

12.1.10: Global Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Describe how advances in technology have had an effect on virtual teams
2. Identify methods of effective communication in global workforce

Communication can be a challenge in any work environment. Even if people speak the same language, personality and communication styles can differ greatly. Now consider the additional challenges that present themselves when communicating with people from other cultures. Not only are there bound to be language barriers, but there are also going to be cultural differences to navigate. Understanding cultural differences is the first step in effectively communicating with people and teams from around the world. In addition to navigating cultural differences, there are other strategies and techniques companies can use to effectively communicate across their global workforce.

Technology

Technology has drastically shrunk the world, providing instant accessibility to countries around the globe. Thanks to technological advances, companies have been able to expand their businesses on a global scale, while still being able to manage company operations remotely. Technology can also help to promote effective communication on international teams. While audio conference calls are still common in today's workforce, technology also allows companies to utilize video conference calls to help teams put names to faces and build strong relationships. Email, as well as collaborative work platforms like Google, allow global workforces to instantly send and receive messages and work alongside each other, even from thousands of miles away.

WATCH IT

Take a look at this video about optimizing virtual teams, and then keep on reading!

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SzWrazgt7Y&feature=youtu.be>.

You can also [download a transcript for the video "Optimizing virtual teams."](#)

As the video explained, virtual teams are comprised of individuals who work together but operate from different geographical locations. Technological advances have allowed companies to expand their workforce across the country and the globe. The 2017 Employee Benefits Report published by the Society for Human Resource Management, reported that greater than 60% of companies offer telecommuting benefits. Technology allows people to work remotely for organizations around the world. There are a number of technological tools companies use in today's virtual workplace to promote teamwork, effective communication, and collaboration.

Video Conferences

Conference calls have been around for decades. Conference calls allow companies to host conversations with their business partners, clients, and coworkers. While conference calls are a great way to host meetings with people in multiple locations, they do not allow for face-to-face interactions. Video conference calls are able to connect people on the next level, providing a face-to-face meeting platform. Video conference calls have also reduced the need for expensive work trips which cuts travel expenses and travel time.

The Cloud

The Cloud is not a physical object but rather a term used to describe data centers that allow multiple users to access them via the internet. Cloud platforms like Google Drive, iCloud, OneDrive, Dropbox, etc. allow users to access shared documents and files from anywhere with internet access. These types of platforms promote and foster collaboration and teamwork.

Webinars

Webinars are similar to video conference calls but usually centered around a presentation or training event. Webinars allow the presenter to display their presentation while also interacting real-time with those in attendance. Webinars are a great tool for Human Resources Teams to use to conduct training events across the world. Instead of traveling from one location to the next, webinars allow HR teams to conduct onboarding and training events remotely.

Project Management Software

Project management software is an effective tool that managers use to keep track of their employees and projects. Project management software platforms help track project tasks and the progress of the employees completing the tasks. This type of software is extremely helpful, especially when managing a large, international team.

Technology continues to improve communication and accessibility across the globe. Companies that capitalize on technological advancements are able to build strong, international teams and remain competitive in their industries.

PRACTICE QUESTION

With the help of technology, business operations have drastically changed throughout the last century. Today, businesses can conduct meetings with clients and coworkers from around the world. Which of the following technological advances can companies use to host face-to-face meetings with international clients?

- Google Drive
- The Cloud
- Conference Calls
- Skype

Answer

Skype is a form of video conferencing that allows people to communicate face-to-face. Video conference calls are more personal as they allow people to put a name to a face and build stronger working relationships.

Translations

Language barriers can pose a big challenge when dealing with individuals from other countries. Providing translation services is a great way to ensure the message is being properly communicated. It is important to remember that certain slang terms and idioms may not translate well or make sense to other cultures. Working with a translator can help to bridge language barriers and form stronger working relationships. There are also text translating services that may be helpful when communicating via email or through similar messaging systems.

Efficient Communication

It is important to be respectful of other peoples' time. One should not call a meeting unless there is pertinent information to discuss. Any message should be geared towards the audience and relevant to their job or assignment. When a meeting is called, it should be accompanied by an agenda. Meeting agendas keep people on topic and help to ensure all important information is covered. Presenting information in smaller, bite-sized pieces is also more effective in helping the audience retain the information discussed. Infographics and visual tools are also helpful in presenting information to a large group. Even if people speak different languages, graphics and numbers are a universal form of communication.

Meeting Standards and Etiquette

Establishing meeting standards and etiquette is extremely helpful in maintaining a professional work environment. When working with people from across the globe, it is important to be mindful of time zones. Ideally, teams should work to find a time that is reasonable for all those attending. However, if it is impossible to find a reasonable time for everyone, it is a good idea to establish a rotation so no single person or team is expected to regularly work outside of their normal business hours.

Establishing etiquette expectations is a great way to maintain respect and professionalism. For example, large group meetings should be held through email, audio conference calls, or video conference calls. Sensitive information around pay and job performance should be discussed through more private communication platforms like one-on-one phone calls or video conferences.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Ralph is preparing for a big meeting with international clients. Ralph is worried that his clients may misinterpret his presentation since they do not speak English. What communication strategy can Ralph use to help ensure his meeting runs smoothly and his message is received as he intended?

- Conduct the meeting via email.

- Use lots of graphics and other visual aids.
- Enlist the help of a translator.
- Present a short and concise message.

Answer

Enlist the help of a translator. Hiring a translator to assist him during the meeting is a great way for Ralph to ensure both parties understand each other. A translator can help to navigate language barriers and form stronger working relationships.

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