

# **Creating an effective team through increasing the leadership concern and modifying the functional duties in Company X**

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<p>The aim of this study is to create a team from the group members to increase its performance, to learn what the team is and what are the factors influencing its effectiveness. The role of a leader is analysed deeply as it plays a crucial role in team's performance. The scope of the research is a group of 7 employees (and a supervisor) in Company X with the goal to produce a solution of forming an effective team.</p> <p>The main research question of the study is How to create an effective team? The sub-questions, which helped to find an answer, include the understanding of a team and a group, the role of a leader in team effectiveness, the concept of knowledge sharing, attributes of an effective team.</p> <p>The study is designed as a case study with the multimethod of collecting the data, including observations, questionnaire, and workshops. The theoretical framework covers the team dynamics, role of a leader in team performance, including the aspects of leading virtual teams and knowledge sharing (team learning).</p> <p>The study revealed that the current employees comprise a group, not a team, which lacks a common goal and the interactions between the group members, including the knowledge sharing, are limited to finding the solutions to own challenges, rather than ideation to promote the whole team performance. The research also stated the shortage of leadership due to the lack of time, that resulted in weak of connection of the group members to the HQ and lack of the common goal.</p> <p>The proposed solution assumed creating a common goal to glue the team through reformulating the functional duties and a new managerial role to spare the time of the supervisor to engage more into leading the team. The action plan was proposed to continue the process of team development and increasing its effectiveness, including enhancing the virtual meetings, launching the knowledge repository, analyses of leadership practices.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Team effectiveness, knowledge management, knowledge sharing, virtualness, motivation, leadership	

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# 1 Introduction

This study shall focus on the team effectiveness and seeks to clarify the role of a leader in managing the team and the right role allocation within the existing groups for increased performance.

The sponsor company is a sales company in Finland, which is a part of an international group of companies. The number of personnel is over 200 employees, some workers have international background, and some are expats. The company has a representation in various parts of the country, and some employees are working in the local offices.

The special focus of this study will be to analyse a group of eight people within a bigger department of 34 employees. The study will try to find out whether these employees act as a group or a team, the existent effectiveness of the team and how the performance should/might be improved. It is important to mention that the group is located in the local offices (virtual team elements), the interaction thus happens mainly through e-mails and phone conversations. The part of the team has been together for a long time and have pretty close working relationship and the other part are the “new-comers”, who need to prove themselves.

This thesis has been divided into the following chapters: the second chapter will cover the needs and objectives and will open the idea behind the project, its importance and potential impact, the research questions and possible supportive questions; chapter 3 will discuss the relevant theories, will give the overview of the already performed studies in the field of the team development and a role of a leader in creating an effective team; methodology and methods chapter will give the reader an understanding of the study's logic, what data will be used and how, it will also address such important issues of validity and reliability of the research; the chapter “Team creation process from existing group of colleagues” will describe the research stages and main outcomes; and the final chapter “Discussions and Conclusion” will explain whether the objectives of the study were reached, the value of the study to the commissioning company and the reflection on the own learning of the author.

## **2 Needs, objectives, and research questions**

The idea of the project has been offered by the thesis author and was supported by the commissioning organization and a direct supervisor. The author's personal interest in this study is finding the key elements, how to make the team effective, how to motivate people to commit and be engaged and keep the performance at high level.

The group for the study has been chosen as the author has close access to it and believes that it will help to get the data for the research. It is a group of 7 employees and a supervisor. The area of responsibility is divided according the geographical regions, and the main duties include budget formation for own geographical region, maintaining and developing business relationships, preparing development proposals.

The part of the group/team has been together for a long time (over 10 years) and has pretty close working relationship and the other part are the "new-comers". The thesis author is also involved in the cooperation with the group/team in question and has noticed that the "old" part of the employees always takes the lead and is active in discussions expressing own opinion. Whereas, the rest of the group leaves their ideas unspoken, nevertheless, they are of no less valuable.

The study should analyse and understand whether these colleagues are a team or a group, which will help to choose the most appropriate approaches for increasing the performance, contribution of each member, establish the critical points requiring development, and propose possible changes to increase the team's effectiveness. The idea is to study the group's effectiveness was also supported by the supervisor.

Nowadays works are comprised more and more from the projects or team works, combining different people and it is extremely important to make such team collaborate effectively, and for the leader to be able to organize such a team. Having existent team/group it is vital to understand its dynamics, potential and possible weak points.

The main research question is "How to create an effective team?", which is divided into the sub-questions, helping to see the components of the main one:

- What defines a team and a group?
- What contributes to an effective team in the case group?
- What is the role of the supervisor in having effective motivated team members? Does he/she act as a leader or as a manager?
- Does the knowledge sharing happen between the case group members and what triggers it?
- How to influence the effectiveness of the case team?

It is of a very high importance to reveal the role and position of a leader in forming and maintaining the team's effectiveness as even knowing all the right attributes, a leader should be able to create an atmosphere, where such elements can be realized.

### **3 Existing literature on teams and a role of a leader in its performance**

This chapter will cover the main findings in the field of team. The subchapters will help to understand the difference between a team and a group, describe the processes that influence the team's performance and propose a role of a leader in making the team effective. A vital concept of knowledge creation and knowledge sharing will show the pitfalls that might be found in the existing teams. Moreover, the aspect of virtualness will be mentioned, which is a characteristic of a case group, and which importance rose significantly during the pandemic.

#### **3.1 Team characteristics**

##### **3.1.1 What is the difference between a group and a team?**

This chapter will define a team and a group and explain the difference between the two. Moreover, based on the differences it will become clear, when a team or a group is more preferable.

A teamwork and discussion about it is on the rise as today's working mode in many fields is a teamwork/groupwork. Indeed, the businesses and processes are quite complex nowadays, and challenges to be solved require the expertise of people from different backgrounds forming working groups and teams (Edmondson 2018). Edmondson (2018) admits that it is not easy to make a team successful, but necessary nowadays.

It is vital to establish the clear difference between a group and a team, because both share few similarities like two or more persons, communication between members, purpose of the existence is to achieve a goal, sharing of information, knowledge, and resources, leader/manage to guide the process (Surbhi 2015).

The main feature that sets the boundaries between a group and a team is the goal and purpose setting (Sisson 2013). The team always has a mutual goal and purpose, for which every team member is responsible by committing own time and knowledge, whereas the group of people has distributed accountability for only particular task assigned to a group member (Nemeth 2018). Nevertheless, the teams and groups are interrelated, and a team may have several groups inside working on some e.g. projects or assignments (Surbhi 2015).



Surbhi (2015) expands and sums up the comparison of the team and the group in table 1. From the table 1 one can see that the team members are independent, they can come from e.g. different divisions and have one group leader. A working group comes to mind, which has a specific goal, and group members have specific tasks to fulfil the goal (Nemeth 2018). Teams, on the other hand, might have few leaders, but the members are all committed to reach the goal, which is a mutual one.

Table 1. Difference between a group and a team (Surbhi 2015)

Basis for comparison	Group	Team
Meaning	A collection of individuals who work together in completing a task	A group of persons having collective identity joined together, to accomplish a goal.
Leadership	Only one leader	More than one
Members	Independent	Interdependent
Process	Discuss, Decide and Delegate	Discuss, Decide and Do
Work Products	Individual	Collective
Focus on	Accomplishing individual goals	Accomplishing team goals
Accountability	Individually	Either individually or mutually

Leadership is not an absolute trait of a team or a group, and nowadays shared leadership is not that common, but has many positive traits, like personal growth or no hierarchy (Williams & Scott 2012). Moreover, quite often the organizations naturally appoint a manager to a team or a group.

Nemeth (2018) also points out such criterion as time: groups (usually) do not have a specific lifespan, but the team's time is until the goal is fulfilled. So, the life cycle of a team can be very different depending on the team's goal.

