



**University of Wales Trinity Saint David's
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Abstract:

In the current competitive marketplace, logistic companies and their supply chains alike have introduced virtual teams into their managerial practices as a means to elevate costs and reduce and resolve a series of complex organizational problems that have been more recently addressed through the recent coronavirus pandemic.

1.0. Introduction

The brief of this paper is to critically discuss the benefits and limitations of virtual teams working in the management of a logistics company and their associated supply chains.

“Virtual teams are the group of individuals spread across different time zones, cultures, languages or, ethnicities which are united by a common goal” (MSG, 2020).

Throughout this report, it will show a detailed analysis by:

- Addressing the views proposed by a number of theorists on virtual teams from both a positive and negative stance
- Providing a series of examples of how both logistic companies and their supply chains have effectively incorporated the use of virtual teams
- Highlighting issues that have caused problems for individual individual logistic enterprises
- How virtual teams have been paramount for Logistic companies during the COVID 19 pandemic

2.0. Why has the inclusion of virtual teams become a necessity to the modern-day Logistics company?

The input of virtual teams working within the modern era has stemmed from the amalgamation of increased globalisation, competitive pressure from rival logistic companies, and the continual and extensive development of information and communication technology (Ale Ebrahim, Ahmed, and Taha, 2009). These developments have paved the way for greater possibilities for logistics companies to make the use of virtual teams in numerous ways. Firstly, as a means to diminish the need for primary face to face interaction, as people can be expertly collated together regardless of their geographical location. Secondly, working on a virtual platform allows organisations to operate away from their regular working hours and require physical staff when required (Mullins, 2013).

3.0. Theoretical views on the implementation of Virtual teamworking

3.1.1 Leadership and motivation

Numerous theorists have conflicting views on the inclusion of virtual team working within the management of enterprises. One such theorist P. Hall addresses the use of virtual teams as an ineffective way of dealing with the day to day running of an organisation stipulating that “videoconferences and net communications are poor substitutes” to that of direct individual interaction. However, in contrast, J Symons feels that the involvement of virtual teams provides an advantage as the incorporation of asynchronous media provides accuracy and

On the contrary, some theorists are not so forthcoming with the definite idea of virtual teams; A. Garrett believes that by concurring with other people it is not always considered a very

favourable strategy and has drawn upon a number of propositions for helping to organise the effective use of virtual teams (Mullins, 2006). Garrett addresses these are the following:

- Say hello
- build trust
- recruit with care
- don't rely on email
- encourage dissent
- use technology thoughtfully
- measure outcomes
- do you say
- don't say

3.1.2 Ethical inclusiveness

The rise in the use of virtual teamwork has impacted heavily on the increase in globalisation and those individuals that are working in a global and international locations (Lenz and Machado, 2008). A survey conducted by Culture Wizard found that of the one thousand and seventy-two participants from eighty overseas locations, a staggering eighty-five percent of those individuals worked in a virtual team-based environment. Of those individuals, individuals forty eight percent concluded that over half of their virtual team colleagues are of a different cultural background (Wizard, 2020). These factors pose possible dilemmas for cultural diversity as expressed by theorists Francesco (Francesco, 2008) and Gold (Gold, 1990) who reveal that by having more culturally diverse individuals it is very challenging to handle a virtual team. They both believe that having a level of ethical inclusiveness creates increased difficulty to organise virtual teams due to team members having different cultural customs, values, traditions, experiences which means that those individuals would have a different perspective of virtual teaming integration.

4.0. Factors for successful virtual team implementation in the agile supply chain of a logistic company

The integration of virtual teams within a logistic organisation is an extremely advantageous method of improving the overall efficiency and productivity of a company's supply chain channels (Factorachian, 2014). The inclusion of virtual team allows for greater flexibility, responsiveness and a broader scope of transparency which helps to mitigate against any potential problems from occurring. Enterprises have attained this in a number of ways, firstly through effective teamwork they have been able to establish stronger working relationships and build trust between the team, its suppliers and their distributors (Ferrazzi, 2014). Secondly, a virtual team has enabled a company to pull in resources from other geographical locations such as being able to hire more talented individuals to work in certain areas of the team where it might be lacking (Gibson and Cohen, 2003).

