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Please cite the original version: Matvejeff, P. (2018) Virtual leadership. eFMinsight 45, 20-21.

URL: <https://eurofm.org/catalogue/efmi-45-june-2018/>

THE EUROFM CHAIR ON VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP



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Virtual teams are on the rise. It has been projected that within a few years more than 1.3 billion people will be working virtually. According to a recent survey, 80% of American employees reported working always or frequently in dispersed, virtual teams (Human Capital Trends, 2018).

Another survey suggested already in 2012 that 70% of multinational organizations worldwide use virtual teams (SHRM survey 2012). For example Cisco has created a digital platform, which enhances the opportunities of teams to work together and be productive. Today's organizations are judged on the basis of their relationships with their workers, their customers, and their communities. Their impact on society at large comes to the fore. Organizations are transforming from business enterprises into social enterprises (Human Capital Trends, 2018).

The complexity of global work sets demands for virtual teams to change and develop. Teams are widely

dispersed and people work in multiple teams and organizations at the same time. A new kind of diversity has an effect on team dynamics. New generations view technology as the norm and are becoming more influential in the workplace. These changes have an impact on the work of managers and especially on leadership (Saarinen, 2016).

EuroFM Network has proven to be a unique concept of bringing together practice, education and research. Similarly, networking organizations will represent powerful and potential platforms and tools, when enhancing the understanding of different market phenomena. Our Network is like a huge global virtual team connecting people and enterprises. Therefore, EuroFM has started upgrading its concept in order to tackle the challenges of virtual leadership.

Platform of Opportunities

The upgraded EuroFM concept will be a platform of opportunities that connects practitioners, business organizations, educators, researchers, FM professionals and young talents globally with a shared and aligned vision. The voices of students, teachers, researchers, national associations and corporates will be heard in a new way. The international (outside Europe) dimension is incorporated into the upgraded EuroFM concept. All international practitioners, educators and researchers are invited to join and get connected through EuroFM.

EuroFM will offer its members better and versatile access and participation opportunities to educational and research projects provided by its member universities.

“A GREAT DEAL OF WORK IS REQUIRED TO DEVELOP LEADERS CAPABLE OF MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF GLOBAL VIRTUAL TEAMS”

National associations, business organizations and other members of EuroFM will have an opportunity to bring in their development and research needs in a portal, which is also utilized for business and young talents to meet. EuroFM Network is close to the market and end-users and acts as a connecting body to various initiatives in the industry.

The EuroFM concept also includes a sound, international and attractive conference concept. A proven and publicly recognized track-record of executing international conferences during the last 26 years in Europe creates the basement for the conference concept. Virtual features have already entered to the conference environment. EuroFM is developing its virtual conference concept together with its professional conference organizer (PCO) Cifmers Global, in order to share knowledge and offer an opportunity to stakeholders to get connected and stay connected.

The last EFMC in Madrid, 2017, had representatives from 53 countries. During one day, people from 70 countries worldwide accessed virtually to the streamlined conference program. The conference concept brings practitioners, educators and researchers together, offers a

platform to get connected and consists of several opportunities for business and young talents to meet. Becoming a platform of opportunities requires virtual leadership. These developments will continue also in the 2018 EFMC in Sofia, Bulgaria.

It is all about trust

The command and control-leadership doesn't work in virtual teams, where one should delegate more compared to traditional teams. Updating information in virtual teams is essential, because virtual team members don't have informal access to the information. Scheduling meetings because of time differences is also challenging.

In virtual teams the relationships are more task-oriented and social groups are not that easily formed. Virtual teams experience more difficulties in building trust and commitment amongst its members. Small misunderstandings or gaps in communication result in violation of the psychological contract between the team members and thus for the team's effectiveness (Saarinen, 2016).

A great deal of work is required to develop leaders capable of maximizing the potential of global virtual teams. Leaders need to be aware of how trust is built and maintained in their teams. It is important to note

that trust in some cultures is assumed and in others it needs to be earned. Building trust across cultures is a required skill for a virtual team leader. In all cases, trust is fragile. It takes time to build trust and it can be eroded in a couple of seconds (Saarinen, 2016).

Talking about trust – when working in virtual teams, it is necessary every once in a while meet also physically and face-to-face in order to develop trust between stakeholders. EuroFM conference concept – the EFMC – is an excellent platform for meeting each other, build trust, get connected and stay connected. Join us in Sofia, in the 26th European Facility Management Conference!

References

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