The leader should be able to identify, whether she/he leads a group of people or a team and set the right expectations in line with what each can offer (Nemeth 2018). Moreover, the leader should decide whether a team or a group is better or more suitable for a specific task in mind. It is important to understand, that the one is no better than the other, but serves different purposes and should be decided accordingly.

### 3.1.2 Team development

This chapter covers the stages of team development as it is important to be able to identify the dynamics and perform maintaining actions to keep the team at its best. The team development stages were defined by Dr. Bruce Tuckman back in 1965, revising them in 1977 adding the final stage (Tuckman 2001). The scholar identifies 5 stages of a team development: forming, storming, norming, performing and termination/ending. These stages can be put to the graph showing the correlation between the stage the team is at with the team's effectiveness (figure 1). The leader plays a crucial role in every stage of team's development and should focus on getting the team to the performing stage as fast as possible (Mindtools 2014).

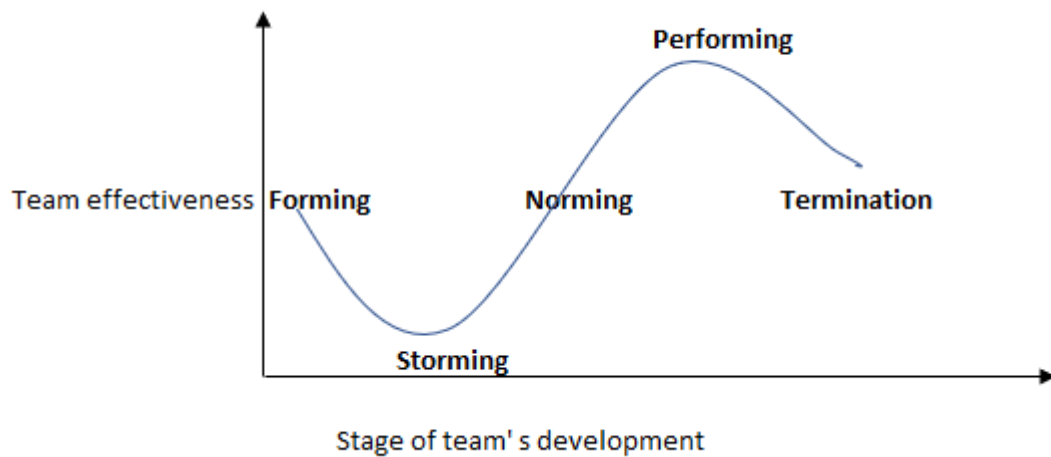


Figure 1. The correlation between the team development stage and the team's effectiveness

The first stage is forming the team, during which the team members get to know each other, get acquainted with the goals of the team, roles. Many may be excited by the participation in a new project. Stein (2020) notices that this stage is quite emotional for the members and requires a great input from the leader to set the clear goals (Mindtools 2014; Nemeth 2018). Usually the performance level is low due to distractions (Stein 2020). The set of the common goal is especially crucial for the team members to realize that they play a role in a common task, rather than play alone.

The second stage is storming, so as the name depicts members get to know each other better, different working styles collide, as a spinoff, the members can start challenging the leader's authority (Mindtools 2014). There also might be disputes on the member roles and the very goal of the team (Mindtools 2014).

The third stage is norming. If the team survives the second stage, it evolves to the next one. The working processes normalize, and members start to appreciate the differences of others and find benefits in them (Mindtools 2014). The efficiency of the group grows, the commitment level grows.

The fourth stage is performing. This is the stage when the team performs at its fullest and gives the possibility to the leader to delegate as much duties as possible. This helps the leader to shift his/her focus on other possible projects as the team has the full commitment to the goal (Mindtools 2014).

The last stage is adjourning or termination/ending. Some teams at some point may come to an end, either the goal is reached or because of natural causes (e.g. the member left or were relocated). The emotional component can be different for different members: some may be excited to start a new endeavour, some may be afraid of uncertainty and some may be sad that the project ends (Mindtools 2014; Stein 2020).

The stages are not always progressing, and quite often the team dynamic can go back to the initial stage, for example, when the new member enters the team. The role of a leader is to identify at what stage the team is and make the needed actions to move it or maintain at the performance stage (Mindtools 2014; Stein 2020). Open conversation on challenging situations are vital for the successful team to continue deliver (Bryant 2017).

### **3.1.3 Team learning**

This chapter covers the team learning as one of the important aspects of benefiting the expertise of the team members. It is important for the leader to be aware of the knowledge existence and knowledge transfer in the team.

Ihrig & MacMillan (2015) put a perspective on the importance for the manager/leader to be able to map the knowledge by identifying the existing knowledge, its importance and usage strategy. It becomes more important in the current business environment, where the knowledge is the main asset. Still, as the authors (Ihrig & MacMillan 2015) claim, not all managers are able to treat the knowledge properly or even recognize it. Nevertheless, having done the knowledge mapping the manager has a very powerful tool for decision making. It will help to clearly see the existing knowledge in the company, its strategic importance and level of its diffusion within the company or even across its borders.

The aspect of knowledge diffusion is very important. As authors state (Ihrig & MacMillan 2015), that even within a company such controversial situations may occur, when one department does not possess the knowledge of the another, which is needed and will

make the work within the company more efficient. For the team to be highly productive it is crucial not to be aware of own expertise but know where/from who to obtain the missing.

Wang, Wang & Zhang (2019) mention the issue of the same knowledge level communication between the team members, and the knowledge gap can even increase along the way. This situation is very dangerous for the team performance as the team fractures to smaller groups and stop serving its existence purpose. The leader must ensure that the knowledge existed or gained is transferred to the rest of the team members. It is vital for the leader to create a suitable atmosphere for knowledge transfer (Wang & al. 2019), the leader should encourage the knowledge sharing (Li, Li, Guo, Li, & Harris 2018).

The teams that consist of the members of different backgrounds, cultures, stimulate the knowledge creation and sharing (Hajro, Gibson & Pudelko 2017). However, to be successful in utilizing the diversity of the team, the leader should be able to create the right atmosphere (Hajro et al. 2017).

#### **3.1.4 Attributes of an effective team**

This chapter opens the attributes of an effective team, which can vary along the team task, purpose and members. Every leader should have his/her own list of attributes depending on the goals, own leadership style, organization's culture.

There are numerous lists on the internet and books listing the attributes of an effective team, nevertheless, few are popping up in every: adequate support of management (clear goals, measurable tasks), empowerment, inspiring leader and communication. Still, some combinations are more natural to teams than others depending on the context, how roles and responsibilities are assigned (Smith 2018). The leadership has also a crucial role in building an effective team, Hoch, Pearce, & Welzel (2010) claim that the shared leadership positively influence the team effectiveness.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that many studies conducted are mostly case specific and can be used as a supportive material rather than the solid theoretical framework for thesis author's study.

#### **3.2 Role of a manager/leader in building and managing the team**

This chapter covers the undeniable role of a manager/leader in creating the team and keep it performing at its best. Sisson (2013) mentions an interesting idea of a manger/leader being able to manage/lead the team as a whole, and not separate

individuals. It puts a different perspective on how the leader may interact with the team, because there is a support from the whole team and every decision influences the teams as a structure.

Starting the team is not the most difficult part (Bryant 2017), but what comes next. The main task for the leader is to be able to set the clear measurable goal (Bryant 2017), explain objectives, which glue the team as this is the main distinctive feature of a team (Sisson 2013). The crucial element for the leader is to understand, whether the goals are understood the same way (Haas & Mortensen 2016). It is essential for the leader to inspire the team members, so that the goal is something everyone wants to commit to genuinely. Leader can invest in creating the team culture to shape the team as desired to correspond to the goals and objectives (Bryant 2017), and thus creating a support for the team healthy environment.

