

Virtual Teams

Course Length: 1 Day

Course Objectives: After completing this course, students will know how to:

- Identify the purpose and types of virtual teams, the benefits of virtual teams, types of work and meetings carried out by virtual teams, and the schedule and agenda of a session.
- Identifying the factors influencing effectiveness and the indications revealing ineffectiveness, the social dynamics stages and factors, and the steps, methods, and challenges in the decision-making process.
- Identify the obstacles in the progress of a virtual team and the factors that influence the success of a virtual team.
- Identify the importance of effective communication, the purpose of a communication design process, the technological and cultural barriers in communication, and the technological innovations in communication and the guidelines for using these technologies.
- Identify the types of alternative office arrangements, the benefits of telecommuting, and the skills and challenges of telecommuters.

Prerequisites: None.

Course Content

Unit 1: Fundamentals of virtual teams

Students learn that virtual teams consist of members who **exchange information** and ideas to solve a problem or make a decision. The types of virtual teams are **networked, parallel, project development, production, and management** teams. Students will then learn that virtual teams offer several **benefits** to those who enjoy meeting new people and exploring the diversity among people working in different locations. The course will cover that virtual team members complete **three types of work: parallel, sequential, and collaborative**. Team members also divide their meetings into four categories: **information-sharing, discussion, decision-making, and product-producing meetings**. Finally, students will learn that conducting a face-to-face orientation session depends on the complexity of the task of the team and that the length of the orientation session must be carefully planned to **allow ample time** for teams to develop the team performance plan and interpersonal relationships among the team members.

Topic A: Defining virtual teams

Topic B: Serving in virtual teams

Topic C: Conducting an orientation session

Unit 2: Effectiveness, social dynamics, and decision-making

Students will understand that there are several factors that influence the exchange of information during a virtual meeting. These are **knowledge and preparedness, opportunity to contribute, social status, and level of motivation**. Virtual team members should consider each factor when determining the **effectiveness** of a meeting. Next students will learn that virtual team members must confront unique challenges as they attempt to work together to reach the goal of the team during the stages of social

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dynamics. Team members could also consider the three factors: **time, environment, and composition**. Virtual team members must also understand the six steps of the decision-making process and follow the steps in sequence when making a decision. There are four primary decision-making methods that can help a virtual team make the best decision: **authority, ranking, voting and consensus**.

Topic A: Effectiveness

Topic B: Social dynamics

Topic C: Decision-making

Unit 3: Obstacles and success factors

Students will discuss that virtual teams are confronted with several **obstacles unique to the virtual team environment**. The three categories of culture that affect a virtual team's ability to communicate effectively and make high-quality decisions will be also covered. Students will also learn that successful virtual teams included members who understand the **factors that influence their collaboration** with one another and that **trust among members is the foundation for any successful team**. In addition, as team members begin to work together, actions taken by one or a group of members can impede the team members' abilities to trust one another.

Topic A: Obstacles

Topic B: Success factors

Unit 4: Communication

In this unit, students will learn that **virtual team communication** allows members to progress toward their goals while being separated by distances. Team members use **norms and roles** to regulate appropriate types of behavior. Members must also understand the implications of using words that might be interpreted in various ways. Words can convey two meanings: **denotative and connotative**. Next, we will discuss that a **communication design process** outlines a timetable and type of technology used for communication. Virtual team members must also **listen carefully** when others speak and should ask questions to solicit additional information. Students will become more familiar with the technological devices necessary for the communication of a virtual team. Virtual teams can also vary various cultural variables when attempting to communicate. Students will learn that novice virtual team members often face the challenge of learning to communicate in different ways. Finally, students will learn the purpose of a meeting. Whatever the purpose of a team, team members can communicate using various **technological options** and that **communication media can be categorized as one-way or two-way**.

Topic A: Effective communication

Topic B: Enhancing communication

Topic C: Communication barriers

Topic D: Technologies used for communication

Unit 5: Alternative office arrangements

In this unit, students will learn that **telework** is an individual's ability to complete work outside of the traditional office setting. The most popular alternative office arrangements including telecommuting, mobile offices, hoteling, satellite offices, and telework centers. Finally, students will learn that telecommuters can have several benefits to both employees and employers. Finally, students will understand that telework is a relatively new concept and those who work in a remote location encounter several challenges.

Topic A: Working in alternative offices

Topic B: Telecommuting

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