mutual cross boundary collaboration. [3]

Basic PC skills are the only one step to admit this type of innovation and to adapt to it. A further important step represents the development of technology supported work and workplaces. Our PCs are not only instruments for our personal utilisation, but they are also means of mutual interconnection, communication and various types of interaction. A lot of enterprises realised advantages of teleworking and transfer number of employees to new workplaces. In this way new type of organisations is built at present. [4]

10. References

- [1] <http://www.ravenwerks.com/Teamwork/virtual.htm>
- [2] http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/bmag/sbsm0305/feature_virtual_teams.shtml
- [3] <http://www.vse.cz/online>
- [4].Lipnack,, J.Stamps: The team net factor, O.W. Publications, 1993.