The leadership style influences the team members and thus its efficiency (DeRue et al. 2020; Barnes & Morgeson 2010). DeRue et al. (2010) make a conclusion, that coaching leadership with a charismatic leader is more effective, but when the charisma is low, then the directive approach is more effective. When the members are lacking self-efficacy, the coaching leadership is more effective, and directive leadership – in cases when members' self-efficacy is high. The team motivation is the mechanism through which the leadership style influences the team's performance.

DeRue et al. (2010) point out based on the studies of other scholars that it is clear that the leadership plays the crucial role in team effectiveness, but there is no clear algorithm for creating a successful team. The coaching leadership allows leader to be more external and not involved in daily operations, whereas the directive leadership assumes more directing, instructing, monitoring (DeRue et al. 2010).

One important task of a leader to be able to assess the level/perception of a level of team members' self-efficacy and adopt the own leadership style accordingly (DeRue et al. 2010), it is worth to pay more attention to the development of the group and possible change of self-efficacy.

Dr. Chaturvedi (2018) also points out the mindful leadership, which has a positive effect on the team performance and also the level of members' commitment. Being a mindful leader includes few simple steps, which are easily omitted in today's always in a rush business world: pausing between decision making (constant distractions block creativity); task switching instead of multitasking; no phones during meetings and conversations; breaks between meetings.

Mindfulness considered to be a potentially powerful tool at the leader's possession as it influences team members in many ways starting from work-life balance to work performance (Chaturvedi 2018). Lacking mindfulness creates the atmosphere where innovation is hardly possible (Bryant 2017), feeling of safety is important for facilitation high-performance and idea creation (Li et al. 2018).

Bryant (2017) also mentions that treating team's members with respect also means that everyone is accountable, and it is leader's job to make it clear for the team members. In the end of the day, the purpose of the team is to deliver on the set goals and objectives.

There are numerous discussions on leadership and management, their characteristics, and benefits. A leader/manager should find the time for both and execute according to the circumstances and set goals (Davidson 2018). It seems to be very difficult to find the right balance between two, but it is the only way to provide long term development and success (Brown 2015).

Edmondson (2018) sums up that the team works thanks to the leadership, and open ups what it means:

- “Situational humility”, when the leader admits that he/she does not know everything and needs the help from team members,
- “Curiosity” to try to find new ways of doing things, and
- “Psychological safety”, meaning absence of fear and courage and take risk to express new ideas

### **3.2.1 Motivation**

This chapter describes the role of motivation for the team and its performance. Burke & Barron (2014) mention, that the leader should create such working conditions, that would engage and motivate team members. The main idea behind motivation and the leadership is that ordering does not always do the trick alone, commanding does not necessarily motivate people (Burke & Barron 2014). Schmid & Adams (2008) mention that depending on the motivation of the team the project may go smooth or otherwise may be interrupted by numerous obstacles.

In this case the key role is played by the leader, who is managing the team. As the very substance motivation is somewhat vague and very personal, one can assume, that the techniques used by a particular manager/leader cannot be universal. There are different motivators for people: rewards and recognition, autonomy, feedback. The list may be continued, and the leader should know the team members to offer the right motivation.

The leader's task is to create an effective team. The leader has to keep the engagement and motivation throughout the whole work, it is a continuous process. As Peterson (2007) states the group dynamics should be monitored at different stages and if needed correction should be made. One of the methods suggested by Peterson (2007) for the leader is to be open about the issues and try to correct the deviations by providing details on the matter, this point is also mentioned by Bryant (2017), that open conversations are vital for the team's progress. As a result of a constant continuous work the leader will be able to create a strong team with values, which are shared by each member. Leader should also show by own behaviour the value of organizational culture (Bryant 2017). Further Schmid & Adams (2008) connect the team motivation and the organization motivation. The team may succeed only in a case the values and objectives are in line with those produced by the organization.

The dimensions involved in team dynamics and effectiveness are not simplistic, and the team analyses would require a good understanding of the team's motives for actions, leader's position. Chartrand (2017) proposes the following tips to better team understanding:

- looking at interrelated parts. Teams are not working independently as was mentioned before, it is a part of a system/organization. Some team's ineffective actions can be explained by the system's failure
- looking for patterns of interactions between members. Team is a living organism, where some interact more than others, which effect the performance
- recognize subsystems/alliances, extremely important for understanding certain team's decisions and actions, that can be explained by the internal subgroup with certain beliefs and agenda
- looking at the group norm. The team as a whole can be explained only by recognizing above mentioned phenomena.

### **3.2.2 Knowing and doing**

This chapter continues earlier mentioned importance of the knowledge for the team, its creating and sharing to achieve high performance. But it remains a challenge to be able to convert the knowledge to an action, to correctly utilize it. Moreover, it still remains difficult for many companies to call themselves innovative and implement new ideas, one of the problems is implementation, so called knowing doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton 2000).

Pfeffer & Sutton (2000) highlight the challenge in many organizations, when employees try to think of obstacles, why something cannot be done. It is the task of a leader to create the right culture for the team members to strive and deliver. Fear creates knowing-doing gaps.

Another key note is when memory substitutes the thinking and thus new knowledge creation (Pfeffer & Sutton 2000). This phenomena is especially dangerous, when the members have been within a group for a long time, and adopting a new way of doing is very difficult, as well as the new members with new ideas are treated as an obstacle to the “normal” way. “It is hard to learn if we already know” (Edmondson 2018). Also, such factors as tight deadlines, work overload prevent the flow of new ideas, and the past knowledge prevails, because in such cases there is simply no time or energy for innovation left. So called exploratory innovation is essential for progress and development (Tuncdogan, Boon, Mom, Van Den Bosch & Volberda 2017)

Pfeffer & Sutton (2000) mention the harm of internal competition, which seems to be especially dangerous for the team as a whole, which is devoted to the common goal. Instead of knowledge sharing, creating new ideas the main goal is shifted to get the manager’s attention and appraisal. Edmondson (2018) also sums up, that it is difficult to team up if others are a competition.

Cessan (2020) proposes an interesting technique to set the individual goals with the team, the team takes part in goal setting of an individual. The concept involves the idea that team set goals will be valuable for the team’s progress and more relevant to team’s goal. Moreover, a member fulfilling an individual goal might be more motivated as the recognition comes from the entire team. Yet again, the author mentions that the leader should understand the team dynamics to assess its readiness for a different perspective on goal setting, for example, on the stages of norming and storming such approach may not be successful (Cessan 2020).

### **3.3 Team performance and decision making**

This chapter explains the team performance and that it defines the team’s effectiveness and how well it delivers on the common goal and objectives based on the team culture and atmosphere created and promoted by the leader. An effective decision making is a part of the high-performance team (Blenko, Mankins & Rogers 2020).

Sleesman, Hollenbeck, Spitzmuller & Schouten (2018) argue that the initial expectation from the team anticipated by the leader as well as the team members is a key factor of the team’s future success. The teams frame the success/failure, and team’s expectations on the performance are being fulfilled by the taken actions (self-fulfilling prophecy effect (Eden 2003). The leader’s task is to set the right positive attitude through the early communication with the team members, as well as the correctional actions should be taken in case of negative implications (Sleesman et al. 2018).



The team efficacy is also influenced by the level of team's members agreeableness through communication and cohesion (Bradley, Baur, Banford & Postlethwaite 2013). Communication helps to share the knowledge, e.g. new ideas. The scholars argue that the agreeable team members help to maintain the good team atmosphere and encourage others to be more committed and involved (cohesion).

A part of team's high performance is an effective decision making, in addition, team decisions are 75% of the time are better than those individually made (Larson 2017).