5.0. A case study on the benefits of the proficient use of virtual teamwork within The European automotive industry (Team project)

This case study addresses the benefits of virtual team working through a team based European automotive, manufacture, multimedia and communication project (Carter and May, 2020). The team project was effective at showing how connected information systems supported the collaboration of different project teams in other geographical locations. These findings came about due to detailed evaluation of two virtual teams that comprised of different elements of the supply chain from design logistics quality and business managers. Each element of the chain used a computer supported collaboration working system (CSCW). The CSCW system allowed for real time sharing of documentation on numerous applications (Bal and Gundry, 1999). Once the CSCW had been used for a prolonged period of time, a series of interviews were carried out with different individuals in the organisation as a way of formulating their opinion of virtual teamwork (May, Carter and Joyner, 2000). From the questioning of individuals, the organisation concluded that the integration of a virtual team was highly beneficial and as a result they were able to see many positive changes such as:

- A decline in non-value adding activities
- The capability to respond swiftly to problems within the supply chain
- Time savings reduction of up to fifty percent during certain stages within the product introduction process

6.0. A Case study on the detailed analysis of collaborative team working between the Rover Group and their suppliers

A survey of the automotive suppliers of the Rover group was carried out as a means to evaluate the current working practices and the perception of virtual teaming within the supply chains. The majority of feedback from the respondents of 70 companies concluded that 72% of them engaged in collaborative virtual team working (Bal, Wilding and Gundry, 1999).

In more through detail, the outcome of the survey revealed that:

- Eighty one percent of the companies had an avidity to use virtual based tools like video conferencing to facilitate their collaborative efforts

The advantages of using virtual teamworking enabled companies to see:

- Time savings by as much as 25% that often occurred from the wasted time waiting on meetings to start and the time wasted due to employees travelling to work
- Reductions in cost by 23%
- An easiness to pool in additional and more experienced individuals into a meeting (20%)
- A decrease in wasted time by (17%) due to be able to schedule meetings over a shorter duration

Matters that concerned the companies from operating under virtual teaming steamed from:

- The lack of any form of physical interaction (35%)

- Loss of team camaraderie (26%)
- A necessity to be proficient in the use of Information technology (16%)
- The safekeeping of information (12%)

7.0. How logistics companies have had to adjust to a virtual team working environment during the COVID-19 pandemic

During the recent Corona virus outbreak, many logistic companies have had to drastically change the way in which they conduct business and liaise with their suppliers globally to ensure that their operations run as smoothly as possible. Many enterprises have become very dependent on the use of virtual teams. The global logistics enterprise Agility, has incorporated the use of virtual teams as a means to produce a series of digital based interactive maps which help to aid the global shipping industry by providing them with real time analysis of where their cargo is currently located and highlights where constraints are across the world so that shipping companies can transport the critical supply of medical and personal protective equipment that countries are so desperately in need of, which is appropriately highlighted by the Fig 1 diagram (Clift and Court, 2020).

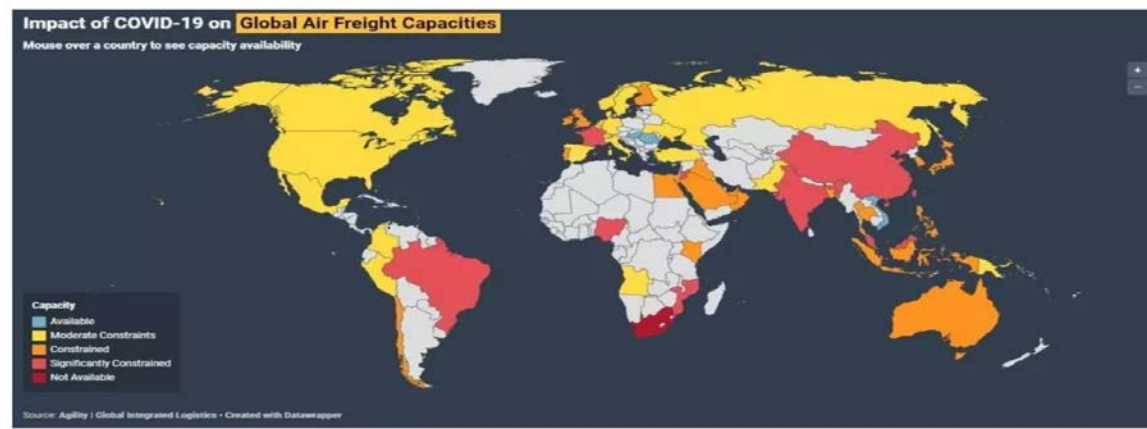


Figure 1 depicts the volume of air freight distributed throughout different global locations

8.0. Conclusion

To summarise, the integration of virtual teams is playing a crucial role in the running of logistic organisations as it has provided them with a greater scope to facilitate and expand their efforts over a geographical location in real time. This has ultimately allowed those companies to notice significant reductions in terms of both time and costs, which have been made more prevalent due to the momentous and ever mounting pressure that companies are currently facing from the current and global coronavirus pandemic to fulfil and satisfy consumer demand.

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