

Deploying Far-Flung Teams: A Guidebook for Managers

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Executive Summary

In order to be globally competitive, companies are deploying *far-flung virtual teams* to pool knowledge resources that are spread around the globe. Far-flung teams are virtual teams whose members are geographically distributed and cross-functional yet working on highly interdependent tasks. The members of such teams conduct their core work mostly virtually through electronic medium (with minimal face-to-face interactions) and share responsibility for team outcomes. The work assigned to these teams is complex either because of the cultural diversity of the team or the innovation required in the task. Finally, these teams not only include employees within an organization but also business partners (customers and suppliers) that are located in multiple regions of the world.

Fifty-four mostly successful far-flung teams were found to meet this stringent definition of a far-flung team and were invited to participate in this study. All agreed to do so. Data were collected from each leader of the team, an executive who was independent and knowledgeable of the team, and members of each team.

In this guidebook we present practices to optimize the benefits of far-flung teams found in these 54 teams. The guidebook is comprised of four chapters. In Chapter 1, we describe our sample of teams and present a framework to understand the practices. These practices are categorized into three broad areas, each of which is detailed in the three remaining chapters: *Establishing a supportive business environment (Chapter 2)*; *Leading far-flung teams (Chapter 3)*; and *Integrating technology into the way that work is done in far-flung teams (Chapter 4)*. In each of the chapters we present anecdotes and examples of various practices, as well as the challenges faced by these teams and how these challenges were overcome. At the end of each chapter is a checklist for managers deploying far-flung teams. These checklists are a succinct way for managers and executives responsible for far-flung teams to benchmark their practices against those used in our 54 successful teams and to learn new practices that have worked for the teams we studied.

For the executive leading corporate-wide initiatives for encouraging virtual collaboration, this guidebook will suggest specific organizational policies you need to put into place to support your virtual teams. For example, if you haven't already established a governance structure where people report to multiple bosses, if you personally are still relying on face-to-face meetings to collaborate with others, or if you haven't provided clear signals on the proper chartering of far-flung teams, you will find this guidebook particularly helpful in learning how to do so.

For the CIO and IT executives, this guidebook identifies specific ways in which collaborative technologies are being used to enable successful collaborations. For example, if you don't encourage users to engage in guided experimentation

with collaborative technologies, if you aren't developing an enterprise-wide taxonomy to support easy retrieval of team knowledge corporate-wide, if you haven't yet thought about standards and security issues pertaining to the use of instant messaging, or if you aren't in the process of providing support in integrating collaborative technology into team work practices, you will find this guidebook helpful.

This guidebook is also intended for team and project leaders and managers who will – one day in the near future if not today – be tasked to manage a virtual collaboration. By not just providing practices, but also the challenges that other leaders faced and how they overcame them, this guidebook helps you to know what to expect, when to get help, and from whom. For example, it is helpful for you to know that the clashes in perspectives you experience among your virtual team members is to be expected, fostered, and mined for insights, not smoothed over. You will learn that careful use of collaborative technologies combined with new work practices can help you mine this creative diversity.

Finally, this guidebook is meant to empower individual members in an increasingly virtually collaborative world. You can use this guidebook to convince your management of the specific changes in organizational practices you believe are needed to alleviate some of the frustrations you may experience in being a member of a virtual team. This guidebook will also help you to identify specific behaviors that will personally help you to work better with your virtual team. By demonstrating a curiosity to learn from the differences of others, quickly articulating creative differences, developing insights from these differences, and modifying the way you normally work to engage in continuous electronically-mediated and asynchronous dialogue – you will become a better virtual collaborator.

In summary, as companies become increasingly global, the need to change their technology, corporate, and work practices has become increasingly pronounced. The specific practices described in this guidebook will help you to initiate and benefit from these changes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As companies become more global and the competition gets fiercer, the need to mobilize knowledge resources that are spread across the globe becomes more acute. Knowledge about local markets, regional supply chains, innovations, best processes etc. needs to be integrated to stay competitive in a hyper-competitive global economy. Best people within an organization are no longer at a central location. As companies become more global, they have to not only improve products and processes in their domestic markets, but gain a better understanding of customers and suppliers in disparate regions of the world.

Since employees within an organization have their day-to-day local responsibilities, they cannot collocate with employees from other regions for the extended periods of time it takes to develop innovations that impact the organization globally. Further, given the socio-political-economic climate of today, employees (or for that matter business partners) cannot travel to a single location frequently to pool their intellectual capital. Given these circumstances, in order to respond to the market, organizations have to develop alternative mechanisms to dynamically and opportunistically pool their collective knowledge resources scattered around the world. *Far-flung virtual teaming* is the very mechanism that enables organizations to do so.

1.1. Definitions

Virtual teams are groups of geographically distributed individuals working on interdependent tasks and sharing joint responsibility for team outcomes. These individuals collaborate using a mix of face-to-face and electronic media mechanisms. Generally such teams have been comprised of individuals belonging to the same company and situated within the same region or continent working on routine tasks.

Far-flung virtual teams, or far-flung teams, or FFTs for short, take the concept of virtual teams the next level – they are teams of individuals spread across the globe, working *collaboratively* to innovate, with minimal or *no face-to-face* interaction. Thus, FFTs are characterized by added complexity over commonly deployed virtual teams:

- They are “**communications challenged**” since they conduct almost all of their core work virtually through electronic medium.
- They are “**culturally challenged**” since the members have diverse areas of expertise, belong to different countries, are based in multiple countries, and hence may speak different languages.
- They are “**task challenged**” as the need to pool together disparate participants create uncertainties in both the processes for accomplishing team objectives as well as the nature of the actual outcomes anticipated.

So much has been written about virtual teams in general that we wondered if FFTs would follow the same practices. We felt there were likely to be differences, but needed the experiences of actual successful FFTs to demonstrate these differences. Moreover, we wondered if there were “lessons

from the bleeding-edge” that would apply to routine virtual teams while adding new knowledge for managing routine virtual teams.

1.2 Description of Sample

We solicited participation from several hundred virtual teams and screened them based on stringent criteria to determine whether they fit our notion of far flung-teams. The criteria included the *nature of the task* (uncertain tasks were preferred over routine tasks and members needed to be highly interdependent on a regular basis), *diversity within the team* (multiple regions and/or companies needed to be represented), and *degree of virtuality* (most of the core work needed to be done through electronic means). Thus, teams that were physically collocated a significant portion of time were not included. Several organizations helped us in our quest to find exemplars of FFTs (SIM, NetAge, Groove, and University of Southern California’s Center for Telecommunications Management).

Over the course of six months, we identified 54 “best practice” FFTs from the several hundred teams that responded to our call. These were categorized as “best practice” based on the independent assessment of an executive familiar with the team. The 54 FFTs that were identified represented 33 different companies (Table 1) from 14 different industries (Table 2) and were entrusted with a diverse range of tasks (Table 3).

Table 1: Companies Represented in the Sample of Far-Flung Teams	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agilent • Air Products • AMP • Cap Gemini Ernst & Young • Childrens Health • Digitas • Dupont Dow • Emery • EDS • Freelances • Fullcircle • Gartner • Glaxo Smith Kline • HP • Heidelberg • IDS Scheer • IBM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intel • International Truck & Engine • Kraft • LDS Church • Lucent • Marinos • Medtronic • MSC • Motorola • NGIS • RFG • Real World Systems • Shell • Textronix • Unilever Latin America • Verizon

Table 2: Industries Represented by the Sample of Far-Flung Teams	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Tech • Industrial manufacturing • Telecommunications • Consumer products • Chemical • Automotive • Engineering design • Medical device manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting • Printing • Financial Services • IT research analysis • Health Care • Non-profits • Logistics

Table 3: The Task Entrusted to Far-Flung Teams in the Sample

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design innovative mfg process technology • Intellectual property mgmt. • Rollout mfg of new products • Product innovation support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Collaboration Products • New Systems Implementation • Virtual Teams IT Support • Software Knowledge Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value-based management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Process Knowledge Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outsourcing Best Practices KM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diesel engine design • IT infrastructure operational support • Develop simulation for automotive design • Global integration of business systems • Identify new supplier quickly • Team collaboration products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Best Practices • Design Collaboration with External Parties • IT Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate tech needs for government client • Develop global employee induction policies • Manage merger of IT infrastructures • Set merged IT infrastructure policies • Team collaboration products • Corporate tax advisement • National infrastructure security • Develop & manage corporate learning strategy • Provide legal advise over web • IT server relocation • Develop expertise locator • Improve Virtual Teams • Corporate safety, health, & environmental protection • Product Transfer IT Support • Identify New Tech. Solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Platform Transfer • Develop Collaboration Tools • Support Tools for Customer Data Analysis • Support for Marketing Services Applications • Global Systems Integration • Global Demand & Supply Planning • IT Platform Renewal and Standardization • Products Trial and Testing • Knowledge Management • Fabrication Plant construction • IT Best Practices • Improving Virtual Teams • Develop Training Material • Industry Analysis • Product Testing • Online Training Material for Gender and Diversity Issues • Service Strategic Accounts • Managing Software Apps

The major characteristics of the teams included in the sample were:

- The teams ranged in size from a low of 2 (not including the team leader) to a high of 50, with the teams having 12 members on average;
- 43% of the teams were tasked with innovation-oriented tasks while 33% of them were involved in operational services tasks;
- Teams were at diverse phases of their life-cycles with 25% already completing their tasks and 20% just starting;
- 50% of the teams included more than one company and more than 50% included more than one function; and
- 75% of the teams included members from more than one national culture! - with 60% including members at 3 or more time zones apart or with different native languages.

1.3. How Data Were Collected

To collect data on the teams, we first interviewed each team leader. The interviews lasted about 40-60 minutes, asking about the purpose of the team; why it was structured as a distributed team; what practices the leader established in the team for cohesiveness, trust-building, and shared understanding; any adjustments made to the team during its lifecycle; and the use of technology by the team. Team members were contacted (either by us directly or by the team leader) and asked to complete a web-based survey that we prepared. We guaranteed confidentiality of all responses. Members were asked about the intellectual capital they had acquired on the team; the technology characteristics they found most useful; and their views of such team management issues as trust, leadership, cohesiveness, and personal benefits from the team. The survey

took about 30 minutes to complete. A total of 269 team members completed the survey, ranging from a low of 2 members from one team of 2 people to a high of 14 of the team members. On average, 50% of the members from each team completed a survey. Finally, executives who were knowledgeable about the team but were not members of the team were asked to complete a short 10-item assessment of the team's outputs to-date, including assessments of the team's efficiency, quality of innovations, adherence to schedule and budget, and work excellence.