To prevent the arguing and lack of decisiveness, the leader should be able to facilitate the process. Moreover, it is a big challenge and even risk, when the team cannot decide collectively and turn to the leader to decide, as the decision will satisfy only the small part of the team (Frisch 2008). The leader should clearly state, what he/she is looking for, so that each member understands the same way the desired outcome, the problem should be broken down. Moreover, it is advisable to offer some options. Larson (2017) states that decision making teams triple the number of options provided for the decision making. In addition, the leader might make a questionnaire to check the early preference within the group (Frisch 2008). This will let people to analyse the options and make up their mind, the proposals should be well grounded and voiced.

Frisch (2008) also mentions that the secure atmosphere should be created for the team members not to be afraid to produce the options for the problem solving as well as the appropriate amount of time should be designated for process. The trust has a high correlation with the effective decision making and teamwork (Shagholi et al. 2020).

As mentioned before the number of options for the decision rises in the team decision making process, which creates a risk of having too much and not be able to handle all the proposals. To avoid such a risk, the leader should have a clear structure for decision making (as referred previously clear understanding of the desired outcomes) (Larson 2017).

As a final step, mentioned by Larson (2017), is the adequate communication of the decision, when the reasoning and the specifics of the decision are opened to the team members. This stage is important to make sure that every team member is on board with the decision and committed to solve the problem.

### **3.4 Virtual teams**

This chapter covers the aspect of virtualness in a team content, which is nowadays even more crucial component as the members can be located geographically very distant

(Bradley et al. 2013). It is very natural that virtual communications are less rich, there is no possibility to read the body language or face impressions. The level of trust is lower, less cohesion (Bradley et al. 2013), what is especially seen in the totally virtual teams.

There is a higher pressure on the leader in terms of motivating and gluing the virtual team (Mawson 2020). Mawson (2020) emphasizes that the information flow and work social communication are much limited for geographically dispersed teams, communication happens mostly by the means of e-mails, phone calls or on-line meetings. The challenge is that the opportunities for misunderstanding and misinterpretation are much higher (Mawson 2020).

There are certain pros and cons of the virtual teams (Figure 2). The performance of virtual teams needs special attentions, as unfortunately, the effectiveness drops with the growth of a distance.

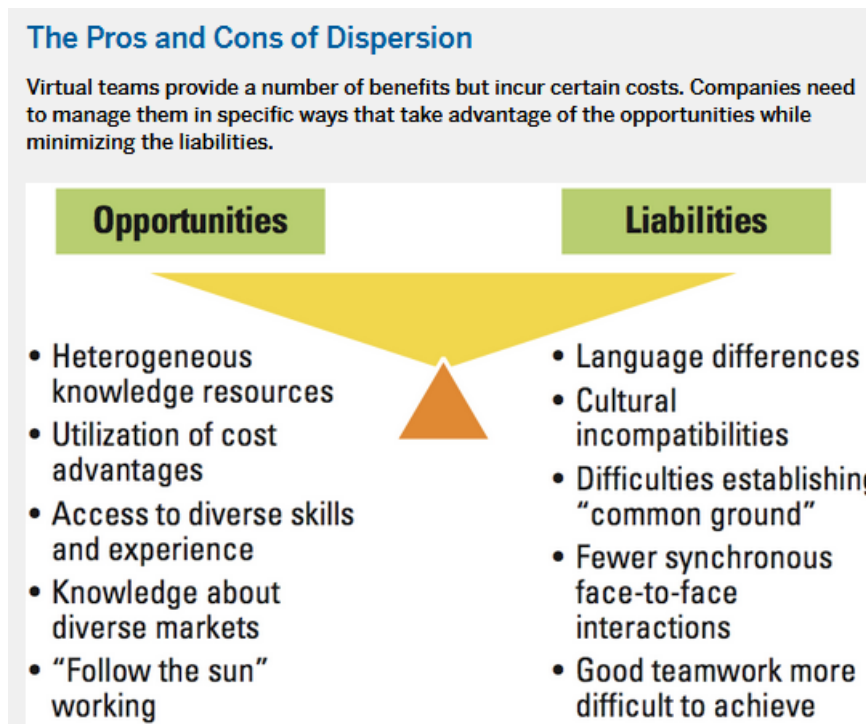


Figure 2. Pros and cons of the dispersed teams (adapted from Siebdrat, Hoegl & Ernst 2009)

Siebdrat et al. (2009) mention that the task-related processes (ensuring the commitment) are well performed in the virtual teams, whereas socio-emotional (ensuring cohesion) are underperformed due to lack of personal interactions, which is why the leader should pay more attention to communication, knowledge sharing, supporting the team spirit, this can be achieved by the regular face-to-face meetings. Soft skills are becoming of a vital importance in managing the virtual teams along the information sharing (James 2020).

According to Siebdrat et al. (2009) the leader should pay a lot of attention to the task-related processes to ensure the performance level. Self-leadership also plays an important role in performing the tasks as due to the distance the leader cannot always be of immediate help (Siebdrat et al. 2009).

Malhotra, Rosen & Majchrzak (2007) present six leadership practices, which help to maintain the team effective in the virtual environment. The first one is establishing trust through the use of the communication technology, Malhotra et al. (2007) mention, that the trust in virtual teams is based primarily on the actions, rather than on the goodwill of the leader. And in such case the communication comes to the first place, how to ensure that the information is shared equally and understood in the correct way, and the tool to help is creating clear norms and adequate revisiting of them. An important note from authors is that all the members should feel equal in being geographically dispersed, equal "suffering" from the geographical location also helps to create trust (Malhotra et al. 2007).

The second practice according the Malhotra et al. (2007) is ensuring that each member is appreciated, including their differences. One method to leverage the practice is to have a clear understanding of each member's expertise and strengths.

Then Malhotra et al. (2007) mention the increased role of a meeting planning in the virtual environment. Such meetings should be used not only for reporting and informing, but also for brainstorming and idea sharing. Preplanning is critical to make such meetings effective and put all members on the same track, also the virtual members can be easily distracted from the meeting, so the leader must stick to the agenda to get the maximum benefit from such meetings. It is noted, nevertheless, that the virtual team members might feel the need to reconnect, which why it is advisable to let every team members to share a personal story in the beginning of the meeting (Malhotra et al. 2007), it might also help to lift the feeling of isolation. It is also essential to document the shared knowledge, keep a track of discussed tasks and deadlines for the team to be able to navigate through the process. All minutes, task lists, etc should be available to all the team members.

It is more difficult for the leader to monitor the progress of the team in virtual mode because there are no opportunities for physical observations. Nevertheless, there are other possibilities to monitor the development. According to Malhotra et al. (2007) one of the important tasks is to follow how the knowledge flows, how members contribute to knowledge creating and recording and how they use already shared information. Meeting the deadline or fail them is also a good meter for the leader to follow the team's progress.

The fifth practice for the leader is to make the virtual team visible (Malhotra et al. 2007). The company/managers/top executives should see the value of the virtual team and the task to the leader to make it happen, some tools include external reporting. The leader's understanding of the own virtual team value will help to provide for the adequate rewarding and thus motivation for the team members.

The last one of the practices is for the leader to ensure that the team members benefit themselves from participation in the virtual team (Malhotra et al. 2007). The members should be able to grow, learn and develop, thus the motivation is up, and employees are committed to the team's goal and enhance the performance.

As it was mentioned before, the target of a leader is to bring the team to the performance stage (either it is a virtual team or a conventional one) and keep it in the performance mode. Knutson (2016) mentions that downtime in team's performance is a normal phenomenon and leader's task is to understand it and recognize such phases to put the team back on track. Nevertheless, as Knutson (2016) states such phases are inevitable and comprise the natural cycle of things.

