

Virtual Collaboration Across Cultures

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There are two aspects

- Virtual
- intercultural
- and multiple stakeholders:
 - students
 - academics (need additional skills!)
 - technicians (provide working environment)



Virtualisation is not new



Kish tablet from Sumer, 3500 BC



And became more abstract



Trilingual cuneiform inscription



Technological virtualisation, 1951



Australia, 1962

Motivated !
Student

Trust, and
leadership

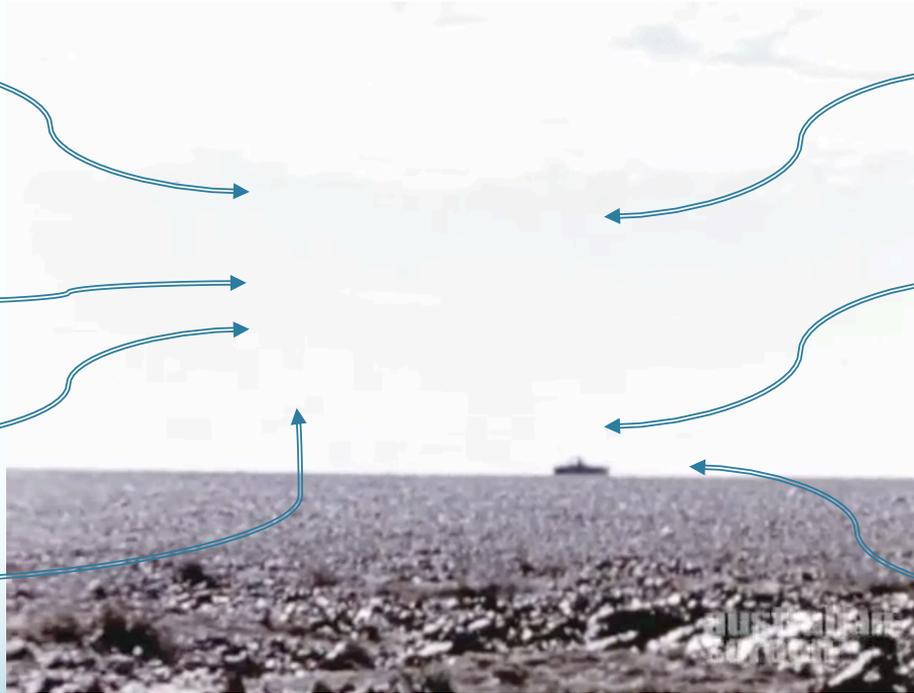
Random old
guy, could not
edit him out..

Technical
Support

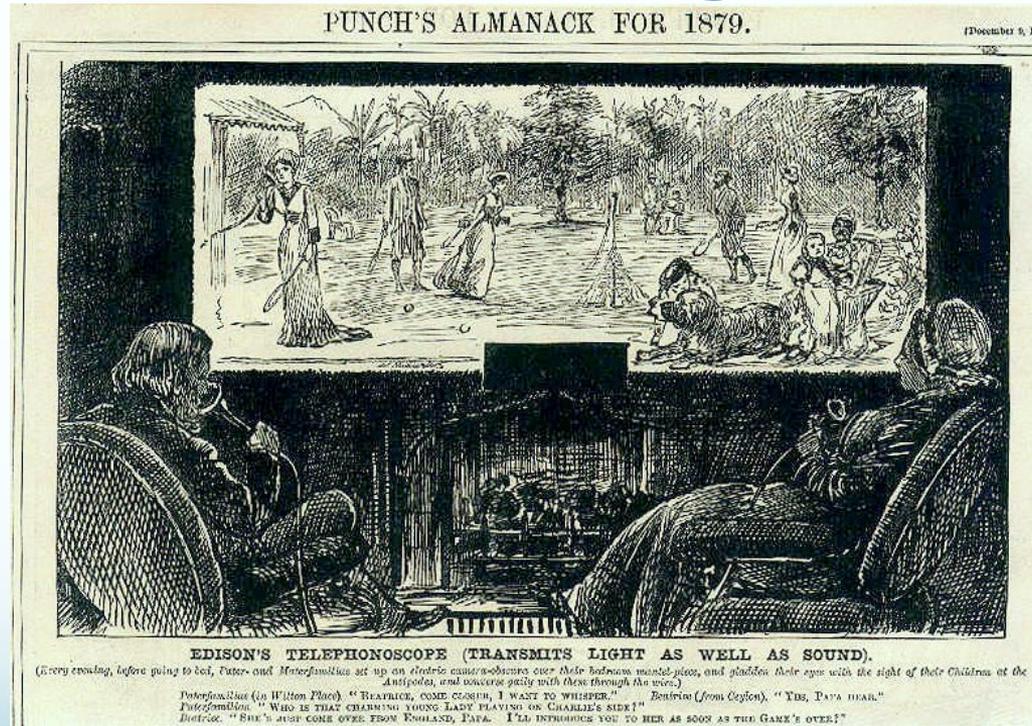
Teacher

Curriculum

Organised (timed)
Environment



Virtualisation reaching new levels...



