2018 Trends in High-Performing
Global Virtual Teams

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In March 2018, RW3 CultureWizard invited executives of major organizations around the world to participate in its fifth biennial global virtual team survey. The survey had 1,620 respondents from 90 countries, which indicates continuing interest in the subject of how to cultivate high-performing global virtual teams. The 2018 survey illustrates the preponderance and importance of global virtual teams—with 89% of respondents stating that they're on at least one team, 88% that the teams are critical to conducting daily work, and 62% that they work on teams with three or more cultures.

We were astounded to find that despite the preponderance and criticality of these teams, only 22% get training for intercultural virtual work. As a result, the key challenges remain the same as in previous years (2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016): establishing relationships with team members, understanding the full context of messages, and the pace of decision-making.

Consistent with the above observation, only 15% of respondents who identified themselves as leaders of global virtual teams were able to rate themselves as very effective. Fortunately, members of those teams had a slightly better assessment of the team leaders, rating them somewhat better (24%). The challenge is obvious.

This year we were struck by the sheer volume and intensity of comments from participants. It is one thing to check a survey box; it is quite another to offer a personal insight with real passion. We saw a torrent of pride, resentment, anger, frustration, and advice from engaged participants, 40% to 50% of whom took the time to write a response to the questions. To do justice to that first-hand experience and wisdom, we included a selection of the most germane insights within the body of survey data.

As we read the comments, we couldn't help but empathize with team members who are not adequately prepared to understand, interpret, and adjust to the intercultural dynamics that always appear when working across cultures. The comments are replete with references to frustration due to "lack of participation," "lack of engagement," and "lack of ownership"—issues that a good inter-cultural training program will address, and for which strategies and team tactics can be developed to mitigate.

There also are comments about how "low-context communication" team members and leaders can frustrate group members who need more background to understand and participate in the team. Others expressed frustration with some team members who say "yes" when they mean "no," or do not notify others that a timeline is slipping. There also are comments on how a "dominant" culture may frustrate team members who have other cultural values and how dis-empowering the experience can be.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (ANALYSIS)

THE HUMAN FACTOR REMAINS THE BIGGEST HURDLE FOR GLOBAL VIRTUAL TEAMS

Given the ubiquity of global virtual teamwork we cannot overstate the magnitude of the challenge that virtual work introduces to productivity. As human beings, we are endowed with multiple senses and forms of expression that we rely on in our interpersonal communication. When deprived of some of that sensory

input and forms of expression, we must compensate. In the virtual work world, we are deprived of using all our senses. Consequently, the information we receive from the senses that are being used must be amplified and translated. When we apply this situation to a team consisting of people from multiple cultures with different personal styles, the challenge grows exponentially. To be successful in the global arena; however, each person must become a proficient and effective virtual worker. This survey demonstrates that a large segment of the global workforce is operating at a disadvantage for a consequential portion of their work.

For years we've reported that just because technology makes it easy for global meetings to take place, it does not mean that global meetings will generate useful results. Profound cultural challenges exist. The hard fact remains that different cultures have different expectations regarding meetings. They have different collaborative behaviors and expectations about leadership, respond to different forms of encouragement, and demonstrate engagement in different ways.

In virtual meetings, all of those differences are exacerbated by the lack of visual cues when people cannot see each other. These differences are intensified by technologies that are challenging in themselves because of time-lags, interference, and operational confusion. Language difficulties and time zones further complicate the problem.

Despite the growing importance of global business over many years, the ability to work globally, especially on virtual teams, doesn't come naturally. Nevertheless, everyone recognizes how critical global collaboration is. For instance, 84% of respondents reported that virtual communication is more difficult than in-person communication, and 89% of virtual teams typically include at least two cultures. Yet only 22% receive training to make their team participation more effective.

In other words, despite all the evidence that indicates challenges related to interpersonal communication and teamwork, we invest heavily in the technologies that make global virtual teams possible, but we under invest in the human skills to maximize the benefits of those investments.

COLLABORATION FACES SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL BARRIERS

A full 89% of respondents work on at least one virtual team, and 27% work on at least four such teams. Moreover, 88% report that this virtual teamwork is critical to their productivity. With virtual teams incorporating larger numbers of cultures, the potential impact of cultural barriers rises correspondingly. And the technologies used to keep team members in touch simply cannot alleviate the consequences of misunderstandings and other culture-based obstacles—frequently over such simple matters as agreement on schedules and task assignments.

Different cultures interpret the term, "collaboration" differently. So, it's not surprising that people could misunderstand behaviors as not being collaborative when, in fact, their colleagues are working very hard to participate and support the team. In fact, 76% cited colleagues who do not participate as one of the greatest challenges. We observe (through the open-ended comments) that team members want to be participative, but the question for many of them is "How?" For example, it is difficult for a team member from a culture where interrupting the speaker is seen as impolite to break into the conversation when it's the only way to participate.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Team leaders face hurdles in leading multicultural virtual teams when they have little preparation for that role, as noted earlier. Their lack of preparation is apparent when they rate themselves; only 15% rate themselves as very effective, and 53% rate themselves as only moderately effective. This leaves a significant number of leaders who feel they are not prepared for the role. It's no wonder. In addition to general leadership skills, global virtual leaders need to galvanize numerous cultures into a cohesive unit while helping their team develop relationships and trust without the benefit of seeing each other face to face. To achieve those goals requires a team charter that defines expected team behavior such as timeliness, responsiveness, and participation—all while recognizing that such behavior is unfamiliar (and perhaps difficult) for some of its members.

This is a very complex task. Fortunately, team members rate their leaders somewhat more favorably than the leaders rated themselves with 24% saying that the leadership was very effective.

Genuine self-confidence in one's own leadership ability is extremely important. Leaders need to feel "very effective" so they can inspire confidence, motivate team members, and create the unity that a team needs. We would expect to see a significant focus on global leadership training over the next few years. In 2018, only 19% of current respondents report that they had formal global leadership training.

DIVERSITY AND THE NEED FOR GLOBAL BUSINESS SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Most participants (76%) value the diversity of their global teams and are aware that diversity improves the output of their work. We also noted that nearly half the participants (49%) had diversity and inclusiveness training.

Despite that training and recognition of the value of diversity, we also recognize the potential for conflict on diverse global virtual teams. Much of that challenge is a result of deeply rooted behaviors that may be dramatically different from culture to culture. For example, participants value team members that share information, collaborate, are pro-actively engaged, organized, and willing to provide feedback. But strong cultural differences can undermine the potential for experiencing these behaviors.

The large number of problems identified in the open-ended comments indicate that despite a positive valuation of diversity (76%), many respondents state they do not know how to manage differences on a day-to-day basis. This is not surprising given the low percentage who have had formal training.

The inability to see each other and to create a personal connection takes a disproportionate toll on team members, crippling those that come from high relationship cultures, while barely affecting members from transactional ones. We should also point out that in addition to having a disproportionate impact on different cultures, being virtual also intensifies generational differences.

KEY FINDINGS

- 89% of respondents work on a virtual team; 27% are on at least four virtual teams.
- 88% of respondents say their virtual teamwork is at least somewhat (32%) or extremely (56%) critical.
- The decline in face-to-face meetings continues; 48% of respondents never meet other virtual team members in person.
- 84% of respondents report that virtual communication is more difficult than in-person communication.
- Only 22% of respondents received training to increase their productivity on virtual teams.
- 30% of respondents lead virtual teams.
- 81% of respondents who lead teams report that they had no formal global leadership training.
- Only 15% of respondents rate themselves as very effective in leading across countries and cultures.
- 89% of respondents report that their virtual teams typically include at least two cultures.
- The following were cited as the top cultural challenges: time zones (88%), understanding different accents (80%), timeliness and responsiveness (80%), colleagues who do not participate (76%).
- 16% of respondents report intercultural misunderstandings that cost the company an opportunity.
- 76% report that members of global teams perceive the value of diversity.
- 39% of respondents have perceived unconscious bias based on age, gender, or ethnicity.
- Respondents say that good virtual teammates share the following characteristics: share information (19%), are collaborative (18%), are proactively engaged (17%), and are organized (14%).
- Respondents indicate that the most beneficial forms of communication between team members are regular face-to-face meetings (93%), conference calls (93%), and video conferencing (84%).
- 39% of respondents use webcam or video technology for at least half of their virtual meetings.

The following issues were frequently raised in the open-ended remarks:
- Resentment that some cultures dominate meetings and others do not participate.
- Lack of clarity about when agreement is reached that may compromise trust among team members.
- Differing assumptions about what constitutes a timely response and politeness.
- The impact of hierarchy in some cultures and the lack of feedback or questions.
- Misunderstandings about differences in gender-related communications.
- The value and impact of diversity and how it affects projects.
- Lack of comprehension caused by language-related problems.
- The challenges of time-zone-related scheduling.
- The need to adopt guidelines, agendas, clear objectives, and follow-up for maximum productivity.
- The desire for informal meetings to build team spirit and trust.
- Constantly changing team membership.
- Lack of a shared core knowledge, experience, and expertise among team members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective leadership of global virtual teams is more important than ever. The smooth functioning of these teams is already difficult enough—even without the challenges of working between cultures. First, because people communicate most naturally in face-to-face situations, the continuing decline in opportunities for such meetings poses a growing challenge to all virtual teams, regardless of culture.

Second, the addition of more than one culture brings a constellation of new concerns. Consequently, we strongly suggest the following practices:

- Create team charter/rules: Immediately after formation of the team, leaders should facilitate the development of operating structures and guidelines. Team charters typically include topics such as scheduled meeting times, expectations for response time to emails, the process for decision- making, encouragement and techniques for all members to participate and debate, and methods for expressing disagreement.
- Distribute an agenda: Before each meeting, prepare and distribute an agenda so that people can formulate their thoughts and questions.
- Send summary notes: After each meeting, it's important to review the highlights so everyone has a shared understanding of what occurred at the meeting.
- Rotate time-zones: On global teams, one of the most difficult challenges is the inconvenience of doing work at awkward times of the day. Moreover, you want to rotate times so that you get the best contribution from all team members, regardless of location. It's important to vary the time of virtual meetings so the inconvenience is shared equally, if possible.
- Devote time to developing relationships: Relationships among team members are an important aspect of high-performing teams. Allow time to share some personal information about hobbies, vacations, etc. to find common areas of interest.
- Focus on trust: Shared trust among team members is quite difficult to establish but is essential. Spend time focusing on the ways members can build trust, specifically by adhering to commitments and investing in relationships with other team members.
- Encourage participation: Active participation during meetings may be awkward for some team members, but effective teams manifest regular participation by all members. Leaders can help everyone contribute by soliciting opinions and polling participants, even pre- or post-meeting, for specific people, if necessary.
- Handle language difficulties: Word pronunciation and accents remain a big challenge, so be sure to maintain an environment where people have frequent opportunities to ask for clarification. Summary meeting notes will help to clarify a shared understanding.
- Encourage offline discussions: Disagreements, negative feedback, and particularly challenging or time-consuming topics should be addressed in separate meetings with fewer participants.

BACKGROUND

ABOUT RW3 CULTUREWIZARD

With offices in New York, Los Angeles, London, and Hong Kong, RW3 CultureWizard is known for culturally based training solutions that enable business professionals to master doing business across cultures with ease and confidence. These powerful blended-learning systems consist of online learning, in-person courses, and a vast multimedia library. For global teams and business travelers alike, these resources support a global mindset, an understanding of diversity and inclusion, and dramatic improvements in the intercultural proficiency that generates organizational success in a global marketplace.