Liao (2017) proposes a multilevel framework for the leadership in the virtual teams, which combine several pillars for the better team performance. As mentioned before, the effective leading is a combination of good practices and knowledge of the team members. The framework gives three perspectives on the virtual leadership: team, individual level and cross-level relationships.

Liao (2017) sees the team-level leadership broke down to virtual collaboration (facilitated through the training, coaching, providing resources), shared mental models (all team members should share the knowledge on technology, job/task, team interaction and team), trust, managing virtual team conflict, and shared leadership (virtual environment promotes self-management abilities in teams). The individual level virtual leadership according to Liao (2017) includes professional respect, contribution, affect, loyalty, which can be described as mindfulness. The third level is cross-level relationships in the virtual teams. Liao (2017) explains the influence of the positive dynamics of team performance (high virtual collaboration, shared mental models) on the individual self-efficacy.

Virtual teams are seen more complex than traditional ones, because of geographical dispersion, high dependence on the technology, and thus choosing the leadership style is dependent on the team's characteristics and goals, which again underlines the role of a leader in team's effectiveness.

### 3.5 Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework combines the main concepts from the literature review and connects them to the main research question: “How to create an effective team?”. The review covers the team related topics and a role of a leader in team’s effectiveness.

The sub-questions for the research broke down the research question to more feasible ones, which helped set the focus for the literature review and comprise the conceptual framework. The first sub-question was essential to understand the difference between a group and a team in the content of the case, followed by identifying the attributes of an effective team. Further sub-questions were connected to the role of a leader in a case study, his/her role in making the effective and knowledge sharing team.

The conceptual framework for the study, thus, includes the understanding of what makes a group of people a team and a role of a leader in the process of making the team effective. Schematically the framework can be seen from the figure 3.



Figure 3. Conceptual framework for the study

It was clearly stated that the main essential difference between a group and a team is an existence of a clear common goal for the team members (Surbhi 2015; Sisson 2013; Mindtools 2014; Nemeth 2018; Bryant 2017). Even though, there are other differences between the two, the common goal and its shared understanding is what glues the team together and identifies its existence (Haas & Mortensen 2016).

The driving force for the team and its effectiveness is a leader, his/her role cannot be underestimated (Bryant 2017; DeRue et al. 2010; Barnes & Morgeson 2010). It is of the

utmost importance for the leader to create the right atmosphere for the team members to strive (Chaturvedi 2018; Edmondson 2018), mindfulness helps the leader to find a connection to the team members. The main target of the leader is to have the high-effective team and keep it at this stage, and certain factors influence its ability to perform at its best (Mindtools 2014; Stein 2020)

Among the most important factor for the team effectiveness is the knowledge creating and then knowledge sharing (Ihrig & MacMillan 2015; Pfeffer & Sutton 2000). Many obstacles can jeopardize the learning of a team, and the leader should be able to recognize the existing knowledge, but more importantly the missing, and encourage the knowledge sharing (Wang et al. 2019; Li et al. 2018).

An effective decision making is a part of the high-performance team (Blenko et al. 2020). Leader should learn the certain techniques to have the process effective and the made decision supported by each team member (Larson 2017).

Motivation of a team as well as each member of a team can be triggered by different factors, some people are motivated by being a part of an effective team, some by performing a complex task, the role a leader is to know the factors inspiring the team members and being able to keep the motivation at the right level for the members to be committed to the team's goal (Burke & Barron 2014; Schmid & Adams 2008). The leader is responsible for monitoring team dynamics and form the deep team understanding to be able to perform correctional measures and return the team to the high-performing level (Peterson 2007; Chartrand 2017).

In the case study content, an essential characteristic was brought up – virtualness, in such framework the role of a leader increases significantly, but also the job of a leader becomes more difficult to keep geographically dispersed team motivated, committed to the task (Mawson 2020; Siebdrat et al. 2009). The leader should be able to make the working results of a virtual team visible and valued in the rest of organization, but there is also a pressure to keep the track of team's achievements (Malhotra et al. 2007). In the content of virtual teams, the concept of shared leadership is risen as an answer to the less control and monitor from the leader, in such case the team might create the self-leading traits (Liao 2017).

The conceptual framework is a summarized literature review, which showed a great role of a leader in making the team effective and performing. Conceptual framework was a base for designing the study to find the answers to the research questions.

## 4 Methodology and methods

This chapter describes the research methodology and methods used to design the research as well as explains the data collection methods.

### 4.1 Research methodology and research strategy

The methodological approach can be illustrated by the research onion (figure 4).

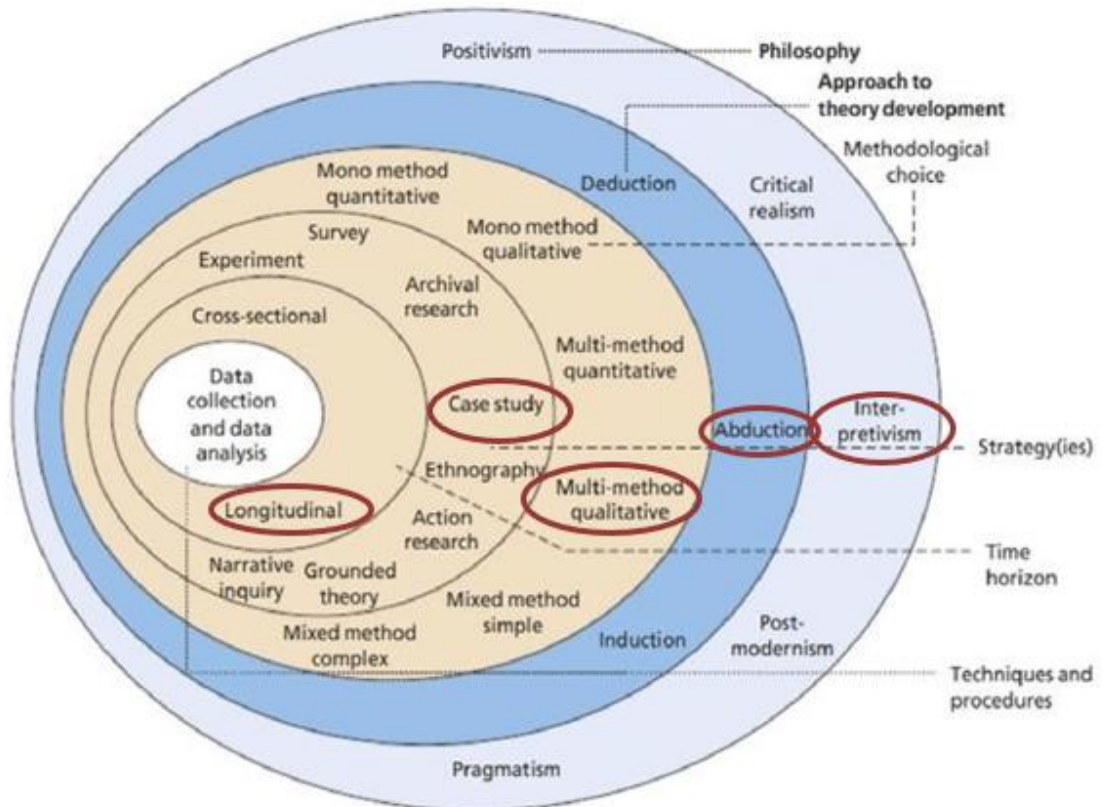


Figure 4. The research onion (adapted from Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012, p.160)

The ontology of the study is subjectivism as the study focuses on social phenomena, which are created by the social actors and perceived by the social actors subjectively. The study thus examines the reality behind the happenings, the details of the social phenomenon (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 130-132). It is true for the research as it aims at analyzing the team, its interaction and tries to unveil the motives behind the actions. The epistemology in this study concerns the subjective meanings and interpretations based on the analyses of different situations (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 134).