1.4 Framework for Understanding Practices

Using our multiple sources of data about each team, we identified a number of practices used across the successful teams. These are categorized into three broad areas as shown in the framework in Figure 1. In Chapter 2 we discuss practices for establishing a supportive business environment to allow FFTs to flourish. Practices for FFT leadership are described in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 presents practices for integrating technology into how work gets done in FFTs. In each of the chapters we present anecdotes and examples of the practices. At the end of each chapter is a checklist for managers deploying FFTs. These checklists are a succinct way for managers and executives responsible for all virtual teams to benchmark their practices against the practices used in our 54 teams.

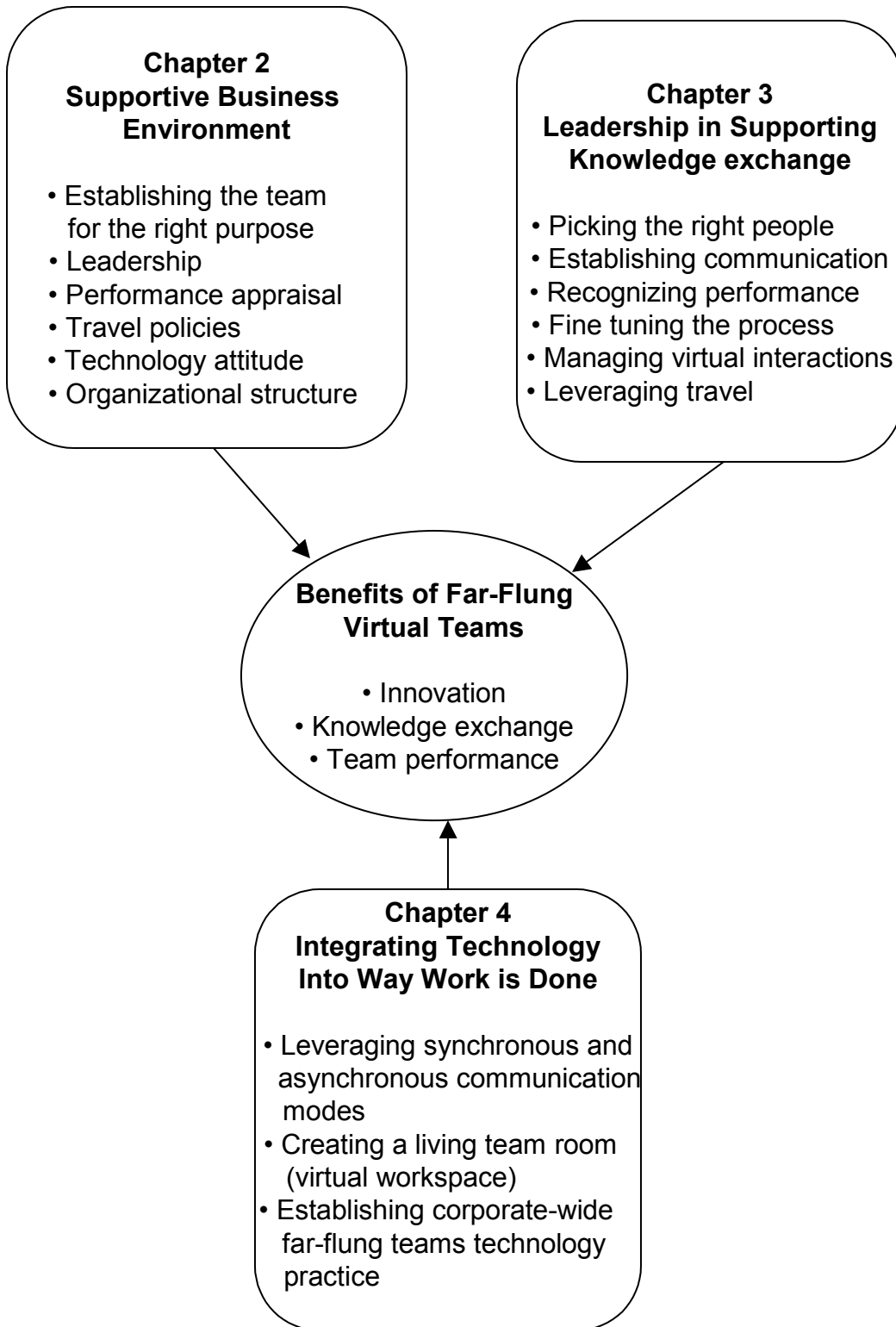


Figure 1: Framework for FFT Practices

Chapter 2: Supportive Business Environment

To gain the optimum benefits from FFTs, there must be a supportive business environment. Such an environment consists of: 1) corporate policies that support FFTs, and 2) proper executive chartering for FFTs. Without a supportive business environment, FFTs will not work. This chapter describes these appropriate corporate policies, and the right expectations and reasons for deploying FFTs. We also present diagnostic checklists to deal with issues that help FFTs to function optimally when deployed.

2.1 Corporate Policies That Support FFTs

FFTs do not operate in a vacuum. They only work in corporate environments that are supportive of them. Through our interviews with team leaders we identified 7 policies that were needed for a FFT to succeed.

Policy #1: Full-time Team Leaders

FFT leaders are often full-time, although generally their members are not. For reasons that will become clearer later in this guidebook, a FFT leader has much to do: communicate frequently and regularly with each member individually, prepare and help to execute mentorship plans for each member, prepare the team's living repository, monitor team members' use of the repository, plan and manage team meetings as virtual events, etc. If the leaders were not dedicated full-time to the FFT, these tasks would suffer and consequently the team would

not function optimally or might even stop functioning altogether. Therefore, corporate policies need to be established to allow for a full-time leader who can carry out the numerous responsibilities required of him or her when leading FFTs.

A team leader told us that every week, he spent an hour of one-to-one telephone time with each member of the team (totaling 10 hours a week) to ensure that the members were on the same page and to alleviate any personal concerns they might have.

A team leader reported initially not meeting with each member individually. When evaluations by her team members were reviewed with her manager at her bi-annual review, the manager recommended that she meet more regularly with each member and decreased her other non-team responsibilities. Her evaluation conducted six months later confirmed a significant increase in members' view of her leadership capability.

Policy #2: Performance Appraisals Count FFT Contributions

Team members on FFTs are usually not dedicated full-time to the team. They have their local job responsibilities that have to be performed simultaneously with the activities associated with the FFT. As such, they have a “regular” manager to whom they report, as well as the FFT leader. Often, it is the regular manager who evaluates the individual, not the team leader. A corporate policy supporting FFTs is one that ensures that the team member’s contributions to the FFT are incorporated into the regular manager’s evaluation of the individual (a reporting structure that supports this policy is presented in Policy #6).

Because a team was composed of part-time members from 5 different business divisions, none of whom reported directly to the team leader, the leader was worried that the members would not give the team their priority. So he created a steering committee for the team composed of the executives from each of the 5 business divisions and had the team give quarterly briefings to the steering committee (by webcast). By the time the annual reviews were conducted, the executives were able to include their knowledge of their team member's contribution to the FFT in the review process.

Policy #3: Give Employee Contribution to Enterprise's Intellectual Capital as Much Importance as Task Accomplishment

Individuals are motivated to join FFTs because they're excited about the possibility of working with new people with unfamiliar knowledge and applying this knowledge to address a new problem. Moreover, they hold the belief that by working in a far-flung team, they can both make a contribution to the problem as well as learn something that will be of value to themselves as well as the firm. A company that values learning and development for the enterprise as a whole, not just for a manager's own division, is more likely to foster successful FFTs. Members feel freer to join FFTs recognizing that the team will make an immediate contribution to the individual and the enterprise that will eventually help the manager. A firm in which managers are evaluated based not just on their own division's independent performance but the performance of the division in facilitating corporate-wide goals is more likely to be supportive of FFTs. In

addition, firms that emphasize the development of individualized personal development plans tend to be more supportive of FFTs.

At an oil exploration and production company, managers are rewarded for the extent to which members of their organization are asked to serve on FFTs (called Assist Teams). These Assist Teams are like SWAT teams that quickly examine problems to recommend solutions.

Policy #4: Justify Travel Before, Not After

Let's face it: people are used to working face-to-face. Many people see working with someone virtually as a last resort. They often don't understand that working virtually requires different skills than working face-to-face, and therefore can't adjust their working styles. Therefore, if they have the opportunity, they will prefer working face-to-face. As long as executives travel to meet with each other, and encourage their subordinates to do the same, FFTs are unlikely to happen, and if tried, are unlikely to succeed. This is because travel becomes the easy excuse to avoid learning the new practices of working in a FFT. When the team can't reach a decision while in their distributed locations, it becomes too easy to say, "let's wait until we travel to see each other". Once that kind of thinking is allowed, then the members stop trying to work together to reach a common decision and await the time they will come together. Delays in decision making occur. Moreover, if people are encouraged to travel, there becomes little reason to document decisions made because "I can always see her again and we can remind each other why we made the decision". Most of the 54 teams

were in business environments which discouraged travel, creating the impression that FFTs are not only desired but the only option. Thus, learning the new skills of working virtually is not only desired but necessary.

A leader of the team in a consumer goods company spoke of how his team was not able to work effectively, as they waited for their first available opportunity to come together face-to-face to work. In the time between these meetings, the team could not make any progress. As a result, most of the face-to-face meeting time was wasted in re-initiating the tasks rather than making any progress. The team leader thus initiated a “no-travel” policy. The team struggled for a few months after this but finally established ways to make consistent progress virtually. When the face-to-face meetings happened (if the members were at the same location for purposes other than the FFT), they spent that time making additional progress without waiting for the face-to-face meetings to happen.

Policy #5: Encourage Use of Collaborative Technologies

FFTs are often found in companies in which individuals routinely try different types of collaborative technologies: instant messaging, collaborative conferencing, corporate repositories, desktop conferencing, electronic whiteboards, shared applications. Thus, the individuals are not afraid of these technologies and often have some rudimentary knowledge of their capabilities even before a FFT is started.

A team in a communications network components and device manufacturing company had a global FFT for testing out new products in their local markets and then formulating a global marketing plan for the product. Some team members began to adopt instant messaging to communicate with each other as an addition to the use of a repository and audio-conferences. Pretty soon all team members had adopted instant messaging to create a shared co-presence to communicate the “Eureka” and “Oh Shoot!” moments. All this happened without any formal training. Many other teams encourage experimentation like this.