SURVEY PURPOSE

In 2010, we pioneered a 17-question survey to gauge the importance of global virtual teams and identify the challenge faced by virtual team members. We enriched our exploration with each passing year, and we currently ask 35 questions, covering the following topics among many others:

- The importance of virtual teams to global organizations.
- The impact of different types of communication and communication technologies on virtual teams.
- The nature and severity of cultural challenges facing virtual teams.
- How team members assess the value of diversity and its impact on performance.
- Unconscious biases among team members regarding age, gender, and ethnicity.
- Valued characteristics among global virtual team members.
- The preparedness and effectiveness of global team leaders, especially for multicultural teams.
- The prevalence of formal global leadership training.

RESPONDENT PROFILE
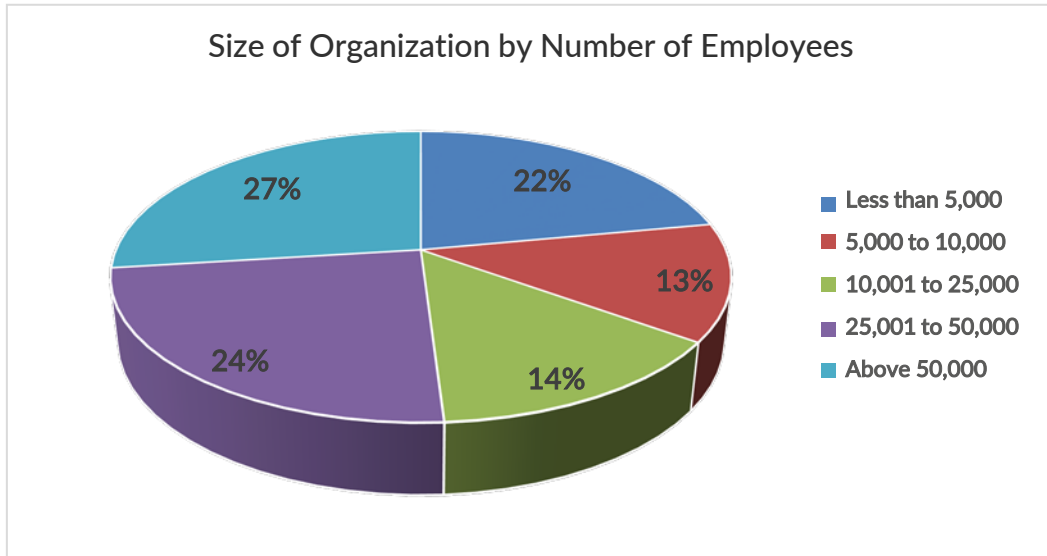
LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS

The 1,620 survey respondents were based in 90 countries. In the left-hand column of the following table, we have identified the percentage of survey respondents from the locations identified on the right-hand side of the table, which are listed alphabetically within each percentage range to make them easier to locate.

Percent	Nationality (2016 percentages shown in parentheses)
34%	United States (43%)*
8%	United Kingdom (10%)
7%	India (6%)
4%	Germany (3%), Italy (1%)
3%	Brazil (2%), Philippines (1%)
2%	Australia (2%), Canada (2%), China (1%), Japan (3%), Mexico (2%), , Singapore (1%), Taiwan (<1%)
1%	Argentina (1%), Belgium (1%), Colombia (<1%), Finland (1%), France (3%), Ireland (1%), Malaysia (1%), Netherlands (1%), New Zealand (1%), Nigeria (N/A), Poland (1%), Portugal (<1%), Romania (<1%), Russia (1%), Slovakia (<1%), South Africa (<1%), Spain (1%), Sweden (<1%), Switzerland (<1%), Thailand (<1%)
Other countries represented (<1%)**	Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Aruba, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belarus, Bolivia, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burma, Cameroon, Congo (Democratic Republic of the), Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Greece, Haiti, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia * The figures in parentheses indicate percentages from the 2016 survey. **For countries with current survey-participation levels below 1%, no percentages showing previous participation rates are displayed in parentheses.

SIZE OF RESPONDING ORGANIZATIONS

The largest group of respondents (27%) represented organizations with more than 50,000 employees. The next largest group (24%) was from organizations with 25,000 to 50,000 employees. Together, respondents from these large organizations constituted 51% of the survey participants.

Size of Organization by Number of Employees

- Less than 5,000
- 5,000 to 10,000
- 10,001 to 25,000
- 25,001 to 50,000
- Above 50,000

22% · 13% · 14% · 24% · 27%

GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

In this survey, 51% of respondents were female and 49% male (compared to 53% and 47% respectively in 2016).

Gender of Respondents

- Female
- Male

49% · 51%
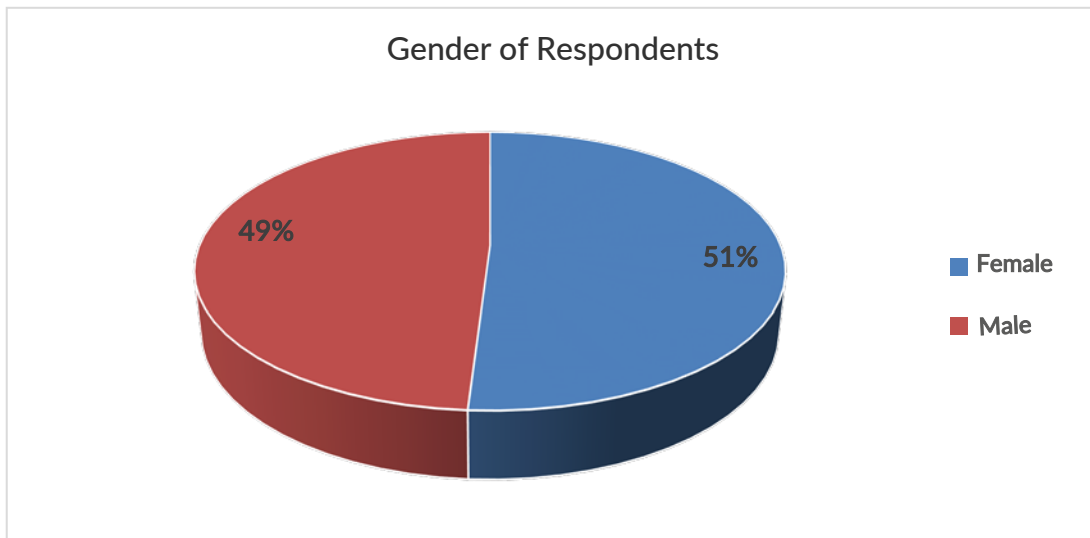
AGE OF RESPONDENTS

The largest group of respondents was 35 to 50 years old (49%), followed by those over 50 years old (28%) and those 34 and under (23%). As in 2016, the survey respondents are primarily in mid-career (Generation X). Furthermore, Baby Boomers still outnumber Millennials, who now constitute the youngest category entirely.

Age of Respondents

Age Group	Percentage
34 and under	23%
35 to 50	49%
Over 50	28%

SURVEY PARTICIPATION BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

The largest groups of survey participants were from the information technology sector (19%) and from the manufacturing, aerospace, and transportation sector (19%). They were followed by participants from the services, publishing, advertising, hospitality, and entertainme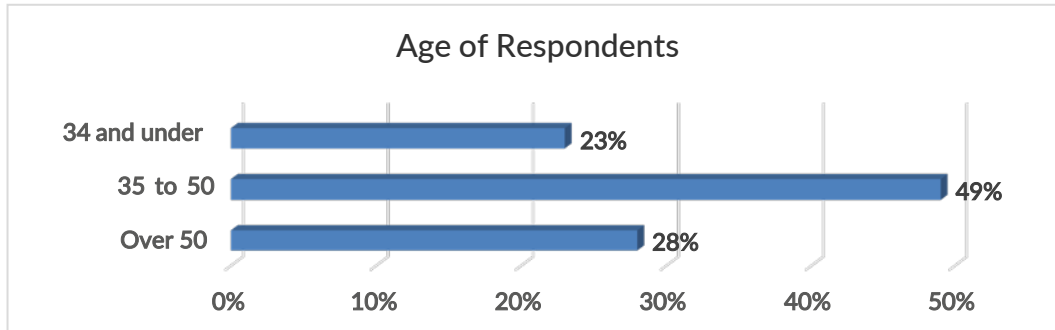nt sector (12%) and from the finance, insurance, legal, and accounting sector (10%). We also had high rates of participation from the pharmaceuticals, medical device, and healthcare sector (8%).

Participation by Industry

Industry	Percentage
Information technology	19%
Manufacturing, aerospace, transportaion	19%
Services, publishing, advertising, hospitality	12%
Finance, insurance, legal accounting	10%
Pharmaceuticals, medical devices, healthcare	8%
Education	7%
Consumer products, retailing	6%
Construction, engineering	5%
Energy, utilities, mining	2%
Chemicals, agriculture	1%
Other	11%

SURVEY RESPONSE DATA

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VIRTUAL TEAMS

NUMBER OF VIRTUAL TEAMS

We asked respondents to state the number of virtual teams on which they work. The overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) are members of at least one virtual team. Some 62% of respondents work on one to three teams, and 27% participate on at least four teams. This is a slight increase over 2016 (63% and 22% respectively).

How Many Virtual Teams Are You On?

16%   11%
11%
62%

■ None ■ 1 to 3 ■ 4 to 5 ■ Over 5
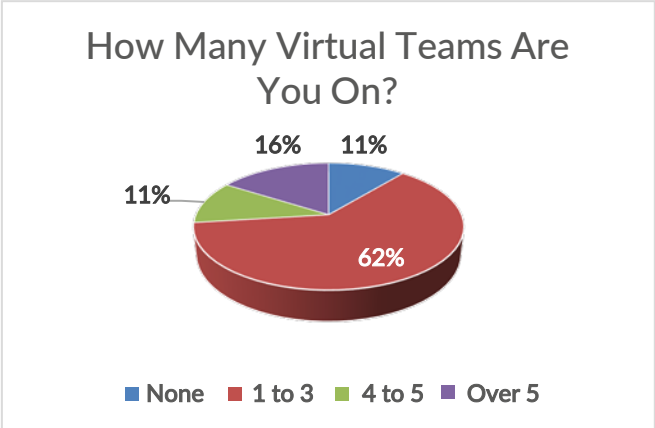
PRODUCTIVE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL TEAMS

When asked how critical virtual teamwork is to their productivity, more than half (56%) of respondents reported that it is extremely critical. Notably, these figures were 54% in 2016 and much lower in 2014, when this question was asked in a different way.

How Critical Is Virtual Teamwork to Your Productivity

12%
32%
56%

■ Not ■ Somewhat ■ Extremely
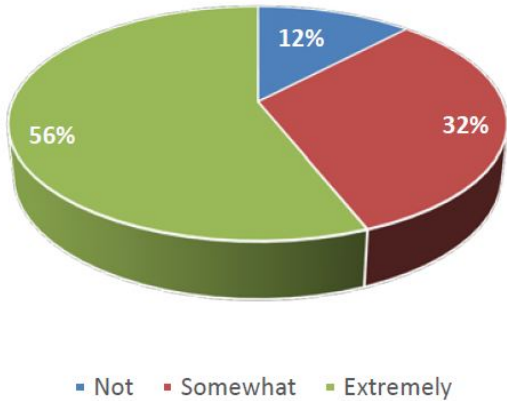
Teams Without Virtual Members

In a new question, we asked if respondents were part of teams with no virtual team members. Only 42% replied "yes," so virtual teams now dominate the collaborative work environment and constitute 58% of all teams.