The research philosophy of the study is the interpretivism, which aims at analyzing complex world, in this case business/management. The thesis author will try to interpret the social actions of the team and analyze the reasons behind. (Saunders et al. 2012, p.137)

The research approach is abduction (Saunders et al. 2012, p147), which gives the undisputable benefit: it allows the researcher to follow some theoretical leads, discover some insights during the research and go back to the theory, when needed. In thesis author's opinion, it is extremely important when studying the social phenomenon/business world as it is complex and involves many social actors.

The research strategy for the study is a case study, which is focused on the single case in-depth analyses in real world settings (Saunders et al. 2012, p.179). The case study can answer a variety of research questions in the field of social science, law, education, business. The case study is associated with qualitative inquiry (Harrison, Birks, Richard & Mills 2017). The author used few methods of inquiring the data, which makes it a qualitative research multimethod (Saunders et al. 2012, p.165). For the case study to be effective it is important to bind it, the setting of the research questions and planning the research (participants, location) will help to achieve this goal (Harrison et al. 2017).

## **4.2 Data collection**

As stated above a multimethod of data collection was utilized, including observations, questionnaires, and workshops. This chapter will open in more details the reasoning behind the chosen methods.

Observation includes observation, data recording, description and analyzing (Saunders et al. 2012, p.340). The covert observation was used, which assumes that the researcher's intentions and goals were not revealed to the study participants (Lugosi 2008). The main goal was during the participation in the meetings to observe the overall interaction of the employees, the interest in discussed issues, willingness to express opinion and ideas. Simultaneously, the roles of the team/group members were analysed and how balanced the team/group was. The data collected during the observations was recorded as field notes by the researcher, no audio/video recording was necessary.

Between the two observations a questionnaire was designed to address the current state of the group, how the employees see themselves, what goal they pursue, etc. The aim of the questionnaire was opened to the respondents, the goal of the research was also stated (unlike the covert observation).



The questionnaire included both opened and closed ended questions (Saunders et al. 2012, p.432), totally 13 questions (Appendix 2, confidential). The meaning of closed ended questions was to validate the certain assumptions, that came into light during the observations and opened ended to receive an honest feedback. The questionnaire was anonymous (hard copies) and required an answer from each member of the group. As long as the group was not large, this goal was achievable, and each member provided his/her answers in the appendix 3 (confidential).

Workshops were also used as a data collection method. According to Ørngreen & Levinsen (2017), a workshop is “an arrangement whereby a group of people learn, acquire new knowledge, perform creative problem-solving, or innovate in relation to a domain-specific issue”. The researcher becomes a facilitator of a process and participants are producers for the data. One of the benefits of the workshop is that this method allows collaboration between the participants (Ørngreen & Levinsen 2017), which gives enriched data.

The workshops with the direct team’s supervisor were organized to collaborate on the results involving prior findings on effective team attributes and discuss the potential measures to improve the situation. The workshops were based on the observation results, intermediate discussions, questionnaires and gained theoretical background on the topic. The agenda also included the analyses of the group members in terms of collaboration between each other and identifying the strengths and knowledge expertise of each of the member.

The workshops were planned beforehand with clear goal set for each one, the first one was designed to discuss the current state of events based on observations and questionnaires and propose optional solution and the second one was aimed at designing a new way of formulating job responsibilities and area of responsibility. The notes were kept during the workshops and then delivered to the supervisor/participant (Appendix 4, confidential).

The researcher role was an insider, as she works in the company. It gave certain benefits, the main was the easier access to the information, but on the other hand, the researcher could take some information for granted, be less critical, which increased the importance of staying objective in the research.

The author/researcher followed the ethical guidelines on every stage of conducting research, from the planning stage to analysing the results. The ethical guidelines may include, but not limited to honesty, objectivity, confidentiality, social responsibility, human

subject's protection (Resnik 2015). The author took very seriously the confidentiality, as well as the human aspects as the research was conducted with people.

### **4.3 Validity and reliability of the research**

The validity can be addressed by the external and internal validity (Miles at al. 1994). The study should be credible for the readers, that is to be valid. To validate the findings the author kept the track that the findings are coherent and well-grounded and linked to the theory.

Moreover, it is a greater goal to have a research result that can be generalized to a bigger scene, so called external validity. (Miles at al. 1994). The author should pay the attention to the boundaries of the research as a case study is limited to a specific social event.

Reliability is addressed by participants' and researcher's error and biases (MeanThat 2016). The reliability of the research addresses the issue whether the collection techniques will produce consistent findings, if are replicated by another researcher or within different occasion.

The author ensured that the data collected with different techniques providing its versatility, the data are comparable, the coding checks are performed, and quality of data was checked. As long as the case study is in question, the author paid attention to the researcher's bias and kept it under control not to derive biased conclusions from the data.

## 5 Team creation process from existing group of colleagues

The previous chapter described the methodological approach to the research, whereas this chapter covers the implementation of the case study and the outcomes. The conducted research is supported by the appendices 1-5, which are confidential to protect the commissioning company and study participants related data.

### 5.1 Overview of the case study stages

The case study was performed in stages (figure 5), which included observations, questionnaires, and workshops:

Stage 1: Observation performed in September 2019

- basis for the coming questionnaire
- discussion with the supervisor and a conclusion, whether a group or a team is in question
- the need to enhance communication between the group members and HQ
- field notes and conclusions are presented in appendix 1 (confidential).

Stage 2: Questionnaire distributed to the group members in October 2019

- validation of the first observation
- understanding of belonging to a team/group based on members' perception
- opinion of the group members on the role of a leader and supervisor's current position
- proposals for improving observed weaknesses
- Questionnaire is presented in appendix 2 (confidential) and consolidated responses in appendix 3 (confidential).

Stage 3: Workshop 1 in October 2019

- discussion with the supervisor on the results from the questionnaire and the first observation
- proposal on the new job duties (creating a common goal for the team formation)
- identifying the role of a supervisor, whether the role holds more features of a leader or a manager
- workshop notes and proposed changes are presented in the appendix 4 (confidential)

Stage 4: Second observation and second workshop in January 2020

- validation of the results of the first observation (observation 2)
- continue the discussion on the new responsibility allocation to create prerequisites for an effective team (workshop 2)
- creating proposal on a better balance between managerial and leading components of the supervisor's role

- field notes and conclusions are presented in appendix 1 (confidential) and workshop notes and proposed changes are presented in the appendix 4 (confidential)

#### Stage 5: Proposal of an action plan

- The proposal of an action plan for an effective team creation based on the literature review and conducted case study
- Presenting the plan to the supervisor and HR representative
- Action plan is presented in appendix 5 (confidential)