Policy #6: Structure Corporate Governance as Network

FFTs are often located in traditional firms with formal reporting structures; however the formal reporting structure is often coupled with an informal network structure. In these network structures, individuals have multiple bosses at any one time, depending on the task they are working on. The bosses come from different organizations, and are rarely collocated with either each other or with the individual. FFT members are not only comfortable in such a dynamic network, but even thrive in it.

A FFT in the electronics testing equipment manufacturer was required to report the team's outcomes and accomplishments to a steering committee. The steering committee was designed in a way that it had a representative (senior-level executive) from every location that there was a team member present. This senior-level executive provided the aegis under which his/her local team member worked on the FFT. They were also responsible for periodically ensuring that their local team member remained at a high motivation level.

2.1.1 Issues Related to Corporate Policies... and Solutions

Without these corporate policies, FFTs and their leaders have too many obstacles to succeed. Without policies that provide the resources for full-time leaders, the leaders don't have the time to stay in touch with each member and immediately intervene when problems associated with being virtual arise. Without policies that support enterprise-wide intellectual contributions from individual employees (instead of just individual contributions to a single

manager's division), team members' attention will not be on the team, diverted to worrying about how to meet their managers' needs while simultaneously meeting the needs of their teams. Without policies that discourage travel, members and team leaders will not learn the new skills to work in a distributed way. Without policies that encourage the use of collaborative technologies, members will have difficulty envisioning what this new world of working virtually looks like, and thus have difficulty in understanding what they are committing to when signing up for a FFT. Without performance appraisals that count FFT contributions, members will not take the team's work seriously and undermine those members that are serious. Finally, without a corporate culture in which people are used to working for multiple and non-located managers, managers will have difficulty appreciating the work of an employee who is "never there" and "always working at home".

The team leaders that had confronted these situations in their careers as FFT leaders offered five suggestions for breaking through these barriers of not having the right corporate policies.

☠ **Issue: Not Having Resources For A Full-Time Team Leader**

Solution: Share team leader load

In some of the teams where the leaders were not full-time, the leaders had broken down the leadership tasks and decided which ones could be delegated

and which ones couldn't. Delegated tasks often included meeting planning, meeting follow-up, and repository maintenance (often allocating each person responsible for a specific knowledge domain to also be responsible for repository maintenance). The one leadership task that each leader kept was the frequent communication with each member, but even this could be reduced from once a week to once a month in teams that had been operating together for long periods of time.

✖ **Issue: Members Can't Commit The Required Time To Team**

Solution: Meet with member's manager

To ensure that members would be attentive during the team's work process and not have their attention diverted by the individual's manager, many team leaders reported having initial conversations with each individual's manager (or having the executive sponsor have those conversations) to discuss anticipated value of the member to the team and the anticipated value of the individual's participation on the team to the manager. In those conversations, expectations for the number of hours required relative to other priorities, as well as the length of time the member would remain with the team were established.

✖ **Issue: Members Not Rewarded For Team By Own Managers**

Solution: Enhance member visibility to upper management

Team leaders understood the value of an executive praising a manager for having a great employee. Therefore, team leaders often had entire teams or

subgroups brief executives. When executives were pleased with the briefings, the team leaders would suggest that they inform each member's manager about the great work that the individual was doing. Often this praise would prompt a call from the manager who might, for the first time, show some interest in understanding what the individual was doing on the FFT.

✕ **Issue: Members Start Allocating Time To Other Activities, Not Team**

Solution: Make team meetings fun and informative

Team members are often in demand by others, regardless of how much up-front negotiation occurs over time commitments. Team members will then gravitate to those commitments that give them the greatest benefits: in terms of intellectual growth, visibility, and fun. FFT leaders understand this and often structure team meetings to capitalize on these benefits by including mini-lectures on a topic related to the team's work which might be provided by an expert, short appearances by executives giving members an opportunity to enter into a dialogue about an issue related to the team's work, and fun activities such as sharing hobbies, sharing catered lunches, internet-based scavenger hunts, and virtual celebrations.

2.2. Proper Executive Chartering for FFTs

In the section above, we discussed appropriate corporate policies that support FFTs. In this section, we specifically examine appropriate charters for FFTs. Our successful FFTs were not chartered for the sole purpose of reducing travel costs. Instead, they were chartered as a FFT to achieve benefits that a collocated team could not do, or would do less well. Dramatic benefits in innovation and cost-savings often resulted. There are four types of charters that work best for FFTs.

One rocket engine design team operating as a FFT, according to an executive at the company, succeeded at designing a thrust chamber for a new rocket engine with only 6 parts instead of the traditional hundreds, with a predicted quality rating of 9 sigma (less than 1 failure out of 10 billion) instead of the traditional 2 to 4 Sigma, at a first unit cost of \$50,000 instead of millions, and at a predicted production cost of \$35,000 instead of millions. The team was able to achieve all of this with no member serving more than 15% of his time, within the development budget, with total engineering hours 10 times less than traditional teams, using a new collaborative technology with several partners having no history of working together, and the members never working in person throughout the design effort.

Charter #1: Think Global, Act Local

A team in a high-tech software and services company trying to develop a collaborative technology solution was comprised of members from 15 different European countries. The objective was to build a tool that would share a common platform but yet be customizable for the needs of the customers in each of these 15 countries.

FFTs often include members from different global market segments and geographical regions. Including such diversity of membership ensures that the team obtains the inputs of these different perspectives in performing the task. One result of such diversity is that the team is able to design a product that shares a common platform yet is customizable for the needs of different market segments. Besides design for global customizability, such diversity often leads to new processes that were not expected at the outset. In addition, there are second-order benefits of accelerated knowledge dispersion. Each individual member of the team can take the team's work and apply it to their local site. Being able to simultaneously share knowledge, develop common ideas, and then apply the knowledge locally is only possible if the team remains far-flung.

In one team in the business of servicing capital equipment for the printing industry, members from each of 11 countries in the Asia Pacific region (China, India, Thailand, etc) worked together on standardization of the Asia-Pacific employee induction process for the sales and service units. One example of how this diversity was valuable was when the HR manager in Singapore shared his HR training policy with the other members of the team. After much discussion & some revision, the other members of the team were able to try out the new HR policy in their local organizations and report quickly on results for further revisions.

Charter #2: Access Specialized Knowledge Without Destroying It

A communications infrastructure components producer company uses a FFT for global demand and supply planning. This team is comprised of members who spread across the globe such that each one of them is near a large supplier or customer base. The aim is to conduct planning in real-time based on the actual local demand and supply situation so as to not be caught flat-footed in case of dramatic shifts in trends or suppliers.

Many FFT include people who are highly specialized in a particular knowledge area or function. They are valued for that specialty, but only if they remain current in that specialty. To remain current may require that they remain physically collocated not with their team, but to others in the specialty, such as remaining physically collocated with local markets. Such specialists can only be brought together in a far-flung manner if they are to continue to do their work at their particular location.

In a team in the rocket engine industry, members included a specialist in high-quality, highly customized manufacturing of difficult metals; rocket engine design; rocket combustion; and simulations. Not all of the members had worked in the rocket engine industry previously, and none had previously worked together. They were from 3 different companies, located in 3 different regions in the U.S. The specialists' physical location was critical to their success: the simulation specialist needed to be near the engineers developing the latest simulations as well as the simulation tools that his firm had developed; the manufacturing specialist had to be near his machinists to find out if certain design ideas could be manufactured with the tolerance anticipated, and the rocket engine and combustion specialists needed to be near their highly specialized design tools. The team of specialists never met over the 10-month design effort, but were able to produce a design that far exceeded the abilities of any other design effort previously.

Charter #3: Promote Work-Family Balance

FFTs allow people to contribute to an interesting task and work with interesting people without leaving their homes or home offices. Team members in the sample of teams that we surveyed found this to be an enormous benefit and a very attractive and rewarding feature of working in the complex environment of a FFT.

The FFT in one consulting firm was tasked with restructuring how learning and training was delivered to the large, global firm. The FFT succeeded at delivering 450,000 hours of training on 1200 different learning topics in a 2-year period, in large part based on innovations in how training was conceived and delivered. Who participated on the team? 12 people – many were women who were tired of consultant travel, and enjoyed the opportunity to work from home for a short while.

Charter #4: Mergers and Acquisitions

FFTs are used in situations where companies or organizations are merging. By keeping the team members collocated with their original organizations, the members can more easily and quickly have team decisions reviewed by the home organization, providing feedback to the team within hours and days instead of weeks. In addition, enabling the employees of merging companies to continue to remain at their previous location while working in the FFT led to higher retention of very valued expertise. And in many ways, this makes the transition to the new company much smoother than otherwise.

A FFT was assigned the task of ensuring that the email infrastructure on the first day of the merged company would operate with no glitches. The team consisted of 7 people from the 2 different merging companies, starting 9 months before the “turn-on” day. The team never met in person but succeeded in all respects. As of the turn-on day, the merged email system worked flawlessly. In fact, a “command center” established to handle problems was so underutilized during those first few days that team members were watching movies since nothing went wrong.

2.2.1. Issues Related to Reasons for Deploying FFTs ... and Solutions

When FFTs are not chartered for the right reasons with the right expectations, members are often unclear about why they are on the team. For example, team members need to understand what domain of knowledge they are on the team to represent: is it their country, the present customer-base in that country, the presumed future customer-base in that country, their functional discipline regardless of country borders, or their work process/product line that may cross geographical boundaries? Not knowing why each person is on the team often reduces the motivation level of all members since it is not clear who is to provide opinions, when to provide their opinions and what their opinions represent.

Therefore, FFT leaders are often quite conscious of the requirement to have clarity in the reasons why the team needs to be far-flung. FFT leaders have experienced two particularly difficult issues in ensuring the FFT was designed with the right reasons in place: 1) Lack of clarity by executive management about benefits of team being far-flung, and 2) Lack of clarity among executives and members about which knowledge domains need to be represented and who is the representative.

☒ **Issue: Benefit of Going Far Flung is Not Clear**

Solution: Either be clear about the benefits of going far flung or don't do it.