Are You Part of Teams With No Virtual Members?

42%

58%

- Yes
- No

Communication on Virtual Teams

Meeting Virtual Team Members in Person

The practice of team members never meeting face-to-face is increasingly prevalent. Nearly half (48%) of respondents never meet other team members (an increase from 34% in 2014 and 41% in 2016). Of the teams that meet, 26% do so once a year, down from 28% in 2016.
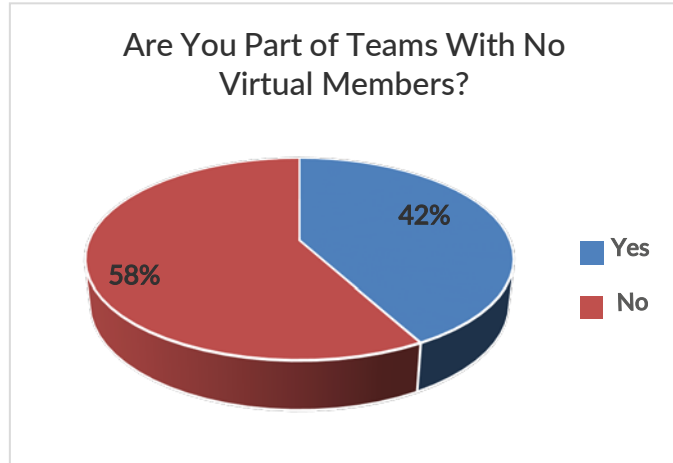
Since personal, face-to-face contact is valuable and enhances the productivity of global teams, we recommend the frequent use of webcams when possible. Although this practice cannot replace face-to-face contact, it enhances people's ability to identify with each other, build trust, and create stronger relationships. Providing opportunities for team members to chat before or after a webcam meeting can increase the trust- building value of these encounters.

How Often Does Your Virtual Team Meet in Person?

Category	Percentage
Never	48%
Once a year	26%
Twice a year	10%
Three times a year	5%
More than three times a year	11%
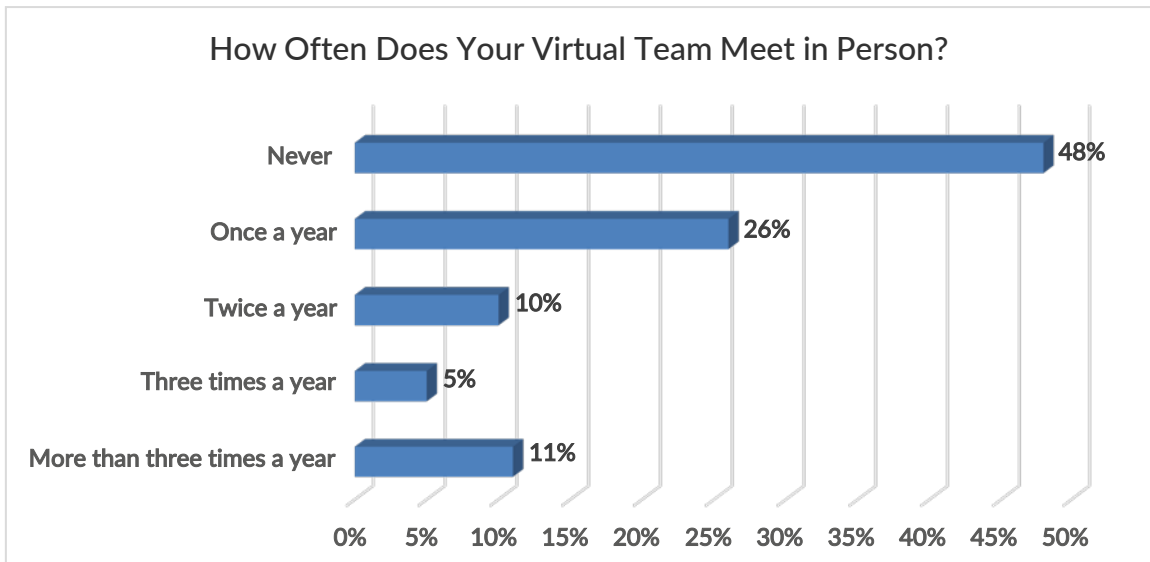
DIFFICULTY OF VIRTUAL-TEAM VS. IN-PERSON COMMUNICATION

For the first time, we asked respondents how much more difficult it is to communicate in a global virtual team than in person. Fully 28% of respondents reported that it was much more difficult, and 56% indicated that it was slightly more difficult. Only 16% reported no difference. The physical presence of other team members with immediate feedback and visual cues of gestures are advantages of in-person communication that are often lacking in virtual communication.

How Much More Difficult Is Virtual Communication Than In- Person Communication?

Category	Percentage
Much more difficult	28%
Slightly more difficult	56%
No difference	16%
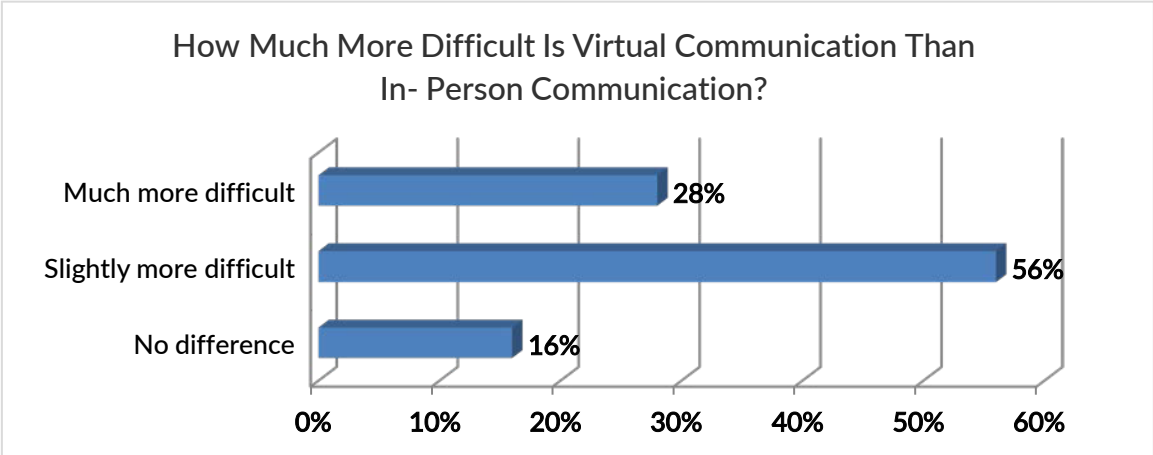
How Lack of Face-to-Face Contact Affects Global Virtual Teams

When asked how the lack of face-to-face contact affects global virtual teams, respondents indicated that the most severe impact was on managing conflict (52%), building relationships (50%), understanding the full message being communicated (48%), having an effective dialog (39%), and establishing trust (39%). This year we added a question, so the ranking of responses is slightly different than in 2016; nonetheless, managing conflict and building relationships were also selected in 2016 as the top concerns.

How Lack of Face-to-Face Contact Affects Global Virtual Teams

Category	Very challenging	Challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not challenging
Managing conflict	18%	34%	34%	14%
Building relationships	14%	36%	36%	14%
Understanding the full context of what people communicate	13%	35%	38%	14%
Having an effective dialog	8%	31%	41%	20%
Establishing trust	9%	30%	42%	19%
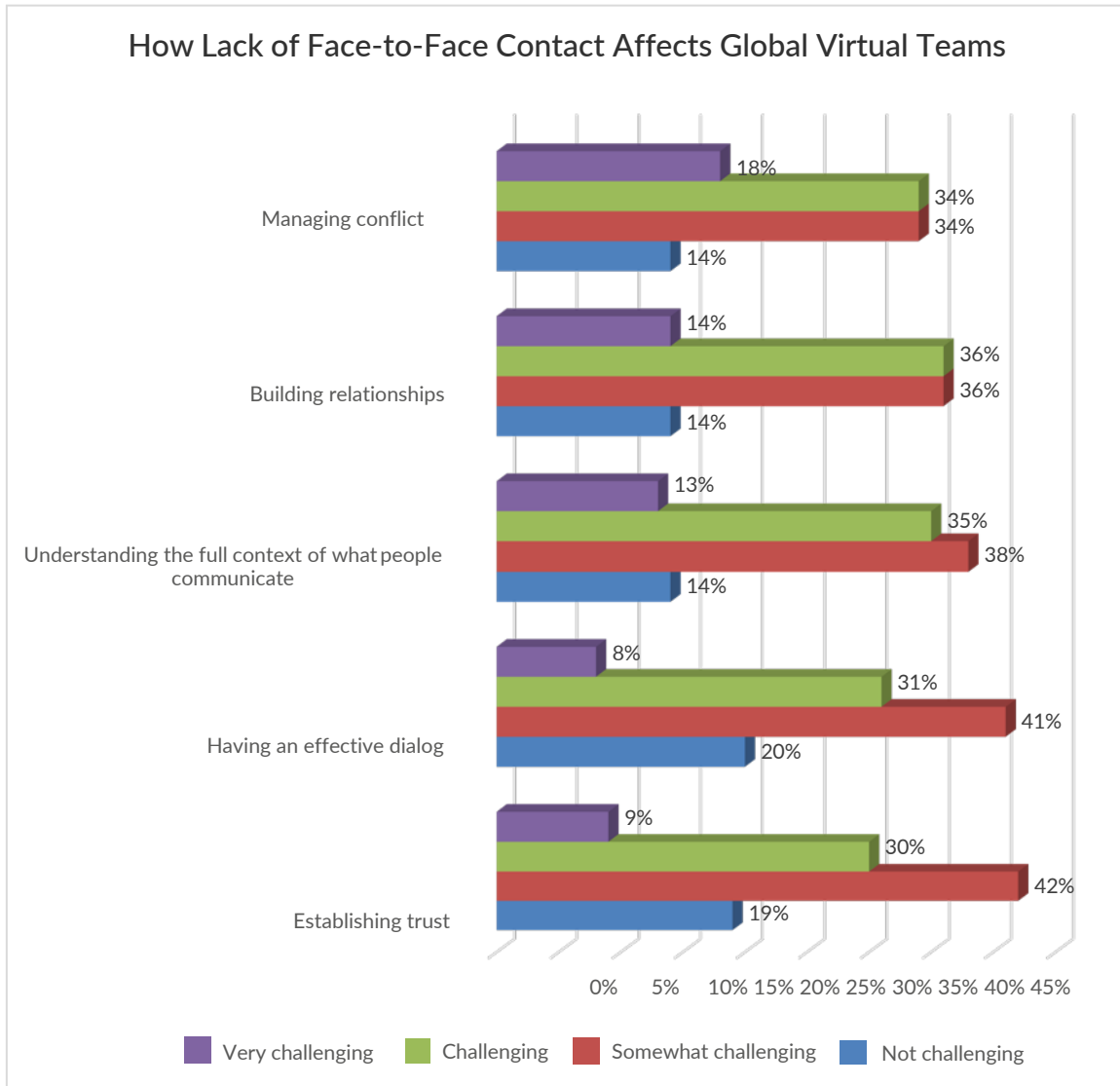
ADJUSTING COMMUNICATION TO COMPENSATE FOR LACK OF VISUAL CONTACT

When asked if people on their virtual teams adjust their communication to compensate for the lack of visual contact (a new question this year), 62% strongly agree or agree; only 12% disagree or strongly disagree.

