

Virtual Teamwork and Commitments Impact on Project Quality

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how commitment among individuals involved in a short term, virtual team projects influence the quality of the project outcome. Results indicate that forced and habitual commitment types had a negative impact on virtual team project quality but found no evidence of the hypothesized positive influences of affective, normative or economic commitment. Findings suggest that commitment in virtual teams, particularly those virtual teams that engage in short term projects, may not exert the influence observed in co-located teams involved in longer duration projects. Further, forced and habitual commitment may actually be destructive. As such, the findings of this study suggest that for project quality to be achieved, other forces may be necessary.

KEYWORDS

Commitment, Database Management Systems, Project Quality, Virtual Environments, Virtual Teams

INTRODUCTION

Virtual teams are here to stay. According to Dulebohn and Hoch (2017) virtual teams are: "...work arrangements where team members are geographically dispersed, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication media to achieve common goals..." (p. 569). Dulebohn et al. (2017) go on to state that virtual teams provide real benefits to organizations ability to accomplish their goals and objectives. For example, virtual teams:

1. Bring functional expertise together that are geographically separated from one another;
2. Computer mediated collaboration technology enables 24/7 productivity;
3. Virtual teams significantly reduce travel costs, relocation costs, and related overheads costs;
4. Provide for knowledge sharing across both geographic boundaries and organizational units (Dulebohn, et al., 2017).

Given the benefits that organizations can gain from the use of virtual teams, it's safe to assume that their use will continue to play an important role in how businesses large and small

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will meet their goals and objectives now and in the future. Or more cleverly put by Bell and Kozlowski (2002) who said: "...virtual teams are here, and they are here to stay." (p. 45). Despite this, it should be noted that virtual teams also have their problems and obstacles to overcome. For example, Liao (2017) reported that it's easier to develop relationships among members in traditional face-to-face teams than it is in virtual teams and that virtual leaders have to invest more time and effort in coordinating virtual team tasks and facilitate team processes. Due to the benefits and challenges of the use and implementation of virtual teams, research that investigate the antecedents to quality outcomes and effectiveness in virtual team projects is becoming increasingly necessary as business and workers continue a move towards using virtual teams to complete short-term projects.

BACKGROUND

Research in this area found a number of challenges unique to virtual teams dealing with leadership, team effectiveness, and quality of completed projects. For example, research published in 2015, titled "Millennial Leadership: The Oppositional Relationship between Leadership Type and the Quality of Database System's Development in Virtual Environments" (Graham, Daniel, Doore, 2015) found that transformational and transactional leadership negatively impacted the quality of completed virtual team projects. The second paper published by IJeC titled "Millennial Teamwork and Technical Proficiency's Impact on Virtual Team Effectiveness: Implications for Business Education" (Graham, Daniel, Doore, 2016) found that proficiency with database management systems development, and greater technical proficiency in coping within the virtual environment contributed to the development of greater virtual team effectiveness. A third paper by Graham and Daniel (2017), *Millennial's Virtual Teamwork and Technical Proficiencies Impact on Project Quality: Is Commitment required in Virtual Team Projects?* investigated whether increased proficiency in project skills and the use of virtual environments resulted in greater virtual team project quality. The findings suggested that while increased proficiency in project skills did contribute to greater virtual team's project quality, proficiency in the use of virtual environments did not. The relationship between proficiency in project skills and the quality of project outcomes was weak ($\beta = .18$, $R^2 = .06$) which suggested that other, unexplored variables such as team member commitment to the project may have exerted a more powerful influence on virtual team project outcomes. The present study continues this research stream by investigating if commitment is more predictive of virtual team project quality than the variables investigated previously.

TEAMWORK WITHIN VIRTUAL TEAMS

Effective teamwork in virtual project groups is increasingly critical as more and more businesses rely on electronic and digital means to communicate between and among team members and other organizations to accomplish goals and tasks. Pinsonneault, and Caya (2005) investigated virtual teams from both an organizational behavior and information systems perspective. In their findings, the researchers note that both perspectives present challenges to effective team work within virtual teams. Behavioral issues include: how to communicate, share body language, and how to administer rewards and consequences within virtual teams. Technological issues include: ease of use of the communication and collaboration technology and functionality of the communication and collaboration

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