FFT leaders reported often needing to have several discussions with executive managers about the goal of the team, and whether the goal required a FFT or not. Not all team assignments require a FFT; assignments that do not require diverse perspectives, or highly specialized people, or people flexibly located may not be well suited for such teams. FFT leaders use the discussions with executives to determine if the assignment is one that is suited to a FFT, using the appropriate charters identified above. For example, at a consumer products division of a large consumer products company, a team was created to implement SAP. Most of the team was already physically located within a few mile radius. However, members of the team from corporate headquarters and from other divisions who would eventually interface with the SAP system were not collocated. There was much discussion about whether the advantages of a FFT (such as more effectively incorporating the opinions from corporate and other divisions) were compelling enough to have a FFT, given that so many people could be easily collocated into the same room. After several weeks of deliberations, in the end, the team decided against working as a FFT since it would require the collocated team members to work in ways that were too different from before, creating a risk that was too great given the relatively small benefit of incorporating the opinions of a few members. The team thus opted to work in the traditional collocated fashion, flying non-collocated members in for quarterly meetings (and more often) when necessary.

✘ **Issue: Lack Of Clarity Among Executives And Members About Which Knowledge Domains Need To Be Represented And Who Is The Representative**

Solution: Develop a skills matrix

Both executives and team members must be absolutely clear about why each individual is on the team. The executive cannot justify the resources to allow a member to serve on the team if the member's role is not clear. Moreover, members of the team must understand the knowledge domain that is being represented by every other member if they are able to assess if each is contributing in line with expectations. This need for clarity has led many FFT leaders to report that the old way of picking team members – exclusively based on who they know – doesn't work. Instead, they prepare a skills matrix for the team (implicitly if not explicitly), which lists all the skills (or knowledge domains) that they thought need to be represented on the team. This list of skills is approved by the sponsor. The leaders then populate the team first with people they know and check off which skills are represented by the team members. They seek some degree of overlap such that an individual is more likely to be selected when she brings more than one skill to the team and they strive to ensure that more than one member represents a particular skill. Using this matrix, they have a better understanding of the "skills holes" on the team, and are able to justify this need to executives in the appropriate divisions to meet those needs.

2.3 Checklists of Practices for a Supportive Business Environment

Checklist A

Best Practice Checklist for Establishing A Supportive Business Environment

- Do you have the following corporate policies in place before deploying the far-flung
 - A full-time leader for the far-flung team
 - Performance appraisals of individuals on team to account for their contribution to the far-flung
 - Employee contributions to the enterprises' intellectual capital equally important as task accomplishment
 - Executives in your company discourage travel for themselves and others unless justified
 - A culture that supports employees working for multiple non-located managers (in a matrix like
 - Encouraging experimentation with and use of technologies.
- Are you chartering a FFT for any of the following reasons?
 - Think global act local
 - Access specialized knowledge
 - Promote work-family balance
 - Execute mergers/acquisitions

Checklist B
**Issues (and their solution) Related to Establishing
a Supportive Business Environment**

- Lacking resources for a full-time leader for the far-flung team?**
Solution: Establish shared leadership responsibilities
- Members can't devote time to the FFT?**
Solution: Meet with members' manager
- Members not rewarded for FFT participation by their local managers?**
Solution: Enhance members visibility to upper management
- Members starting to allocate time to other activities, not the FFT?**
Solution: Make team meetings fun & informative

Checklist C
Issues (and their solution) Related to Chartering FFTs

- Benefit of deploying FFT not clear?**
Solution: Either be clear (and communicate) about the benefits or don't deploy at all.
- Lack of clarity amongst executives about who to place on the FFT?**
Solution: Develop a skills matrix.

Chapter 3: Leadership in Supporting Knowledge Exchange

Interviews with FFT leaders uncovered several best practices that these leaders followed in order to make their teams more cohesive and productive (see Checklist D). These practices covered the areas of picking the right people for the team, communications with individual team members, motivating members for intellectual growth, recognizing and leveraging differences between team members, conducting focused and productive virtual meetings, and enhancing the external visibility of team members. We elaborate on each of these practices in the sections below.

3.1 Pick the Right People

FFT leaders we interviewed indicated that not all people can or should serve on a FFT. People most suited to FFTs are those who:

- ☑ Have self-discipline, high personal confidence, are “ambiguity-tolerant”, have a personal drive, and demonstrate initiative.
- ☑ Tend to think globally even though they are vested locally (i.e, they know their local customers well, but have an enterprise-wide perspective).
- ☑ Like the flexibility of a non-located job (e.g., are used to or better still prefer working out of their homes).
- ☑ Like intellectual stimulation and diverse opinions (rather than being threatened or see diversity as a barrier to overcome).

- ☑ Are knowledgeable of the domain that they were asked to represent and are able to keep up-to-speed on that domain through personal contacts and initiative.

One team leader reported that the team did so well because it was composed of people used to working from the home, without close supervision. “At our company, we want to get the best people on the project, not those who are located next to each other. I’ve worked out of my house for six years. There’s no benefit to being in an office since I work with so many people in different locations. “

3.2 Motivate Members for Intellectual Growth

Few (33%) of the team leaders we spoke with had any formal rewards to provide to the team members for their work on the FFT. For most, they had to convince executives directly responsible for the team members (i.e. local bosses) to offer formal rewards. From our interviews we gathered that the true reward that a FFT leader can provide the members is the opportunity for intellectual growth through interaction with other global-minded individuals on the FFT. This opportunity for intellectual growth was provided in two ways:

Motivational Carrot #1: One-on-One Mentorship Meetings

FFT leaders spend significant amounts of time meeting with each individual on a one-to-one basis repeatedly throughout a team's life cycle (mainly through teleconferences). FFT leaders use this time to help develop, and then review progress toward, the member's personal intellectual growth goals for participating in the team, and ways of achieving those goals. In some FFT situations the one-on-one meetings were initiated by the members themselves, and in other FFTs, the leader had standing times to meet with each person. During those meetings (virtual of course), the leader reviewed the member's contribution to the team and discussed how the member's contribution fit with her intellectual growth goal.

One team leader reported meeting with each member of her 12-person team once every two weeks (teleconference). These discussions would last from 15 minutes to an hour. She would cover the person's contributions during meetings, recent reports made to the team, and other areas of improvements. The member would discuss areas of improvements he/she would like to see in the FFT.

Motivational Carrot #2: Recognition Awards for Contribution

Team leaders are quite creative in providing recognition rewards for individual contributions. These ranged from the leader simply thanking the person publicly for making an important contribution, to more formally preparing certificates and even virtual parties.

The leader of a FFT in the high-tech industry used the practice of giving members a "gold star" for work well done. This award afforded the members recognition in the organization and could be parlayed for future promotions.

3.3. Foster Understanding of Differences

The key to the success of the FFT is the ability to take advantage of the differences between members. As long as members represent different constituents with differing needs and opinions, the creativity that comes about through differences will be enhanced. Several practices are involved in fostering an understanding of differences.

Fostering Understanding Practice #1: Identify Differences

The leader of a FFT tasked with merger- related activities told us that there were significant cultural differences between those team members who used to be with one pre-merger company (focused on processes and procedures) and those who used to be with a different pre-merger company (that emphasized customer responsiveness regardless of procedures). When discussions about appropriate procedures came up, the customer-focused members initially showed little respect for members emphasizing clearly laid out process.

Team leaders often begin the team's process by identifying differences among team members in personality, decision making style, functions, organizational culture, and country culture. Team leaders reported that all kinds of differences, not just country differences were important to surface early. To identify and surface these differences, team leaders reported using a variety of techniques, such as having individuals take Myers-Briggs or other personality tests, or have individuals describe their cultural background, country norms (including holidays,

working times), personal preferences for leadership and work styles, and personal experiences with past teams they've worked on.

One team started its teaming experience by developing an internet-based multi-user game that each member played, taking on personalities and roles in the game. By observing the roles each member took on, the members were able to learn something about how the member would later make decisions on the team. This also served as a nice reference point in later discussions when there were impasses.

Fostering Understanding Practice #2: Establish Norms to Work Together

In order for the team to function effectively, norms for working together need to be developed. Several such norms are possible. The box below presents an example of norms developed by various FFTs we studied. Generally speaking these norms tend to revolve around meeting times and communication protocols.

Example norms created by different teams included:

- ❖ References to Myers-Briggs when starting a conversation such as “I think out-loud and it sometimes pisses people off when I do that, but here goes...”
- ❖ Team meetings shall begin at 9 P.M. Singapore time once a week. The Singapore member agreed with this norm since he was a late-night person (provided that the team agreed to end the meeting at 10pm). The team leader reported that this encouraged the team to get to their points within the allotted time making the meeting more efficient than it might otherwise have been.
- ❖ One team had a member from the Philippines. Members expressed some concern that the Philippines member was usually silent. When the member explained that it took him 2 hours by bicycle to get to the office to be able to use a computer for the telecons, they realized that their meetings (which were often scheduled in the early hours for him) were exhausting for him and decided to rotate the meeting times so everyone shared equally in the hardships of far-flung meetings.
- ❖ No email to be exchanged one-to-one (one team leader felt that email caused too much misunderstanding; another team leader found that a discussion forum on a team website was better than email)
- ❖ Make a habit of checking team repository once a day.
- ❖ Always leave notice where you can be reached

Fostering Understanding Practice #3: Create Common Procedures

Several of the teams we spoke to struggled initially due to lack of a common set of procedures or way of doing things. Faced with this situation, team members resorted to using the practices prevalent in their local setting. This often resulted in every team member doing things in a unique way that was not shared with other team members. The result was lack of cohesion and difficulty in integrating work of different team members. Members of such teams floundered until the point at which a common way of “doing things” was established or emerged. The more successful teams tended to establish a common set of procedures from the onset. These common procedures were arrived at by either integrating best practices from each of the different locations represented on the FFT, or by using already-established corporate-wide best practices/procedures.

A team designing a new automotive engine (design engineers in Brazil, the automotive plant in Mexico, company HQs in the U.S. and customer HQs in the U.K.) at first did not establish a set of common practices of developing a design. By default the design engineers in Brazil adopted their local practices, which were not understood by others on the team. The team could not communicate well until the leader decided to use the well-established company-wide practices.

Fostering Understanding Practice #4: Frequent All-Team Audio-Conferences

Team leaders felt that all-team audio-conferences were the “life-blood” of the team, even when tasks were distributed among all the team members. The

meetings were structured, though, not just for reporting and coordination, but also for discussions. In order to “keep everyone in the loop” it was often mandated that all team members attend these audio-conference sessions that were held as frequently as once every week.