Do People on Global Virtual Teams Adjust Their Communication to Compensate for the Lack of Visual Contact?

Category	Value
Strongly agree	13%
Agree	49%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%
Disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	1%
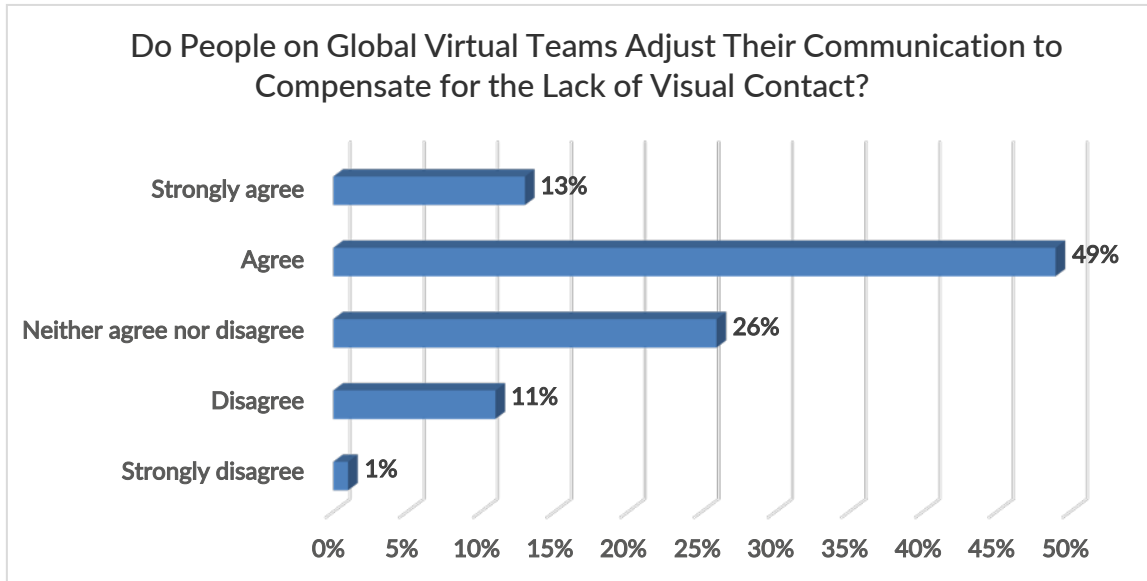
MOST BENEFICIAL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

When we asked which forms of communication were most beneficial when team members interact, respondents reported that regular face-to-face meetings were the most beneficial (93%), followed by conference calls (93%), video-conferencing (84%), and group emails/email discussion groups (79%). Internal and external social media tools were cited by 62% and 39% respectively. The ranking sequence is the same as in 2016.

Most Beneficial Forms of Communication Between Team Members

Regular face-to-face meetings
- Extremely beneficial: 52%
- Beneficial: 41%
- Not beneficial: 7%

Conference calls
- Extremely beneficial: 27%
- Beneficial: 66%
- Not beneficial: 7%

Video-conferencing
- Extremely beneficial: 34%
- Beneficial: 50%
- Not beneficial: 16%

Group emails/email discussion groups
- Extremely beneficial: 14%
- Beneficial: 65%
- Not beneficial: 21%

Internal social media tools
- Extremely beneficial: 13%
- Beneficial: 49%
- Not beneficial: 38%

External social media tools
- Extremely beneficial: 7%
- Beneficial: 32%
- Not beneficial: 61%

Legend: Extremely beneficial | Beneficial | Not beneficial

*The weight assigned to an "extremely beneficial" communication is higher than for a "beneficial" communication; consequently, the 93%score for face-to-face meetings is actually higher than the 93% score for conference calls; this weighting method applies to all scores.
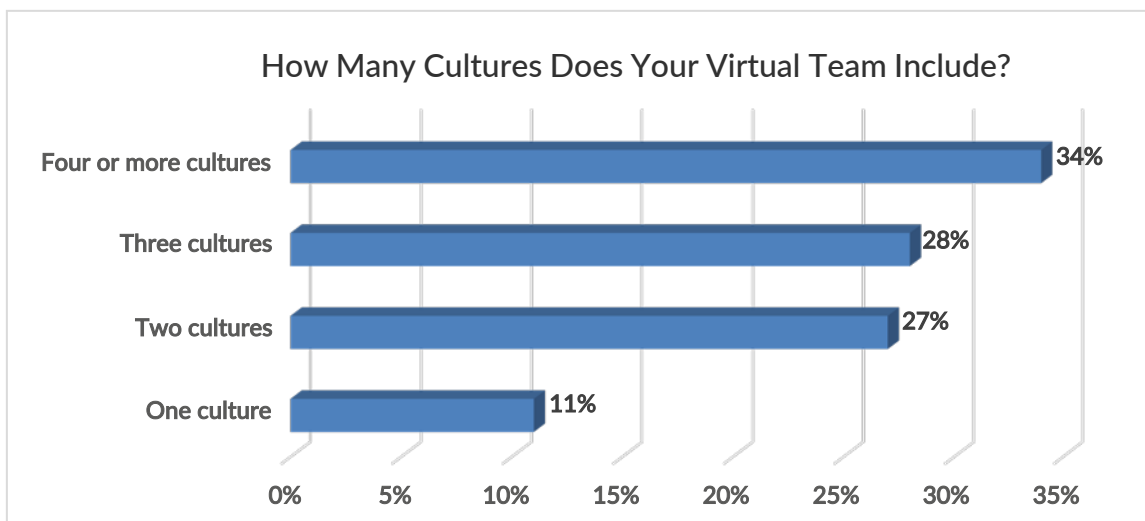
USE OF WEBCAM OR VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

There is increasing reliance on webcam video technology. When we asked respondents how frequently they used webcam video technology for virtual meetings, 15% reported using it during all meetings (compared to 12% in 2016 and 6% in 2014); 24% use it half of the time (25% in 2016 and 20% in 2014). Despite the increasing reliance on this technology, most respondents (61%) rarely use it (compared to 63% in 2016 and 74% in 2014). We recommend the adoption of webcam technology whenever possible as a best practice.

Use of Webcam or Video Technology

Category	Value
For all virtual-team meetings	15%
About 50% of the time	24%
Rarely	61%
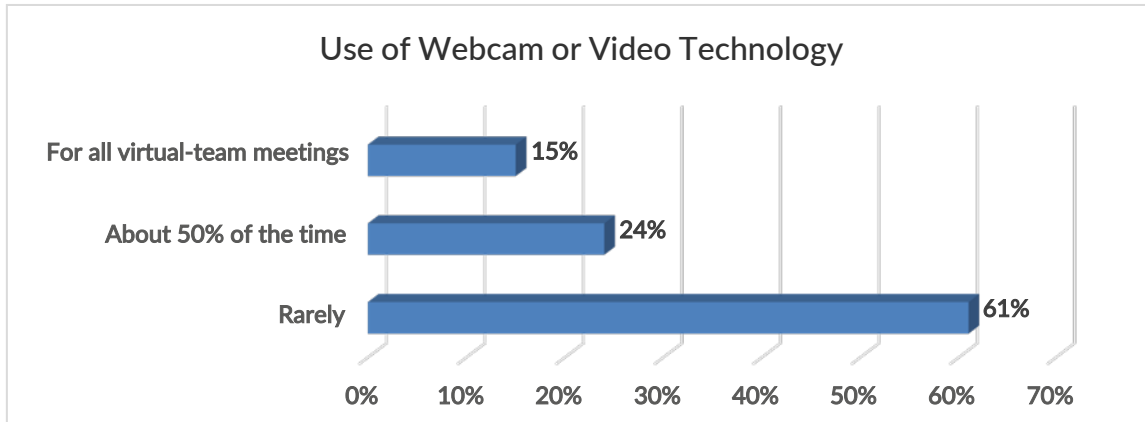
IMPACT OF CULTURE AND GENDER ON VIRTUAL TEAM PERFORMANCE

NUMBER OF CULTURES ON YOUR VIRTUAL TEAM

Because multicultural issues play a role on nearly all virtual global teams, we asked a new question to explore the complexity of these issues. Respondents reported that 89% of their virtual teams typically include at least two cultures, and more than one-third of them consists of four or more cultures.

How Many Cultures Does Your Virtual Team Include?

Category	Value
Four or more cultures	34%
Three cultures	28%
Two cultures	27%
One culture	11%

HOW CULTURAL CHALLENGES AFFECT YOUR VIRTUAL TEAM

We asked survey participants to rate the severity of various cultural challenges faced by virtual teams. The most acute challenges are timeliness and responsiveness of team members (80%), colleagues who do not participate (76%), the pace of decision making (79%), candid and constructive discussion of problems and challenges (78%), unfamiliar leadership style (77%), different role expectations of members (74%), general behavioral assumptions (73%), follow-through of team members (70%), and adhering to an agenda (55%). Year after year, the challenges of time zones and understanding accents are rated very high, but since those are immutable we'll not address them further here.

When examining these challenges, we're struck by how profoundly they affect team members individually (as amplified in the open-ended comments) and the efficiency of the team function. Because cultures have unique manners and behavioral styles, which are deeply held and considered universal, behaviors that violate those standards are particularly challenging. If we assume that all team members intend to do a great job, but face cultural challenges as barriers to their best performance, it underscores the importance of taking time at the creation of the team to discuss cultural differences and create a set of guidelines for respectful interactions. Addressing these issues at the beginning is the wisest way to avoid some of the potential conflicts and frustrations.

Open-Ended Comments

ENGAGEMENT:

There are differences in feeling responsible...differences in work ethic...
Taking ownership; some cultures wait to be told rather than taking the initiative...
Lack of progress between calls...Lack of actions being written up and circulated so no one remembers what was supposed to be done...
Attending meetings unprepared...

DOMINANCE & HIERARCHY:

Understanding who really makes the decision; may not be the person in the meeting; more than one leader involved at multiple locations...
Sometimes designated leaders aren't good at explaining things; more valuable to use the person who best expresses himself to take the lead instead of the one with the higher role...
One location might exclude others by keeping parts of the information flow on site...

ASSERTIVENESS & DIRECTNESS:

The more talkative members tend to dominate the discussion; really need a facilitator to encourage equal participation...
Saying yes when the answer should be no, specifically in regard to work capacity/ bandwidth...
UK is direct when talking, but Japanese and Americans are not...
Reticence and not wanting to disgrace...
Tone of pragmatic emails/chats often comes off as blunt and dismissive...

LANGUAGE:

Use of regional slang terms, comprehension of the English language, unwillingness to ask questions or admit there is a lack of understanding, the rate at which people speak... Casual style writing of native English speakers...
Native English speakers should aim to simplify their choice of vocabulary... Non-technical/ sentimental discussion is harder than technical exchange...