1969, AT&T Picture Phone

at a cost of
0.5 Billion USD



90 years after
Punch Almanak
prediction !!



Access Grid, etc.

- advanced videoconference using big displays and with multiple simultaneous camera feeds at each node
- Skype™ and other technologies
- Bandwidth rapidly increasing (2013-2020: 30/140 – 315/1150 Mb/s up/down)
- video compression is a core enabling technology: factor 2-3x per decade



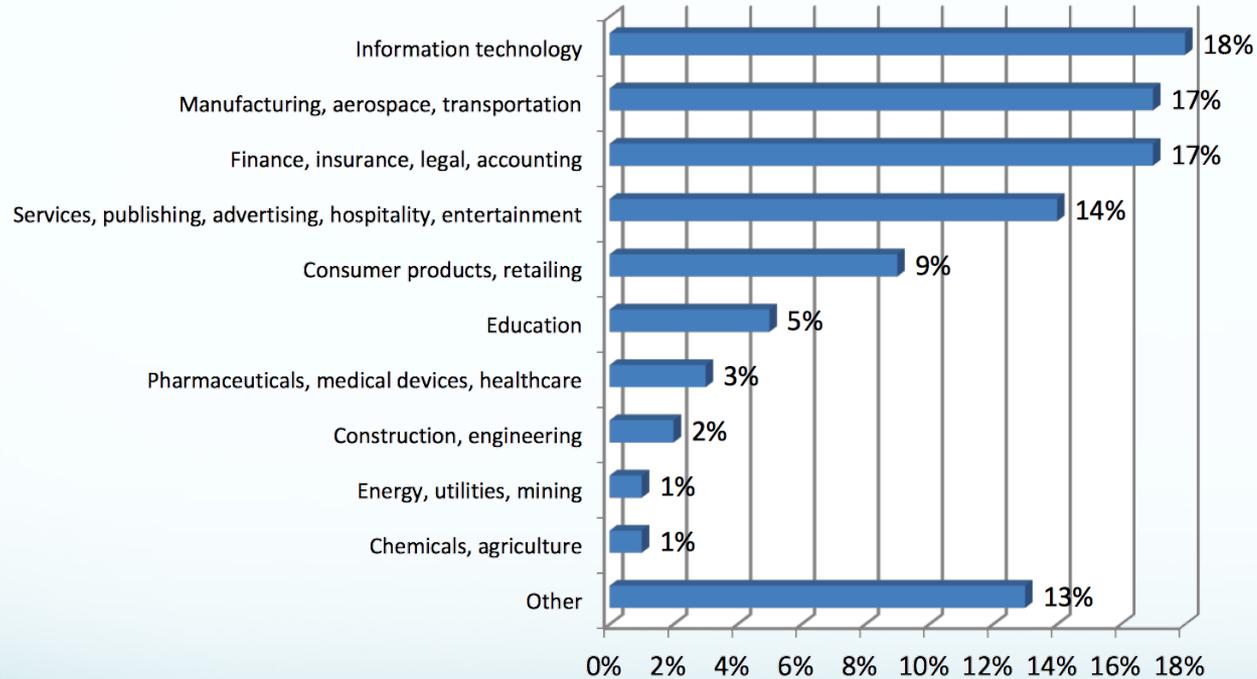
Trends in Global Virtual Teams

- 34 questions, 1372 respondents in 80 countries, 43% in USA, 57% elsewhere
- people expect to encounter cultural differences
 - are aware of the issues, but not trained to cope with them
 - underestimate the consequences
 - haven't developed the skills to be agile in a multicultural environment
- Just being aware is not a solution

(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



Participation by Industry



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)