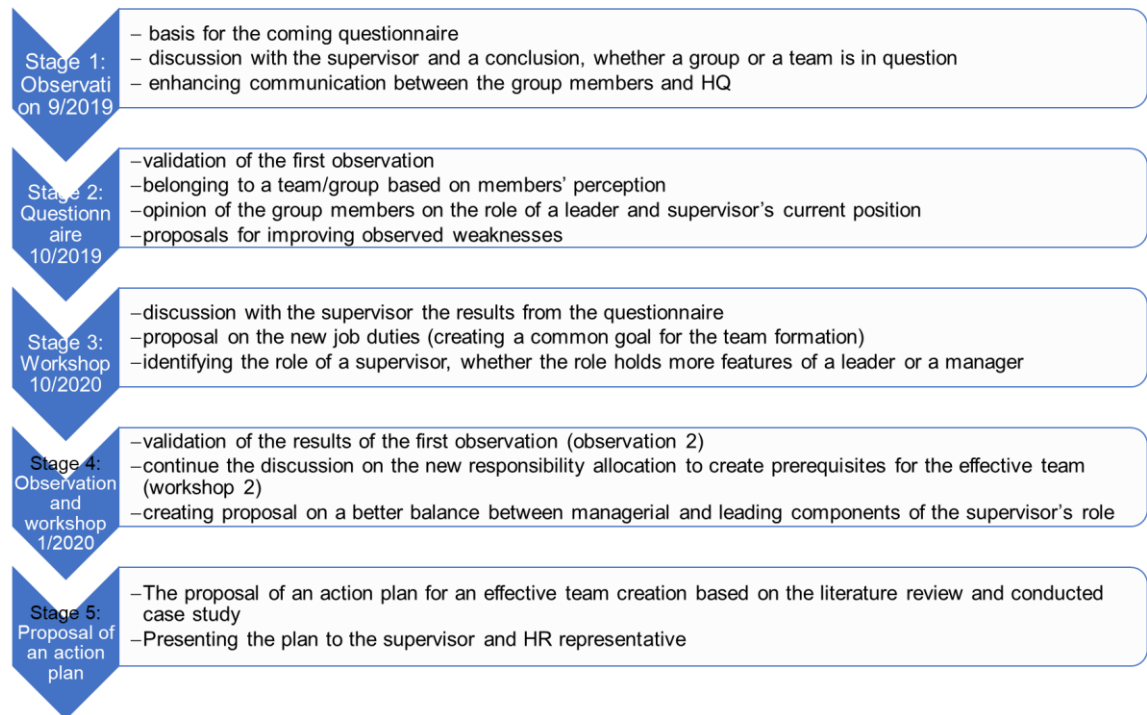


Figure 5. Stages of the case study

### 5.2 Stage 1: Observation

The research started with the observation of the subdivision members during the face-to-face meetings. The first observations took place during the common meetings in the beginning of September 2019. The main target of such meetings in general is to share and communicate the urgent and open issues, discuss challenges, and find potential solutions. They also serve the purpose as a get-together for the colleagues from the remote locations and team building opportunity during an informal team-building event (the latter was not included into observations).

The main focus of the observation was to find out: how a person represents him/herself in respect to the rest of the team/group; interest in the common matters; whether the own opinion is expressed; eagerness to share own knowledge and expertise; knowledge

sharing; general attitude. The field notes and general conclusions are presented in the attachment 1 (confidential).

The traits of the employees were noted based on the set goals for the observations. The general conclusion was the lack of interest in common affairs, the main focus was on the own geographical area of responsibility.

To facilitate the communication of the partially virtual team, the weekly online meetings were introduced (which run weekly until this day). The meetings were welcomed warmly, nevertheless, they mainly serve the purpose of reporting from the own area, asking questions from the supervisor. The supervisor has a possibility to get the overview of the past week and inform on the HQ matters. Usually, such meetings have a very positive atmosphere, still lacking the knowledge sharing aspect and common discussions, ideation. A deeper analysis should be performed to increase the effectiveness of such meetings.

Based on the feedback and conclusions from the observation one, there was a discussion with the supervisor on the matter, whether these employees comprise a group or a team. Based on the main differences between a team and a group, the analysis shows that the subdivision is a group rather than a team (table 3, Surbhi 2015).

Table 3. Difference between a group and a team based on the Surbhi's summary. (adapted)

Basis for Comparison	Group		Team	
Meaning	A collection of individuals who work together in completing a task.	x	A group of persons having collective identity joined together, to accomplish a goal.	
Leadership	Only one leader	x	More than one	
Members	Independent	x	Interdependent	
Process	Discuss, Decide and Delegate.	x	Discuss, Decide and Do.	
Work Products	Individual	x	Collective	
Focus on	Accomplishing individual goals.	x	Accomplishing team goals.	

Accountability	Individually	x	Either individually or mutually	
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Based on the goals set by the supervisor, that team was more preferable, and he would like to build a team as the goal is common for the division and should be addressed accordingly.

### 5.3 Stage 2: Questionnaire

To validate the results from the first stage and get the opinion of the division members a questionnaire was prepared and sent out to fill in the end of October 2019 (Attachment 2, confidential). During the meeting 17.10.2019 the researcher informed and explained the purpose of the questionnaire to the employees in question, all answers were received. The answers are presented in the attachment 3 (confidential) in a consolidated form. Moreover, it was important to understand the value of the positions to the employees holding them.

The questionnaire questions included the ones about the current leadership and ones, which could help understand, how the members perceive themselves: members of a group or a team. Questions were mostly open ended; few were closed ended.

Based on the responses it was clear that the employees consider themselves as a part of a group not a team, there was clearly missing the common goal vital for the team's existence. Nevertheless, the expertise and opinion of the fellow colleagues was highly appreciated.

The most valuable features in the current job duties were "possibility to interact with people" (83% of respondents) and "diverse job duties" (100% of respondents). What the employees were missing the most was "more connection/support from HQ" (83% of respondents) and "more commercial duties" (83% of respondents). Moreover, 100% of the respondents were positive that they can deliver more in case some obstacles would be lifted.

The employees ranked the qualities that they valued in the manager so, that the most valued was "honesty and integrity" (100% of respondents), followed by "Good communicator", "Decision-making capabilities" and "Accountability" (67% of respondents). The qualities that were more leader related like "Inspires me", "Delegation and empowerment" and "Creativity and Innovation" were less appreciated by the respondents.

One of the explanations can be that almost all of the respondents mentioned that they would like more connection to the leader, more communication, more team building, support, and mindfulness.

#### **5.4 Stage 3: Workshop**

The results of the questionnaire were discussed with the supervisor during the first workshop 31.10.2019. The purpose of the workshop was based on the collected data to analyse the current state of affairs and start a discussion on how to create a team from the group of colleagues.

In terms of forming the team, this group of employees is already formed and has given members. The group of people has been working together for a long time, some members have longer background and some shorter. That means that the stages of forming and storming have passed (Mindtools 2014). People know each other, how to work with each other (even not in direct sense, but being within the group), expertise of each other, etc.

The proposal was to shift the focus of the functional duties to the commercial ones (increase the satisfaction from the performed job), ideas how to set a common goal (team responsibility) were discussed, a vital attribute of a team (appendix 4, confidential). There was a deliberation on the fact whether the supervisor has enough time for leading, or mostly managing the group members. The preliminary draft of the new functional duties was created.

#### **5.5 Stage 4: Second observation and second workshop**

The second observation happened in January 2020 and did not reveal any changes in comparison to the first one (appendix 1, confidential). Based on the first observation there was done an attempt to engage the employees into knowledge sharing during observed meeting.

The second workshop was also held in January to continue the development of the new functional duties for the team members. As a results of workshop 2 new responsibility allocation with modified employees' functionalities was created (appendix 4, confidential). A new role was created to spare time to the supervisor to dedicate more to leading his team and created a possibility to try shared leadership. Moreover, some duty changes should trigger knowledge sharing, which is important for team effectiveness and motivation.

## **5.6 Stage 5: Proposal of an action plan**

Based on the previous stages and information gained through literature review the action plan was proposed, how to proceed with modifying and implementing new functional roles to create a common goal for the team and increase its effectiveness. An action plan also addresses such factors influencing the performance of the team like knowledge sharing, motivation, virtualness and shared leadership, including decision making (appendix 5, confidential).

The plan is being implemented partially and due to unforeseen circumstances is delayed (corona pandemic). Preliminary negotiations were held with the person, who was proposed to take a new role, and the employee took the idea very positively. The supervisor to motivate and encourage the person started to give the tasks, which incorporate little by little the new possible duties. The representation of the person towards the rest of the team has changed to some extent, nevertheless, as long as the change has not been official yet, it cannot be done openly.