The Severity of Cultural Challenges for Virtual Teams

Time zones
- Very challenging: 24%
- Challenging Somewhat: 34%
- Challenging: 30%
- Not Challenging: 12%

Understanding different accents
- Very challenging: 14%
- Challenging Somewhat: 27%
- Challenging: 39%
- Not Challenging: 20%

Timeliness and responsiveness
- Very challenging: 10%
- Challenging Somewhat: 31%
- Challenging: 39%
- Not Challenging: 20%

Colleagues who do not participate
- Very challenging: 11%
- Challenging Somewhat: 30%
- Challenging: 35%
- Not Challenging: 24%

Pace of decision making
- Very challenging: 10%
- Challenging Somewhat: 29%
- Challenging: 40%
- Not Challenging: 21%

Discussing problems and challenges
- Very challenging: 6%
- Challenging Somewhat: 32%
- Challenging: 40%
- Not Challenging: 22%

Unfamiliar leadership style
- Very challenging: 6%
- Challenging Somewhat: 27%
- Challenging: 44%
- Not Challenging: 23%

Different role expectations of members
- Very challenging: 5%
- Challenging Somewhat: 27%
- Challenging: 42%
- Not Challenging: 26%

General behavioral assumptions
- Very challenging: 5%
- Challenging Somewhat: 25%
- Challenging: 43%
- Not Challenging: 27%

Follow-through of team members
- Very challenging: 5%
- Challenging Somewhat: 22%
- Challenging: 43%
- Not Challenging: 30%

Adhering to an agenda
- Very challenging: 3%
- Challenging Somewhat: 15%
- Challenging: 37%
- Not Challenging: 45%

Legend:
- Very challenging
- Challenging Somewhat
- Challenging
- Not Challenging

THE COST OF INTERCULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDING

We asked if respondents were aware of situations when an inter-cultural misunderstanding cost the team or company an opportunity, and 16% replied "yes." This may only be the tip of the iceberg because we often are not aware of cultural misunderstandings and the role they play.

We asked two follow-up questions so that respondents could elaborate on their perceptions and suggest ways to improve their ability to collaborate virtually. The first question addressed misunderstandings that cost the team or company an opportunity.

Did an Intercultural Misunderstanding Cost Your Team or Company an Opportunity?

- 16% — Yes
- 84% — No

Open-Ended Comments

AGREEMENT & TRUST:

One party thinks everything is agreed, and the other thinks it is still under discussion…
In some cultures, it is difficult to say "no," even though they do not agree; so agreement is reached in meeting only to be overturned later…
Other cultures might not find it necessary to do what they say they would do…
Acceptance of a proposition from global marketing that cannot be enacted in Asian markets…

In many Asian countries, a "yes" does not mean people understand…Misinterpretation of the Indian "yes" has led to lots of rework …

In Mexico, people are reluctant to discuss difficult topics in a meeting; once when I requested agreement, there was no response, and I assumed that there was an agreement and confirmation from everyone, but later it backfired…

ASSUMPTIONS & DIRECTNESS:

Too much explanation can offend the pride of the one receiving it…
Lost big RFPs and have to rework contracts …
Misinterpretation of directions had to be course-corrected …
Excessively direct style of some people sometimes affected the ability to establish trust and good relationships, especially with Latin American members…

In some cultures, saying "I do not know" is unacceptable; providing false information is considered better...

TIMELINESS & POLITENESS:

A request is made by email from Asia to Europe, but Europe did not answer, and Asia is too polite to call the European colleague to push ...

Different understanding about the meaning of deadlines; in the US, deadlines are seen as hard dates, but in other cultures, it seems that deadlines are more of a suggested date...

HIERARCHY & ASSERTIVENESS:

Hesitant to raise their hand and make a quick decision without management approval...

Some sites have more of a hierarchy where there is less collaboration and more top-down instruction; the US we are more open to direct feedback and a collaborative approach.

MARKET DIFFERENCES:

A manager made a decision about the Australian market without fully understanding the values and principles ...

You cannot apply what works in EMEA, US, or Asia and vice versa; we need to fine tune based on locations and industries...

LANGUAGE:

Information in English translated poorly and sending it out without an internal quality check created needless misunderstanding and churn; this situation also meant a loss of trust ...

Reticent to speak because they do not speak English well... every country speaks a different dialect and even though English is the universal language ...use of terms and jargon...

The second follow-up question asked respondents if they were aware of situations where an intercultural misunderstanding was responsible for a team problem.

Open-Ended Comments

ASSENT:

In some cultures, to say "no" is considered impolite and not done…you never knew if "yes" meant "yes, I will do it" or "get off my back"…

Americans thought a decision was made and action would be taken by Asian participants, and nothing happened because the Asians didn't think it had actually been made …

DEADLINES & POLITENESS:

Trying to push the group to get things done on deadline in a culture where a particular compliance activity is not valued…

Missed deadlines; some cultures bring this up as soon as they see it happen; others state they can meet the deadline, even on the day of the deadline when there is no chance of meeting it…

Northern European colleagues attend meetings on time (or early) while Latin American colleagues show up late; the Europeans were offended that their time was being wasted; when this was mentioned to the Latins, they began attending meetings on time…

A national holiday in one country led to a project delay…

HIERARCHY:

One culture that is ok with simultaneous people talking or interrupting offended someone from another culture…

Hierarchy conflicts can get in the way of collaborative outcomes…one or a few team members got what they wanted at the cost of the team consensus…

An internal conflict became detrimental to a business outcome, so we involved the most senior leader of the team; upon hearing this, the teams with high regard for hierarchy felt it should not have happened as it tarnished their reputation with the leader; it was more important for them to maintain their reputation with the boss than resolve the issue…

In Bangalore, it takes time for the team to voice opinions to members more senior than they are…

DIRECTNESS:

Some team members are very aggressive and direct and intimidate team members from cultures where people are modest…

In some cultures, members don't like to give a direct answer, especially for bad news…

Feedback from a direct to less direct colleague escalated to their mutual boss, who thought a contribution was being denigrated when the intent was to solve a problem by suggesting ways to outsource tasks and reduce workload…

I thought a manager from the UK was scolding us, but it was only their way of talking…

MISUNDERSTANDING:

Multiple people unknowingly worked on the same projects…

Understanding accounting terminology between the UK and US…

Taking offense to things communicated poorly…a member with a heavy Asian accent was misunderstood, resulting in wasted effort…

Colleagues from the UK are not used to direct German wording; perceived as offensive…

A Singaporean did not want to give a ballpark estimate to a senior leader, afraid to give a wrong answer; the leader took it as a lack of interest or respect…

Not understanding jokes..

**GENDER & GENERATIONAL ISSUES:**

When working with a male team member from another culture, my request for a specific list was interpreted to

DO YOUR TEAM MEMBERS VALUE DIVERSITY?

For the first time, we asked if all members of global virtual teams perceive the value of diversity, regardless of national origin. Most respondents (76%) indicated that they do.

We asked a follow-up question to enable respondents to elaborate on their observations.

Do All of Your Team Members Perceive the Value of Diversity?

24%

76%

■ Yes ■ No
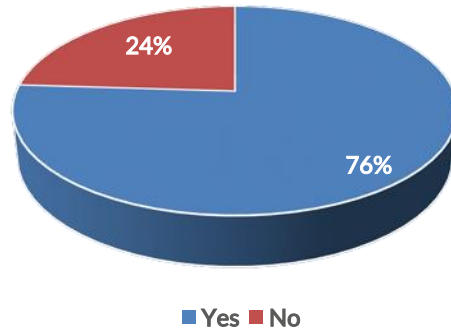
Open-Ended Comments

WORK GOALS ARE MORE IMPORTANT:

We are more focused on our jobs/role than who we are...

We perceive the value of diversity, but we simply ignore it and do real work... the time and effort we spend discussing diversity is becoming a problem when we don't continue to transform to the next level; awareness of cultural differences is not new and only the first step; instead we should focus on defined corporate commitments; we cannot bake an individual cake for everyone, which leads to privileges and cherry picking...

APPLICATION VARIES:

Diversity is valued, but not a priority...

It's quite clear that there's a 'not invented here' bias towards other sites' recommendations, especially the newer ones...

Several cultures actively practice discrimination...I still notice significant bias against women...

A clear tendency to favor and trust home country team members over global team members...

Older team members and not-so-attractive ones are hardly accepted...

If they perceive themselves as outsiders, then diversity is welcome because it allows them to participate; [but] the group representing main dominant cultural or business backgrounds sometimes see diversity not as an added value as it takes more efforts and time...

Most people in western countries have a level of understanding about diversity or gender equality, [but] in some less developed countries this is not always the case...

Lower cost locations are for doing the work while Western nations are for decision- making...

COMPROMISES MERIT-BASED PERFORMANCE:

Diversity is sometimes seen as fostering competition. [But] in a diverse environment, it is more difficult to position yourself and measure up against others as there are more dimensions of contribution. In a homogeneous environment, it is easier to establish a pecking order...

I don't look at differences in the team as a value. I look at the contributions of each member...

IT WORKS:

All my MBA colleagues valued cultural diversity in our class because this collaboration helps to become more flexible in approach to different people for decision making, makes a person more creative in finding solutions, increases self-awareness...

We work well together because of our different strengths, despite appearing homogeneous from the outside...

IT DOESN'T WORK:

it depends on what you're doing! the low level of skills, collaboration, and productivity in some locations cannot be seen as a value...

I think that many think diversity is a road block...I think some would rather have homogeneous environments...It takes constant effort to be diverse...

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES:

I have worked on four projects outside the US, and India was the one [where] diversity is still slow in coming...

I don't think diversity is thought of as a value in Shanghai and Singapore...

[In the UK], Asia is often expected to join, but little is done to include them in the conversation.

Virtual meetings are always extremely late at night for Asia, once people have already gone through an entire working day and are tired. I have never seen people in UK or US taking calls outside working hours...

Diversity is largely a US-based focus. The more self-aware leaders pay attention to diversity and inclusivity, and they do a better job of orchestrating discussion and engaging/inviting team members...

US leadership mocks diversity programs... An out-of-country manager from HQ made the team feel they are superior from America...

British have a poor approach to Indian counterparts...

I do find less communication to me personally (I'm a woman) from the men in India and the Philippines...

The folks in northern Europe are becoming more diverse all the time...In the European part of the team, this aspect is not valued... Europe does, Asia does not...

## UNCONSCIOUS BIASES BASED ON AGE, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY

In a new question, we asked if respondents perceived subtle, unconscious biases based on age, gender, or ethnicity among team members. A substantial proportion (39%) do indeed perceive such bias. Given what we understand about unconscious bias, it's not surprising that the vast majority of respondents don't perceive it as an issue, and it's certainly an area that could benefit from more research.

Do You Perceive Unconscious Biases?

- 39% Yes
- 61% No
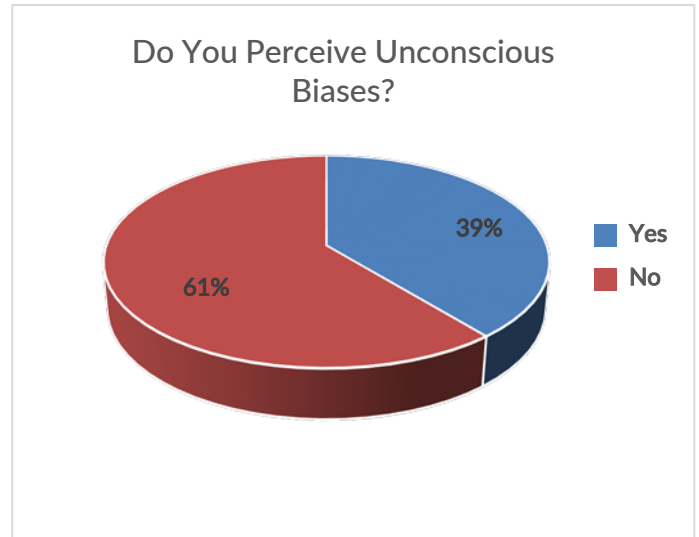
POSITIVE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON VIRTUAL TEAM PERFORMANCE

In another new question, we asked respondents if they believe that the diversity of their global virtual team has a positive impact on performance. A large portion (72%) agree that such diversity has a positive impact. Nonetheless, the presence of unrecognized biases can have a negative impact upon or otherwise undermine the benefits of this diversity.

