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WORKING TOGETHER APART

Instructional Guide with methods on how to
enhance knowledge sharing in virtual teams

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1 Introduction

Knowledge can be considered as one of the most important resources in any organisation that can provide a sustainable competitive advantage at any competitive market and dynamic economy (Wang and Noe, 2010). The movement of knowledge from one team member to another, typically called transfer, diffusion, distribution - or more commonly, - knowledge sharing (Berhman e al., 2004; van den Hooff & Ridde, 2004; Wasko & Faraj, 2005, as cited in Staples & Webster 2008). In addition, knowledge sharing englobes the dissemination of existing knowledge as well as bringing new information from the external environment. As Gardner (2016) puts it, "Today's problem simply demand that specialists in the context of professional service firms [...] work together to integrate their separate knowledge bases and skill sets to forge coherent, unified solutions. They have to collaborate, in efficient and effective ways." As already mentioned, a virtual community is based on information and communication technologies, however, creating a knowledge-based environment requires other key elements, which will be elucidated in this digital Guide.

Key Words:

knowledge sharing, team effectiveness, elements, virtual team

2 How to increase trust?

Create an environment of Swift Trust



It is simple. Let's say you are on a boat with the rest of your team. You would have to trust each other's strengths in order to reach the shore safely and fastly. In a virtual team you should adopt the following mindset:



"We are in this together,
if we succeed, awesome!
If we fail, we go down
together."

2 How to increase trust?

Develop interpersonal relationships

1 Be a good listener

Be there for your colleagues when something is wrong. Try to listen with insight and give your full attention.

3 Keep a positive attitude

Having a good mindset and positive attitude is inviting to others.

2 Show respect at all times

Be timely with your emails and calls, do not let people waiting. Come prepared an on time for virtual meetings.

4 Communicate openly and honestly

Be curious and ask questions. Also, be aware of the tone of your voice, remember that virtually you cannot see body language.

5 Establish "Coffee Break" meetings

In these meetings you can talk about everything but work. Be interested in what is going on with your mates outside of work.

3 Which communication tools should be used and when?

For Video Conferencing

Zoom

Features:

Join from any device
Built-in tools for screen sharing
Recording option to save sessions



For a common workplace

Microsoft Teams

Features:

Online meetings
Instant messaging
Apps
Workflows & more



For social networking

Yammer

Features:

Enterprise microblogging
Share files, links, and images
Message and content tagging



Note that it's important to establish a common ground for communication and use net-working within the organisation to share information easier.

Make sure that you know how to effectively use these tools.

4 How to keep motivation high

Celebrate small results!

Congratulate your colleagues for their good work! Let them know how much you appreciate their contributions.

Stay positive!

It is not about being happy all the time. It is about sharing positive experiences with your team mates and creating a positive workplace.
It is proven that a positive approach in an organisation helps raise to productivity and sales!

Stay healthy!

If you are ill, better to stay at home. Take a few days off if needed and come back with more energy than ever!

Be transparent!

Being transparent will make other trust you more. And if your mates think they can trust you, motivation will increase within the workplace!

Set small goals!

Setting clear and measurable goals is a motivation booster. Every time you achieve something, you will see that you are on the right track and this will keep you motivated to keep going. Important: celebrate each step achieved!



5 Some practices that should be implemented

The team leader should:

Encourage frequent communication by always checkin up of the work and process of all members - clearly define work processes to help keep everyone on track towards their goals.

Provide guidelines and structures on how the team should communicate.

Endorse team building and promote constant and positive members' interactions.

Develop rewards systems according to their inputs (e.g., effort, time, performance, etc.) Being rewarded fairly for the work performed will lead employees to put more efforts toward virtual teamwork.

Do not micromanage! Trust your employees' abilities and that they will perform their tasks. Specially virtually, employees feel more productive if they have more authority.

If nobody is sharing knowledge effectively, employees are not motivated to start doing so. Therefore, encourage every new member to adapt from the beginning a knowledge sharing approach.



6 Tips for an effective virtual meeting

1

Set your agenda, goal and prepare yourself for the meeting

2

Always try to use headphones and mute them whenever you are not speaking

3

Make use of different tools like brainstorming or screen sharing, in which everybody has to collaborate real-time

4

Make sure notes and actions are distributed following the meeting and rotate who takes the notes, as it will affect how you participate

5

If you have to discuss a topic which not everybody knows about, send participants a pre-read so that you don't lose time

7 Further Development

Create a Collaborative Development.

Continue the great work by implementing "Check Up" virtual meetings. This is a great opportunity for you and your mates to collaborate and discuss about the new change of behaviour into becoming a knowledge sharing-based organisation.

Participate in an Interactive Workshop.

This Workshop is intended to happen at least twice a year, where you and your team mates get together in person and work collaboratively towards learning even more about how to enhance knowledge sharing. This is a great opportunity for you and your team to reflect on issues and on your experiences applying the methods from this Guide.



Adapted from Coleman (2018)