It was proved that the role of the leader in the team effectiveness cannot be underestimated, especially when the team is partially virtual. The motivation plays a crucial role in keeping the team effective and the team members committed. The motivation triggers are different for different employees vary, nevertheless, the employees in questions consider the versatile working duties motivating enough within the right contents and structure of the work.

The knowledge sharing is quite natural between the team members who do daily work together, even in virtual mode, nevertheless, it is the role of a leader to make the process more formal and normed, so that the knowledge can become available to every team member equally.

The changes proceed according the action plan within the timeframe suitable for the supervisor. The process should be closed with a follow-up check and comparison of the new situation to the state of affairs before with the main criterion – increased effectiveness.



## 6 Discussion and conclusions

This chapter summarizes the research done, whether it answered the set research questions, opens the value of the case study for commissioning company, proposes the possible future research areas and reflects on the learning process of the thesis author.

### 6.1 Objectives and research questions

The main research question of this case study was “How to create an effective team?”, which was supported by the sub-questions for better understanding the substance of the question, which are answered below.

*Sub-question 1: What defines a team and a group?* The literature review gives a clear attribute of what is a team and a group. Having few features in common the most defining difference is the existence of a mutual goal for team members, whereas group members have their individual goal. The goal to become mutual for a team and be able to glue it should be equally understood by each member. In more details the topic is covered in Chapter 3, sub-chapter 3.1.1.

*Sub-question 2: What contributes to an effective team in the case group?* The literature review proposed different attributed of an effective team, which include knowledge creating and sharing, motivation, mindful leader, and his/her practices. The case group does have an feature of virtualness, which adds the extra pressure for the leader to keep the team effective as there is less cohesion, less trust and possibility to immediate interaction. Chapter 3 covers these topics in more details.

*Sub-question 3: What is the role of the supervisor in having effective motivated team members? Does he/she act as a leader or as a manager?* The case study opened the fact that at the moment the supervisor assumed mostly the role of a manager, rather than a leader, which is why there is a need to enlarge the leading part. The role of a supervisor in having the effective motivated team members is crucial as he has the possibility and ability to influence the triggers of the motivation for the team members, also through own leadership practices. Moreover, chapter 5 showed that the team members are lacking the leading role in the supervisor.

*Sub-question 4: Does the knowledge sharing happen between the case group members and what triggers it?* The knowledge sharing and creating was underlined many times along the case study progress. The research showed that there is no formal knowledge sharing at the moment and moreover, there are certain obstacles preventing it from happening. The process is not formalized and the cases when the knowledge is

transferred is when only someone specifically asks for it. The aspect of team learning is important for the team effectiveness, unfortunately, even though, it seems natural to communicate the knowledge, this process needs strict norming and monitoring for the knowledge to be transferred in a proper way to all the team members. The monitoring of the process will help to ensure that the new knowledge is being produced and more effective working ways implemented, rather than sticking to the old known ways of doing things. Such behaviours eventually block the innovation.

*Sub-question 5: How to influence the effectiveness of the case team?* During the research performed, including the literature review, it came to the light the undeniable role of a leader in keeping the team functioning in an effective and efficient way. There is no one rule or clear method, how to create an effective team, nevertheless, the leadership practices used by the leader shape the team. Such practices include mindfulness, understanding the expertise of team members, setting the clear team's goal, ensuring everyone understands it in the same way, motivation, supporting psychological atmosphere. The leader should be aware of the team's dynamics, at what state the team is, the goal is to keep the team at the performance stage, when the team is at its most effectiveness. When the team slides the development stages, the correction measures should be taken by the leader, the most important being is open communication.

The virtualness aspect was also raised up as the team in question is located in the different remote locations, and during the thesis writing the corona pandemic even more shifted the focus on virtual team leading. The leader must be aware of the fact that the distance decreases effectiveness, and even more attention to motivation, support and monitor should be paid. It is extremely important to remember the feeling of isolation of virtual teams' members with no day-to-day face-to-face contact with the colleagues. Special techniques should be implemented to keep the team glued.

Having sub-questions answered, the study produced the clear proposal and an action plan on how to reshape the group into a team and increase its effectiveness. The study was performed to evaluate the group of people in respect to whether it was a team or a group of colleagues. Even though, the group serves certain purposes and can be effective in performing group assignment, which each member responsible and accountable for the own task, it was clearly stated that in this study the team was more suitable for the continuous goal fulfilment.

A clear message was received from the supervisor on the group's dynamics, which helped to produce the proposal. Forming an effective team will help the supervisor to deliver a

better performance for the Company X, as well as motivated employees strengthen the performance.

## **6.2 Value of the study for the organisation**

This study and proposal were assessed very positively by the supervisor and the HR representative. The author and the supervisor continue the implementation of the action plan and the target is to make the changes during 2020.

In my opinion, the proposed changes and an action plan are very practical and will help to improve the certain areas of leading the team. The study findings and some of the action plan steps can be potentially implemented in other sub-groups/teams.

In addition, the study covered the virtual teams, their characteristics, and tips on managing unconventional teams more effectively. This aspect has become very important during the corona pandemic and the tips can be used by other managers of Company X in their daily work.

## **6.3 Recommendations for further research**

This sub-chapter will propose the possible topics for the further research, some of which are connected to this case study, whereas some have more general application.

The proposal could not be implemented in full due to some obstacles, which is why it is advisable to continue to monitor the effect of the changes (included into action plan). One possible option can be the questionnaire to the team members on how their perception has changed after the action plan has been implemented as well as assess the effectiveness of the team, change management of the process in general.

During the workshops ideas and issues were brought up, which were not in the scope of this research, which might be worth for further investigation, e.g. communication between the sub-division with the rest of the division or even across division borders. Additional possible research topics is the analyses of the need for the Company X for the common knowledge repository, the benefits and risks of having information available to the wide range of users.

The corona pandemic has changes the way the teams work and cooperate, all were shifted to the total virtual mode, even though the thesis covered the virtualness of the team, it was still partial, it might be of an interest to investigate the consequences for the effectiveness in the longer run of virtual mode of working in specific projects or specific field of work (e.g. sales, public relationship etc).

## 6.4 Reflection on own learning

The thesis writing and the journey behind was of a particular interest for me as the topic was suggested by the author herself. In general, I must admit that I am pleased with the result of the work and most of all that it was a value for commissioning organisation. The topic of the teams is quite large, but I felt that the narrowing it to the thesis topic was a right decision after all, it helped to focus on the specific literature review and not to drown in the amount of information.

As a process, I found a bit challenging the happening changes in the organization, which interfered with the initial timelines, and then the corona pandemic made it impossible to implement the project as it was initially planned. Nevertheless, I am pleased that I was able to combine the full-time job with thesis writing and also benefiting the organization. Looking back to the process, I might have increased the sampling of the case study, but on the other hand, it could have turned out differently.

I have broadened my knowledge on the teams, and undeniable role of a leader in the whole process of forming the team, motivating it, keeping efficient. Once again, it became clear that no algorithm is available to make the effective team from scratch, but rather the combination of numerous factors and most of all a leader him/herself. I appreciated to learn the interesting angle on the virtual team and some specifics associated with them.

As a whole, the process was rewarding as I got to work with the people, and the aim after all was to improve their work and interest in what they are doing. The workshops were very fruitful, and it was exciting to get new insights on the issues or innovative point of views also for the workshop participants, which opened up new possibilities. Even though, sometimes the discussed topics were outside the scope of the project, but again it highlights the benefit of the workshop as data collection method, the richness of gained information. These workshops also triggered the anticipation of the coming changes.

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## **Attachments**

**Appendix 1. Field notes from the observations (confidential)**

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire (confidential)

**Appendix 3. Questionnaire answers in a consolidated form (confidential)**

**Appendix 4. The workshops and proposed change (confidential)**

**Appendix 5. Action plan (confidential)**