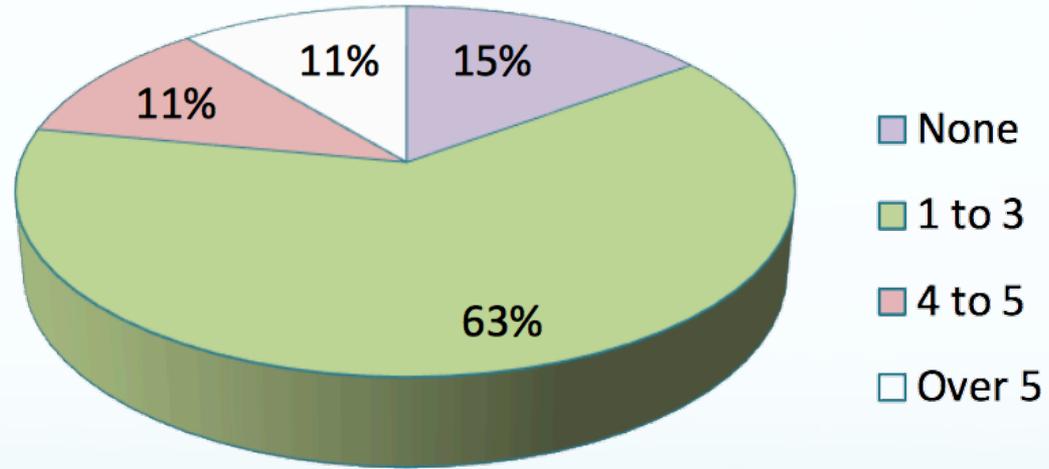


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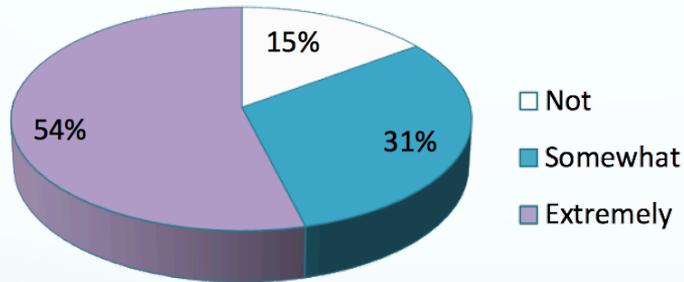
How Many Virtual Teams Are You On?



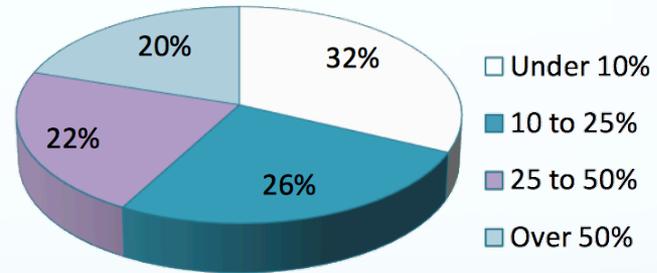
(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



How Critical Is Virtual Teamwork to Your Productivity



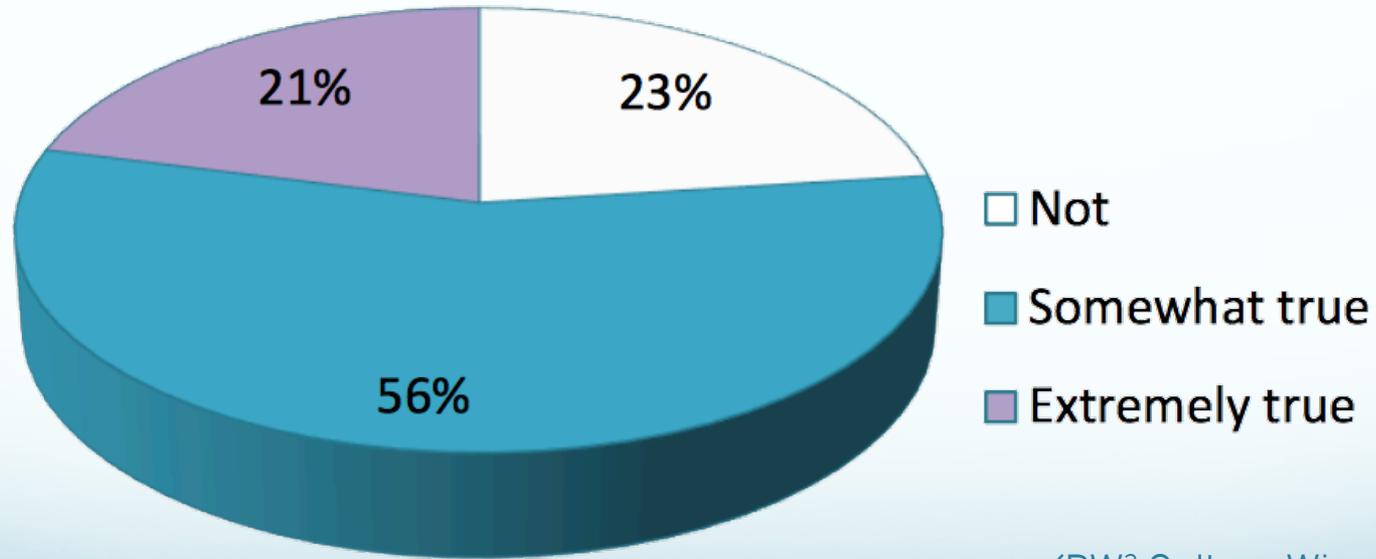
Percentage of Work Day Spent Interacting on Virtual Teams