In a team that was involved in managing the merger of the information infrastructures of two merging companies, each member was the liaison to a subteam planning a portion of the information infrastructure (e.g., phones, security, etc.). At each weekly teleconference of this management team, each member would report on issues from their subteams that they thought might affect other subteams. The issues would then be discussed.

Fostering Understanding Practice #5: Redistribute Tasks Frequently Among Team Members

One team leader had a person knowledgeable about finance and a person knowledgeable about organizational change on his team. To roll out the new financial strategy that the team had developed, the team leader would have normally assigned it exclusively to the member that was expert in organizational change. Instead, the team leader realized that more benefit could be achieved if the organizational change person worked with a finance person in developing the roll-out strategy.

In an effort to ensure that team members shared knowledge, many team leaders reported that knowledge-sharing was often best done when specific tasks had to be accomplished. Therefore, team leaders would often assign pairs of individuals to complete a task, and pick the pairs based on who could benefit the most from learning from each other. Once the task was accomplished, the

individuals would be redistributed to new tasks. Often the redistribution occurred by individuals volunteering for the assignment; but just as often the team leader might influence this volunteering through the one-on-one mentorship sessions or by making suggestions about who could perform the task during the frequent all-team audio-conferences.

Fostering Understanding Practice #6: In-Process Team Tuning

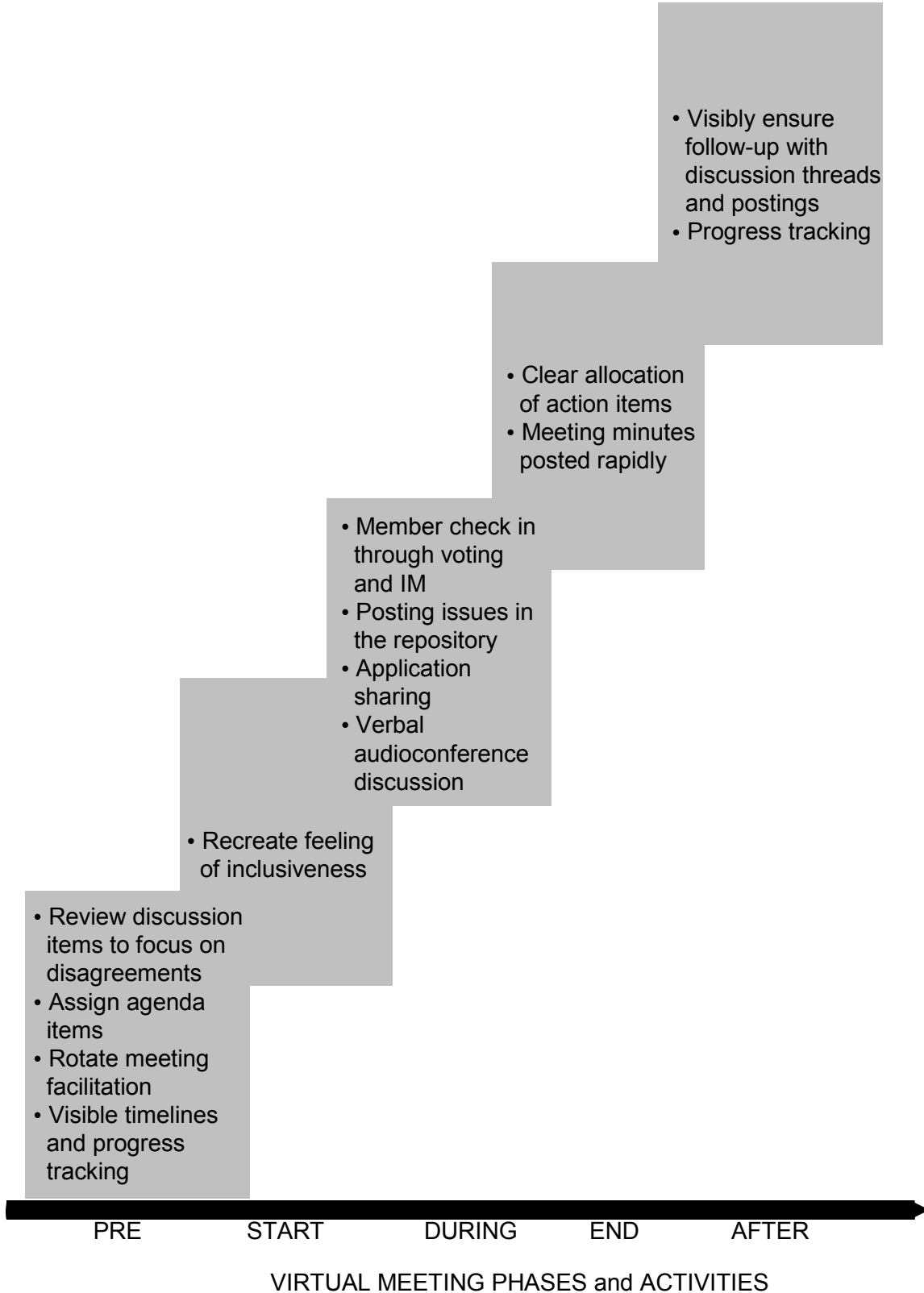
Team leaders sensed that after some time working virtually, teams often lose their sense of purpose, shared identity, and excitement. Therefore, they find the need to bring the team together. These “get-togethers” were called various names including “team tuning sessions”, “rejuvenation”, yearly strategic meetings, team development sessions, and in-process self-evaluations. Sometimes these “get-togethers” were done in-person, sometimes done virtually. Sometimes they were annual, sometimes on an as-needed basis.

A team in Latin America held annual collocated sessions for FFT members. At these 3-day sessions, speakers were invited from corporate headquarters, a benchmarking partner, and a client. In addition, each session had a theme. One year the theme was trust, another year the theme was “synchronization” (defined by the team leader as the need to know how to move forward individually, yet in perfect step with others with whom you cannot see). The team leader invited a famous local composer to come to the session and together the team members learned about how developing musical compositions involved understanding synchronization, and how they could use that metaphor for their work.

3.4 Plan Meetings as Events

FFT leaders use meetings as the way to keep members engaged, excited about the work, and aligned with each other. However, because members can be easily diverted in a virtual meeting, meetings should be treated not simply as a semi-structured activity in which members share, but rather as an opportunity to instill creativity, focus, and enthusiasm. For a meeting to capitalize on this opportunity, it must be managed carefully as a highly choreographed event. Several practices were used to turn meetings into choreographed events. These practices can be categorized into several stages in an event lifecycle as depicted in Figure 2.

MANAGING VIRTUAL MEETINGS



Plan Meetings as Events: Pre-Meeting Practices

Prior to an all-team audio-conference, FFT leaders open discussion threads about the teams' current work activities. These discussion threads are often started by posting draft documents and asking team members to comment on them. FFT leaders often suggest specific questions or sections of a document they want reviewed and identify a timeline within which the comments need to be provided. Using the discussion thread forum allows all comments to be seen by all members. A virtual workspace with a discussion thread capability is often used to facilitate this process. Prior to the meeting, the comments posted on the discussion threads are then examined and summarized. To ensure that the meetings are focused on exciting elements, only those areas of *disagreement* that have been identified from the discussion thread are raised at the meeting, since discussion about consensus issues raises little excitement.

In the words of one FFT leader: "We found that planning out a meeting poorly for a collocated team is OK; but in a virtual environment, team pre-planning is critical. Otherwise nothing gets done and bridge meetings become excuses for things not getting done. So I started to do significant pre-work. I would ask my members to review a document by linking to it in eRoom so they have to make only a single click to it. I would give them the link to the discussion, saying this is when the discussion starts and ends and this is when and how I expect you to contribute and whether or not members are supposed to interact with each other or to do the commenting asynchronously without interaction."

Another pre-meeting practice used by some FFT leaders is to ensure that all team meetings have clear written agendas with time allocations circulated in advance so that members would know when they should attend. In those teams

which had been together for some time, or where there were clearly assigned responsibilities that needed to be discussed at each meeting, the agenda was implied rather than written.

An example of an implied agenda was a FFT responsible for a merger in which the members met every week and each member reported out the key issues of the workgroups to which they were assigned as the liaison. No written agenda was needed.

Another pre-meeting practice was to rotate meeting facilitation. FFT leaders often assign different people to facilitate the meeting. Their view is that this helps to draw people out and give them some exposure to management responsibility.

One FFT leader not only assigned people responsibility for leading different parts of the discussions, but also assigned different people responsibility for managing discussion threads and sub-processes of the team – both in meetings and in the repository.

A final pre-meeting practice used was visibly posting timelines and progress towards milestones in a repository for all to see. Members are asked to post their progress (in terms of draft documents, memos, drawings, spreadsheets, analysis results, PPTs slides, etc) on the repository linking them to project timelines, action item lists, and responsibility charts. In this way, it becomes obvious if a member has not posted in accordance with the expected task. In addition, when task dependencies are specified (such as in a visible PERT chart), the impact of a delay in not completing a task becomes apparent so that the people suffering the downstream consequences can join with the leader in

drawing out the information that is required to complete the downstream tasks. FFT leaders then become not the only ones to enforce project plans; the entire team exerts peer pressure. Critical to this process, however, is that the leader steps in and makes it clear to all members that lateness is unacceptable; otherwise a new norm becomes established that allows timelines to slip.

Plan Meetings as Events: Start-of-Meeting Practices

FFT leaders report often feeling the need to have members “reconnect” at the start of a meeting. Since they may have only been in touch with each other electronically with communications almost exclusively about tasks, FFT leaders feel that it is helpful to have team members reconnect with the “human” side of each individual. This helps to remind each member why they like each other, as well as provide them “boundary objects” or common metaphors to work from during the meeting.

To reconnect, team leaders started their meetings by:

- ☑ having each member share a personal story about an event that happened to them over the last week.
- ☑ having each member share a hobby they were working on.
- ☑ focusing on major events in one or two of the members’ lives. For example, one team member lived in a Washington D.C. suburb near the 2002 sniper attacks, which became the focus of the beginning of one meeting.

Plan Meetings as Events: During-Meeting Practices

Team leaders have found that it is critical to keep members engaged throughout a meeting process. They maintain this engagement by having members “check-in” throughout the meeting process. Some use voting tools to have FFT members check-in throughout the meeting. Other teams use Instant Messaging. Still other teams actively use application-sharing capabilities such as shared excel spreadsheets to change analyses in real-time.