We asked a follow-up question to enable respondents to elaborate on their observations.

Does Diversity Have a Positive Impact on Performance?

- 28% No
- 72% Yes
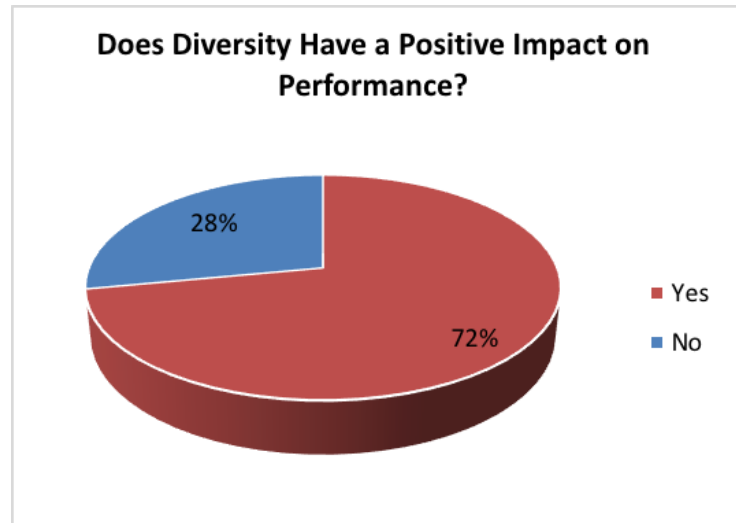
Open-Ended Comments

PROBLEM SOLVING:

Different cultures generate different ways to analyze and solve problems...............
When we have a problem with a certain country or region, we ask someone from that area why there is an issue...

WORKLOAD & TIMING:

We would not be able to complete our work if it wasn't for our global virtual teams...

We can complete our work in the late afternoon and return to work the next morning to find that Bangalore people have completed the copy editing while we were sleeping......

Another thing is that when a writer in India makes an edit that shows he did not get the nuance I was trying to communicate, I don't just dismiss and override it automatically. I think, "How could I make my meaning more transparent and less susceptible to misinterpretation?"...

SPECIFIC TALENTS:

Diversity enabled the engagement of the right set of people for the job....................
Input on change strategies that need to vary from market to market; better understanding of customer needs ....
Team members understand the unique country differences and what is important for being successful...

NEGATIVE IMPACT:

It hinders positive collaboration. I have less trust and loyalty to a virtual team!...
Customer may not want to work with them ...
It takes longer to commit and be clear on the objectives, and not sure we all have a common purpose to work together...
Time difference, as a consequence of not speaking face to face, can sometimes slow decisions...
Group performance comes from individual strengths of individual team members and how they interact to achieve a common goal.
I don't think increasing diversity is a guarantee of success...
Adding one man to the team [of 10 ladies] won't necessarily positively impact performance unless that guy has the right skills...

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND TEAM PARTICIPATION

When we asked respondents if they perceive any gender-based differences in team participation and collaboration styles, 17% indicated awareness of differences (compared to 12% in 2016 and 14% in 2014).

Although this year's respondents are acknowledging differences more openly than in past years, we continue to be surprised by the low percentage of respondents who perceive gender-based differences on virtual teams.

All of our experience—and much anecdotal, psychological, and sociological information—points to gender-based differences and, in particular, to the role that they play in participation on virtual teams. differences.

Do You Perceive Gender-Based Differences in Team Participation?

- **Yes** — 17%
- **No** — 83%
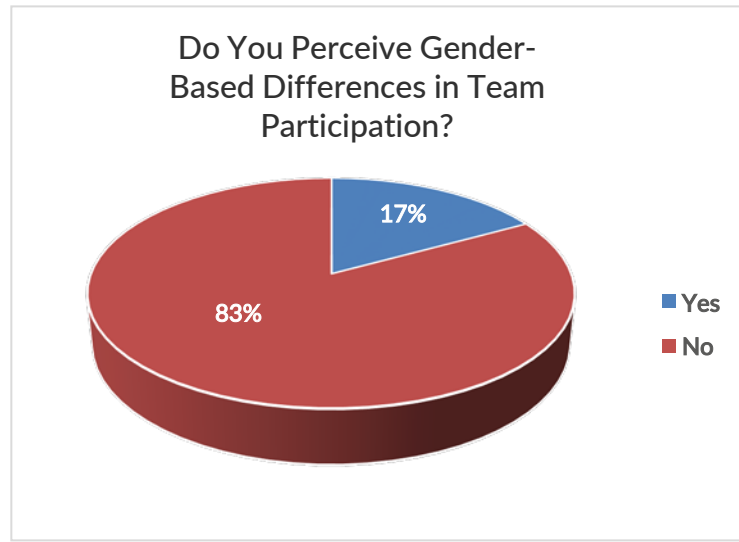
There are gender-based differences in all cultures, and since virtual teamwork tends to magnify cultural differences, it has the same impact on existing gender differences. The open-ended comments explore many of these gender-based

Open-Ended Comments

ASSERTIVENESS:

As a young, active female, I sometimes feel I'm perceived as pushy and annoying...

Females from some cultures actively defer to males... men are generally far more outspoken ...

When we have strong female representation, there is a withdrawal of participation from males, perhaps because the conversation is more fluid and exploratory than they are used to...

Women and sometimes Asian men wait for an opportunity to speak and never do; Americans tend to interrupt...

With the delay in conference calls, it seems women are getting stepped on more easily...

If a project is openly offered, men will raise their hands to get the project even though they are not competent; the women who are competent will wait to be asked...

GROUP INCLUSION:

Boys' club behaviors [interruptions] are more freely displayed when the woman is the virtual team member based remotely...

Men are listened to better and first sometimes; approval is biased towards males unless they are very junior...

I am usually the only female, and it is apparent some participants would prefer a male ...

FEEDBACK ACCEPTANCE:

Some cultures don't accept instruction from women even if the boss is a woman...

People are less likely to provide constructive criticism or negative feedback to men than to women

A predominantly female team reacts more emotionally than rationally, which impacts the decision-making process and time it takes to arrive at conclusions...

Men prefer collaboration with men and women with women...

Men are quieter and form a more naturally cohesive group and work together fairly effortlessly; women are more vocal, working out small details and circling back to work

CAREERS & ROLES:

IT and telecoms are still male dominated businesses, especially in Germany. Women (if present) often engage in HR, legal, or roles with a teaming aspect...

Sometimes females are not taken seriously as professional IT experts...Most engineers are men...

Women keep the meeting notes, update internal social media, remain stuck in quality assurance and project management; they are not given the sexy breakthrough technology assignments...

No! Frankly I'm getting sick and tired of the gender-bias debate being crammed down our throats. If I never hear this mentioned again as long as I live it will be too soon. Give it a rest. Male and female employees are treated equally and in some cases the female team members have more authority and respect in the meeting than males do. Really, really sick of this...

SOCIAL INTERACTION:
Women are usually more pro-active and interested in social things, establishing trust, etc.

> *Men seem less patient...*
>
> *Women tend to connect faster across cultures...*
>
> *Female collaboration works better in the US; the Asian side is less attuned to consensus, expecting firm direction...*
>
> *When something goes wrong, women hold a grudge; men do not take things as personal... Indian*
>
> *and Japanese men and women adhere to stereotypes in the hierarchy...*
>
> **LEADERSHIP & DECISIONS:**
>
> *Women make comments, but the men dominate ...*
>
> *In some cultures, men do seem comfortable working with women in leadership roles; it's getting better...*
>
> *US leadership is significantly more sexist (male preferring) than European leadership... Men*
>
> *do not really accept a female boss...*
>
> *Males in non-white countries talk down to or are dismissive of females leading projects or directing their work...*
>
> **DILIGENCE & ORDER:**
>
> *Women are more committed to the tasks...*
>
> *Females tend to be better organized and manage to keep the team on the agenda; males allow team members to deviate from agenda items...*

## TRAINING TO CAPITALIZE ON TEAM INCLUSIVENESS

This year for the first time, we asked respondents if their companies offered formal training to capitalize on the inclusiveness of their global virtual teams. Nearly half of the survey participants (49%) reported that they have this training.

Training to Capitalize on the
Inclusiveness of Global Virtual Teams

51%   49%

- Yes
- No

TEAM MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD VIRTUAL TEAMMATE

When we asked about the key characteristics that made good virtual teammates, respondents indicated that the most important characteristic is willingness to share information (19%), being collaborative (18%), being proactively engaged (17%), being organized (14%), providing useful feedback (12%), having good social skills (11%), and offering assistance to teammates (9%). These results are roughly consistent with past results, with only a minor shift in the rankings and in the relative percentages.

Assuming Competence, What Makes a Good Virtual Teammate?

- Shares information — 19%
- Collaborative — 18%
- Is proactively engaged — 17%
- Is organized — 14%
- Provides useful feedback — 12%
- Has good social skills — 11%
- Offers assistance to teammates — 9%
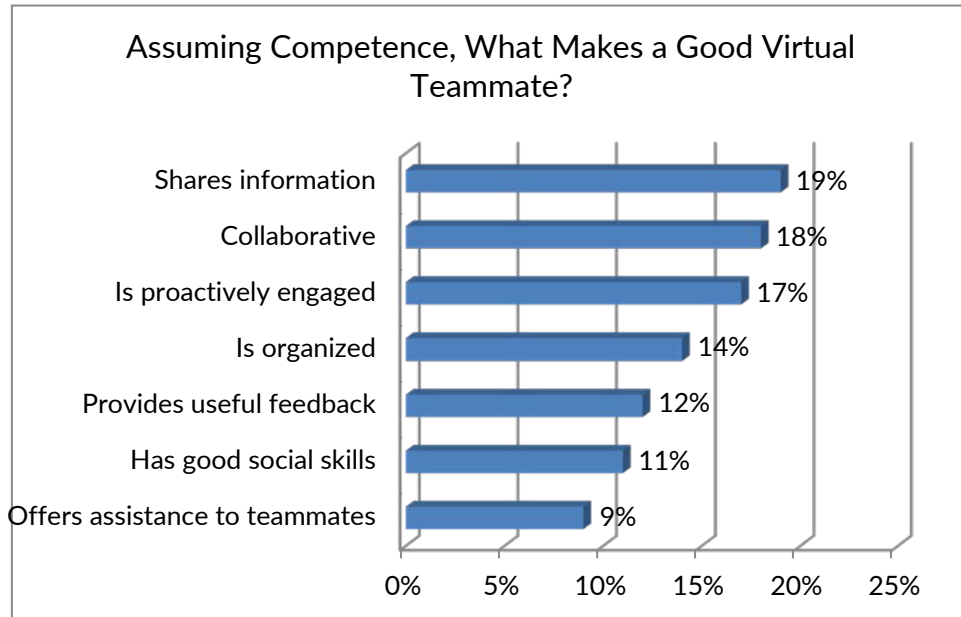
TEAM CHARTERS AND GUIDELINES FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

To determine whether companies are helping to define expectations to boost the productivity of global virtual teams, we asked respondents if their virtual teams have any sort of "team charter" or used a set of guidelines for high performance. Only 24% of respondents used such guidelines to achieve high performance (compared to 28% in 2016). We strongly urge companies to establish such global team guidelines. We're certain they will achieve measurable productivity improvements for virtual teams.

A follow-up question asked respondents to identify additional practices designed to boost productivity.

Do Your Virtual Teams Have a Team Charter for High Performance?