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



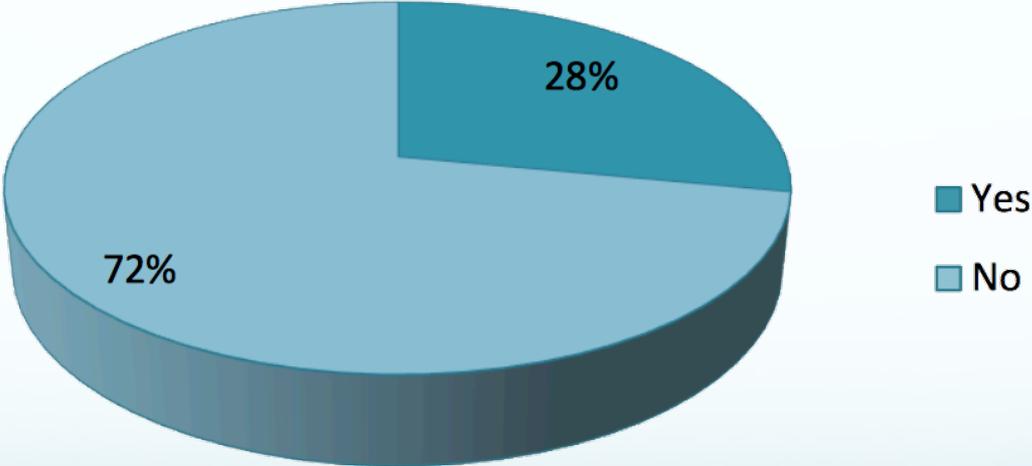
"My Virtual Team Capitalizes on Its Cultural Diversity"



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



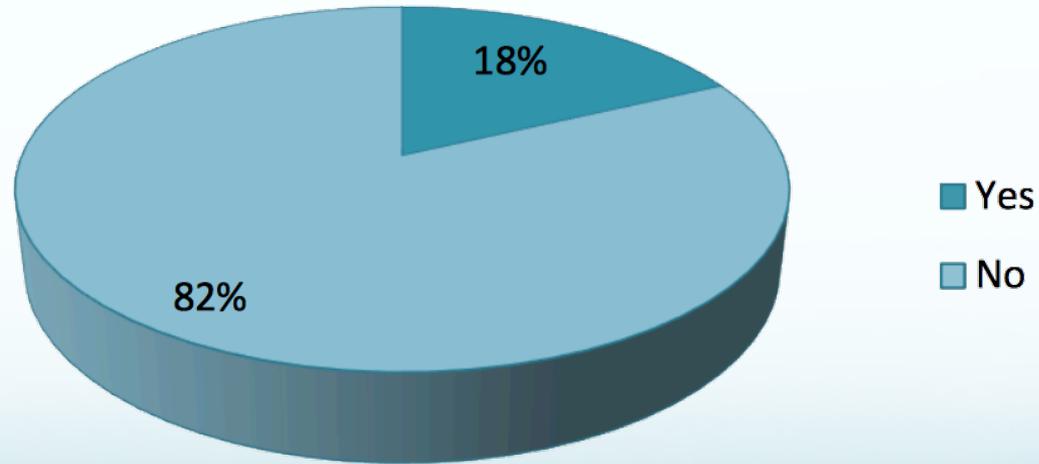
Do Your Virtual Teams Have a Team Charter for High Performance?