One team leader used the voting tool on the net conferencing technology to have members vote on whether or not an issue being discussed was resolved to their satisfaction and should continue to be discussed. To her surprise in one situation, voting indicated that a discussion that seemed to be generating significant conflict among the team had in fact unanimous agreement about how to move forward. Therefore, with the voting tool, she was able to not only keep members engaged, but end conversations when appropriate and not use people’s valuable time in a discussion that was not needed.

Plan Meetings as Events: End-of-Meeting Practices

Because these virtual meetings are the primary mechanism for creating commitment toward forward movement, ending each meeting with a list of action items that are then posted in the team repository are key practices. Action items have responsible people allocated to them as well as dates. For some teams, links to the project task list for each action item are made. The action items often become the basis for the next virtual meeting agenda, ensuring that the action items are worked on immediately. Ideally, though, action items can be accomplished without discussion, leaving the next meeting for new issues requiring discussion, rather than status updates.

In addition to action items, many FFT leaders insist that minutes of each meeting be posted to the repository within a very short timeframe after the meeting. Several FFTs have minutes taken during meetings. This minute-taking responsibility is often rotated among members. The team members often develop norms for minute-taking.

In one team, norms required that minutes be taken during the meeting on a Word document opened and displayed in the shared workspace so all could see. The norm also dictated that only results of discussion (i.e., decision and rationale) be captured to reduce burden to the note-taker. To follow this norm required that when a discussion was completed during the meeting, team members would summarize what should be said in the minutes and minutes were posted immediately upon the end of the meeting.

Plan Meetings as Events: Between-Meeting Practices

FFT leaders understand that FFT members may easily forget that they are members of a team when the team isn't actually in a virtual meeting session. Therefore, the team leaders work hard to keep the members engaged as a team in-between meetings. They do this through discussion threads, use of instant messaging (e.g., to see who's available to discuss some problem immediately), making unplanned announcements on the team's website (e.g., to share some recent good news with the team), and automatic notifications of recent postings to the website to keep members abreast of progress of team members, an action that subtly reminds members of their own commitments to their teams.

3.5 Virtual Reporting Outside the Team

FFT leaders often have multiple people to report to, since they are often cross-functional, as well as matrixed to an internal (as well as possibly external) customer base. Different teams handled this external reporting differently although they were always quite conscious of the need for continuous and careful communication with these external bodies. Two basic approaches are used for external reporting. In one approach, the team leader organizes a steering committee of managers from the various departments and client organizations represented, and conducts formal status briefings with this steering committee. In an alternative approach, the team leader expects each member to report out to the sponsoring manager of the functional, geographical, or business unit that the individual member represents. The choice of the approach depends on the type of managers, the type of tasks, and the level of ability of the members on the team.

A team spread across the globe reported using a steering committee to oversee the progress of the FFT. This committee consists of executives who were collocated with a member of the FFT.

Regardless of how the status reports were made, leaders indicated that all reports (e.g. powerpoint slides) were approved by all members so that they would feel a part of the report-out process. Occasionally, a separate section of a repository was made available to the managers for review.

In addition to reporting out to managers, the knowledge acquired by the team needs to be reported out to the enterprise so that it can be reused by others in the organization. For this purpose, some teams would create “outward-facing” websites that could be accessible by anyone in the organization. Norms were devised about when a document should be moved to an outward-facing website and the keywords on which it should be tagged, and whom should be notified about this movement.

3.6. Issues in Leading FFTs...and Solutions

Team leaders reported confronting many issues in being able to lead the team toward knowledge exchange. In essence, team leaders have to be good at quickly identifying impediments to their FFTs. These include members not suited for a FFT environment, collocated managers of the team members creating obstacles to members making contributions, emerging differences between team members that could potentially be debilitating, unfulfilled need for team-tuning, and cultural and time differences that can doom the team from the start. Below we provide solutions for leaders to deal with each of these issues.

✕ **Issue: Communication Patterns Negatively Impacting The Team**

Solution: FFT leaders keep informed about interactions among team members

Some of the team leaders we spoke to handled this issue by being copied on all email traffic so they can quickly identify when a problem arises. Other team leaders examined the log files or recent postings to see if someone was not contributing. Finally, other team leaders reported having frequent one-on-one meetings with each member at which problems would be mentioned.

☒ **Issue: What To Do With A Person Who Is “Not Right” For The Team**

Solution: Quick intervention

When problems arise with an individual, FFT leaders quickly intervene. Often, the problem might be between two people; the team leader will call a teleconference and negotiate a better relationship between the two. One leader reported that one member's problems were so severe that the individual was replaced. His working style was to do tasks alone without informing others of his progress, often being late in producing the product, and then when the final product was produced, expecting other members to approve it. This style harmed the ability of others to learn from him and his ability to learn from others. The team leader commented that in retrospect he should not have been on the team. But, she acted quickly when the problem became apparent, keeping the team from missing its deadlines.

☒ **Issue: Managers Undermining (Or Unaware Of) The Contribution Of Members**

Solution: Intervene between manager and the team member

Team leaders often found themselves in the position of explaining to managers the value of a member to the team. In one case, the team leader provided the travel funds to a member to meet with her manager to resolve the issue. In another team, the team leader always had the individual's

manager sign any certificates of contribution, even if the contribution was to the team's efforts, rather than the manager's own division.

Issue: Team Members Not Understanding or Being Sensitive to Differences

Solution: Stop and do assessments to surface differences

No matter what stage of the team, FFT leaders, sensing this problem, will have team members complete a Social Styles Inventory or Myers-Briggs and discuss them as a group. Or they may have each member describe their culture or refer members to an information source (such as a website) that describes cultural differences. Then, the FFT leader will initiate the "Fostering Understanding of Differences" Practices discussed in Section 3.3.

Issue: Language Barriers Among Team Members

Solution: Find alternatives to real-time translation

Real-time translation is often too expensive and slow. Moreover, requiring a member of a team to speak in a foreign language often limits the member's contributions. FFTs adopt alternative approaches to the language barriers. In one team involving Japanese and American partners, the American

partners hired students majoring in the domain (engineering) from a local university as interns who could speak Japanese. The students worked closely with the American partners and spent significant time on the phone with the Japanese partners, becoming liaisons during meetings. In another team involving members from Brazil and Argentina, the team developed a hybrid language called “Span-ogese” which combined Spanish and Portuguese. In another team involving members from Southeast Asia and the U.S., brainstorming was encouraged to occur electronically rather than in a fast-paced teleconference. This allowed the Southeast Asian members the opportunity to carefully craft their ideas in the team’s written language of English and thus contribute more effectively than they were able to do orally in teleconferences.

☒ **Issue: There Is No Travel Budget For Annual In-Person Team Tuning Meetings**

Solution: Leverage all travel for in-person get-togethers

Some team-tuning sessions were in-person, some were not. Not all team members felt that occasional in-person meetings were necessary. Thus, for these teams, they felt that team-tuning sessions conducted virtually were quite adequate. Nevertheless, team leaders and members without travel

budgets were quite successful at leveraging travel conducted for non-team purposes into in-person meetings. For example, one team leader reported that any visits to clients were often planned to bring several team members together who would not normally have come together in person. This time together was then used for team building. Members not present were involved either through audio (where appropriate), or promised to be included at the next session. Another team member reported that the division had annual get-togethers which were leveraged to bring team members together (even those not in the Division).

☒ **Issue: Managing Time Differences is Difficult**

Solution: Rotate times

Teams often rotate the times at which weekly meetings occur so that every one experiences the pain of a late night or early morning meeting at some point during the year. An alternative approach used by a team was for members, at the beginning of the team, to share their preferred work schedules and constraints on their schedule. In this way, the Singapore member of a team was found to prefer to work in the evenings (vs mornings) and thus agreed to hold virtual meetings at 9 P.M. her time as long as the teleconferences ended by 10:00 P.M. so she could get to bed. The team leader commented that there were many meetings in which team members

were willing to stay focused and push to consensus because “Zhang needed to go to sleep”.

3.7 Checklists of Leadership Practices To Support Knowledge Exchange

Checklist D

Best Practice Checklist for Leadership Supporting Knowledge Exchange

- Pick the right members for your FFT:
 - Self-starters
 - Ambiguity tolerant
 - Communicative
 - Big picture (enterprise level) thinkers
 - Possessing excellent local knowledge (functional, customer, or business process related)
 - Appreciative of work flexibility afforded by FFT
 - Striving for intellectual stimulation and seeking diverse opinions related to work
- Communicate frequently one-on-one with team members to:
 - Reiterate FFT objectives
 - Resolve any conflicts that may arise in FFT
 - Review individual milestones
 - Ascertain intellectual capital growth
- Visibly recognize individual contributions to the knowledge of entire team (ideas not just documents)
- Identify (early-on) individual differences in styles: personality, decision-making, organizational culture, and nationality.
- Establish norms for working with these differences
- Integrate local practices to form a common FFT practice.
- Conduct frequent audio-conference virtual meetings involving all members of the team (see checklist E).
- Ensure external visibility for the team by reporting team results to executives or steering committees.
- Create an “outward-facing” website for use of the knowledge generated by the team by the enterprise (establish norms of what to publish and when).
- Keep informed about the interactions between team members so as to identify and intervene early if miscommunication or conflict arises.
- Have team address and resolve cultural and time zone differences regularly.
- Conduct periodic team tuning meetings with team members
- Leverage travel opportunities to meet with non-collocated members

Checklist E
Best Practice Checklist for Making Virtual Meetings

Before the Meeting:

- Set up the virtual meeting to maximize their potential by:
 - creating excitement about the
 - focusing members on areas of
 - assigning agenda items to
 - rotating meeting facilitation role amongst
 - making timelines and progress clearly

During the Meeting:

- At the start of the meeting perform activities that create a feeling of inclusiveness.
- During virtual meetings, have members check-in regularly through voting on issues or through Instant
- Take clear minutes and post it in the repository at the end of the meeting
- Clearly allocate follow-up action items at the end of the

After the Meeting:

- Visibly ensure follow-up of meeting with discussion threads, progress tracking and posting messages linked to meeting agenda and action items.

Checklist F
Issues (and their Solutions) in Leading FFTs.

- Communication in the team suffering?**
Solution: Identify if a member (s) does not have the characteristics for FFT environment.

- Wondering what to do with a member who is “not right for the team”?**
Solution: Quickly intervene through a “one-to-one” meeting.

- Managers undermining the contribution of FFT members?**
Solution: Explain FFT value of the member to the manager. Involve manager in recognizing the member’s FFT achievement.

- Team members not understanding or being sensitive to members’ differences?**
Solution: Stop the team and conduct assessment to surface differences.