- Yes — 24%
- No — 71%
- Other — 5%
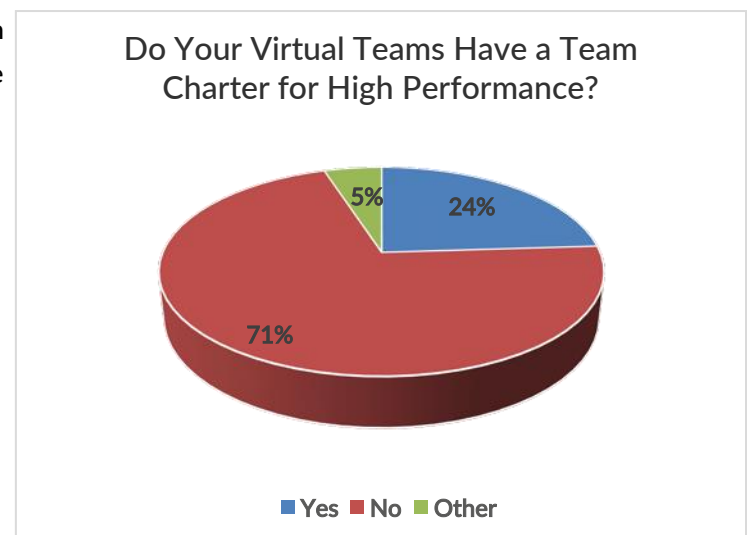
Open-Ended Comments

PROJECT DEFINITIONS & OBJECTIVES:

We have a purpose and scope that we follow...

We have an objective and key performance indicators (KPI)... Job description and responsibility is properly delegated... Generally there is a problem statement, etc.

IMPROVEMENT TECHNIQUES:

We do things like a retrospective to bring up better ways for us to work together...

Scrum retrospectives are used to discuss performance, and action points come out of that...

We do review and try to suggest improvements regularly...

OTHER GUIDELINES:

We have general guidelines that apply to all teams (virtual and non-virtual) and then discuss how we need to adapt them or bring them to life slightly differently on our virtual teams...

Not a normal practice at this company, but when I start a new project as a leader, I try to make sure everybody agrees on a set of guidelines before actually working on the project...we adhere to our company values guide and performance management system...

We are in the process of creating our mission/vision/core values...we are overrun with guidelines and charters of various teams to the point that none stand out...

CONTRACTS:

The contract is the only reference document...
Business process outsourcing (BPO) has a contract with service level agreement (SLA)...

TRAINING TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY ON VIRTUAL TEAMS

When we asked participants if they had received training to increase their productivity on virtual teams, only 22% reported that they had such training. This is the same result as in 2016, a slight improvement over 2014 (21%), and much better than 2012 (16%).

We asked a follow-up question so that respondents could describe the kind of training they got.

Training to Increase Productivity on a Virtual Team

- Yes
- No
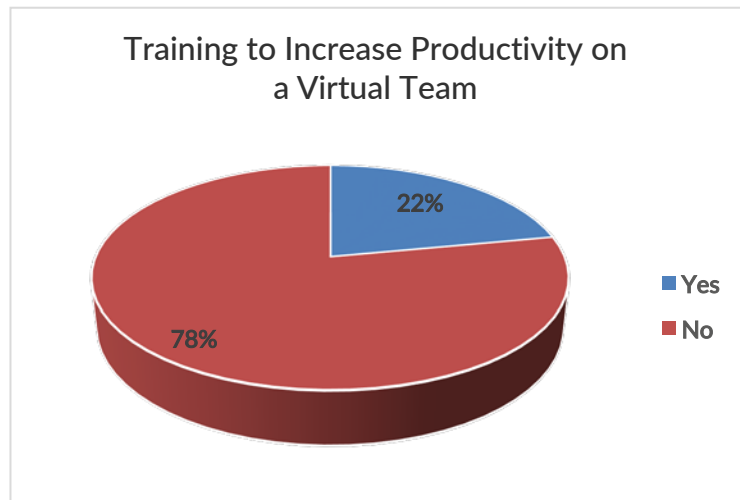
Open-Ended Comments

ONLINE:

Webinar and self-guided...e-learning...
Virtual training (video-conference/webinar) on managing virtually...Called in by phone to a large audience...
CultureWizard Global Team webinar! ... Skype for Business and OneDrive for Business...Culture Profile webinar...Virtual Action Learning Projects... CW webinars, Emer genetics...IT ERP software...Helix New Prime...ABB... cultural and diversity training, web-based and in groups...

IN-PERSON TRAINING:

Group session in person on how to effectively communicate globally (with people in different locations), how to escalate issues if there is no response and if we are not able to obtain information from other virtual teams; another training was how to effectively write emails and a workshop on cultural differences...
*There is no training to replace the beer/coffee face-to-face for establishing trust...*

OTHER METHODS:

TR learning class...part of PMA training... written best practices... PDC, BECP training... MLA training... presentations... reading, lecture...manager Development Sessions, Performance Management, Art of Feedback...outside vendors...G3S Management Training...

TEAM LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING

EFFECTIVENESS OF TEAM LEADERS IN MANAGING GLOBAL VIRTUAL TEAMS

For the first time, we asked participants how effective their team leaders are in managing global virtual teams. Only 24% rated their leaders as very effective. If we add those deemed moderately effective (54%), the overall score rose 78%. We also asked a follow-up question about what makes a global virtual team leader effective.

How Effective Are Team Leaders in Managing Global Virtual Teams?

Rating	Percent
Very effective	24%
Moderately effective	54%
Slightly effective	17%
Not effective	5%
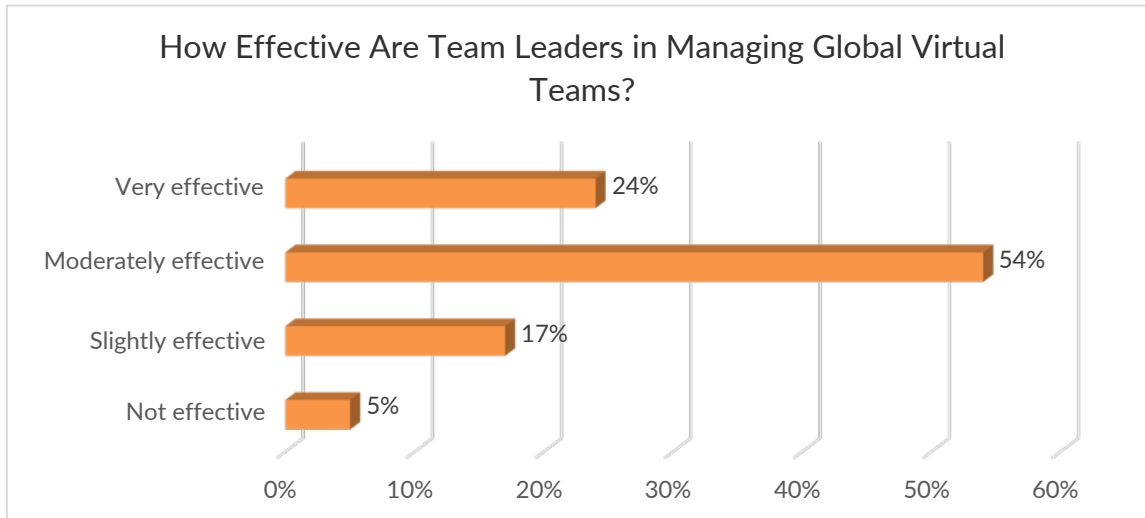
Open-Ended Comments

ORGANIZATION:

Organized clear roles...Pre-discussion, preparation, clear tasks...follow through... Coordinating and sharing...setting expectations...

Ability to keep the team focused on the topic...

Has personal commitment of the executive and managerial teams...

PARTICIPATORY:

Encourage participation... ensures everyone is truly part of the team, collaborative...

Empathy, conflict resolution, patience...

Listening, not talking... receptive and capable of forming new opinions ... takes advice...

Strong facilitator to ensure an inclusive forum where differing viewpoints are aired, and drives decisions that are accepted by all...

INTERPERSONAL AWARENESS:

Understanding the different cultures...

Rotates the meeting times to accommodate all time zones...

Knowing your people... respectful... appreciation for individual team members' talents ...

Cannot be too sensitive and rigid; you have to be very open minded, understanding, compassionate, but firm ...

Able to get members to remain active...

COMMUNICATION:

clear, concise communication...

Uses different forms of communication, online slides and telco, video conference ...

Regular communication with all team members, not just the ones located in that person's

office... Not using baseball analogies ...

CONSCIENTIOUS:

Monitors... centralized accountability and metrics ... punctuality...
Proactive and engaged... Not embarrassed to ask people to help them understand
... Holds all team members accountable to the same standards...
Ensuring everyone has a voice and that it's heard...
Provides the tools we need...

ALTERNATIVE:

We are a scrum team; we don't have a team leader as such; the scrum master is not the leader, but facilitates meetings and keeps the team accountable to its own goals; we the team are leading the team...

VIRTUAL-TEAM LEADERSHIP

Thirty percent (30%) of respondents indicated that they are leaders of a virtual team. Of course the role of the global team leader is critical given their responsibility to manage technology challenges, time schedules, and cultural differences on top of the typical team-leader functions.

We also asked two follow-up questions. The first enabled respondents to identify the top two challenges that leaders face with their global virtual teams.

Are You a Leader of Any Virtual Teams?

Yes, 30%,

No, 70%

Yes

No

Open-Ended Comments

TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES:

System tools... Bad connections...

Software communication tools that don't work consistently between locations...

TEAM DYNAMIC:

Keep everyone included in the conversation...Lack of feedback... Keep motivated...

Attendance...Conference call members arriving late or not pitching in... Clear shared understanding...

Power distribution [between HQ and satellites] ...

Keeping people on track...Having an effective discussion with more than five people...

Lack of accountability...

Discussions and decisions take longer; getting teams to follow through...

Solutions tailored to the lowest common denominator...

PERSONAL SKILLS:

Getting a feel for the local office...

Lack of leadership skills... Trust... Clearing up misunderstandings...

Organizational skills and keeping the focus... Not handling complex problems well... Lack of responsiveness... attention to detail...

LANGUAGE & CULTURE:

Time zone differences; difficult to have all the team players on the call at the same time...
Getting western cultures to move away from 100% accuracy and eastern cultures to move toward it...
Fluency in languages...Accent and mannerisms...

For the second follow-up question respondents identified practices adopted to generate high levels of effective collaboration among team members.

Open-Ended Comments

REGULAR CONTACT BY MULTIPLE CHANNELS:

Frequent phone calls ... conference calls...internal messaging ... emails... Meet regularly face to face ...

Brief reports...

Skype for business... Slack tool for team communications that require immediate attention...

Screen sharing on hangouts... Chatroom for the team... Frequent check-ins by social media...

PREPARATION, FOLLOW-UP & FEEDBACK:

Brief reports on Yammer as results come in (good tool for discussions and questions you don't want to handle by email) ...

Sending meeting materials ahead of the meeting...Hold pre-discussions one-to-one, preparation, and instantly request opinions and feedback...

Ask direct questions...

ENSURE ENGAGEMENT IN MEETINGS:

I split tasks and responsibilities among participants...

Giving everyone a voice during the webinar...Going around the group for comments...

Circulate the leader role in meetings ...

ORGANIZATION & ACCOUNTABILITY:

Replace task distribution with clearly defined responsibilities and clearly communicate the background of the requirements...

Written agenda and follow-up notes with action items attached... I let them set the agenda and host the calls in turn...