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



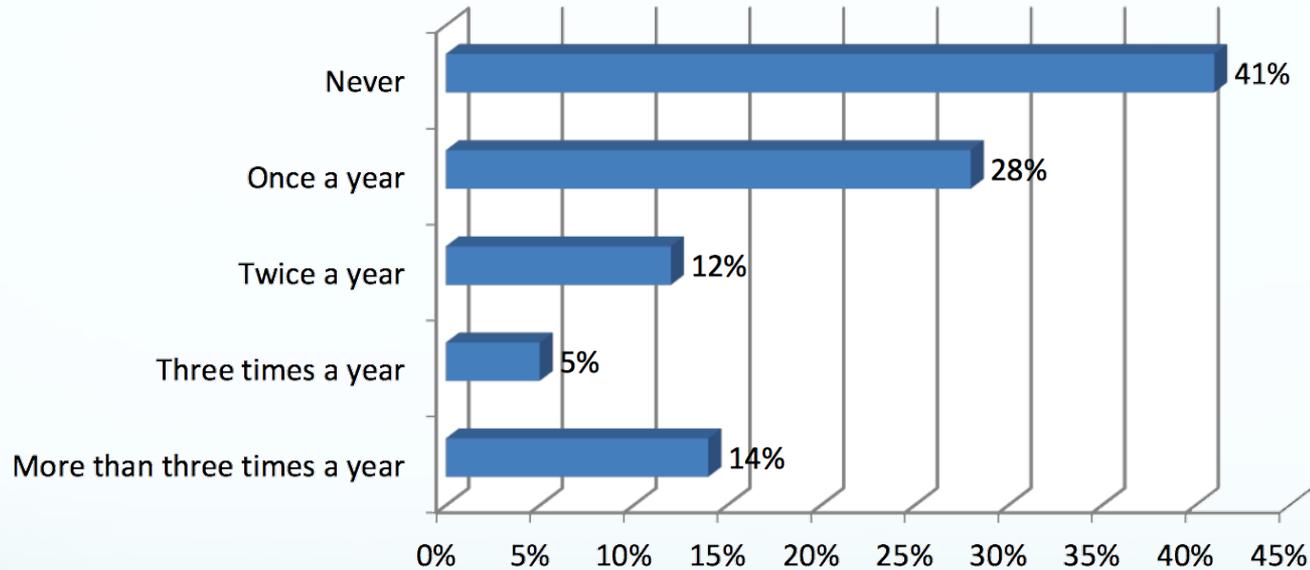
Did an Intercultural Misunderstanding Cost Your Team or Company an Opportunity?



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



How Often Does Your Virtual Team Meet in Person?



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)