- Language barriers among team members?**
Solution: Find alternatives to real-time translation.

- No travel budget for annual in-person team-tuning meetings?**
Solution: Leverage all travel for in-person get-togethers.

- Difficulty in managing time differences?**
Solution: Rotate meeting times

Chapter 4: Integrating Technology Into the Way Work is Done

FFTs rely on technology for their existence. Without a good collaborative tool, members would need to meet face-to-face, which would make it impossible for them to stay local while acting global. However, FFT members are not technology wizards; in fact, most have no real interest in technology. For FFT members, then, technology must not be an additional burden; working virtually is hard enough. Instead, technology must be fully integrated into the way team members do their work. Observing our FF teams yields several best practices that we describe in detail in the sections to follow.

4.1 Combining Audio, Instant Messaging, and Repository Without Video

One team leader reported: “We tried and stopped doing videoconferencing since the technology was too slow; it would break down with more than 3 sites. So we found it too disruptive. Instead we used Placeware, conference calling, IM, discussion database, a tracking database, and an issue log.”

Less than 30% of our teams used any form of video conferencing. Most team leaders reported that video conferencing would get in the way of the work. Sometimes this was due to the technology itself: low bandwidth, not enough sites, too expensive. For those without desktop videoconferencing, team leaders reported that removing people from their desktop to attend a videoconference in a meeting room made them less productive since they couldn't manipulate

documents during the meetings. Those teams with desktop videoconferencing reported that the technology didn't work very well with large teams since too many small windows were opened up on the screen. Other team leaders reported that the use of videoconferencing was disruptive not because of the technology but because viewing people through the video screen was too distracting. It was far more important to look at the document being discussed, or where the cursor was being pointed in the document, than to see the facial expressions of the people. Team members reported that they could often infer people's non-verbal reactions if they listened closely to their speech. Moreover, instant messaging could handle any "back-channel" discussions that were occurring. Therefore, most of the FFTs that tried videoconferencing ended up not using it (except for possible "dog-and-pony" shows). Instead, FFTs used a combination of three tools:

- Instant Messaging (IM),
- Audio-conferencing, and
- Repository for content capture and display.

Instant Messaging was used for a variety of purposes: back channel conversations during meetings for quick coordination communication between the team leader and members, finding people who were available to discuss something immediately, informing people of news as it happened, and sending instructions at the last moment before meetings.

One FFT tasked to develop software tools used IM to send “Eureka” and “Oh Shoot” messages when a product they were testing would work (or fail to work). Such instant messages not only kept others who were testing the same tool apprised of the latest information, but it also kept them energized as they saw the progress of their colleagues. For this team, IM became the mechanism for replicating the feeling of shared identity that a collocated team might experience.

In addition to IM, FFTs relied on audio-conferencing technology. Practices found to be useful for audio-conferences included:

- ☑ Having standing times for audio-conferences with standing passwords.
- ☑ Purchasing an open audio-conferencing capability so that a member could, on the spur of the moment, initiate a conference call without scheduling it in advance (typically initiated with IM).
- ☑ Providing an open audio-conference line for all sub-teams so they could use the same password as the full team. This would allow any member of the full team to sit in on the audio-conference of the sub-team.

Finally, in addition to audio-conferencing and IM, FFTs used repositories. Out of the 54 teams we surveyed, only three teams didn't use a repository. The repository was incorporated into the audio-conferencing and IM to provide visual aides. We discuss the roles of the repositories in more detail in the next section.

4.2 Knowledge Repository Treated as a Living Team Room

Living Team Rooms are the FFT's virtual workspace. In the successful teams, the Rooms included discussion threads, content storage organized by business processes, background on the team and team members, timelines, action items, brainstorming ideas, revision histories of documents, and links among documents. Several practices made the Rooms more effectively utilized. These included:

- ☑ Banning email for content discussion and transfer
- ☑ Organizing repository by individual responsibilities, which are, in turn, organized by task lists (or work breakdown structures)
- ☑ Making comments visible by annotating documents and using discussion threads
- ☑ Linking documents
- ☑ Use of discussion threads for electronic brainstorming
- ☑ Providing a folder focused on project and member background
- ☑ Revision history on documents

Living Team Room Practice #1: Room Replaces Email

Many of the FFT leaders we spoke to pointed to one-to-one email exchange as the biggest culprit of communication breakdown in their teams. Some learned the hard way that using email exchanges for communication and coordination (rather than a repository) leads to members not feeling involved, information overload and in extreme cases the team's progress coming to a dead halt. These negative consequences of email appear to be caused by team members feeling that they

are not “kept-in-the-loop” and no clear understanding of decision rationales or team progress. Even though email exchanges offer a crude and quick fix for a team’s coordination and communication needs, over the long haul their negative impact is very pronounced. For this reason, FFT leaders often ban email and encourage use of team rooms.

Living Team Room Practice #2: Repository Organization

Structure to the team room is essential if information is to be easily found. Most teams opted for a structure based not on chronology, but rather on work processes used by the team. For example, in one team responsible for corporate training, three of the business processes for the team included learning technology, learning delivery, and learning measurement. Therefore, the repository had 3 folders (among others): one for learning technology, one for learning delivery and one for learning measurement. Each process had a process owner (one of the team members) responsible for keeping the content in the folder current.

One team in the oil production industry used the following structure for its repository:

- People
- Purpose
- Links
- Timeline
- Meetings
- Content

Living Team Room Practice #3: Making Comments Visible

One of the reasons for banning email was to ensure that everyone on the team saw everyone else's comments. Comments therefore needed to be presented in a structured way so that others could understand who made the comments and why. Many teams used discussion threads for this purpose, e.g., by first posting a draft document, then sending out an email with a link to the document indicating that a discussion thread for comments on that document was now open and would remain open for a limited time (from 48-72 hours). The document owner would then be responsible at the end of the discussion thread to summarize the comments and make changes to the document and re-post.

In one team, the norm was to post a draft document, then send out an email with a link to the draft document. Rather than using a discussion thread, team members made comments right on the document (using Word's color-coded commenting and annotation capability). Document owners found this process easier to make revisions since this required less inference.

In addition to organizing a repository for easy retrieval by team members, some of the teams were beginning to give some thought to organizing their repositories for easy retrieval by non-team members. This required an enterprise-wide taxonomy: a task that was only beginning for most of the FFTs surveyed.

Living Team Room Practice #4: Linking Documents

Successful FFT rarely simply posted documents; instead, they would post them with links. Links were made to multiple references including action items (to

which the document pertained), timeline/milestone plans, and task objectives. In addition, links were made to other pertinent documents within and outside the repository. How these links were physically represented varied with the collaborative technology used: keywords, placing documents, or drawing links directly and then specifying link type (e.g., precedence, referential, etc.).

Living Team Room Practice #5: Electronic Brainstorming

Old-style wisdom assumed that any brainstorming needed to be done preferably face-to-face, and at the very least with audio-conferencing. Many of the FFTs questioned that wisdom. Team leaders argued that verbal brainstorming often moved so quickly that not everyone could participate. Language differences added to the difficulty of including everyone's contribution. Therefore, teams turned to discussion threads as a means for fostering electronic brainstorming. This allowed time for reflection before comments were posted, and time to reflect on others' comments before reacting.

Living Team Room Practice #6: Background Folder

One of the folders of most of the Team Rooms included information on the background of the team: the team's charter, team norms, team members, team sponsors. This was an important folder because it provided a means for getting new members up to speed. The team leader was often responsible for maintaining the currency of this folder, with members keeping their own backgrounds current.

Living Team Room Practice #7: Revision History on Documents

Team rooms were structured to identify a document's revision history. Some of the technologies provided revision history automatically with pop-up windows asking members to summarize changes. Most team rooms were less advanced, however, with members using a numbering scheme to indicate the revision sequence.

4.3 Developing and Enforcing Technology Use Norms

Technologies are only as useful as the norms that have been specified to ensure their integration into the work process. For example, a norm that allows repositories to go unchecked by members would ensure that the repository is relegated to a document database used infrequently rather than a living workspace. Thus, most of the teams created norms for technology use. These norms described how often to check the living team room, what to post, how to post, how to comment, who owned documents for revisions, informing other members of whereabouts, etiquette for electronic communication (e.g., use of all capitals), and audioconferencing etiquette (e.g., indicating who is speaking). These norms were reviewed repeatedly throughout the team's life cycle.

Norms for technology use included:

- You have to be available no matter where you are by publishing your cell phone and home phone and change greeting on your voice mail to indicate where you are.
- Use eRoom for working documents and Microsoft for calendaring and meeting information
- Use consistent naming conventions such as 08_22_01.doc for minutes
- Review all presentations asynchronously before start of meeting

4.4. Allow Team To Evolve its Technology Practices Over Time

FFTs rarely began their teams having all the technologies in place from the outset. Instead, team leaders and members had an attitude of: “let’s try and work together virtually and find the tools we need to do our job”. This attitude of experimentation meant that the teams were not unduly frustrated by failure (i.e., when the technology didn’t work), accepted some responsibility to make it work (i.e., by asking questions if they didn’t understand it and finding the right resources to help them), and were interested in making something work (even if the solution was primitive or incomplete). This attitude of experimentation also meant that FFTs pursued technology solutions regardless of existing corporate technology standards. In some instances their adoption of a technology made the company realize the needs for standards, as was the case with a team that tried IM and found it to be extremely useful. This led the IT area of the company to focus on establishing standards and security protocols. Other teams partnered with corporate IT departments to bring in new technologies. Overall, the issue was not whether a technology was sanctioned or not by the corporation; the issue was to find tools that worked. This required an allowance for technology evolution over time.

In the words of one team leader: “Our technology use evolved over time. Our database [of services and clients] matured. We initially had a discussion database. Then we added IM. Then we added Change Request capability. Then we added a Call Tracking database. Then we added an Issue Log. Then we created a view called “Management View” with schedule, costs spent to date and project status. Then we added a Working Section view just for the team. We tried videoconferencing but stopped using it.