Structured calls......

Meet subgroups independently...

Cloud-based tracking tools...

Meet their management frequently to align objectives ...

Continuously visible task boards...Reports that automatically generate on the work done by group daily so that status is transparent to the global team...

BUILD TEAMWORK:

Allocate tasks to two or more participants to work on between calls so they get to know each other... Cross-functional collaborations...

One-on-ones and team meetings...

Allow everyone to share their story, both work and personal lives...
Values and culture training...Learn words and phrases in their language to show I am trying... Flexibility in scheduling meetings to accommodate time-zone differences...

Culture-based conflict resolution... Shared cultural celebrations...

Send appreciation emails and give back pats during meetings... Appreciation notes to their managers...

CLEAR UNDERSTANDING:

State expectations and demands... Asking what they don't understand...
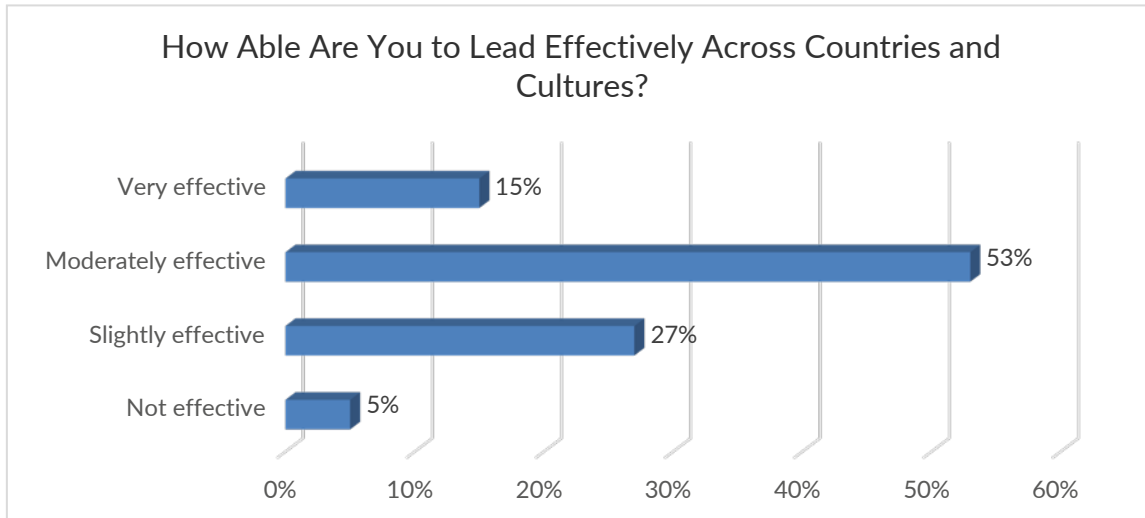*Pull issues out into the open for everyone to discuss... PowerPoint calls to keep attention...*
Collaboration tools (SharePoint) for version control...Cloud-based document management...Refused to allow them to bypass the process by coming straight to me...
Quizzes, contests, education sessions to share information...
Simple language...

SELF-RATED ABILITY TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY AROSS COUNTRIES AND CULTURES

When we asked respondents to rate their own ability to lead effectively across countries and cultures, only 15% rated themselves as very effective. Since global leaders need to harness the wisdom and skill on their teams (which comes with differing cultural styles), it's not surprising that so few feel very effective in their leadership role. Nonetheless, there is an ever-growing need for this critical skill in today's global business world, and the bar has been set very high. For professionals who undertake these mission-critical leadership roles, only formal training can prepare them adequately for the challenges they face.

How Able Are You to Lead Effectively Across Countries and Cultures?

Category	Percentage
Very effective	15%
Moderately effective	53%
Slightly effective	27%
Not effective	5%

FORMAL GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Only 19% of respondents reported that they had formal global leadership training (compared to 34% in 2016) instead of simply leadership training. It appears that training programs are not able to keep up with the increasing number of global virtual teams that are being formed since 89% of respondents work on at least one virtual team.

When you consider the additional challenges presented by the multicultural makeup of these teams and their operation in a virtual environment distributed across geographical distances, the comparatively small percentages of trained leaders is cautionary to say the least.

Have You Had Formal Global Leadership Training?

- Yes: 19%
- No: 81%

We provided respondents with an opportunity to describe the nature of their global leadership training.

Open-Ended Comments

UNIVERSITY:

Masters in cross-cultural management...
Degree in cultural anthropology...
Courses in intercultural communication... management
training... Global virtual team training... masters in virtual
teams...

OCCUPATIONAL:

Executive leadership training...2-week course on leadership development for new team leaders...

making great leaders, team accelerator... fundamentals of leadership, coaching, delegation, teamwork...

Military intelligence ... military training for varying cultures... US Army leadership...

Expatriate cultural training...On-the-job during assignment...In-house for selected employees covering 10 nationalities... Cultural awareness, business practices...Values and culture workshop... Cultural diversity training...RLP Cohort... PLE course...LSO training...

VENDORS:

Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)...American Management Association... Developing You Developing Others, Navigating Through Change...Global Mindset workshop... Coaches specializing in cross-cultural teams...Bridge coaches...MaTR...Micron Leadership in Action (MLA)...CODECS certification...PRINCE2, ITIL...Chiltern...Summer Intern for Cultural Communication (SIIC)...one-year Diageo Leadership Performance Program (DLPP)...Dale Carnegie... CultureWizard (self-guided)... Eneagrama, Navigating through Change, 3Cs, Global Communication Culture... CLS...Learning Paths...Forever Living Products (FLP) Global Leadership...The College Board...ABB remote leadership...Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)...

ADDITIONAL OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO COLLABORATE VIRTUALLY ACROSS CULTURES?

Open-Ended Comments

MORE FREQUENT USE OF TECHNOLOGIES & IN-PERSON CONTACT: *Telephone conference calls...*

Web-based technologies...emails... video conferences...social media... In-person meetings...

CLEAR GOALS:

Make roles and expectations clear and visible... Manage poor performance... Good guidelines that can be applied everywhere...

Have a scribe that documents action item assignments ...

Improve planning of activities to achieve advance communication of expectations...

COMMUNICATION STYLE:

Gather proactively feedback from my team members and stakeholders...

Over-communicate, if necessary, to increase understanding of issues, increase sharing of information and key insights on a cloud platform, share constructive feedback...

Read my emails to be aware and reminded of the sensitivity, taking surveys ... Start all global initiatives in person first...

Speak slowly and clearly, verify you are understood, listen actively, and always have the meeting times long enough to get to all the business at hand...less sensitivity, more honest and direct communication...

LOCAL CONTROL:

Let them have their own local teams that develop software independently rather than having one or two on each team being run from the UK and Ireland...

TRAINING:

Learn languages better and improve my social skills...

Understand the driving & motivating factors in each culture...Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions ...

Work with a coach...
We each explored CultureWizard training and set up a one-to-one mentor for everyone with a member at another work site, and they bring their learnings back to the team;

> *I give these team members a challenge to resolve, and they work in pairs or small teams for a global resolution…*
>
> **RELATIONSHIPS:**
>
> *Strengthen relationships with individual participants; if possible, get to know them better and enable them to know, me…Emphasize non-work-focused meetings to have a more personal connection…*
>
> *Team-building activities…*
>
> *Understand each other's [personal] characteristics…know their motivation, sports, family, or sometimes little things…*
>
> **PLANNING & SCHEDULING:**
>
> *Time zone comparison so we can all see what time it is at the location of people we invite…*
>
> *Shift the work hours of team members in all geographies to more closely align…clear and structured agenda…*

HOW DID TEAM CHARACTERISTICS CHANGE IN THE PAST FEW YEARS AT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

> ## Open-Ended Comments
>
> **INCREASINGLY GLOBAL & MULTI-CULTURAL:**
>
> *Reporting teams have become more global, [it's not just] virtual project teams that are international, which have been commonplace internationally for 15 years…*
>
> *From more country-based teams to more multicultural virtual teams… Multi-cultured male & female team members…*
>
> *More and larger virtual teams with stronger emphasis on delivery and timeliness…*
>
> *More flexibility in teams and more collaboration of people from other locations and cultures… More and more outsourcing…*
>
> *Acquisitions make us geographically more diverse…*
>
> **YOUNGER WORKERS WITH MORE DIVERSITY:**
>
> *Generation Y kicks in; less age diversity but more cultural diversity…Much younger people now… More women in technical positions and accepted by men…*

Widening age gap between older and newer members; many differences in outlook between generations (Millennials, GenX, BabyBoomers) ...

New members don't have confidence to speak out and participate...Four generations with equal voices struggling for balance...

LESS FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT & MORE REMOTE WORKERS:

More virtual conferences and less face-to-face meetings... Significantly less travel ...

Increasingly virtual versus local only...Many people have become 100% remote workers... More

work at home by remote workers...Greater collaboration...

MANAGEMENT APPROACH:

More openly acknowledge the differences and leverage each other's strengths and complain less about the weaknesses...

More effort devoted to make the virtual teams more effective...

Processes and tools have been standardized...

The supervisor has become an entry-level position from which they are promoted or let go...

Align globally down to really low levels, but no appreciation for this extra effort...

Management has become metric-obsessed at the expense of team building and innovation; this has reduced morale... More stressed by workloads...

Much of the business is now through 3rd parties ...

FREQUENTLY CHANGING TEAM DYNAMICS:

Rapid rate of reorganizations has affected the dynamics of the teams...Frequent restructuring led to re-shuffling of teams... People come and go...

Gone to almost only virtual...

More cooperative across teams...

Less buy-in from the team as a whole... Less participation since leader is not in the room... Higher

turnover so have to re-educate each other...

TIME-ZONE CHALLENGES & BENEFITS:

Greater time-zone challenges with increase in global teams (India + Europe + America + APAC countries)...More cultural and time-zone experiences cause the process to take more time...

Time zones can be beneficial for tasks that can be passed off and worked for more hours in a day than with a centralized team...

GREATER LOCAL INDEPENDENCE:

More agile, more self-organized...

Before it was more compliance-related, following the structure of the leadership; then it changed to become a lot more inspired and open...
From a central team only to a central plus site-based team...

SKILLS & ATTITUDES OF TEAM EMPLOYEES:

Technical and professional people...

All participants have to adapt to virtual communication and working methods... Work

more cross functionally...

Less tolerant of prejudiced behaviors... Since more focused on diversity, I have become more sensitive, patient, and understanding on virtual teams...

Those doing manual processing have little knowledge of the business...

NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT:

Worse as more work is offshored...

It has deteriorated; less travel, only virtual meetings, time pressure, little social interaction, results focus...

More demotivated and stressed; we are tied to some stats that are beyond our control, so we will do anything to meet those stats, regardless of ethics... Doing more work with fewer people...

Team really struggles, and morale is not good; in one-on-ones, I've become aware that people are actively looking for alternative positions... Not attending...

Challenges with language and culture have slowed effectiveness, but in the end, we have a better team...

Challenges to keep the organization aligned... More disparate, less knowledge, less self- managing and more need to manage... More confusing with constant rotation...

Politics-driven changes cause lack of adequate skills, which is not recognized by management; management relies on digital tools rather than competency and experience...

Teams smaller but responsibilities increased...

TECHNOLOGY USAGE:

Our team never used to do webinars... IM, Skype... Technology is highly used... More

effective with collaboration with WebEx, Lync, and email...

Tools without knowledge are useless... More flexible work... Less cultural and more reliance on technologies as we work remotely...