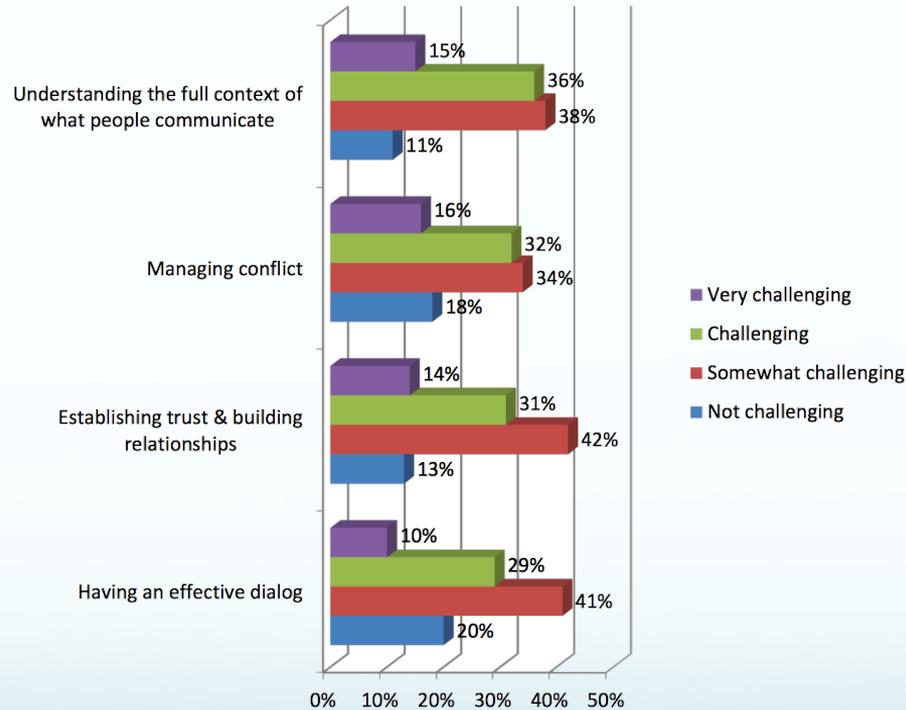


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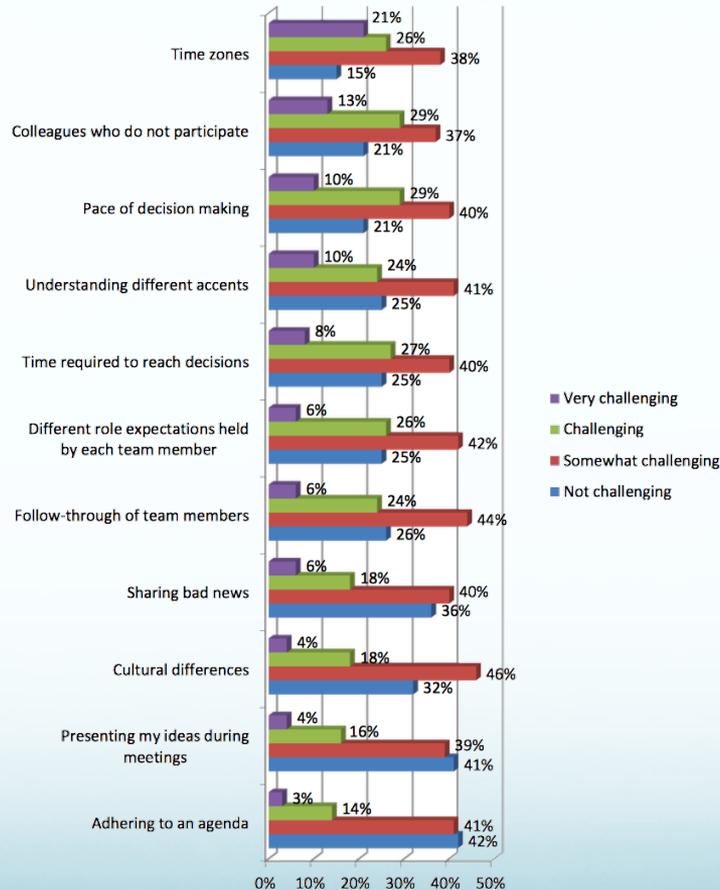
How Lack of Face-to-Face Contact Affects Productivity



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



Rating the Severity of General Challenges Faced by Virtual Teams



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



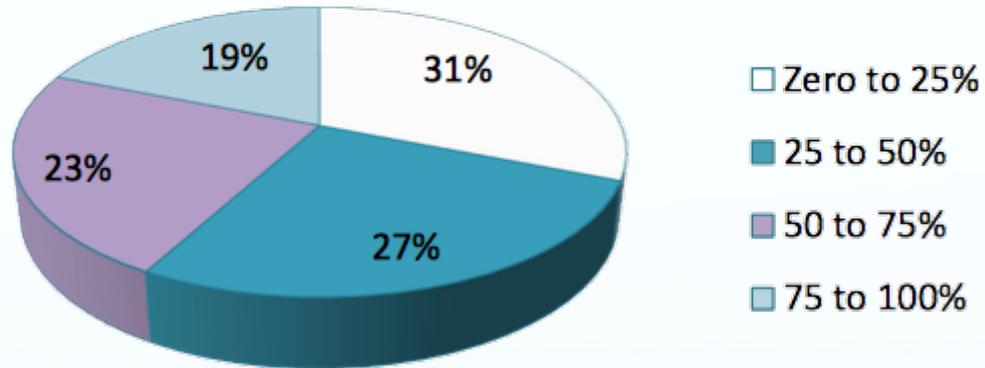
Assuming Competence, What Makes a Good Virtual Teammate?