4.5 Develop Corporate-wide Guidelines for FFT Technology Integration

Larger organizations with many FFTs mentioned that the increased use of virtual collaboration meant that some virtual teams were operating more effectively than others within an organization. Therefore, in these larger organizations, efforts to simplify and optimize the work of FFTs were being made. These efforts included:

- ☑ Guidelines for mixing and matching tools to tasks (e.g. one corporation had a guideline that if, during a virtual meeting, everyone has to work with the same document then they should use NetMeeting)
- ☑ Templates such as for minutes and action items
- ☑ Templates for setting up Living Team Rooms
- ☑ Internal consulting and online training services
- ☑ R&D on evolving FFT tools

4.6 Issues in Integrating Technology into the Work...and Solutions

Team leaders reported confronting many issues in integrating technology into the work. One issue was how to manage hybrid teams: teams composed of some members being collocated while others were not. This meant that the members who were not collocated missed out on these exchanges and felt that they were not “kept-in-the-loop”. For these hybrid teams, there was also a propensity to have the collocated members get together in a room during the audio-conferences. This would frequently lead to conversations that were not clearly audible to those on the other end of the phone. Further, the remotely located members tended to become less assertive during these meetings as they felt the lack of visual cues that the collocated members were privy to. All this would lead to a feeling of “in-group” (for those in the collocated room) vs “out-group” (for those participating virtually) which was damaging to the team. The effect was that the “out-group” members stopped contributing or became misinformed.

Another issue was the “lurker” phenomena. Often at audio-conferences, people can come in unannounced, listen in without announcement, and then leave. The people on the line may not know the person joined in; or may have an uncomfortable feeling that someone joined but they don’t know who.

With the geographical spread of a FFT comes the issue of unequal access to technology and proliferation of standards for the same technology. Members in different parts of the world may not all have the same access to the same

collaborative technology. Moreover, different countries may have different bandwidth availability and thus the ability to download large files, such as PPT slides or videos, may vary dramatically. Further, one division might use eRoom, another use Open Link; one division might use NetMeeting, another might use Webex; one might use Lotus Notes, another might use Microsoft Outlook.

A third issue arises from the fact that all employees are not “born equal” when it comes to using technologies. Some people are more comfortable with technology than others. Sharing a mouse in an application-sharing environment, for example, might stretch one member uncomfortably. Thus training of FFT members is a crucial issue for the successful working of the team in a “technology-intensive” environment.

A fourth issue arises from the fact that just because norms are established doesn't mean they'll be followed. For example, “Check the living team room on a regular basis” norm might not be followed by all members. If everyone doesn't follow the norm, then the norm breaks down and new norms develop (such as “it's OK not to check the team room everyday and therefore if I want everyone to know something I should send it by email”). Broken norms can quickly spiral into work-arounds, causing inefficient problem-solving and poor teamwork.

A final issue is that, in some organizations, the use of collaborative technologies is largely centralized and “technology standards” are dictated. Individuals must be approved before they can create team rooms. IM is blocked without special access privileges. Real-time collaborative technologies (such as Webex) are not

sufficiently understood by individuals so they cannot create their own sessions. This can potentially stifle the FFT's activities. And sometimes FFT members (being self starters and driven that they are) tend to ignore the corporate guidelines, which then has repercussions of its own.

Below we address these issues and provide some solutions that we gleaned from the team leaders.

☒ **Issue: Collocated Members Interacting Face-To-Face Instead Of Using The Collaborative Technology**

Solution: Level the playing field

In successful FFTs, everyone dials in on a conference line and everyone uses the same repository, even if they could sit together in the same conference room. In this way, everyone feels that they have been treated equally and are expected to contribute equally.

☒ **Issue: Lurkers on the Prowl during Virtual Meetings**

Solution: Announce lurkers

FFT members reported often welcoming people on the line, even if they chose not to speak. These might be called the “extended family” such as managers, technical advisors, or “non-core members”. These people were invited and thus

the team felt comfortable with their presence, provided they were informed of that presence. Some teams required such individuals to make a contribution prior to leaving the phone call (i.e., before they hung up, they needed to inform the team about their thoughts). Other teams did not place such restrictions on the lurkers. This type of lurker (the announced and invited) was distinguished from the people one team leader referred to as “spies”: those who were unannounced and somehow became aware of the call and listened in. When this occurred (rarely), FFT leaders accepted responsibility for tracking down such individuals to inform them that such behavior was unacceptable.

☒ **Issue: Differences in Access to Collaborative Technology**

Solution: Allow team to select a single solution

Team leaders reported that they were able to resolve differences among team members in the access they had to collaborative technologies by having the team members decide on a standard for the team. This would often mean that someone might have to learn a new technology that might be different from the technology used in his/her division. However, team leaders felt that through discussion, the team was able to make a sound decision. In addition, sensitivity to bandwidth issues often meant, for example, that PPT slides may not include the animation (or the animation was added after a draft had been approved by all team members).

☠ **Issue: Technology Training For The Team Members**

Solution: Just-in-time training by team leader or designate

Most of the FFT leaders assumed that initially members did not understand the capabilities of the collaborative technologies they were using. Therefore, an important first step is that the team leader conducts an early training session virtually using the team repository as part of a virtual team meeting. Or when a new feature was being used the first time (e.g., voting), the team leader might walk the team through the feature so they could use it themselves in the future. After this initial just-in-time training, however, team leaders needed to be very good at sensing when a training problem exists. Members rarely voluntarily admitted that they weren't comfortable with a technology. However, signs such as failing to post, or improperly annotating, may signify problems with technology use. Some team leaders responded to these signs by having the challenged member teamed with a technologically proficient member on the next task so technology coaching could occur in a less public environment. Occasionally, during the one-on-one mentorship meetings, the team leader might do the coaching herself.

☠ **Issue: Violation of Norms for Technology In-use**

Solution: Team leader intervenes quickly

A FFT leader must be vigilant about each member's behavior. Some do this by examining the repository on a regular basis and email members who are not keeping their repository sections up-to-date. Other leaders examine repository log data to determine who is checking the team room and how often. Other team leaders assign a "facilitator" whose role is to keep track of tool usage and report problems to the team leader. Once a norm violation is identified, team leaders must take quick action by informing the individual that the violation is unacceptable.

☒ **Issue: Standards Get in The Way**

Solution: Standards must allow flexibility

Team leaders discussed how they negotiated with IT departments the right to give leaders and their members the privilege to set up their own team rooms. They also discussed how they worked around the IT department to get IM installed (even using their home email addresses instead). Some team leaders reported partnerships with the IT department that allowed them to experiment with new technologies (on an evaluation or pilot basis).

Issue: Corporate Guidelines for Technology Use Ignored by FFTs

Solution: Facilitate experimental attitude, not harness it.

FFTs, by their very nature, are experimental; members tend to enjoy flexibility, intrapreneurship, personal initiative, and excitement. FFT members, then, are not going to use templates, guidelines, and sanctioned tools simply because corporate headquarters requires them to use them. FFT members need to become convinced to channel their experimental interests in the work, not the tools. This will only occur if the tools precisely match their needs. Therefore, unless that perfect match is there, FFTs will modify the guidelines. Optimal guideline development then should come not from corporate departments, but from the FFT leaders themselves. This suggests that such team leaders need their own team rooms to share their best practices.

4.7 Checklists of Practices for Integrating Technology Into the Way Work is Done

Checklist G

Best Practice Checklist for Integrating Technology and

- Conduct frequent audioconferences coupled with a repository to capture and display content at each member's desktop.
- Create a living team room (or virtual workspace) with the following characteristics:
 - organized by individual responsibilities and tasks.
 - post all relevant documents both in draft and final form.
 - make comments on documents visible by annotating documents and discussion threads
 - link documents in the repository for history, task, and dependency.
 - use discussion threads not just for commenting but also for brainstorming.
 - include a directory with background of team and project for any late addition to catch up.
 - carefully version document to maintain revision history.
- Use instant messaging to create co-presence
- Make limited use of videoconferencing (if at all)
- Ban e-mail one-to-one exchange between members
- Allow team to evolve its technology-use practices over time.
- Monitor adherence to technology use norms once they are established.
- During virtual meetings, have every member interact through their desktop even if some are collocated.
- Allow team to develop its own IT solution if corporate IT solutions do not meet team's needs.

Checklist H

Issues (and Their Solutions) For Integrating Technology & Work

- Collocated members ignoring the technology for face-to-face interaction during virtual meetings?**
Solution: Ensure that everyone uses the technology during the audioconferences.
- Lurkers on the prowl during the virtual meetings?**
Solution: Announce the lurkers and make the team feel that they are “visitors” not “spies”.
- When to provide members technology training?**
Solution: “Just-in-time” training by the leader or a designated team member.
- Technology-in-use norms being violated?**
Solution: Team leader must intervene immediately and make the unacceptability visible.
- Corporate technology standards getting in the way?**
Solution: Standards must allow flexibility in-use.
- Corporate technology standards being ignored by FFT?**
Solution: Allow team (and leaders) technology experimentation, without harnessing their creativity.

Afterword

As firms increasingly become global, the need to change technology, work, and corporate practices is becomingly clearer. This guidebook is intended to provide a window into learning more about what those new technology, work, and corporate practices will look like. From our 54 FFT leaders, we have learned that corporate policies are needed that:

- Recognize that FFT leaders need to be full-time despite the fact that they are reporting to multiple bosses, and despite the fact that none of the team members are likely to be full-time.
- Shore up the gap in performance appraisal systems that ignore the contribution of individuals to FFTs or give intellectual capital contribution less value than task accomplishment.
- Expect everyone including senior executives to justify travel before, not after.
- Encourage everyone at all levels in the organization to use collaborative technologies – not just email.
- Create network-based command structures, not chains.

The team leaders we interviewed helped us learn that these new practices call for executives to become more knowledgeable about how to properly charter FFTs, recognizing when they work and don't work.

We have also learned that FFT leaders need to be different than leaders of today. They need to be able to predict who will fit on a FFT and who needs to be relegated to the few collocated positions that will remain. They need to learn to motivate people for intellectual growth, not just for money or task accomplishment. They need to learn not to smooth over differences, but to foster an understanding of how these differences lead to creative insight. They need to learn how to plan meetings as events and use the team to report to senior executives and people outside the team.

Finally, we have learned that the new practices of the future do not simply install technology; they integrate it into new work practices such that neither the technology nor the work practices can function independently. These new practices require us not just to recognize that living team rooms are important, but to know how to structure a team room so that members and the corporation uses it for optimal knowledge-sharing and intellectual capital development. This involves new ways to use such functionalities as electronic brainstorming, document-linking, templates, email, instant messaging, and audioconferencing.

If corporations of today are to benefit from these new practices, they must not simply be integrated into the use of a FFT, but into the fabric of how projects, people, and corporations are managed. Project management today must be replaced by virtual team leadership of tomorrow.