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



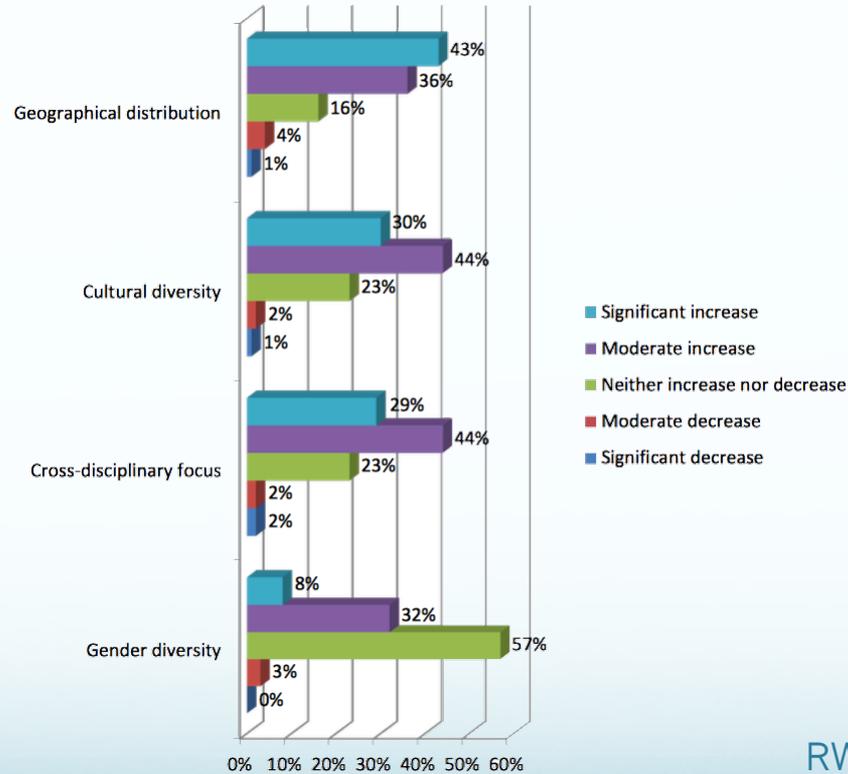
Percentage of Global Team Leaders Who Are Prepared to Lead Multicultural Teams



(RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



How Have Team Characteristics Changed in Your Organization?



RW³ Culture Wizzard, 2016)



A Comparison

Face to Face (FtF) and Virtual Teams



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Face-to-Face

- higher self-actualising
- higher humanistic encouraging
- higher affiliative
- constructive group

Style

Virtual

- passive/defensive-dependent
- avoidance or aggressive/defensive power
- inferior decisions

(Gera, 2013)



Face-to-Face Performance Virtual

- culturally diverse teams performed inferior

- culturally diverse teams performed superior
- Transformational leaders' behaviours positively linked to performance
- Higher task performance with richer media

(Gera, 2013)



Face-to-Face Satisfaction Virtual

- more satisfied with quality of team working
 - more satisfied with work-process
- Less satisfied due to heterogeneous nature of the teams

(Gera, 2013)



Face-to-Face Trust

- context (cooperative vs. competitive) exerts greater influence on trust development compared to medium used for introductory meeting (FtF vs. electronic)

Virtual

- Cooperative context facilitated high levels of trust and collaboration

(Gera, 2013)



Face-to-Face Cohesion

- stronger relational links and more cohesion
- more satisfied with outcome and decision process

Cohesion

Virtual

- computer mediated communication systems use resulted in lower cohesion scores
- comparable higher scores obtained with FtF and videoconference

(Gera, 2013)



Face-to-Face Conflict

Virtual

- more dispersed and diverse nature resulted in greater and more diverse conflict
- different conflict management behaviours: collaboration, competition, avoidance
- more task conflict when relying heavily on technology

(Gera, 2013)



Intercultural collaboration

- Kimmel and Volet (2012): “completion of collaborative learning activities in culturally diverse small groups is a highly complex, socially and emotionally demanding experience”
 - cohort characteristics play an important role:
 - nature of the discipline (e.g. science versus business)
 - language proficiency (and)
 - (perceived) academic competence



Hofstede's dimensions & Learning Patterns

- Power distance
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Individualism vs. collectivism
- Masculinity and femininity
- Short term vs long term orientation



Confucian Heritage Culture

- dominant in China and region: Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia)
- learners excel in group settings, because of:
 - collectivist culture
 - Confucianism: in-group harmony and interpersonal relationships
- Thus, Collaborative Group Learning is appropriate for CHC learners, but Western model of CGL is not

(Nguyen et al., 2006)



Power Distance

- when students collective knowledge may exceed that of the teacher (social constructivism)
 - this creates a vulnerability for the teacher (in CHC)
 - socially complex situation may arise:
 - leaderless class, CHC says there must be a leader
- Western culture
 - teacher is guide and facilitator
 - each member has a job to do, shared leadership

(Nguyen et al., 2006)



Individualism & collectivism

- can co-exist
- CHC:
 - competitive style makes learners want to work individually (full control of end product)
 - collectivism is about group harmony, 'giving face', assuming an obliging style, and suppressing personal desires
- Western:
 - challenging one another's conclusions, need to be seen in different light, striving for mutual benefit, no concern over loss of face

(Nguyen et al., 2006)



Masculinity & Femininity

- no consensus on issues related to gender in group learning
- Confucianism interacts on this dimension

(Nguyen et al., 2006)



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Uncertainty avoidance

- Confucianism interacts
- different scores in CHC countries: Japan, Korea, Taiwan (high score), China, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Singapore (low)
 - weak on time and interpersonal relationship
 - high on moral social rules and education
- CHC: well structured tasks, detailed intro & guidelines



short-term versus long term

- short term – mono-chromic time, emphasis on clock, schedules, appointments - Western
- long term – polychromic time, time is limitless, re-schedule is fine - CHC

(Nguyen et al., 2006)



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Study Abroad

- HEI students have:
 - a long history of schooling in their home country
 - developing their patterns of learning and study habits
 - in conformation to their cultural and educational environments
- They expect things to be different.....
- E.g. Wageningen -1st year students:
 - Dutch: deep, structuring and relating strategies to identify main points and construct a coherent overall picture
 - CHC: reproductive, stepwise, sequential, detailed and analytical study strategy



Virtual Cooperative Group Learning

- added issues (consider the academic role):
 - **home environment**, more difficult to imagine other culture
 - **team bonding** is harder, **trust** more difficult
 - **informal leaders** less likely to emerge
 - tougher to create **genuine dialogue**
 - easier for **misunderstandings** to escalate
 - local language, **off-line conversations**
 - English as a **second language**, but no immersion
 - **time-zone** differences, consider the **rhythm**
 - **technological** limitations



Trust

- 3 stages of trust identified (Zaccaro & Bader, 2003):
 - Calculus trust
 - getting together is effective
 - members trust others act reasonably and consistently (trust in the organisation)
 - Knowledge based trust
 - members become to know one another (knowledge, skills, abilities)
 - Identification based trust
 - members share same values, goals, and intentions
- It takes time to develop trust (think of months - Oertig & Buergi, 2006)



emergence of virtual leaders

- characteristics of informal leaders (value in group phase):
 - High level intercultural ability (mostly early phase)
 - High power distance culture (both early and late)
 - Content specific knowledge (early and late)
 - High level of trust (early and late)
 - High level of performance (early and late)
 - Male and co-location with recipient of team product



English at Work Project

- Virtual Collaboration between Finland and the Netherlands
- Problems reported by students: lack of clear goals, miscommunication, various levels of commitment, bonding
- Observed challenges: different learning cultures, backgrounds, variant reward (credit), cultural & psychological distance



Recommendations EaWP

- to develop intercultural competence, need to reflect on it during the project
- need to pay attention to different study practices, clear outline of study at outset
- equal benefit to students to ensure similar motivation
- more external stakeholders involved for higher motivation



Summing up

- Virtual Intercultural Collaboration may increase the number of students' exposure to other cultures
- Virtual team work brings along a new set of challenges (cf. face-to-face)
- Given the increased usage of Virtual Teams in global collaboration, development of skills associated with virtual collaboration enhances employability
- Please: Don't forget to support the academics in this exciting new endeavour!



Thank you !



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I am grateful for the following 'virtualisations':

- RW³ LLC (2016) *Trends in Global Virtual Teams Virtual Teams Survey Report*, New York
- Gera, S. (2013) Virtual teams versus face to face teams: A review of the literature. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 11(2):1-4
- Kimmel, K. & Volet, S. (2012) University Students' Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Culturally Diverse Group Work: Does Context Matter? *Journal of Studies in International Education* 16(2): 157-181
- Nguyen, P-M., Terlouw, C., & Pilot, A. (2006) Culturally appropriate pedagogy: the case of group learning in a Confucian Heritage Culture context. *Intercultural Education* 17(1):1-19
- Hietbrink, J., Huisman, J., Berazhny, I., & Wallenius, L. (2016) *English at Work: an international virtual collaboration project* in Mulder, M., Wesselink, R., Biemans, H., and Lans, T. Conference Proceedings, International conference on Competence theory, research and practice pp 487-490
- Zaccaro, S. J., & Bader, P. (2003). E-Leadership and the Challenges of Leading E-Teams: Minimizing the Bad and Maximizing the Good. *Organizational Dynamics*, 31(4), 377-387
- Oertig, M., & Buergi, T. (2006). The Challenges of Managing Cross-Cultural Virtual Project Teams. *Team Performance Management*, 12(1/2), 23-30
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